

Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation of Least Developed Countries

Audit Trail

Stakeholder comments on the draft report—May 2020

Commenter	Topic/ Paragraph	Comment	Reply and responding actions taken
World Bank	General comments	The report is based on an elaborate and well-designed methodology, involves in-depth analysis, and provides very clear and useful conclusions. In particular, conclusions regarding such factors of project outcome sustainability as attention to socioeconomic and environmental nexus, support to sustainable livelihoods, creation of markets, and integration of environmental activities into development plans and budgets is well supported by evidence from multiple completed projects and provides important guidance for the future work. Also, GEF's positive experience promoting policy and institutional frameworks is well illustrated and important to note.	Noted.
World Bank	p. vi, p.24, p.27 including Table 9, p.28, p.31, p.32, p.47	It would be helpful if the following conclusions of the report could be clarified: Improvement of post-completion outcome sustainability as compared with the outcome sustainability at the time of terminal evaluation. This is one of the main report conclusions (p. vi, p.24, p.27 including Table 9, p.28, p.31, p.32, p.47). However, it seems that these two indicators are not comparable: while sustainability assessment in terminal evaluation is a risk rating or an expectation looking forward, the post-completion sustainability assessment is an observed outcome five or more years after project closure. If the former is lower than the latter, it would not mean that	No action taken. It is accurate that the two assessments are not the same, but it is useful to compare the ratings as they show the extent to which the assessments at completion are conservative or liberal. It is possible that the sustainability rating at completion are overly conservative or optimistic, and in this evaluation, we have made a comparison between sustainability ratings at completion and current field observations. Project site visits confirmed whether outcomes are continuing or not. When conducting post completion verifications, the evaluator has an

		sustainability improved with time (as the report states), it would only mean that the risk assessment was conservative enough not to overstate the prospective.	additional benefit of the hindsight which shows that things are better than had been expected.
World Bank	p. 47, p. vii	Financial sustainability is outlined as the most challenging dimension of sustainability in LDCs, as compared with the other three dimensions of sustainability—institutional, environmental, and political. This outcome was probably expected. The report confirms it and states that “limited post-completion financing is a key context-related hindering factor in most of the country case studies conducted by the three SCCEs. This finding points to the importance of elaborating financial arrangements in the project design that can continue after project completion to deliver benefits over time.” (p. 47) While the report does not intend to make recommendations, could the authors share their knowledge obtained from project documents and country case studies that would point in the direction of achieving longer-term post-completion financing from outside of the donor community? What are the “financial arrangements in the project design” that could support funding sustainability? What exactly is meant by the importance of “elaborating financial arrangements in the project design that can continue after project completion to deliver benefits over time” (p. vii)?	Noted. No action taken. The evaluation has included evidence from the portfolio review and country case studies that led to findings and conclusion through triangulation. The evidence and information collected does not support providing the details requested in the comment. While the current report does not present final recommendations, due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the virtual Council meeting, the IEO intends on making recommendations. The findings and recommendations from this evaluation will be discussed with various stakeholders after the June 2020 Council meeting and will be included as part of the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7).
World Bank	p. vii	Fragility is described as an important factor of “the timely delivery of GEF support as well as outcomes and sustainability of GEF support in LDCs” (p.vii). Should there be a different approach in FCV countries to post-completion financing, emphasis on community engagement, emphasis on political economy during project preparation, balance between institutional capacity/knowledge sharing support and investment in assets, anything else?	No action taken. This evaluation assessed fragility as a cross-cutting issue. The IEO is currently conducting an evaluation GEF’s engagement in fragile and conflict-affected situations to determine whether and how GEF interventions are conflict-sensitive, and the implications thereof. This study will examine the design, implementation, and M&E of GEF-funded projects and programs, focusing on interventions since 2002 (the start of GEF-3) in six conflict-affected situations and identify

			recommendations for improving future GEF interventions in conflict-affected situations.
World Bank	p. 123	“Climate resilience is addressed in climate change adaptation projects, but rarely in other focal area projects”. This is not a surprise, as very often in the projects financed by other focal areas the focus is on the relevant to these FA barriers and solutions. Rio Markers (part of the GEF 7 taxonomy) would allow to detect projects with climate co-benefits, including adaptation, especially for non-climate change focal area investments.	Noted. The IEO will consider Rio Markers for assessment of climate resilience in the context of OPS7.
World Bank	p. 35	Related to that: evaluation finding in para 35 – we would like to propose Evaluation team to review climate co-benefits of the WB GEF portfolio in LDCs. WB Climate co-benefits assessment focuses not on the source of the project funding (focal area), but on the project context: for example, adaptation co-benefits are assigned if project documents lay out all three steps required by the MDB climate adaptation finance methodology (context of vulnerability to climate variability and change, statement of purpose or intent, clear and direct link between climate vulnerability and project activities)	Noted. The IEO will consider this proposal for assessment of climate adaptation cobenefits in the context of OPS7.

Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation of Least Developed Countries

Audit Trail

GEF Secretariat comments on the draft report—July 2020

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions taken
General comment	<i>The CW Portfolio in relation to LDCs</i>	The evaluation has not adequately considered GEF intervention in the area of POPs, at least in the Africa LDCs and SIDs. As an example, we note that the AFLDC project co-implemented by UNEP and UNIDO was not included in the analysis. The AFLDC project “ <i>Capacity Strengthening and Technical Assistance for the Implementation of the Stockholm Convention in Africa LDCs and SIDs</i> ” is a GEF-4 project implemented in 28 countries covering 3 Regional Economic Communities (ECOWAS, COMESSA and SADC). This major program addressed issues related to the Stockholm Convention and country priorities identified in National Implementation Plans - namely legislative and regulatory framework development; sustainable enforcement and administrative capacity; coordinated information dissemination and awareness raising and Best Available Technologies Dear Sand Best Environmental Practices (BAT/BEP) in industrial processes, reduction on exposure to POPs and contaminated sites. We recommend that the IEO reviews the reports derived from the different projects of the AFLDC, and considers to what extent these can be factored in the context of the current evaluation.	No action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper. The three child projects of this program were included in the portfolio review. As stated in paragraph 6, a complete list of projects reviewed is available on the GEF IEO website (the link to the page is provided in footnote 2).
General comment	<i>The IW Portfolio in relation to LDCs</i>	Limited reference is made to International Waters, despite the significance of IW and associated GEF programming to the countries in question. We suggest considering inclusion of further analysis in the report.	No action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper. Forty-one International Waters projects and programs were included in the portfolio review. As stated in paragraph 6 a

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
			complete list of projects reviewed are available on the GEF IEO website (the link to the web page is provided in footnote 2).
General comment	<i>The IW Portfolio in relation to LDCs</i>	The lack of mention or analysis of some programmatic approaches (R2R, PAS, CTI) or transboundary river projects do not reflect the importance of the International Waters portfolio for LDCs (Senegal, Chad lake, Niger, Haute Volta, etc).	No action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper. Forty-one international waters projects and programs were included in the portfolio review. As stated in paragraph 6 a complete list of projects reviewed are available on the GEF IEO website (the link to the web page is provided in footnote 2).
General comment	<i>Low performance</i>	It may be relevant to mention that LDCs face specific challenges, whereas performance ratings are based on a general framework that applies to all countries beyond just LDCs.	No action taken. Challenges faced by LDCs are referenced throughout the evaluation report. The performance section also indicates the improved performance of LDCs over time.
General comment	<i>Global/regional projects</i>	References to global/regional projects seem to be missing from this evaluation.	No action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper. As stated in paragraph 8 of the evaluation report global initiatives and those regional interventions that are set up as umbrella arrangements for administrative convenience, were excluded from the evaluation scope.
General comment	<i>LDC graduation</i>	The report mentions it covers 47 countries. However, it is unclear if/how the 5 countries that graduated during the period covered by the report were considered in the report. E.g. were they considered as LDCs for the time when they were classified as LDC; or were they were completely excluded from the analysis?	Text added to clarify that LDCs that have graduated are not covered in the evaluation.
