

Third Joint GEF-UNDP Small Grants Programme Evaluation audit trail, 2021

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1	Overall comment on Methodology	1) we understand the limitations regarding any field visits or the extent of outreach to key actors due to the Pandemic. However, some of the conclusions seemed to be based only on desk reviews (of documents, minutes, etc.) and the evaluators seemed to have lost an opportunity to enquire, interview and follow-up with key respondents, such as GEF Sec staff (particularly with the Program Manager and PPO Director who Chairs the SGP Steering Committee). This could have helped validate or triangulate some of the findings. 2) Similarly given that the Upgrading process and its effects on Upgraded Country Programmes (UCP) as well as the recommendations on the Upgrading Policy were such a big focus of the evaluation, it would have been important to interview all or the majority of the (15) UCP National Coordinators before arriving at some conclusions about the benefits or challenges of upgrading. 3) The Evaluation could have benefited from having a reference group (composed by key stakeholders in addition to staff from the evaluation offices of both GEF and UNDP), following the practice of other evaluations such as the one on the GEF Policies. This could have allowed for early corrections of factual errors or considerations of other relevant sources that could have provided additional information and benefited the early findings and recommendations.	1. As cited in the limitation “The evaluation tried to mitigate these challenges as much as possible. The global survey was strengthened by translating the questionnaire into four languages¹ and following up with the survey recipients to increase the response rate. Case study countries were increased from five, as envisioned in the approach paper, to eight. The evaluation developed a detailed country case study methodology (annex 6) to facilitate the process. National evaluation experts were engaged in conducting these studies to ensure that the country context was taken into extensive consideration. Also, several meetings between the global evaluation team and the national evaluators were held to triangulate findings and aggregate evidence. 2. As cited in the report in addition to the case studies, the evaluation included “...17 mid-term and terminal evaluations of all 16 UCPs.” 3. The evaluation was supported by the evaluation steering committee, comprised of senior GEF and UNDP staff from the IEOs. The evaluation was also supported by two independent external reviewers. All data was checked and triangulated, and preliminary findings were presented to CPMT. Wherever necessary, information was factually checked with the GEF Secretariat, particularly as regards accuracy of financial data.
2	Overall comment on Definitions	It would be helpful if a clear distinction can be made amongst “programme, projects, grants, subprojects” and that consistency is ensured in the use of these terms throughout the document to avoid confusion – for example, Core SGP programme, full-sized or medium-sized projects for upgraded countries, grants to CSOs/CBOs and subprojects in countries. Perhaps a list of definitions of these terms can accompany the report.	Definitions have been added in paragraph 4 and use of terms have been clarified throughout the document.

¹ The English survey was translated into French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

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3	Overall comment on Analysis	An analysis of the cost structure of the Programme, such as the one done in 2008, and a comparison of those costs with other similar programs would have been a useful addition to this report, particularly in the context of the ensuing discussion on “Grants versus Non-Grants”.	A table has been added providing the different cost categories in the “grant vs non-grant” section.
4	4	<i>“Overall strategic and programming directions, supervision, and technical support are provided by a Central Programme Management Team (CPMT) based in New York.”</i> Please note that strategic directions are given, first by the GEF Council and then by the Steering Committee of the SGP, chaired by the GEF Secretariat. It would be helpful if this paragraph includes this point.	Clarification in line with the comments has been added to the text.
5	6	<i>“The SGP global programme is funded by core funding agreed by the GEF replenishment for each replenishment period.”</i> Please note that, in addition to core, countries under the global programme can also access part of their STAR (up to 10% and no more than 2 million) to complement their allocated amount from the core. It would be useful for this paragraph to clarify this point.	This has been added in the text.
6	5	This paragraph refers to <i>“40 LDCs, 37 SIDS, and several fragile situations”</i> . In this paragraph or in a footnote, it could be useful to identify it could be useful to identify how many are both LDCs and SIDS, and also to name the countries that are in "fragile situations".	A reference has been added to table 7 which nuanced the countries into LDC, SIDS and countries with fragile situations. The reference for the classifications are cited in the notes for table 7.
7	13	There is mention here of this study <i>“not conducting an in-depth aggregation of country results”</i> . Why not? The data seems to have already been gathered for the study, and it would be an interesting analytical addition to the study.	As noted in the approach paper prepared for this evaluation, the focus of this evaluation is placed on strategic issues that have arisen since the 2015 evaluation of the SGP, and the rigorous examination of evidence from the thousands of small grants would have required logistical arrangements that were not feasible in a pandemic context.
8	14	This paragraph mentions the <i>“sampling of 22 country strategies”</i> . Why this number, and how were the case studies chosen? The Annex may have the explanations, so perhaps it might be useful to reference the Annex here and footnote the explanation. Similarly, there is mention of <i>“193 interviews at the global and country level”</i> – what was the distribution of these interviews among the Partnership and key SGP stakeholders at the global and country levels? Again, if the Annex has the answers, it might be useful to reference the Annex here and footnote the explanation.	This has been edited in the text and footnotes have been added. List of interviewees are available in annex 9.
9	37	<i>“While the lack of an encompassing vision statement for the SGP may have little bearing on operational efficiency at country level, it has an impact on decision making at high levels within the SGP. A case in point has been the ongoing discussion in the GEF and UNDP about the cost of managing the SGP, and the categorization by the GEF Secretariat of SGP expenditures as “grant” or “non-grant” elements (section 4.3), which illustrates a lack of consensus on the SGP’s overall long-term vision. ”</i> This statement may be misleading in terms of the causality that it describes: Regardless of whether there is an agreed vision statement or not, the categorization of grants to non-grants is as simple as this: grants are any expenses that are not directly executed by the CSOs/CBOs on the ground in the form of grants. This has nothing to do with the vision for SGP, it is an accounting/budgeting issue.	The view of the evaluation is that the issue of accounting, actually originates in a misunderstanding of how the SGP is supposed to operate. It is clear that the two parties in this debate have diverging views as to what is considered a legitimate expense. If this was merely an accounting issue, the GEF would have been using the same methodology for accounting project management costs as it uses for the rest of its portfolio.
10	42, Table 4	The associated Table 4 is quite confusing and would benefit from some further explanations in the accompanying text.	Text has been added and the table has been clarified.