General comment	<i>Co-financing</i>	The GEF normally spells 'co-financing' with a hyphen (see Policy and Guidelines on Co-financing); please correct throughout the report.	No action taken. The GEF IEO Style guide spells cofinancing without a hyphen.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
General comment	<i>Reliance on APR sustainability ratings</i>	The report uses a lot of APR data on sustainability. If much of the analysis is simply repeating APR data, this can question the value-added of this evaluation. Instead, it would be helpful to more greatly promote the very useful findings on post-completion analysis found in paragraphs 56, 62 and 119. These findings come from the evaluation itself, rather than disaggregated data from already well-known and much-discussed APR data.	No action taken. APR 2019 data has been highlighted based on GEF SEC comments on the SIDS SCCE to include data from more recently completed projects and programs in the evaluation.
General comment	<i>Project examples</i>	Related to the comment above, there are very few project examples up until page 38 of the report. It makes the report feel like a desk-based and statistical analysis, rather than one that considers project context and give an account of them to substantiate findings.	No action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper. A major part of the methodology is based on an extensive portfolio review and analysis.
General comment	<i>The use of the word “significant”</i>	As per earlier comments - the word “significant” is profusely used throughout this report, largely without statistical testing. This is discussed in later comments as well. We suggest the deletion of the word “significant”, except in circumstances where the relevant statistical testing has been conducted and is being presented. Where testing is done, it would be useful to see all details of all statistical testing into the paper or into an Annex, including details of which test was used, why that test was chosen, what assumptions were satisfied, what were the limitations, etc. Statistical conclusions should not be sweepingly made without those accompanying details to provide the necessary context for the reader.	The word “significantly” has been replaced except when used with statistical testing or in reference to biodiversity. Noted. No action taken. It is not the IEO’s practice to provide such details on statistical testing.
General comment	<i>The data cohorts being used for the analysis</i>	A general comment for the report is that the different cohorts upon which many sections, tables and figures in this report are based, are a source of continuous confusion to the reader (as evidenced by further specific comments below). It would be useful to find a way (perhaps through a Table, or an Annex) to bring some up-front clarity to the overall cohort(s) for analysis,	Text has been edited to clarify cohorts in paragraph 7 as well as in other paragraphs.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
		to be explicit as to where statements and analyses refer to cohorts that are different, and to explain why these differences are needed.	
Executive Summary 1	<i>LDCs face severe environmental challenges exacerbated by climate change.</i>	It may be worth mentioning that environmental challenges are also exacerbated by several non-environmental and non-climatic challenges; which are driven by numerous socio-economic drivers.	This has been added to the text.
Executive Summary 1	<i>Most of these residents are trying to feed their families by cultivating land that produces far less than it once did. All these environmental issues are exacerbated by climate change.</i>	This is a misleadingly general statement. Different families and different environmental issues in different LDCs (and areas within each of them), are impacted by climate change in different ways and to varying extents.	No action taken. This sentence is in reference to people living on degraded land.
Executive Summary 3	<i>The evaluation looked closely at the determinants of sustainability by focusing on projects completed between 2007 and 2014.</i>	It may be worth mentioning that some LDCs have graduated in this period.	No action taken. It is mentioned in paragraphs 3 and 20 of the full report and in annex 1. Recently graduated LDCs are also listed in footnote 4.
Executive Summary 3	<i>Countries for a case study were selected based on the aggregate and geospatial analysis of the portfolio under review.</i>	Some further clarity and details on the criteria used for the case study selection would be useful.	No action taken. The country selection process is further explained in paragraph 6 of the full report and the cited "Selection of Case Study Countries" available on the GEF IEO website.
Executive Summary 4	<i>GEF support to LDCs has increased consistently since the pilot phase. The GEF has long recognized the unique challenges faced by LDCs and has regularly increased its support to LDCs since the pilot phase to more than \$1.2 billion in GEF-5 and GEF-6.</i>	To this end, the specification of STAR allocation floors specific to LDCs in the GEF-6 allocation framework (which continues into the GEF-7 allocation framework) is noteworthy and should be mentioned, both here and in other relevant sections of this report.	Text has been added to paragraph 26 of the full report.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
Executive Summary 4	<i>Just over 60 percent of the funding comes from the GEF Trust Fund, and 37 percent from the LDCF.</i>	This contradicts the statement in paragraph 2 above that “Seventy-seven percent of this funding came from the GEF Trust Fund, with the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) contributing 20 percent of total funding.” Perhaps these two sets of numbers are referring to different cohorts, but this causes confusion.	Percentages have been corrected.
Executive Summary 5	<i>Most of GEF support to LDCs has focused on climate change adaptation to address the effects of a changing climate that exacerbates most environmental challenges in LDCs.</i>	This statement directly contradicts the one above. The GEF Trust Fund does not do adaptation, so most of the GEF support to LDCs cannot be on adaptation if 60% of that support comes from the GEF Trust Fund. Some further clarification on this would be helpful. In addition, it would be useful to refer to earlier evaluations or existing literature as evidence for this statement that a changing climate particularly exacerbates environmental challenges in LDCs.	No action taken. LDCF/SCCF is part of GEF support.
Executive Summary 5	<i>Government officials in countries visited highlighted that the GEF is an important source of funding that fits into their planning.</i>	It is not clear what is meant by “their planning”. Please explain, or reword.	The sentence has been reworded.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
Executive Summary 6	<i>The relevance of GEF support has not been affected by the GEF's move toward integrated programming. Since GEF-4, the GEF has been moving toward more integrated programming through multifocal projects and programmatic approaches.</i>	The first sentence could be interpreted in different ways. Is the message that GEF support is equally important to LDCs; or that the programming of GEF support is equally impactful; or otherwise? This language can be made clearer with respect to LDCs and their use of program resources. Both here and throughout the report, integrated programming seems to be equated to multi-focal-area programming. This seems somewhat misleading, as "integration" has a very specific meaning in a GEF context.	The first sentence has been edited. It means programming of GEF support to help recipient countries meet their commitments to more than one global convention or thematic area by addressing the underlying drivers of environmental degradation. This started in GEF-4 with MFA projects, continued with the formal introduction of programmatic approaches in 2008 and was solidified in GEF-6 with the IAPs and GEF-7 with the IPs. While single focal area projects are still an important share of GEF financing, programming that emphasized "integration" as a key organizing principle for GEF financing is becoming increasingly prominent. IAPs emphasized that GEF financing is not "siloed" by focal area, but rather designed with the intention to be invested in a coherent manner to promote synergies in generating multiple global environmental benefits, while ensuring that progress in any dimension of the global environment does not negatively affect other related socio-economic objectives.
Executive Summary 7	<i>For LDCs that are also SIDS, the original three GEF Agencies continued to account for 82 percent of financing in GEF-6, showing that the benefits of expansion are still to be realized.</i>	There is no comparison point provided for this statement. The implication is that GEF-5 and before was exactly 82%, which is unlikely to be true.	Text has been edited to compare to 92 percent in GEF-3.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
Executive Summary 7	<i>However, no clear trend emerges when looking at GEF Agencies' comparative advantages in terms of specialized technical knowledge. Countries select GEF Agencies based on several aspects of comparative advantage including their technical area of specialization, their history of engagement with the Agency and the physical presence of the Agency in the country.</i>	While the first sentence claims "no clear trend emerges", the second sentence highlights a clear trend.	The first sentence has been replaced.
Executive Summary 8	<i>Analysis of the most recent APR available data from the 2019 cohort shows that completed projects in LDCs are rated lower than the overall GEF portfolio on all performance indicators.</i>	This speaks to an earlier comment on the reader's confusion throughout the report on which cohorts of data are being used for which analyses. What exactly does "the most recent APR available data from the 2019 cohort" mean? What are the data and the related project numbers? Perhaps details of these and other cohorts can be put into an Annex.	Text has been edited to clarify cohorts in paragraph 7.
Executive Summary 8	<i>On these dimensions, LDC projects are also rated lower than projects in the Africa and Asia regions, where most LDCs are located.</i>	We suggest a rewording of this statement, as its meaning is unclear. Furthermore, Africa and Asia do not comprise the entirety of the GEF regions, and it seems an odd analysis to compare the overall LDC statistics with the Africa and Asia regions only, just because this is where "most LDCS are located". It would be more logical to have a comparison of the overall LDC statistics with both the overall GEF cohort statistics as well as each of the regional breakdowns.	No action taken. We disagree that it would be more logical.
Executive Summary 12	<i>Community livelihood interventions in LDCs are more likely to succeed if the proposed activity truly is an alternative livelihood, is well designed, has a positive environmental-socioeconomic nexus, and meets the needs of beneficiaries.</i>	The use of the word "truly" here implies that it is false otherwise? We suggest the deletion of this word.	Sentence has been edited.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
Executive Summary 14	<i>Promoting climate resilience is a key aspect in LDCs as demonstrated by the large number of adaptation interventions and the considerable amount of LDCF/SCCF funding in LDCs.</i>	But earlier paragraphs indicated only a comparatively small percentage of LDCF/SCCF funding (20%) relative to overall GEF funding. This is not “considerable”.	No action taken. LDCF/SCCF is part of GEF support and accounts for a growing share of the GEF portfolio in LDCs.
Executive Summary 14	<i>While all climate change adaptation projects financed by the LDCF/SCCF and the GEF Trust Fund Strategic Priority for Adaptation included resilience considerations, only 37 percent of nonclimate change adaptation projects showed some evidence of resilience considerations.</i>	What is the evidence base and context for this statement? Later comments below refer to this also. While this is the Executive Summary, there needs to be caution with respect to these kinds of sweeping statements that, on their own, can lead to erroneous conclusions. It is written that GEF projects beyond LDCF/SCCF, “rarely” include resilience. But in the same text, it is said that 37% of these projects include resilience aspects. Either what is meant by “rarely” should be defined, or more reasonably, the wording should be revised. In addition, it is useful to clarify what is meant here by “resilience” (climate resilience; resilience to non-climate pressures; or both).	No action taken. The evidence is presented in paragraph 98 of the full report. The evaluation found some evidence of resilience considerations which is not equal to addressing climate resilience issues.
Executive Summary 15	<i>The environmental shocks LDCs face include natural disasters, weather shocks that do not favor agriculture production, and <u>permanent shocks</u> caused by climate change.</i>	Suggest rephrasing “permanent shocks”. E.g. “other negative impacts” or “slow onset events”?	No action taken. Paragraph 15 of the main text talks about permanent shocks which is used by the Committee for Development Policy in describing the characteristics LDCs.
Executive Summary 15	<i>As observed in country visits by the African Biomes and SIDS SCCEs in Comoros, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, and Mali, country insecurity and the emergence of fragile situations can significantly delay implementation and outcomes.</i>	The word “significant” is profusely used throughout this report, largely without statistical testing. This is discussed in later comments as well. We suggest the deletion of the word “significant”, except in circumstances where the relevant statistical testing has been conducted and is being presented.	The word “significantly” has been replaced except when used with statistical testing or in reference to biodiversity.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
Executive Summary 16	<i>In light of the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have limited the opportunity for discussion of the conclusions of evaluations, the findings and recommendations from this evaluation will be discussed with various stakeholders and included as part of the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7).</i>	As discussed in a later comment, it would be good to articulate in more detail what these “discussions with various stakeholders” will entail, and the extent to which the GEF Secretariat will be a part of those discussions. To this end, the Secretariat would appreciate receiving any draft recommendations.	Noted. Draft proposed recommendations will be discussed with the GEF Secretariat.
3	<i>Given the GEF’s priority in addressing environmental constraints in LDCs through increased allocations...</i>	The meaning of this statement is unclear. We suggest a rewording.	No action taken.
3	<i>The sustainability analysis is based on the GEF’s investment in LDCs since GEF-4: a total of \$3.18 billion. Most of this funding was from the GEF Trust Fund, while 37 percent was from the LDCF.</i>	These statistics contradict paragraph 2 which states the following: <i>To date, the GEF has invested \$4.68 billion accompanied by \$25.81 billion in cofinancing in LDCs. Seventy-seven percent of this funding came from the GEF Trust Fund, with the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) contributing 20 percent of total funding; less than 1 percent came from the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF).</i> This speaks to the general point, raised in an earlier comment, about a fundamental confusion throughout the report as to the different cohorts being referenced and used.	Paragraph 2 refers to the time period from the pilot phase up to the cutoff date for this evaluation, December 30, 2019 mentioned in the footnote. While paragraph 3 presents figures since GEF-4 up to the cutoff date. Edits have been made to paragraph 2.
5(c)	<i>In what way, if any, does the environment and socioeconomic development–livelihoods nexus help explain the sustainability of outcomes in LDCs?</i>	It is difficult to understand the meaning and objective of this key question. While we understand that the key questions come directly from the Approach paper, perhaps this one can be further discussed (either here or in the relevant section of the report) for the sake of clarity.	No action taken. All the questions are further discussed in the approach paper. The link to the approach paper is provided in the paragraph for easy reference.
8	<i>The portfolio of the LDC SCCE included enabling activities, full- and medium-size projects, as well as programs in the 47 LDCs.</i>	It is not clear why Enabling Activities should be included in some parts of the analyses – such as in the sustainability analysis and the ratings analysis. Are EAs being excluded from those data cohorts for those sections? If yes, it should be made clear. If not, this will lead to misleading conclusions and we suggest the relevant analyses be redone accordingly.	Text has been edited to clarify cohorts. Enabling Activities were included in the relevance cohort, but not in the sustainability cohort.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
15	<i>Moreover, these shocks are exogenous from the perspective of LDCs—even though the frequency and magnitude of environmental shocks, such as climate change, are to some extent dependent on policy choices made at the international level.</i>	Perhaps the “even though” should be deleted, as what is discussed seems to be the definition of exogenous – i.e., external to the decision-making of the LDCs.	“Even though” has been deleted.
16	<i>Despite their similarities, LDCs are a diverse group of countries, varying widely in their geography, history, and problems.</i>	Perhaps the word “challenges” is a better fit here, instead of “problems”.	“Problems” has been replaced with “challenges.”
18	<i>In 2011, the Fourth United Nations Conference on LDCs adopted the Istanbul Declaration and the Istanbul Programme of Action for the decade 2011–20.</i>	Given that we are now in 2020, it would be useful to reference here any planned or ongoing assessments of achievement towards this program of action.	No action taken. Not part of the scope of this evaluation.
19	<i>The GEF has put an emphasis on supporting LDCs with regard to the environment.</i>	As outlined in an earlier comment, the special LDCs floor for minimum STAR that was introduced in GEF-6 is relevant to this discussion.	Text on the LDCs floor has been added to paragraph 26 of the full report.
19	<i>To this end, the GEF manages the LDCF to address the <u>special</u> needs of the LDCs, which are especially vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change.</i>	Suggest rephrasing “special”. E.g. “Adaptation needs”?	No action taken. Please note the LDCF website says “special” needs.
20	<i>In line with the UN system of classification a country has access to special support until it graduates from LDC status.</i>	Over time, the LDC country list necessarily changes as countries graduate (or regress). Is there the assumption of one list here for the different GEF periods? If so, which list? If not, what are the differences between the GEF periods? Perhaps these details can be placed into an Annex.	The evaluation covers the current 47 LDCs. This has been clarified in paragraph 3 and annex 1. Recently graduated LDCs are also listed in footnote 4.
20	<i>The committee will consider Bangladesh, Lao PDR, and Myanmar for graduation in 2021.</i>	Perhaps mention that Vanuatu graduates in 2020, and Angola in 2021.	Text has been added to reflect Vanuatu is scheduled for graduation in 2020 and Angola in 2021.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
21	<i>All these environmental issues are exacerbated by climate change.</i>	It is useful to mention that these environmental issues are also exacerbated by non-climate challenges, including socio-economic pressures, poor policy, lack of enforcement of regulations.	This has been added to the text.
Figure 1	<i>Countries in a blue box are covered by the SIDS SCCE. Countries in a black box are covered by the African biomes SCCE. Guinea-Bissau is covered by both SIDS SCCE and African Biomes SCCE; to avoid repetition in the figure Guinea-Bissau was only listed once under SIDS SCCE.</i>	It is very hard to tell the blue boxes from the black ones. A color change is advisable.	The color of the blue boxes has been changed to red in figure 1.
26	<i>This includes System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) allocations, a special window for SIDS and LDCs under the chemicals and waste focal area, regional funds available under the international waters focal area, resources via the Small Grants Programme, and support for fulfilling convention obligations.</i>	This paragraph is misleading in terms of the Chemicals and Waste and International Waters focal areas. The CW special window is relevant to the discussion but is specific to GEF-6 and GEF-7 and should be discussed as such. Furthermore, IW funds are not limited to regional projects. As in earlier comments, the special LDCs floor for minimum STAR that was introduced in GEF-6 is again relevant here.	Text has been revised to reflect this comment.