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11	43	The numbers cited in the text of this paragraph need to be reflected in the table that follows. The numbers do not match up. It should be 127 in GEF-7. If there were 110 countries under the core/global programme at beginning of GEF-7 and 4 have joined (and are benefiting from GEF-7 core resources) and Malaysia has transitioned to UCP and Pakistan and Thailand will not have full-sized projects in GEF7, then there are 113 countries that are not upgraded and benefiting from core (and STAR in some cases) and 14 UCPs that are benefiting from STAR. To be more precise, there are 129 SGP active countries currently: 113 countries are supported by the <i>core</i> allocation under the SGP Global Programme, and 16 are SGP upgraded country programmes (UCP) financed solely by allocations from the respective countries' STAR. This is because Malaysia is in the process of transitioning to UCP, while Angola, Bangladesh, Eswatini and Gabon joined as new country programmes under the SGP core/ Global Programme in GEF-7. Pakistan and Thailand are UCPs that have not received any STAR funding in GEF7.	The evaluation team has checked the figures, however, please note that the cutoff date for this evaluation is February 2020. In GEF-6, the GCP had 115 countries. While implementing OP6, 5 country programs closed, which is reflected now in OP7 with 110 country programs.
12	43 and 44 Table 5	It is not clear how the “Pure STAR Allocations” have been calculated. In table 5, is the column Total SGP funding envelope in an Upgraded Scenario for OP 5,6 and 7 (A) calculated as the allowed cap from countries’ STAR allocation, or the actual contributed STAR resource by countries in full-sized or medium-sized projects? Clarifications on this point, and explanations in the text, would be useful.	Table and text have been edited to clarify.
13	48	This paragraph makes vague reference to the GEF-6 funding shortfall in a less than complete way: <i>“funding shortfalls within the GEF might lead to deprioritizing for funding the SGP full-size project, as was seen in India's case where their OP6 project identification form had to be resubmitted in OP7. This is in contrast with the global country programme, where the GEF core funds are allocated at the onset of a GEF period.”</i> It should be pointed out that the GEF-6 funding shortfall was a unique set of circumstances, and that the GEF Council took a decision on how to handle it at the 51st Council, encapsulated in the Council document linked below. There was no active “deprioritization” of funding SGP projects as is implied by this paragraph. Furthermore, in the specific example of India given in this paragraph, it should be checked whether or not India decided to prioritize its resources differently. We suggest clarification and rewording accordingly. https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF%20C%2051%2004_Update_on_GEF-6_Resource_Availability.pdf	Details have been added on the GEF-6 funding shortfall and the Council decision.
14	51	The report states that: <i>“Upgrading is a learning-by-doing process for countries, without enough support for the transition in project design and implementation arrangement.”</i> It however omits explicit mention of the responsibility of the Implementing Agency in helping with the design of the project and ensuring efficiency in the process.	Description of efforts of all stakeholder to redress the challenges from OP5 onwards have been added.
15	53	See the general comment on the methodology above. The conclusions in this paragraph on upgrading are strong, and yet the number of countries where this happened is 4 out of the 15. It would be more accurate to say that the upgrading process has caused some level of confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of actors in <u>some</u> UCPs.	This para has been edited for clarity.

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16	58	This paragraph states that <i>“upgrading leads to more global environmental benefits being generated in the global programme countries unless each country that upgrades is replaced with a country generating similar levels of global environmental benefits, which is improbable in the first years because of the setup costs and the need for CSOs to learn how to engage with the SGP.”</i> However, it is unclear that upgrading was hypothesized to lead to more global environmental benefits in <u>global</u> programme countries – rather, it seems from other parts of the report that upgrading was hypothesized to lead to more global environmental benefits in the <u>overall</u> program (global plus upgraded) as it then allowed the channeling of STAR funds into the SGP program via the upgraded countries that, by definition of upgrading, possessed an assumed increased capacity to generate GEBs. We therefore suggest the rephrasing of this paragraph.	Further details have been added in this paragraph to explain the hypothetical link between upgrading and GEBs. The evaluation did not conduct an analysis of GEBs being generated in either the GCP or UCPs, however, the evaluation deduced that more GEBs in either UCPs or GCPs is unlikely.
17	60, Figure 3	The scale used in Figure 3 is misleading, as it puts the focus only on the disparities whereas the main point here is that all responses are between 4 and 4.5 on a six-point scale. With a scale of 1-6, the noticeable part of this graph is the emphasis on the "in favor" categories of 3 and above. We suggest that either the x-axis be redone to include the categories 1-6, or that the explanation be amended to describe that all the responses per region were favorable to upgrading. Relatedly, it would also be useful to state the exact categories of the answers to accompany the Figure, perhaps in a footnote.	The text has been edited and a note has been added to the figure regarding the x-axis.
18	60, Figures 4 and 5	For these Figures, it would be helpful to include the details on the rating range and meaning of ratings in both of these Figures (is it just, the number of respondents that selected the option?)	Clarification added in the notes for all figures.
19	61	This statement that <i>“Because the fiscal context of the SGP has changed and is subject to change, the policy and criteria for upgrading are inadequate”</i> and the accompanying paragraph are wide-ranging and address many points, including elements not discussed earlier such as the fiscal context of the SGP. It would be helpful to clarify what is meant by the “fiscal context”.	A footnote has been added defining fiscal context.
20	62	<i>“To our knowledge, the criteria for upgrading have not yet been improved, although UNDP and GEF report they were internally discussed at the start of OP6”</i> . This is factually incorrect, as UNDP and GEF have discussed the issue of upgrading in numerous occasions and have deliberately decided to postpone the decision to change the upgrading criteria for GEF-8, until more evidence and a better assessment about the effects of upgrading is considered. We suggest that this text be revised to reflect that fact.	Reference to the internal discussions has been added as well as in the footnote.
21	66	This paragraph speaks of “effectiveness” in the context of “volume of projects” and “grants disbursed”. Firstly, it is uncertain as to whether or not these constitute “effectiveness”. Secondly, the earlier paragraph 65 defines 4 categories of effectiveness on which this analysis will focus, and none of these include volume of projects or grants disbursed. Thirdly, none of the this section discusses or presents data on disbursement.	Some details of results reported have been added below in paras 76 to 79.
22	67	In this paragraph and in the associated Table 7, it is odd to use percentages to refer to number of countries – it may be better to simply use the numbers. For example, the statement <i>“The number of participating LDCs has increased from 44 percent in 2007 to 68 percent in 2020”</i> is much more easily understood by simply stating that the number of LDCs increased from 37 countries in 2007 to 85 countries in 2020.	Text has been edited to reflect numbers of countries.
23	68, Table 7	There is a portion of text in the footnote to this Table that seems misplaced, and perhaps is intended to be a paragraph that refers to Table 8: <i>“The portfolio analysis reveals that, as has been the case since the beginning of the SGP, the majority of grants went to projects in the biodiversity focal area, although this trend is decreasing to the benefit of the mitigation and land degradation areas. The chemicals and waste, climate change adaptation, and international waters focal areas are those that mobilize the least amount of funding, historically.”</i>	Has been edited in the text.