26	<i>During the shortfall in GEF-6, an effort was made to ensure that LDCs were sufficiently funded and as a result, country allocations for LDCs and SIDS were unaffected (GEF IEO 2018b).</i>	The “shortfall in GEF-6” will not be understood by a wider audience and should be explained.	The “shortfall in GEF-6” has been clarified in the text. Also, the wider audience can get further information on this in the document cited.
26	<i>In GEF-6 the share from the LDCF, which had grown substantially in GEF-5, decreased due to a decline in resources available through the fund.</i>	Both here and in other parts of the report, it is misleading to present LDCF funding as “per replenishment”, as this is not the way that LDCF funding is raised. We suggest this paragraph be refined to explicitly indicate this decrease reflects an unpredictability of donor contributions, as is mentioned later in the document in paragraph 40.	No action taken. LDCF/SCCF Council documents present project approvals and financing by GEF phases. Text has been added to clarify that LDCF is replenished through voluntary contributions and pledges had declined.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
26	<i>In GEF-7, programming is still ongoing but continued support to LDCs is strong and has reached \$295.8 million.</i>	It is worth clarifying that the LDCF doesn't get a single replenishment at the beginning of each GEF cycle (like the GEF TF), but donors make contributions on a voluntary basis throughout.	It has been added to the preceding sentence.
26	<i>The 47 LDCs also participate in 83 global projects and 14 global programs totaling \$1.04 billion; among these is the Small Grants Programme, for which a total of \$99.6 million has been provided in GEF-4 and GEF-5.</i>	Are SGP funds being included in the analysis, or not? Here it is being excluded, but paragraph 8 above explicitly says that the SGP funds to the LDCs are excluded: "Global initiatives and those regional interventions that are set up as umbrella arrangements for administrative convenience, including the Small Grants Programme and the GEF Biosafety Program (GEF ID 3654), were excluded from the evaluation scope."	The inclusion of the Small Grants Programme is clarified in paragraph 8. This paragraph describes how much the GEF has invested in LDCs. In the analysis, the Small Grants Programme is covered on an opportunistic basis in case studies.
26	<i>Figure 2: LDC funding by trust fund by GEF replenishment period (million \$)</i>	While the paragraph states that GEF-7 programming is ongoing, the visual effect leads to the conclusion that GEF-7 is giving much less funding compared to previous replenishments. As GEF-7 is beyond the scope of this evaluation, we suggest that this chart should exclude that data, and that the paragraph should stress that only a small portion of GEF-7 allocations have been committed at the time of preparation of this report.	A note has been added to figure 2 stating that for GEF-7 programming is still underway.
27	<i>The focus of focal area allocations in LDCs has shifted from biodiversity to climate change adaptation.</i>	This is not a useful comparison, as one is not at the expense of the other. This phrasing seems to suggest the shares are inter-dependent or relative, which is in fact not the case for CCA vs GEF TF FAs. It important to note that BD is funded by the GEF TF and adaptation is funded by the LDCF – as such, the two funds are independent of each other.	No action taken. This is a description of the portfolio.
27	<i>Figure 3: Focal area grants invested by GEF replenishment period in LDCs</i>	Same comment as above on the suggested deletion of the GEF-7 data from this Figure.	A note has been added to figure 3 stating that for GEF-7 programming is still underway.
28	<i>Regional interventions may include non-LDC countries.</i>	This statement should also encompass global interventions.	Global has been added to the text.
28	<i>Table 1: GEF support by geographic scope and support modality</i>	As stated in paragraph 28, regional (and global?) interventions may include non LDC countries. Therefore, the numbers (and	The row of totals has been deleted.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
		overall total) in this table can be s they give the impression of LDC funding only. We suggest presenting the regional and global numbers in a separate table, and/or deleting the row of “totals”.	
29	<i>Most child projects are full-size interventions, augmenting the stand-alone full-size projects.</i>	This can be restated to better reflect the meaning (we assume) that the child projects are sometimes as large as the FSPs.	The text has been revised to reflect that since most child projects are full-size, it increases the total number of full-size projects in LDCs.
29	<i>Table 2: GEF interventions by support modality</i>	The total of the last column on GEF Funding should exclude the parent program amounts, as these amounts include but are not restricted to these programs’ funding to LDCs.	The program financing has been taken out of the total.
30	<i>Investment in programs increased in GEF-4 but decreased in GEF-5 and GEF-6.</i>	Elements of context are lacking to explain this decrease. In GEF-4, there was actually almost a non-programming situation at the middle of GEF-4 (2008) in several LDCs – for instance in West and Central Africa. This is why programmatic approaches were proposed in GEF-4: one in West Africa, with one BD sub-program, and another CCM sub-program, and one for Congo Basin on forests, using both BD and CCM RAF resources + tropical forest account. In GEF-5, with the introduction of the STAR and efforts with countries (CSP for instance), Africa was the first region to move with a programmatic approach with the SAWAP/GGWI. But except this program, countries were better equipped to program their resources.	Noted. No action taken.
30	<i>....the 2013 Ridge to Reef in the Caribbean and Pacific (GEF ID 5395).</i>	Please check the reference to the R2R project, as the Portal and the GEF website has the title as specific to the Pacific only.	Caribbean has been deleted.
31	<i>Programs and their respective child projects are becoming larger in size, and there is a move from single focal area interventions toward multifocal interventions.</i>	The increase of project size is due to a move from single focal area projects (at a time there were RAF allocations only for BD and CCM) to multi-focal area projects (with a STAR with BD, CCM, and LD), as well as the design of the SFM incentive program adding 50% of resources to projects (2:1).	No action taken. This description is to explain why this shift (i.e. larger size projects) is acceptable to countries, not to explain the reason for the shift.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
32	<i>A substantial number of GEF-6 interventions, 48 projects, are pending approval; 36 of these projects are financed by LDCF, totaling \$241.7 million.</i>	The table 4 below does not give any details on the funding sources of projects. It would be useful (either in this Table or a separate one) to see the disaggregation of this data between the GEF TF and the LDCF.	No action taken. We disagree that further details would be useful.
32	<i>Table 4: Project status by GEF replenishment period</i>	The title should make clear this data is for LDCs only. Some of the data in this Table needs a further check. For example, it is difficult to understand how one GEF4 project is still pending approval, and with a 0-funding amount? Furthermore, it is surprising that 6 GEF-5 projects are still pending approval. It may be worthwhile checking if these projects have not in fact been rejected and that this fact has yet to be reflected in the system from which the data was generated.	“LDCs” has been added to the table title. No further action taken. The IEO has used status data reflected in the portal, verified with cross referencing milestones dates. In the case of missing data, PMIS data cross-referenced with the milestone dates was used.
33	<i>However, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, and the World Bank—the three original GEF Agencies active since the pilot phase—have the largest share of GEF grants in LDCs.</i>	This statement needs to be put into the wider context that this is not true for LDCs only- the three founding agencies have continued to maintain the biggest share of grants across all replenishment periods. Furthermore, this paragraph would benefit from a greater discussion of the expanding presence of individual Agencies in LDCs, as is clear from Table 5 and Figure 4. For example, a striking result is that the AfDB (which covers many LDCs) moved from just two projects in GEF-4 to 36 under GEF-5 and 6; BOAD also increased its share, though at a slower pace, as did CI and IUCN. A greater unpacking of these noteworthy LDC numbers and shifts per Agency would be useful. Also, this statement should be reworded – the three original agencies don’t “have” the largest share of grants – rather, they “implement” them.	No action taken. The paragraph already states “OPS6 found that the expansion of the GEF partnership to 18 Agencies increased GEF relevance in countries by offering greater choice and focal area coverage. This finding also applies to LDCs.” No action taken. Noted. These trends are clearly visible in table 5. “Have” has been changed to “implemented.”
33	<i>Table 5: Share of GEF projects and grant amount by GEF Agency</i>	The title should make clear this data is for LDCs only. Furthermore, the title says “share” but none of the presented data is percentage-based. In fact, percentages of amounts and numbers relative to the LDC total would be really useful.	“In LDCs” has been added and “share” has been deleted in the title of the table 5.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
34	<i>LDCs that are SIDS followed a different trend. By GEF-6, the share of financing by the original GEF Agencies was still at 82 percent compared to 69 percent for all LDCs.</i>	Does this sentence refer to the LDCs that are also SIDS? It is not clear. Furthermore, it would be useful to have a table similar to Figure 4 for the LDCs that are also SIDS, to see the comparisons, if the paper is making these conclusions of differences.	Clarification has been added that this sentence also refers to SIDS. Text has been edited to compare to 92 percent in GEF-3.
34	<i>This could be partly explained by a more specific and diversified demand for technical services by recipient countries as well as by the GEF's strategic move from single focal area support toward multisectoral integrated programming through large impact programs.</i>	It is not clear how this is the explanation for the 52% share of the previous statement.	Noted. No action taken. Additional GEF Agencies is equivalent to more specialized and diversified technical services; and more integrated approaches corresponds to a higher need for more Agencies to fulfill the increased diverse technical requirements typical of integrated approaches.
36	<i>From a detailed review of project documents, it clearly emerged that the comparative advantage of a GEF Agency includes (1) the history of engagement between the GEF Agency and the country in which the project is implemented; (2) the GEF Agency's ability to bring in technical expertise, provide policy support, and strengthen national capacity; and (3) the Agency's thematic and subject area knowledge through experience with similar projects implemented in the same country or region.</i>	How does this differ from non-LDC selection of projects? These selection parameters do not seem particularly specific to LDCs. Also, what of national presence? This is mentioned as a factor in other parts of the report.	Noted. No action taken. This review was part of the portfolio review and analysis done for all three SCCEs. These are the results from an open-ended question for projects and programs in LDCs.
37	<i>In a recent priority-setting exercise, the World Wildlife Fund has been selected as the GEF Agency for a project under GEF-7.</i>	Why only use one example? Access is available to the NPDF, other documents from national dialogues, and BTOR from programming assistance missions which document and explain several examples. There are several countries who prioritized other agencies since GEF6: E.G. Cameroon with WWF, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania, Guinea Bissau, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Burkina Faso with IUCN, etc.	No action taken. Examples are drawn from the country case studies conducted for this evaluation.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
38	<i>For LDCs that are SIDS, climate change adaptation accounts for 34 percent of GEF support, followed by international waters at 23 percent and multifocal projects at 22 percent.</i>	As in a comment above, it would be good to see the similar figures for the subset of LDCs that are also SIDS, if these comparisons are going to continue to be made.	No action taken. Data for LDCs that are also SIDS have been presented when noteworthy.
38	<i>...while most of the funding for multifocal interventions originates from the GEF Trust Fund.</i>	For MFA projects that are also MTF projects, the funding would be GEFTF + LDCF/SCCF	Noted. No action taken.
39	<i>The percentage share for climate change adaption projects has also increased, while shares for land degradation and biodiversity have decreased.</i>	As commented for para 27 above, the problem with phrasing it this way is it seems to suggest the shares are inter-dependent or relative, which is in fact not the case for CCA vs GEF TF FAs.	No action taken. This is a description of the portfolio.
40	<i>The largest percentage of multifocal area projects address biodiversity, land degradation, and <u>climate change</u> during GEF-4 to GEF-6 (Error! Reference source not found.).</i>	Is “climate change” here referring to climate change mitigation exclusively?	Yes. The text and figure 9 have been revised.
41	<i>Within each focal area, the GEF must ensure support to achieve global environmental benefits. A desk review that examined the most important global environmental benefits in LDCs showed that the main intervention domains include...</i>	It is not clear on what dataset these conclusions of this paragraph are being based, or what methodology was used to reach these conclusions.	Text has been edited to clarify the cohort.
41	<i>Figure 10: GEF interventions and global environmental benefits in LDCs</i>	Do the 621 projects include EAs? If so, these results are misleading and the analysis should be redone on the reduced dataset that excludes EAs, therefore giving the relevant GEB percentages according to this smaller sample.	No action taken. Yes, Enabling Activities are included as they contribute to GEB 6 - Enhance capacity of countries to implement MEAs.
42	<i>GEF interventions are aligned with the respective government’s environmental priorities in LDCs.</i>	This is a criteria in the review sheet used for all GEF projects. Therefore, all GEF projects are aligned in this way, whether they are for LDCs or not. We suggest clarifying.	No action taken. We stand by our finding and supporting analysis.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
43	<i>Although not explicitly emerging as a direct environmental challenge for LDCs, climate change is addressed by 51 percent of the projects reviewed.</i>	Other parts of the report contradict this statement about climate change not emerging as a “direct environmental challenge for LDCs”.	Noted. No action taken. It is acknowledged in the earlier part of the sentence.
43	<i>Table 6: National projects addressing the main environmental challenges in LDCs</i>	It would be useful to show this data in percentages, for the totals at least, particularly since the related paragraph discussions are in percentages. Also, a point of clarification – why are there all of these additional sources to this data beyond the project documents in the PMIS databases?	Noted. No action taken. We disagree that it would be useful. In addition to PMIS, these sources were used to determine countries’ key environmental challenges.
44	<i>Cognizant of beneficiaries’ livelihood needs in LDCs, project documents <u>have begun</u> to capture the socioeconomic dimension of GEF interventions... and another 8 percent engaged private sector engagement.</i>	This paragraph is related to socio-economic priorities – but it is not clear how private sector engagement fits into this category. Furthermore, since its inception, most LDCF projects include components to diversity or strengthen livelihoods. Therefore, “have begun” is not accurate. We suggest rephrasing.	No action taken. The portfolio review looked at the project’s logical framework/monitoring tool, for socioeconomic aspects and cross cutting domains that were measured including indicators to measure contributions to socio-economic aspects derived from engagement with the private sector. No action taken. The text says “project documents have begun to capture the socioeconomic dimension of GEF interventions” which does not mean that these components were not included before, but that they are being captured better in project documents and project results frameworks.
45	<i>Table 7: Intervention typologies in LDCs</i>	It would be useful if this data was also aggregated to calculate and show the percentage to each of the three defined intervention areas.	No action taken. We disagree that it would be useful.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
49	<i>Analysis of terminal evaluation ratings from the most recent IEO Annual Performance Report (APR) 2019 database on the cohort analyzed, composed of projects completed between GEF-4 to GEF-6 (i.e., the relevance cohort) and projects completed between 2007 and 2014 (i.e., the sustainability cohort)...</i>	The dataset that is being used here is unclear. Are there two different cohorts? Are the projects used for this section comprised of n=277 for the LDCs as per Figure 11? And does this represent the completed projects between GEF-4 to GEF-6, or completed projects between 2007 and 2014?	Text has been edited to clarify cohorts in paragraph 7.
49	<i>... shows that projects in LDCs significantly underperformed when compared with the overall GEF portfolio on all dimensions (Figure 11).</i>	The use of the word “significantly” is misleading here as it implies a statistical testing that does not seem to have taken place. Furthermore, the deviations between the overall portfolio and the LDCs portfolio vary for each of the 6 dimensions, with some visibly smaller and some visibly larger. As per earlier comments - the word “significant” is profusely used throughout this report, largely without statistical testing. This is discussed in later comments as well. We suggest the deletion of the word “significant”, except in circumstances where the relevant statistical testing has been conducted and is being presented.	Changed to considerably. The word “significantly” has been replaced except when used with statistical testing or in reference to biodiversity.
50	<i>Focusing on the two dimensions of interest to this evaluation—project outcomes and likelihood of sustainability—...</i>	Why the focus on these two outcomes only? The other parameters are of great interest. For example, the 74% rate for implementation quality seems particularly striking in the context of the limited capacity (and sometimes-fragility) of LDCs which is discussed elsewhere in this paper.	No action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
50	<i>...this is significantly lower than the rating of 80 percent of projects in the overall GEF portfolio and 83 percent of projects in the Asia region, but similar to the rating of and 73 percent of projects in the Africa region where most LDCs are located</i>	As per earlier comments - unless accompanied by a statistical test of significance, it is advisable to avoid the use of the word “significant” when discussing data. Furthermore, Africa and Asia do not comprise the entirety of the GEF regions, and it seems an odd analysis to compare the overall LDC statistics with the Africa and Asia regions only, just because this is where “most LDCs are located”. It would be more logical to have a comparison of the overall LDC statistics with both the overall GEF cohort statistics as well as each of the regional breakdowns. It would also be useful to see what the numbers of projects for each of those cohorts are, as this would provide a context to the conclusions that are being drawn based on percentages.	The word “significantly” has been replaced except when used with statistical testing or in reference to biodiversity. No action taken. We disagree that it would be more logical. Text has been edited to clarify the number of projects in the cohorts that are not presented in the graph.