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24	70	<i>“The GEF monitors only results and indicators related to GEBs, and largely classifies the other types of results as “cobenefits.” As a result, the GEF reporting system does not provide enough nuance to allow for a full consideration of the scope of SGP ‘s results.”</i> This statement may fuel the (inaccurate) notion that the GEF does not look at broader results at the project level. The GEF uses a set of Core Indicators to report on key priority results areas across the Partnership. Separate to this, it considers the full results framework during project design and the various indicators used to assess progress to project objective. The GEF also conducts results analyses that focus on more than the Core Indicators. Two publicly available examples are available in the SGP section of the 2019 monitoring report and the IAP analysis in the 2020 edition. We suggest that this paragraph be edited accordingly to reflect these facts.	A few more sentences have been added on results generated by SGP in terms of GEBs (paras 76-79).
25	72	In this paragraph (and elsewhere) the evaluation reports results data as if they were direct outputs and outcomes, whereas the SGP stresses in many instances that these are indirect, “influenced” results. This is an important distinction that should be highlighted clearly in this paragraph.	Noted in this paragraph.
26	76	The footnote 23 to this paragraph states <i>“This sharp increase could partly be due to the lack of field level validation.”</i> This seems to be a very vague assumption to make. We suggest removal.	This has been deleted.
27	77	<i>“Since the upgrading started in GEF-5, there is a total of 34 projects, amounting to \$126.19 million in grants and \$194.31 million in cofinancing, in the portfolio of upgraded country programmes as of December 2020.”</i> This can be misleading as the term “projects” here is referring to the number of PIFs/CEO Endorsements approved, and in other sections the term “projects” refers to the grants. As stated in an overall comment above, we recommend using the proper terminology and distinctions amongst “projects”, “grants”, and “programme”.	Changed “projects” to “full-size and medium-size projects.” Definitions were clarified in the introduction and throughout the document.
28	78	<i>“Among the 16 upgraded countries, the top three countries with the largest amount of GEF grants are Mexico (\$15.04 million), Kenya (\$12.4 million), and Bolivia (\$10.78 million); each of them has three UCPs.”</i> This statement is confusing. What does <i>“each of them has three UCPs”</i> mean? Does this mean that these countries, being an UCP, have benefitted from the programme through STAR, in three GEF cycles? We suggest clarification accordingly.	Edited in the text.
29	80	It might be useful to add into this paragraph that this large percentage of MFAs is in line with the overall trend of the GEF portfolio towards an increasing share of MFAs.	Added.
30	89	The Egypt example may be misleading, as GEF resources do not need to, nor are expected to, cover the full area of a country for them to be relevant in meeting program objectives.	Clarified.
31	92	The use of the term <i>“reinvention”</i> implies that there was once a lasting definition of what the SGP is and what it can do. The fact is that the SGP evolves over time, and this is a sign of its responsiveness to emerging challenges. We suggest rewording accordingly.	Reformulated reinventions to repackaging.
32	100, Figures 9 and 10	As in an earlier comment, it is not immediately clear what the x-axes of many of the charts mean. In these two cases, is it the number of responses for each answer option? It may help to clarify in the text.	X axis has been clarified in a note of all relevant figures.
33	113	The bolded text at the start of the statement: <i>“There is a difference in how the SGP at the country level and UNDP Country Offices each approach and implement gender-related activities”</i> is not actually supported by the discussion in the ensuing paragraph.	The statement has been revised.

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34	127	This paragraph states that “<i>At the global level, SGP governance is not delivering its full potential due to miscommunications and ambiguous responsibilities between the SGP steering committee, GEF Secretariat, and CPMT. The evaluation notes that regardless of the programme status of a country, the linkages and coordination between the SGP and the UNDP’s other programming needs to be reviewed and may require reformulation, so as to better situate the SGP within the scope of UNDP country programming. The SGP provides a useful model for small grant-making that could provide valuable lessons for other areas of UNDP work.</i>” The GEFSEC has played a regulator role through frequent technical exchanges with the CPMT and UNDP teams; these have allowed to articulate and clarify operational modalities and financial management boundaries and enabled decision making in formal Steering Committee meetings. As part of its growing partnerships and impact, the SGP should be seen not only in the context of a closer integration within the UNDP organization, but as an asset for the broad GEF Partnership that would benefit from new and expanded implementation modalities. Furthermore, there is a clear responsibility of governance that is set in GEF policies and anchored in the TORs of the steering committee. We suggest the rewording of this paragraph accordingly.	The paragraph has been significantly revised.
35	134	<i>The classification of SGP expenditures should be based on the commonly accepted GEF definition of management costs, rather than opposing grant and non-grant elements. The non-grant cost for the SGP is defined by the GEF Secretariat as “programme activities, including capacity development and workshops, knowledge management and communication, monitoring and evaluation, technical assistance as well as operational costs and agency fees” (GEF 2020, 19). This is in contrast to the general definition of grant and non-grant instruments in the GEF, where the latter refers to a type of financial instrument such as loans, guarantees, or equity.</i> This may be misleading. There seems to be some confusion between two different definitions, one is the SGP-applied grants vs non-grant expenditures as discussed right before in paragraph 133; the other is the general terms in our GEF financing between grant and non-grant instruments, which is a different issue that refers specifically to GEF funding modalities and is not relevant here. This is also raised in a comment to paragraph 37 above.	The paragraph has been clarified.

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36	134-139 (The Grant versus Non-grant Debate)	<i>“Further analysis of this topic was conducted as part of the 2015 joint evaluation. A technical report noted that the SGP funded both programme management activities (understood as administration and oversight) and programme support interventions (including M&E, capacity development knowledge management, and policy dialogues towards broader adoption). It was these programme support costs that have been referred to as ‘non-grant’ costs (GEF IEO and UNDP IEO 2015).”</i> In the GEFSEC 2018 &2019 Monitoring Reports, we applied this differentiation between grants vs non grant: “Grant resources are defined as the total funds committed and/or disbursed directly to local civil society organizations (CSO) and community-based organizations (CBO). Management costs include salaries of the SGP staff at both country and global levels to provide administrative and operational support to the Programme, including the provision of technical support to grantees, training, knowledge management and communication, workshops and monitoring and evaluation of projects on the ground,” as well as the fees for both UNDP and UNOPS. These two Monitoring Reports found that the so-defined “management” expenditures were more than 31 percent of the total SGP envelope, and the GEF Secretariat asked the SGP CPMT to maximize the ratio of grants to non-grants. Given the conclusion in paragraph 139 that <i>“This evaluation examined new available information and confirms that the findings of the 2008 and 2015 evaluations remain valid, since no change has occurred in the way the SGP is managed. The evaluation also notes that the requirements placed on the SGP by the GEF Council—be they in terms of expansion to new countries, refinement of M&E systems, creation of mechanisms for policy-upscaling and broader adoption, or adoption of new GEF-like programmatic approaches, have increased, while the funding envelope has not followed similar trends (GEF 2011).”</i>, we think our methodology on grant vs non-grant is relevant. The conclusion that the debate of grants vs non-grants had little bearing on the overall effectiveness of the programme may be misleading in terms of the causality that it implies. The purpose of maximizing the amount of funding to grants directly executed by CSOs and CBOs is to have more of those good projects on the ground.	New tables and text have been added highlighting the three different categories of costs.
37	141	This paragraph contains conflicting statements: <i>“Many upgraded countries have reported difficulties in managing the project cycle; they have experienced significant delays and interruptions in programme implementation, and report difficulties in managing the requirements for planning, financial management, reporting, or M&E.”</i> together with: “ <i>“Analysis of available terminal evaluations for the upgraded country programme also showed that 100 percent of the completed UCPs (n = 12) were rated in the satisfactory range for efficiency.”</i>	The paragraph has been edited for clarity.
38	145 & 147	The conclusions about the efficiency of UNOPS as Executing Agency of the Global Programme and several UCPs fail to take into consideration the cost of the executing functions vis a vis other projects. Is 4.6% high or low for the services rendered?	This has been clarified in the text.
39	146	This paragraph states that <i>“In 2020, 10 country audits were planned but were cancelled due to the pandemic”</i> . Perhaps the Evaluation can explicitly identify that as a gap, and state that it would be useful if these audits are conducted as soon as is feasible.	It has been clarified in the text that audits have been postponed.
40	149	This paragraph can benefit from some clarification: the fact that a country defines its level of ambition and pathway before allocating its grants is not a contradiction in any way – rather, the demand for the grants should help meet this target given the criteria set in the call for grant proposals.	The paragraph has been reformulated.
41	152	This paragraph gives the example of a TE prepared before grants were completed – so perhaps the issue is that the TE was prepared too early and therefore that this is not the best example to use here	Text has been added to clarify.
42	169	It is unclear why, as a general principle as is presented in this paragraph, a grant mechanism would attract only low co-financing in itself. This is not “a characteristic of a grant mechanism”, just what the data is showing in this instance.	Text has been edited for clarity.