50	<i>The statistical test for proportionality for this evaluation indicates that the outcome and sustainability ratings for the two comparators—overall GEF and LDCs—differ in their proportions. The difference between the cohorts is statistically significant: the proportion of projects that are rated satisfactory for outcome and sustainability is higher in the overall GEF portfolio compared to the LDCs’ portfolio (p-value < 0.05).</i>	It would be good to put all details of all statistical testing into the paper or into an Annex, including details of which test was used, why that test was chosen, what assumptions were satisfied, what were the limitations, etc. Statistical conclusions should not be sweepingly made without those accompanying details to provide the necessary context for the reader.	Noted. No action taken. It is not the GEF IEO’s practice to provide such details on statistical testing.
51	<i>In 2008, the IEO concluded that in Madagascar, despite 15 years of donor investment in the country’s environmental program totaling over \$400 million (of which the GEF invested \$36 million), financial and institutional sustainability remained a key weakness at the end of GEF-3.</i>	Does this 2008 data point reference projects that were completed by that time? If so, this data point must be relying on projects from inception and early GEF-phases. This cannot be of relevance to this discussion. We suggest deletion.	No action taken. It is relevant that findings on sustainability from this evaluation confirm evaluative evidence collected by the GEF IEO in the past.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
51	<i>The Madagascar country portfolio evaluation recommended the government and donors diversify investment in the environmental sector to address threats to sustainability (GEF IEO 2008a). More recently, the seventh Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report reporting on GEF portfolios in Eritrea, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania concluded that the likelihood of sustainability is mixed (GEF IEO 2014a).</i>	It is not clear to which of the dimensions of sustainability this refers.	No action taken. The preceding sentence states “financial and institutional sustainability remained a key weakness.”
51	<i>Sustainability has been most successful when pursued through fostering of institutional and individual capacity development and promotion of livelihood activities through community-based approaches, such as those financed by the Small Grants Programme.</i>	An interesting conclusion, but it would be useful to see the evidence base for this statement. It is not clear to which of the dimensions of sustainability this refers. Furthermore, if earlier IEO studies themselves identify the importance of the SGP to sustainability, it is not clear why the SGP is deleted from the cohort of projects being analyzed in this report (if it is indeed being deleted, as there is also confusion over this point as per earlier comments).	The text has been revised to better reflect that this is a conclusion from the Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report cited in this paragraph. The evidence base is in three Country Portfolio Evaluations of Eritrea, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. The conclusion does not focus specifically on individual dimensions of sustainability. No action taken. The evaluation covered the Small GP on an opportunistic basis in case studies.
52	<i>The LDCF provides a sizable portion of the GEF funding for LDCs (32 percent).</i>	Different parts of the report give different numbers to the LDCF portion of GEF LDC funding. This is causing much confusion. In most places, the report says 37% funding came from LDCF.	Has been corrected to be 37 percent for the GEF-4 to GEF-6 period.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
52	<i>The main area of potential concern for the LDCF portfolio is the financial sustainability of project activities beyond the scope of project-related funding. Added to this is the need to integrate climate change adaptation into national policies and programs (institutional sustainability), and the need for country ownership to ensure sustainability (sociopolitical sustainability).</i>	This is the first time in the paper that the dimensions of sustainability as defined by the IEO are being mentioned. As such, it would be useful to preface this paragraph with those definitions – in fact, these definitions should come high up in this sustainability chapter. Furthermore, please note that while Paragraph 66 outlines four dimensions - financial, institutional, sociopolitical, and environmental – only three are used in this paragraph.	No action taken. The four dimensions from the terminal evaluation guidelines are introduced in section 3.3, paragraph 66 for the discussion of APR 2019 database. No action taken. As stated in the preceding sentence in the paragraph this is a conclusion from the 2016 LDCF program evaluation. The program evaluation did not have a conclusion on environmental sustainability.
53	<i>Performance has improved in projects completed more recently. Ratings in terminal evaluations of completed projects approved in GEF-4 and GEF-5 in LDCs were higher than those for projects completed between 2007 and 2014.</i>	Again, it is not clear what are these project cohorts. If these are indeed two cohorts, it is not clear which of these refer to the “more recent” projects, as the GEF-5 cycle concluded in 2014.	Text has been edited to clarify cohorts in paragraph 7 and 53.
53	<i>This finding is consistent with recent IEO analyses, according to which projects in LDCs, Africa, SIDS, and FCVs are less apt to be rated in the likely range for outcome sustainability than other projects but have improved significantly from GEF-3 onward.</i>	This can be misleading – these projects may not be “less apt”, but simply just often less rated as such. We suggest rewording.	Text has been reworded.
54	<i>Table 8: Outcome and sustainability rating by focal area in LDCs</i>	Paragraph 50 above states: “It is useful to note here that satisfactory outcomes and their likely sustainability have been found to be statistically correlated”. It would be useful to discuss the data presented in this table with respect to that observation. Secondly, some of the project numbers in these sub-categories may too small to come to any conclusions on either outcomes or sustainability.	No action taken. We do not think it would be useful to conduct statistical testing by focal area.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
55	<i>Figure 12: APR ratings of national versus regional projects in LDCs</i>	As in an earlier comment, there are other dimensions to this data that stand out and should be discussed, such as the implementation quality rating which is remarkably high.	No action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper.
56	<i>In country case studies conducted by the African Biomes and SIDS SCCEs postcompletion sustainability of outcomes for 7 out of the 10 field-verified regional projects was assessed in the likely range. In four cases, the sustainability ratings went from negative at completion to positive at postcompletion (table 9).</i>	This finding should be made more apparent in the executive summary and elsewhere, as it relates strongly to the objective of the evaluation. Furthermore, a greater emphasis both here and throughout the report on these post-completion studies would be very useful, as these findings are additional to the APR data – data that is already well known and well discussed.	No action taken. Although this is an interesting finding it did not lead to a conclusion and does not warrant being highlighted in the executive summary. No action taken. APR 2019 data has been highlighted based on GEF SEC comments on the SIDS SCCE to include data from more recently completed projects and programs in the evaluation.
57	<i>The higher postcompletion rating is based on partner engagement toward development of proposed activities and replication projects; however, there is a risk that the process could be negatively affected without further funding.</i>	It is not clear to which projects and countries this statement refers.	Has been clarified in the text.
58	<i>The impact of GEF support may occur immediately as a result of project activities, but often takes years or even decades to emerge after the project is completed.</i>	The meaning of “impact” is not clear here. Project activities themselves may not directly and immediately lead to “impact”, which can be the result of multiple activities and interventions, some exogenous to the project. “By analyzing how GEF support contributes to progress toward impact” as used later on in this paragraph sounds like more appropriate wording.	No action taken. The language used to describe impact is in line with language the GEF IEO has been using since OPS5 as cited in the paragraph.
60	<i>Overall, completed projects in LDCs showed lower broader adoption rates than those of the overall GEF portfolio analyzed as part of the APR 2017.</i>	As per earlier comments, the LDC cohort(s) being used continues to be a source of great confusion. Is this paragraph now referring to the LDC component of the 53 projects used for analysis in the 2017 APR as referenced in paragraph 29? Or is this the LDC completed projects between 2007-2014? Or is it the LDC completed projects from GEF-4 to GEF-6? Furthermore, in whichever cohort is relevant, what exactly is the number of projects of the sample?	The text has been edited to clarify that it is 123 projects in the sustainability cohort.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
60	<i>Over 74 percent of projects reviewed in LDCs for sustainability found no actions were taking place during implementation to stimulate broader adoption of project outcomes postcompletion.</i>	The methodology for the analysis in this paragraph is not clear. Exactly how is “broader adoption” along the lines of Box 1 being assessed? Earlier IEO reports (such as GEF/ME/C.54/01, here) clearly state that “<i>Projects in LDCs, global projects, and the climate change and biodiversity focal areas, show a statistically significant improvement in sustainability ratings between GEF-2 and GEF-3 and onwards</i>”. The discussion in this paragraph would benefit from an analysis that shows these improvements over time. These percentages must be given a context vis-à-vis other international organizations that provide funds to LDCs. Earlier IEO reports that discuss sustainability (GEF/ME/C.54/01, here) state “<i>The percentage of GEF completed projects with a likelihood of sustainability at project completion is comparable with other multilateral organizations.</i>” Is this also true for the LDCs subset? Furthermore, some project-level examples of “broader adoption” would be very useful.	Text has been added to clarify the methodology used. Noted and no action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper. The SCCE did not aim to repeat the same statistical analysis and comparisons with other international organizations as the Special Focus Sustainability Study in APR 2017. Noted and no action taken.
60	<i>Figure 13: Evidence of broader adoption having taken place during project implementation</i>	The related paragraph 60 that discusses this data refers to the APR2017 data as a comparison point. Therefore, this Figure should be amended to include those numbers for each of the dimensions of “broader adoption”. This Figure needs to be enlarged so that the orange bars show properly – it takes a moment to understand why some sections have three numbers but only two bars.	Noted. No action taken. Figure 13 has been enlarged.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
61	<i>The likelihood of broader adoption taking place after project completion increases when it is planned for in the project design and implementation—such as in the detailed design of follow-up activities, or the establishment of governance structures or financing windows. In LDCs, such activities translate into concrete sustaining, mainstreaming, replication, and scaling-up initiatives being implemented in only 12 to 20 percent of the projects reviewed (Figure 14).</i>	This paragraph is contradicting itself – it states that broader adoption is more likely to take place when it is planned for, but then states that the planned-for activities have translated into broader adoption in LDCs in only 12-20% of the reviewed projects. Also, see comment below on Figure 14.	The text has been edited.
61	<i>Figure 14: Likelihood of broader adoption taking place postcompletion</i>	The Figure 14 is extremely confusing. How does this show these initiatives “being implemented” as stated in paragraph 61? This Figure seems just to show what the legend says – the percentage of projects that design follow-on interventions to various degrees. This says nothing about the translation of those designs into implementation of initiatives.	Figure 14 has been enlarged.
62	<i>Sustainability of outcomes is often achieved over time.</i>	This very important point should be emphasized more clearly in the executive summary. Furthermore, as in a comment of paragraph 56 above, a greater emphasis on these post-completion studies both here and throughout the report would be very useful, as these findings are additional to the APR data – data that is already well known and well discussed.	No action taken. It is highlighted in paragraph 10 of the executive summary and as a conclusion in paragraph 119.
66-69	<u>66 - Financial sustainability is rated lower than other dimensions of sustainability in LDCs...</u> <i>69 - The likelihood of institutional sustainability emerged as the most prominent sustainability dimension in</i>	More elements of context would help to understand the message in these multiple paragraphs. Without any analysis, it is not surprising that financial sustainability is challenging in LDCs – because they are LDC (meaning low income and therefore less budgets for institutions). They compensate (para 69) by focusing on capacity rather financing for sustainability.	No action taken. The context of LDCs is provided in paras 11-21.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
	<i>LDCs, with 77 percent of project so rated.</i>		
66	<i>Findings are then compared with projects in LDCs that were completed between 2007 and 2014 and are part of the APR 2019.</i>	As in many previous comments, the different cohorts used for analysis throughout this report are a source of much confusion. This cohort is particularly difficult to understand.	Text has been edited to clarify cohorts in paragraph 7. Please see paragraph 67 for further details on these cohorts.
67	<i>Regional subsets of these are completed projects in LDCs in Africa and Asia.</i>	As per earlier comments – (i) Africa and Asia do not comprise the entirety of GEF regions and it is not clear why these have been singled out, and (ii) it would be useful to see what are the numbers of projects for each of the 4 regional cohorts, as this would provide a context to the conclusions that are being drawn based on percentages.	Please see response for paragraph 50.
70	<i>By region, financial sustainability varies widely, from 54 percent in LDCs in Africa to 84 percent in LDCs in Asia, the latter being higher than the overall GEF cohort.</i>	As per the comment above – (i) Africa and Asia do not comprise the entirety of GEF regions and it is not clear why these have been singled out, and (ii) it would be useful to see what are the numbers of projects for each of the 4 regional cohorts, as this would provide a context to the conclusions that are being drawn based on percentages. What are the numbers of projects for these regions? Also, it would be useful to see the details of the 4 sustainability dimensions for these regional subsets. Perhaps a graph similar to Figure 15 would be a helpful addition.	Please see response for paragraph 50. Noted. No action taken. Adding additional figures as suggest would not be helpful and would overburden the report with figures.
70	<i>The statistical test for proportionality was conducted on the four sustainability dimensions—financial, institutional, sociopolitical, and environmental—for the two cohorts overall GEF and LDCs.</i>	It would be useful to put the statistical details and results of these tests into an Annex.	No action taken. It is not the GEF IEO's practice to provide such details on statistical testing.
72	<i>Analysis of the terminal evaluations of projects completed between 2007 and 2014 in the sustainability cohort identified...</i>	Is the material and discussion in this paragraph for the overall portfolio, or for an LDC subset only? We suggest the material of this paragraph can also be summarized into a table or a figure.	No action taken. As stated in the text, the analyses discussed is of LDC projects in the sustainability cohort. Also, presenting the material in a table as suggest would overburden the report with tables.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
73	<i>The predominant context-related factor contributing to likelihood of outcome sustainability in LDC projects is “national government support” (35 percent); “links to previous/current related initiatives” was also frequently cited (18 percent)...</i>	These categories discussed in this paragraph do not match with, and are not referenced in, Table 10 below. We suggest the material of this paragraph can also be summarized into a table or a figure.	No action taken. The last sentence in the paragraph pertains to case studies and table 10. Also summarizing the material in a table or a figure as suggest would overburden the report with tables/figures.
73	<i>Table 10: Factors hindering sustainability observed in country case studies</i>	It is not clear to which dimension of sustainability this Table refers. Is it to sustainability of outcomes? Furthermore, on the element of “ <i>Flaws in the projects’ theory of change/poor design</i> ”, please note that <u>poor design</u> is the main issue that needs to be addressed. There is no GEF policy requiring a mandatory Theory of Change. Has a specific analysis been conducted on the correlation of inclusion of a ToC visual and/or text section and strength of design of projects? If not, and given some agencies use Theories of Change while other do not, highlighting Theory of Change in this paragraph and in Table 10 may be confusing and misleading.	No action taken. The table refers to all dimensions of sustainability. This analysis was based on early work presented in the APR 2017 where flaws in the project’s theory of change was identified as a contributing factor to outcomes not being sustained.
83	<i>The review of design documents of GEF 4 to GEF 6 projects in LDCs including projects completed between 2007 and 2014 (n = 621) indicates that 85 percent of projects included risk considerations, in compliance with GEF requirements.</i>	Is this figure correct? 621 seems a high number for LDC projects completed between 2007 and 2014.	Text revised to stress that the figure n = 621, includes projects completed between 2007 and 2014.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
85	<i>Little consideration is given at the project design stage to the influences that synergies and trade-offs between socioeconomic and environmental objectives have on prospects for sustainability.</i>	This is a very complex and involved statement, and it is not clear what is trying to be assessed and achieved here. Can there be some more explanation for the sake of clarity? Furthermore, the evidence for this claim as discussed in the paragraph 85 should be set against whether these “tradeoffs and synergies” were required in PIFs and project documents. If we did not explicitly require this, Agencies would not have necessarily provided, focusing instead on other explicitly requested aspects such as GEBs. The conclusion that “little consideration is given” seems to be an over-reach.	No action taken. It is based on analysis of the data from the portfolio review. Even if not a requirement, some project documentation discusses trade-offs and synergies. Many GEF IEO evaluations have assessed trade-offs and synergies such as OPS6 and the SIDS SCCE.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
85	<i>The review of design documents of 123 projects completed between 2007 and 2014 showed that only 32 percent of projects (39 projects) contained some mention of trade-offs or synergies, or both.</i>	If the methodology here is a word-search for “trade-offs” or “synergies”, then this is <u>not</u> a robust assessment of the consideration given at the design stage to these topics, and we therefore suggest the deletion of this discussion on the numbers and percentages of projects that “mention” these words.	No action taken. This was part of the project review protocol and was not just a word-search, but an assessment of trade-offs and synergies based on definitions. <u>Definitions in the portfolio review template:</u> - Trade-off expresses the idea that “when some things are gained, others are lost”. it is the notion that it is not possible to maximize benefits in two or more sectors at the same time. Trade-offs can be between sector objectives, between environmental and socioeconomic outcomes, between geographic locations, and between global and local benefits, in addition to temporal trade-offs between short-term and long-term benefits. - Synergy refers to multiple benefits that are achieved either simultaneously through a single intervention, or through the interaction of outcomes of at least two interventions. Synergy is also used to refer to the benefits achieved by a project or program in more than one sector.