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43	170	This paragraph refers to the co-financing associated with MICs and HICs. It might be useful to instead present the category that we use in the Secretariat - UMICs and HICs that are not SIDS or LDCs.	The evaluation team is not convinced this would bring added value to the discussion. The nuance categorization used (SIDS, LDC, MIC, HIC) is being retaining.
44	170	This statement “ <i>UCP did not fare well, with 47 percent or 7 countries (out of a total of 15) having a cofinancing ratio lower than a 1:1</i> ” seems to contradict Table 23 below and its associated statements in paragraph 172.	Text has been added to clarify.
45	172	This paragraph states that “ <i>Six out of the nine completed UCPs had the actual cofinancing amount greater than the promised cofinancing (table 23). The average materialized cofinancing ratio for UCPs in OP5 is \$1.5 for every GEF dollar</i> ”, but this seems to contradict the discussion in paragraph 170 which states that UCPs have a co-financing ratio lower than a 1:1.	Text has been added to clarify.
46	174	This paragraph give valuable information, but does not seem quite relevant to the “Additionality” context of this section.	Noted. Please refer to the GEF IEO report on additionality cited in the preceding paragraph.
47	Recommendation 2	This paragraph states that the upgrading policy is designed “strictly as a means for creating fiscal space”. This does not seem to be a correct assertion.	Recommendation has been revised in line with this and other comments.
48	Recommendation 2	This recommendation to the GEF Partership: “ <i>In developing and approving the implementation arrangements for SGP, the GEF Secretariat, Council and Replenishment should consider the impacts of a shrinking SGP funding envelope on the operations of the SGP, the pressures placed on STAR allocations, demands to add new countries to the global programme without concomitant growth in core funding, and the risk of losing the good will and social capital the SGP brings to the GEF as a whole</i> ” - the operationalization of this is not up to the GEF Secretariat, but rather this is up to the donors and the replenishment process. We therefore suggest rewording to reflect this fact.	This recommendation has been edited to provide clarity on roles and responsibilities.
49	Recommendation 7	This recommendation “ <i>The measurement of sustainability in the SGP should be improved to capture the tangible and intangible benefits of the programme</i> ” - is targeted to the CPMT, UNDP, and the GEF, but its operationalization does not fall within the GEF’s purview. We therefore suggest removing the GEF from the list in this recommendation. It may be more appropriate, in fact, to address this recommendation to the GEF IEO, as they are the body that tracks results after project completion.	This has been updated. The evaluation recommends the GEF should work alongside SGP in developing an approach to sustainability and its measurement.
50	Recommendation 9	As also discussed in the extensive comments to paragraphs 134-139 above, irrespective of accounting standards and management costs, the amount of funding that goes directly to CSOs is a metric that should be tracked, monitored and regularly presented to the GEF Council. Further discussions on this matter should not be restricted to the context of an articulation of the future vision of the SGP as stated in this recommendation. It may also be feasible for the replenishment process to set a notional benchmark for this percentage. We suggest the rewording of this recommendation accordingly.	A sentence has been added reflecting the possibility of benchmarking in relation to vision and resources. Note that the evaluation still stresses that misunderstandings on what constitute acceptable levels of programmatic resources, management costs and CSO grants would be more sustainably resolved in the context of an agreement on the overall vision for SGP. As noted in the report, the evaluation concurs with the fact that GEF Council can track and monitor SGP expenditures and that the amount delivered to CSOs should be maximized.

UNDP comments

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1	Page number: 1 Para: 4 Chapter: 2	Type: Factual error “National steering committees (NSCs) provide major substantive contributions to and oversight of their respective SGP country programmes” is rather vague. - Request updating in line with the SGP Operational Guidelines that notes, “The National Steering Committee (NSC) serves as the main decision-making body of the SGP at the country level, and provides overall oversight, guidance and direction to the Country Programme.” - Also add that UNDP RR and GEF OFP are the only institutional members; other members participate in their individual capacities. Related evaluation text: National steering committees (NSCs) provide major substantive contributions to and oversight of their respective SGP country programmes as key governance structure at the country level.	A sentence has been added in this paragraph reflecting this comment.
2	Page number: 1 Para: Footnote 2 Chapter: 2	Type: Factual error - Request changing “programme advisers on the GEF focal areas” to “regional focal point/programme advisers on the GEF focal areas”. - Request changing “UNDP-GEF global coordinator” to “Upgraded Country Programme Global Coordinator”. Related evaluation text: The Central Programme Management Team (CPMT) consists of eight staff including a global manager, a deputy global manager, programme advisers on the GEF focal areas, a programme specialist for knowledge management, a monitoring and evaluation specialist and two programme associates. Together, they provide global supervision and day-to-day programmatic and operational guidance to over 126 countries that are part of the SGP global programme. In the 16 upgraded countries, CPMT is responsible for coordinating knowledge management activities as well as for matters pertaining to the SGP global operational guidelines. It should be noted that upgraded country programmes (UCPs) are managed by a UNDP-GEF global coordinator, who provides oversight by supporting and monitoring implementation and promoting the sharing of lessons learned and best practices among UCPs and between UCPs and the Global Programme, as per GEF/C.54/05/Rev.0, “GEF Small Grants Programme: Implementation Arrangements for GEF7.”	The correction has been made in the footnote.
3	Page number: 2 Para: 4 Chapter: 2	Type: Factual error/political sensitivity Remove/change word ‘Ideally’. According to the SGP Operational Guidelines, all NSCs must have a non-governmental majority. In some exceptional cases, adjustment may be made to the NSC composition, but without compromising the fundamental criterion to	Has been edited in the text.

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		retain the majority proportion of non-governmental members in the NSC. Country governments which do not agree to this rule, either as part of the application process to join the global programme or as part of the Upgrading transition no longer participate in the SGP. Related evaluation text: Ideally, the majority of members should be nongovernmental, respecting the CSO-led nature of the programme.	
4	Page number: 2 Para: Figure 1 Chapter: 2	Type: Factual error For Figure 1, SGP results Model, please change source to ‘SGP M&E Strategy, 2019’.	Source has been corrected.
5	Page number: 3 Para: 6 Chapter: 2	Type: Factual error/political sensitivity - As pointed to the Evaluation during the approach paper discussions in March/April 2020, as well as part of the review of initial findings, this sentence mis-represents the 2009 GEF Council paper on the Upgrading Policy for GEF5 which does not mention at any point that the purpose of Upgrading is “to continue to expand and to serve low-income countries”. Language referring to focus on “low-income countries” for SGP core funds was inadvertently introduced into the GEF-7 paper on Implementation Arrangements (2018) and mis-characterizes the original GEF Council paper from 2009 on the purpose of Upgrading which refers to increased responsibilities, continued growth of the programme, but without any explicit mention of an increased focus on service to “low-income countries”. Request rewriting as “continue to expand, including to serve low-income nations and other eligible countries, without...”. - The same concern and misrepresentation of the original purpose of Upgrading introduced in GEF-5 is replicated in Para 39 providing a second inaccurate depiction of the purpose of Upgrading with reference to a specific focus on low-income nations. Request rewriting as “continue to expand, including to serve low-income nations and other eligible countries, without...”. The evaluation may further wish to note that the correct reference to the Upgrading criteria from 2009 with respect to new country programme participation (without any specific reference to low-income countries) is accurately referenced in Para 56 of the document (i.e., GEF, 2009 iv). In addition, the “low-income countries” was inadvertently introduced into the GEF-7 implementation Arrangement paper by the GEF, while the original draft followed the GEF-6 SGP Implementation Arrangement Paper (GEF/C46/13) notes that the two key objectives of upgrading are “(1) upgrading the most mature country programmes would lessen the burden on the global SGP and allow incorporation of additional new countries; and (2) mature country programmes undergoing upgrading would be able to receive higher levels of funding commensurate with their greater capacities.” Following the council decision, the approach under the OP7 expansion to new countries includes all GEF eligible countries not only the low-income countries.	The direct quote from the GEF-7 implementation arrangements has been added here, and a footnote providing clarification has also been added.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team														
		Related evaluation text: During GEF-5, countries with the longest standing and most mature SGP country programmes were transitioned to a new funding mechanism to enable the SGP to continue to expand and serve low-income nations without concomitant growth in core funding.															
6	Page number: 3 Para: 6 Chapter: 2	Type: Political sensitivity The paragraph mentions climate change projects including adaptation. Request adding in footnote: GEF funding is used for climate mitigation, and adaptation projects are funded through cofinancing including from Government of Australia on community-based adaptation. (Since adaptation is not part of GEF funding, perhaps it would be good to mention that in a footnote) Related evaluation text: Biodiversity projects have constituted the largest share of the SGP portfolio, followed by climate change projects (including adaptation) and land degradation projects. These three SGP project areas constitute the large majority of the SGP portfolio, corresponding to 81 percent of the total number of projects, and 82 percent of the total grant budget.	Clarification has been made in the text.														
7	Page number: 3 Para: Table 1 Chapter: 2	Type: Factual error For evaluators internal use and no action needed. The total number of projects approved during that period is 6,275 projects. Its marginally higher than 6,005 as noted in table. It’s not a problem and maybe due to a different calculation methodology. Request if back up calculation tables can be shared post the completion of evaluation.	Noted, with thanks. Please note the evaluation cutoff date is February 2020, which may explain the discrepancy.														
8	Page number: 3 Para: Table 2 Chapter: 2	Type: Factual error The SGP financial figures for each Operational Phase do not match the cumulative SGP financial report certified by UNDP from June 2020 (table below for reference). While the certified financial report does not include Agency fee, the numbers are quite different. Request cross checking and updating. Please reach us in case of any questions here. SGP Financial Status (incl. SGP Global and Upgraded Countries) (Excl. Agency Fee) <table><tr><th>SGP Phase</th><th>GEF Grant Amount</th></tr><tr><td>PILOT</td><td>14,943,245</td></tr><tr><td>OP1</td><td>24,000,298</td></tr><tr><td>OP2</td><td>133,376,746</td></tr><tr><td>OP3</td><td>106,890,000</td></tr><tr><td>OP4</td><td>168,858,554</td></tr><tr><td>OP5</td><td>295,246,994</td></tr></table>	SGP Phase	GEF Grant Amount	PILOT	14,943,245	OP1	24,000,298	OP2	133,376,746	OP3	106,890,000	OP4	168,858,554	OP5	295,246,994	The table has been corrected.
SGP Phase	GEF Grant Amount																
PILOT	14,943,245																
OP1	24,000,298																
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OP5	295,246,994																