85	<i>...30 projects focused on project-level synergies such as those with other projects and programs, cost-effectiveness and financial synergies, or synergies among GEF focal areas.</i>	This discussion on types of synergies is useful in its own right, but does not fit in to the (confusing) focus in this section on “Synergies and Tradeoffs between Environmental and Developmental Objectives on Sustainability”. As per an earlier comment, there needs to be more explanation as to what is being sought with this objective.	No action taken. See response above.
91	<i>To assess the extent to which gender has been taken into consideration in GEF programming in LDCs, the evaluation</i>	The cohorts being used for analysis in different parts of the report continue to be a source of great confusion.	Text has been edited to clarify cohorts in paragraph 7.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
	<i>completed a quality-at-entry review of design documents of both the relevance and the sustainability cohorts (n = 621).</i>		
94	<i>No evidence of women being considered or consulted at design emerged from the project documentation reviewed.</i>	We suggest the rewording of “no evidence” to “no explicit evidence in project documentation”. Project documentation cannot completely capture the extent of consideration or consultation.	“Explicit” has been added to the text.
97	<i>Promoting climate resilience is a key aspect in LDCs as demonstrated by the large number of adaptation interventions and the considerable amount of LDCF/SCCF funding in LDCs.</i>	It is a source of confusion that the report varies in referring to LDCF/SCCF funding in LDCs relative to GEF TF funding as both “large” and “small” in different parts of the report.	Noted. No action taken. LDCF/SCCF is part of GEF support and accounts for a growing share of the GEF portfolio in LDCs.
98	<i>Resilience is addressed in climate change adaptation projects mostly in the form of climate risk management and as a benefit.</i>	We suggest rephrasing this sentence for greater clarity. It would be useful to be more specific as to what is meant here by “mostly”; if “resilience” in this sentence is referring to climate or non-climatic stresses; and clarify the meaning of “as a benefit” here.	The text has been edited to clarify.
98	<i>While all climate change adaptation projects financed by LDCF/SCCF and the GEF Trust Fund Strategic Priority for Adaptation included resilience considerations, only 37 percent of nonclimate change adaptation projects showed some evidence of resilience considerations.</i>	Please make clear the sample and number of projects to which this percentage refers.	Text has been edited to clarify cohorts.
99	<i>In the 37 percent of nonclimate change adaptation projects that showed some evidence of resilience considerations identified in the first step of the analysis...</i>	As in the above comment, please make clear the sample and number of projects to which this percentage refers.	Text has been edited to clarify the number of projects.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions taken
99	<i>None of these projects showed transformative change. Only two of all the projects reviewed showed resilience as transformative change.</i>	These two statements are contradictory. Is it none, or is it two? Furthermore, how is a project being judged to “show transformative change”? This is a complex subject to which much thinking has been and continues to be devoted. Therefore, it would be very useful to understand the methodology being used to come to these conclusions.	Text has been edited to clarify.
105	<i>A possible explanation is that the GEF has been risk adverse, and most of the projects implemented in fragile countries are in nonfragile areas in those countries.</i>	Please delete the first part of this statement that “A possible explanation is that the GEF has been risk adverse”. This is a sweeping statement with no grounding in evidence. It will be sufficient to say, “A possible explanation is that most of the projects implemented in fragile countries are in nonfragile areas in those countries.”	This sentence has been deleted.
110	<i>The private sector had limited involvement in GEF projects in LDCs; when involved, it contributed to sustainability...</i>	It would be good to remind the reader of the number of projects being reviewed here, so that the percentages discussed in this paragraph can be put into perspective. The role of the private sector to contribute to effectiveness, and the role of the private sector as a co-financier, are two different (though related) matters. This paragraph is confusing both issues which should be addressed separately.	Text edited to reflect the cohort and number of projects assessed.
113	<i>GEF support to LDCs has increased consistently since the pilot phase.</i>	As per earlier comments, this paragraph (and report) should also reference the special STAR floors for LDCs which were introduced in GEF-6.	Text has been added to paragraph 26 of the full report.
113	<i>During the shortfall in GEF-6, an effort was made to ensure that LDCs were sufficiently funded.</i>	As per earlier comments, the “shortfall in GEF-6” will not be understood by a wider audience and should be explained.	The “shortfall in GEF-6” has been clarified in the text.
113	<i>Just over 60 percent of the funding comes from the GEF Trust Fund, and <u>37 percent from the LDCF.</u></i>	Para 52 indicates 32 percent comes from LDCF.	Percentages have been corrected.
113	<i>Amounts for GEF-7 show continued strong support to LDCs having reached \$295.8 million.</i>	As per earlier comments, the GEF-7 data is on commitment to date, not on allocation, which can therefore be misleading given that this evaluation was conducted at an early stage of	“Commitment to date” has been added to the text in paragraphs 113 and 26.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
		the GEF-7 period. Please clarify the statement with the necessary caveat.	
116	<i>The expansion of GEF Agencies has led to more options for most LDCs.</i>	This summary statement does not say much, and can be reworded to emphasize that, due to the expansion, LDCs are indeed working with a more diverse set of agencies than in the past.	No action taken.
117	<i>Analysis of the most recent APR available data from the 2019 cohort shows that completed projects in LDCs are rated lower than the overall GEF portfolio on all performance indicators...</i>	As per earlier comments in the sustainability section from whence this conclusion comes, these LDC findings in this entire paragraph 117 need to be put into the context of (i) improvements over time as discussed in earlier IEO reports (such as GEF/ME/C.54/01, here), and (ii) vis-à-vis other international organizations that provide funds to LDCs.	No action taken. Analysis to support this conclusion has been done in the sustainability section.
117	<i>Additionally, projects in LDCs have tended to have lower ratings, more recently completed projects have higher ratings than those completed between 2007 and 2014.</i>	Possible typo – there may be a “while” missing after “Additionally”.	“While” has been added to the text.
119	<i>Demonstrating sustainability takes time...</i>	As per an earlier comment, this very important point should be emphasized more clearly. Perhaps this paragraph can be placed higher up in this “Conclusions” section on sustainability. This point should also be made more clearly in the executive summary. As per earlier comments, a greater emphasis on the post-completion studies both here and throughout the report would be very useful, as these findings are additional to the APR data – data that is already well known and well discussed.	No action taken. See responses to earlier comments for paragraph 62.
120	<i>Financial sustainability is a challenge in most LDCs...</i>	A Table that shows the numbers of projects for this analysis (total, LDCs, by region etc.) would be really useful in order to give some context to these percentages.	No action taken.
123	<i>Promoting <u>climate resilience</u> is a key aspect in LDCs as demonstrated by the large number of adaptation</i>	We suggest also referring to effort to build resilience to other (non-climactic) shocks and stresses.	No action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper.

Paragraph	Referenced text	Comments	Reply and responding actions take
	<i>interventions and the considerable amount of LDCF/SCCF funding in LDCs.</i>		
123	<i>While all climate change adaptation projects financed by the LDCF/SCCF and the GEF Trust Fund <u>Strategic Priority for Adaptation</u> included <u>resilience considerations</u>, only 37 percent of nonclimate change adaptation projects showed some evidence of <u>resilience considerations</u>.</i>	It would be useful to clarify if “resilience considerations” here is referring to resilience to climate risks, other non-climactic shocks, or both.	The text has been revised to “climate resilience considerations.”
125	<i>The LDC SCCE does not present final recommendations. In light of the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have limited the opportunity for discussion of the conclusions of evaluations, the findings and recommendations from this evaluation will be discussed with various stakeholders and included as part of the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7).</i>	As discussed in an earlier comment, it would be good to articulate in more detail what these “discussions with various stakeholders” will entail, and the extent to which the GEF Secretariat will be a part of those discussions. To this end, it would be useful for the Secretariat to see any draft recommendations that may have already been formulated.	Noted. Draft proposed recommendations will be discussed with the GEF Secretariat.
Annex 2		Some explanation would be beneficial to understand the selection of projects and why key or flagship programs are lacking (R2R, PAS, CTI, for instance in the Pacific).	No action taken. The scope of the evaluation was defined in the approach paper. The country selection process is further explained in paragraph 6 of the full report and the cited “Selection of Case Study Countries.”