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback		Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		OP6	206,681,947	
		OP7	200,276,327	
		Grand-Total	1,150,274,111	
9	Page number: 7 Para: 21 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error It says that in GEF5 in Climate Change Focal area SGP mainly contributed to enhancement of carbon stocks. It’s not factually correct. Request correction: The enhancement of carbon stock consistently represented lower proportion of the portfolio, while renewable energy and energy efficiency represented a dominant proportion (over 65%). Related evaluation text: SGP is also aligned with GEF focal area strategic priorities. For example, in the biodiversity focal area, SGP focused on engaging communities to mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use across sectors as well as landscapes and seascapes. In the climate change focal area, the SGP mainly contributed to promoting conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable management of land use, land use change, and forestry in GEF-5, and gradually shifted to demonstrating systemic impacts of mitigation options in GEF-6.		This has been edited and corrected in the text.
10	Page number: 8 Para: 23 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Request rewording as the term fragile may be misunderstood. Suggest, “context dependent, and occasionally weak”. Related evaluation text: Further analysis undertaken in the eight country studies shows that in many cases, though the links are present at the project creation stage and in documentation, at the local level the linkages between UNDP and the SGP remain fragile (section 3.3 on synergy between SGP and UNDP).		Has been changed to “occasionally weak.”
11	Page number: 8 Para: 26 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error On Botswana case, request to add, ‘through the planning grant modality’ after ‘to provide funding’. This will substantiate the statement/ contextualize it to all stakeholders. Related evaluation text: This was the case in Botswana, where the SGP was able to bypass the usual requirement for CSO registration to provide funding to a group of organizations that would have otherwise been excluded. As a result, these grantees were able to register after a grant cycle and receive grants from other sources.		This has been added and clarified a in footnote.
12	Page number: 10 Para: Box 2 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error It may help to note the portfolio approach on Jaguar conservation in Argentina is part of the Innovation Programme on Big Cats that enabled focused investment for big cats conservation, i.e. Jaguar, in the country and also enabled knowledge sharing at the global level with other big cats initiatives under the innovation programme. (Evidence, please refer concept note on <u>Innovation Programme on Big Cats</u> as shared with the Evaluation team)		This has been added in the text of the box.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		Request that 3 rd paragraph in the box start by noting “As part of the SGP OP6 Innovation Programme on Big Cats, the SGP responded....”	
13	Page number: 10 Para: 31 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error “The long-term vision for the SGP is neither explicit nor shared, leading to competing perceptions of what the SGP can accomplish and how it should be operated.” The survey on SGP’s vision allowed stakeholders to choose multiple visions, and they are not necessary “competing perceptions” but mutually supportive in many ways and reflects the multi-dimensional approach that SGP takes in addressing the complex issues. Here, request updating “competing” to “multiple” perceptions. “This exercise has not been completed, although a number of steps were reported by both UNDP and the GEF in the years following the 2015 evaluation. This includes the development of new terms of reference for the steering committee and a global visioning workshop in 2017.” In addition to the global visioning workshop in 2017, various exercises were organized during SGP Retreats and Inter-Regional Workshops during 2017 to 2020. However, requests were made by GEF Secretariat and UNDP senior management to further the visioning exercise once the new GEF leadership is in place and by reflecting on the Joint Evaluation findings and recommendations. Request updating the sentence as: “This includes the development of new terms of reference for the steering committee, global visioning workshop in 2017, SGP retreats and Regional Workshops that were held during 2017 to 2020.” Related evaluation text: The first recommendation of the 2015 evaluation stated that the SGP steering committee should be revitalized “to support high-level strategic thinking in developing a long-term vision for the SGP...” (GEF IEO and UNDP IEO 2015, 49). This exercise has not been completed, although a number of steps were reported by both UNDP and the GEF in the years following the 2015 evaluation. This includes the development of new terms of reference for the steering committee and a global visioning workshop in 2017.	This has been added to the text. References to the various internal discussions have also added. Note that the evaluators did not have evidence from these workshops supporting a discussion on SGP vision.
14	Page number: 12 Para: 36 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error In this paragraph, it is important to note that respondents to the question on SGP vision was asked to choose up to three relevant answers in figure 2, thus many have chosen multiple answer/visions that are mutually supportive. Therefore, it does not necessary mean that “SGP takes on different meanings and values to different people in different times” but rather it may be useful to say “SGP takes on holistic approach and different meanings among stakeholders with shared values.” It shows coherence yet with different aspirations. Each answer/vision are mutually supportive and not exclusive, and forms part of the vision that the SGP stakeholders share. The top three “visions” under figure 2 also fits very well with figure 1 on “what” SGP focuses on.	Thanks for the comment. Please note that the evaluation is referring to all the different iterations of the SGP vision as expressed in various documents, and not only to the survey questions.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		Related evaluation text: The variety of statements about the SGP’s vision, mission, and mandate shows that the SGP takes on different meanings and values to different people at different times. In figure 2, the primary vision seems to be to secure global environmental benefits, while working with local organizations appears as a means to an end. In the second statement, the purpose appears to be to empower community-based organizations (CBOs) to develop and implement sustainable development projects (empowerment being the primary target); in the third, the purpose appears to be to support local action. Each iteration expresses, adds, or removes different elements, and appears to indicate a subsidiarity of purpose or a hierarchy of goals, means, and ends. At the same time, the different statements all refer to similar elements and principles that seem permanent (e.g., local action, CBO, environmental and developmental objectives). These differences and similarities have an impact on the operational deployment of the SGP from the global to the local level.	
15	Page number: 12 Para: 38 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error - The second sentence is confusing and ungrammatical. The sentence might be clearer if stated as follows: First, UCP funding levels are decided by the government, which allocates funds to the UCP from the country’s STAR allocation. This is in contrast to the country programmes under the global programme that receives annual country allocation from the SGP core fund based on the agreed rules set forth by the GEF Council through the SGP Implementation Arrangement paper for the given from operational phase. - Request third sentence be rephased as “... UCP operates as a GEF Full-Size Project, which is fundamentally different from its previous status as a non-upgraded Country Programme under a continuous global programme or rolling modality, where it had more strictly controlled operations, budget reporting, and different GEF related M&E requirements than global programme.” Related evaluation text: The UCP has three main features. First, its funding level UCP are decided by the government, which allocates funds from the country’s STAR allocation instead of receiving annual budgets from an operational phase allocation through the CPMT in UNDP Headquarters. Secondly, a UCP operates as a GEF full-size project, which is different from previous operational programmes that work as a continuous programme, with more strict operations, budget reporting, and M&E requirements. Lastly, UCP-supported grant projects put more emphasis on upscaling and replication of interventions, which is a shift from supporting pilot and demonstration projects.	The paragraph has been reformulated to reflect the comments.
16	Page number: 12 Para: 39 and Footnote 15 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Please note that when the upgrading process was conceptualized and approved by Council” the objectives were yet to be articulated. The objectives were formulated in 2018 and retrofitted to the already-underway upgrading process. While this is more or less acknowledged in the footnote, this still makes the upgrading policy look much more thoughtful and strategic than it actually was/is.	At this stage, within the evaluation scope and timeframe, the objectives have not been met. Adding “yet” implies that the evaluation has conducted analysis on the likelihood of objectives being met, which it has not. The text and footnote have been updated with more historical details.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		- The objectives mentioned in the text represent an evolution of the concept of upgrading based on the lessons learned from the Fifth and Sixth Operational Phase, as indicated in the SGP Implementation Arrangement Paper for GEF 7. GEF/C.54/05/Rev.01 (2018). Request including “yet” in the first sentence “the objectives (as reformulated in the GEF 7 paper) have not “yet” been fully met. - The objectives of the upgrading were first noted in the GEF-6 SGP Implementation Arrangement Paper (GEF/C46/13) before the GEF-7 SGP Implementation Arrangement Paper. It also notes that the objectives of the upgrading appear to have been achieved. The GEF-6 Implementation Arrangement Paper specifically notes: “two objectives were frequently discussed: (1) upgrading the most mature country programmes would lessen the burden on the global SGP and allow incorporation of additional new countries; and (2) mature country programmes undergoing upgrading would be able to receive higher levels of funding commensurate with their greater capacities. These two objectives appear to have been achieved as OP5 saw an increased number of new countries participating in the SGP and the average funding level of the SGP upgrading country programmes in OP5 was over USD 4.6 million per country.” - Request updating the footnote 15 as: “In the original OP5 document, no objectives were explicitly listed, but the rationale and process were set forth. In OP6 Implementation Arrangement paper, the objectives were noted as: (1) upgrading the most mature country programmes would lessen the burden on the global SGP and allow incorporation of additional new countries; and (2) mature country programmes undergoing upgrading would be able to receive higher levels of funding commensurate with their greater capacities. The updated objectives were listed in the document “GEF Small Grants Programme: Implementation Arrangements for GEF-7....” Related evaluation text: The objectives of the upgrading policy have not been fully met, and the upgrading process has come with higher transaction costs and operational risks for participating countries. When the upgrading process was conceptualized and approved by Council, the objectives were: ...”.	
17	Page number: 13 Para: 40 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error The following 16 countries have joined SGP in OP5: 6 new country programmes started up in OP5 (Djibouti, Guyana, Georgia, Moldova, Sierra Leone, and Timor Leste) 1 country, Afghanistan was planned to start in OP4 but for security and operational issues started in 2012, in OP5. 9 countries from 2 sub-regional programmes in Barbados and Micronesia became separate country programmes with dedicated country staff and NSCs. (Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau) Related evaluation text:	Text has been edited and an added footnote on 9 countries provides added details. The table has been modified for clarity.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		During OP4, which we used as a baseline, 122 countries were implementing SGP, of which 21 were new countries. By the time of OP5 when the Upgrading Policy was approved and launched, nine countries had upgraded, and 16 new countries joined the SGP. In OP6, six countries upgraded; However, only one new country joined the global country programme.	
18	Page number: 13 Para: 40 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error OP7 started in July 2020 with the signing of the UNDP project document for OP7 SGP, following the CEO endorsement by GEF in late May 2020 (corresponding with a two-year period from July 2018-June 2020 during which time OP6 overlapped with the GEF7 replenishment cycle) Request change 2018 to 2020. Also, Eswatini joined the programme as of April 2020 with a SGP National Coordinator (NC) on board and recruitment of NCs in Bangladesh and Gabon were ongoing at the time of evaluation. Related evaluation text: In OP7, which started in 2018, and at the time of writing, no new country had joined the global country programme.	Eswatini has been added and the text has been modified.
19	Page number: 13 Para: 42 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Please note that in OP5, nine countries were upgraded, and 16 new countries added (as noted in earlier comment). The core was \$140 million, and the maximum STAR funding one country with a total of more than \$15 million can allocate up to \$3.6 million to SGP, and \$2 million for countries with STAR funding lower than \$15 million. In GEF-6, this amount has reduced to only 10 percent of the total STAR and maximum \$2 million per country. Even after the upgrading of countries, the total funding for SGP for OP6 and OP7 dropped for SGP-global. Hence there was no fiscal space created to admit more new countries. This is especially the case in OP7, as the core funding was reduced by \$12 million (~15%). Most of the 16 new countries have joined the SGP at the very end of OP5. If you see the total numbers, during OP5 and OP6, there were total 15 UCP countries, while 16 new countries have joined the SGP. Request updating the text as: “These figures, summarized in table 4, show that the programme has tried to use fiscal space generated through the upgrading process, with total 16 new countries that joined the SGP global programme and 15 countries that became UCP during OP5 and OP6, despite an overall decrease in resources for SGP Global, particularly between OP5 and OP6.” Related evaluation text: These figures, summarized in table 4, show that even though the programme has opened up fiscal space through the upgrading process, the addition of new countries has not been maximized.	No change to the text has been made as it is consistent with the table presented.
20	Page number: 13&14 Para: Table 4 and Para 47 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Omission Suggested revision: As presented, Table 4 lists all the countries which previously participated in the SGP global programme and have received STAR endorsements during three GEF cycles from OP5 to OP7. The table does not consider the case of one country (Chile) which was subject to the GEF Council criteria on Upgrading during GEF5, where the SGP country programme did not receive a STAR	A sentence has been added to that effect in this paragraph.

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		endorsement and was subsequently closed. The evaluation may wish to consider how to present this omission, either within the table or by other means in the evaluation analysis (i.e. under para 47).	
21	Page number: 13 Para: 43 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Please note the concept of Pure STAR countries (they did not receive Core for grant-making) was only for OP5. In OP6 and OP7, countries with total \$15 million STAR allocation also received SGP Core resources. Therefore, we request to delete/ reword the sentence “These were called “Pure STAR” countries.” as they are no longer called in this term under OP6 and OP7. In OP6 and OP7, the STAR allocation that can be allocated to SGP by a global programme country was capped at “10% of the total STAR allocation and up to \$2 million for all countries.” Request to update the last sentence of the paragraph accordingly. Related evaluation text: The second scenario is a hypothetical “Pure STAR” scenario. In OP5 to OP7, countries with STAR allocations above \$15 million were allowed to allocate STAR resources to their small grant programme. These were called “Pure STAR” countries. Most of these countries were on the brink of upgrading and belonged to the Country category 2. In OP5, the countries with more than \$15 million were able to allocate \$3.6 million (\$2.4 million if the STAR allocation is below \$15 million). In OP6 and OP7, the STAR allocation that can be allocated to SGP by a global programme country was capped at \$2 million for countries with a total STAR allocation above \$15 million.	Text has been edited to clarify that Pure STAR is for OP5 only and the last sentence of para has been changed. Table 5 has been renamed “STAR-based scenario” and heading of column 3 has been edited for clarity.
22	Page number: 13 Para: 43 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Request replacing “some” with “most UCP countries”, as corroborated in the text. Based on the calculations, all UCP countries have been able to access greater resources, with the exception of Ecuador and Pakistan who have received the same financial resources compared to the hypothetical pure STAR scenario. Related evaluation text: The upgrading process succeeded in enabling some countries to access greater financial resources.	Has been edited to reflect “most UCP countries.”
23	Page number: 14 Para: 45 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error The sentence could be revised for clarity: “The landscape and seascape approach, which was recommended for UCPs in OP5, was considered an improvement in SGP programming from previously scattered and independent small projects to landscape-based synergistic projects.” Related evaluation text: Increase in funding envelope and strategic linkages with other full-size projects were the most significant advantage in upgrading based on the global survey. ...”The landscape and seascape approach, which was recommended for UCPs in OP5, was considered an improvement from previous scattered and independent small projects to landscape-based synergistic projects”.	“In SGP programming” has been added.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
24	Page number: 14 Para: 46 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error This appears to be a direct quote, so revising it for clarity may be difficult. However, as it reads now it is very confusing. Could this be modified – without changing the sense of the sentence – to read: “there is a sense of ownership by the other national stakeholders after upgrading since the funds are government-allocated.” Related evaluation text: For example, partnerships can flourish effectively, as can be seen in Egypt and India, where the government-civil society collaboration is strengthened: “there is a sense ownership from the other national stakeholders after the new structure since the funds are government-allocated.”	“Upgrading to” has been added to clarify sentence.
25	Page number: 14 Para: 48 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Material omission In addition to the example of India, there are other cases where lack of liquidity or competing GEF Work Programme priorities caused GEFSec to defer integration of UCPs into Work Programmes for Council review. After the PIFs were submitted, GEF funding shortfalls and delayed inclusion in the GEF Work Programme were also the reason for delays in OP6 approval for Thailand (submitted in July 2016 and technically cleared by GEFSEC in August 2016, but not included in the GEF WP until October 2017, more than a year later). Similarly, OP7 PIFs for Brazil, Philippines and India were submitted for the 2018 Work Programme and only approved in the June 2019 Work Programme. Please note, the same is experienced by the global programme, not only the UCPs. Since OP6, the GEF core funds are no longer secured at the onset of a GEF period. During GEF-6 and GEF-7, the core fund requests for the global programme were submitted in two separate project concepts based on guidance from the GEFSEC. The CEO endorsement for the core fund was not approved until two years into the concerned replenishment cycle. Further, in both OP5 and OP6, some of the technically cleared PIFs for the global programme were not included in the GEF WP for over a year. Therefore, request to revise the sentence to “With the global country programme, the amount of GEF core fund is determined through the replenishment process at the onset of a GEF period. However, securing the GEF core and STAR funds for the global programme takes the entire GEF period through multiple fund requests.” Related evaluation text: For a full-size project, the project identification form, the GEF operational focal point’s letter of support, and other related documentation needed for submission to the GEF Council and CEO are subjected to risk of delay. The reasons might include a change in GEF focal point or delays in approval within different governments (as in the Philippines and Egypt). In some cases, even if the project identification forms are submitted, funding shortfalls within the GEF might lead to deprioritizing for funding the SGP full-size project, as was seen in India's case where their OP6 project identification form had to be resubmitted in OP7. This is in contrast with the global country programme, where the GEF core funds are allocated at the onset of a GEF period.	Other countries have been added as examples and has been further edited for clarity, as well as to provide added detail on the GEF-6 circumstances.
26	Page number: 14 Para: 49 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error	Edits have been done as suggested in the comment.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		“Cut through the continuity of programme-level support for its NSC and grantees” is unclear. Could this read “break the continuity of programme-level support to grantees and maintenance of the NSC”? Related evaluation text: Interviewees from the case studies mentioned that gaps in SGP implementation threaten the credibility of the SGP at the national level, discourage potential partners, and, most importantly, cut through the continuity of programme-level support for its NSC and grantees. In the case of Mexico, even if it was successful in receiving a full-size project in OP5, OP6, and OP7, the delays until disbursement of funds meant that its SGP programme still had a gap between OP5 and OP6.	
27	Page number: 14 Para: Table 5 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Request Table 5 moved closer to paragraph 43 for continuity of reading.	The table has been moved.
28	Page number: 15 Para: 50 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Request rewording: “Gray area” refers to something that is not clearly defined. There is nothing in this paragraph that would make the reader think that this is an ambiguous topic. The strength of the community-based landscape and seascape methodology developed initially through the COMPACT and COMDEKS Programmes, as well as organically from different UCP experiences, and continues to inform the larger GEF SGP approach under GEF-6 and GEF-7. This does not seem a gray area of contribution, but rather a key contribution as also recognized by this evaluation as one of the key uptakes of the SGP Global Programme. The UCP portfolio has provided not only much of the methodological basis for the landscape approach, but also evidence for its effectiveness in a variety of different geographic and cultural contexts. UCP experiences with participatory landscape planning and multi-stakeholder governance of local production landscapes, along with the experience gained through the COMPACT and COMDEKS, have played a key role in providing the necessary tools and capacity among the SGP Global Country Programmes to adopt the landscape and seascape approach. Related evaluation text: The upgrading objective “to make better use of the capacities of mature Country Programmes to enrich the younger, less experienced ones” is a gray area and has not been fully realized by the SGP.	The text has been edited for clarity. A little historical background on landscape seascape approaches has been added. However, the evaluation finds that the objective, as it is currently formulated, is not achieved by the knowledge exchanges mentioned as examples. This may be due to the objective’s formulation, which implies a capacity transfer from one group of countries to another, rather than general cross-fertilization.
29	Page number: 15 Para: 50 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Request rewording: It suggests that the SGP landscape approach started in the UCPs and was rolled out to other core countries. This is factually inaccurate. SGP implemented the Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation (COMPACT) which was co-financed with the UN Foundation (UNF) for 13 years from 2000-2013, developed the model to aggregate small grants for PAs at the landscape level. COMPACT was the foundation upon which COMDEKS (small grants for socio-ecological production landscapes,	

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		SEPLs, with co-financing from the Government of Japan) subsequently build upon and integrated into the UCP FSPs, and later on to the overall SGP Global Programme as an overarching strategic framework. These experiences with the design, development, piloting and implementation of the community-based landscape management approach were rolled up and scaled up through the SGP Global Programme. Suggest rewording the sentence as “The evaluation recognizes that the SGP’s current landscape and seascape approach has a long evolution starting in 2000 with the COMPACT programme, continued through the COMDEKS programme where total of 20 UCPs and Global Programme countries participated (starting essentially in OP5), was extended to all UCPs since OP6 as the primary programming framework, and has now been taken up more broadly by the Global Programme as an overall strategic framework. This reflects ongoing interactions between UCPs and Global Programme countries, both facilitated by CPMT and the UCP Global Coordinator as well as through ad hoc meetings and conversations among National Coordinators.” Related evaluation text: The evaluation recognizes that the SGP’s landscape and seascape approach originated from the UCPs and was later rolled out to the global country programmes.	
30	Page number: 15 Para: 50 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Respectfully disagree with the statement that “it is unclear as to what concrete learning exchanges transpired between UCPs and global country programmes.” The extent of knowledge exchanges among UCPs and the Global Programme has not been fully captured by this paragraph and by the Joint evaluation overall, which points to some shortcomings in the methodology of this joint evaluation (i.e. among others, the fact that only three of the UCP NCs were interviewed as part of the case studies, UCP PIRs were reviewed only for the three UCP case studies), and/or lack of more in depth conversation on the knowledge management contributions of SGP overall and UCPs in particular, which is only tangentially covered by this evaluation. The evaluation methodology, perhaps hampered by the pandemic, relied heavily on national consultants for three case studies of Upgrading Country Programme projects; it is particularly notable that the evaluation team did not directly interview any on-the-ground SGP UCP staff (National Coordinators, PAs, etc.). In particular, this paragraph doesn’t mention the UCP participation in global programme regional workshops in Bangkok, Panama and Africa during OP6, and OP7, UCP participation in the 2017 visioning workshop or other key events at global, national and local levels that bring UCPs and global programme countries together, including townhalls and webinars, as well as UCP participation in ECW Constituency meetings. Additionally, UCPs participate in and often take the lead on south-south cooperation efforts (as indicated in the AMR, PIRs, and key publications). Similarly, UCPs participate in key SGP Partnership Programmes together with Global Programme countries, where information and knowledge are exchanged during webinars, workshops and other means (i.e., COMPACT, COMDEKS, ICCA-GSI, CBRs, EU-NGO).	
31	Page number: 15 Para: 51 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error This statement is too broad and doesn’t reflect current reality while the focus of the evaluation is on developments since 2014, which was the cutoff date for the 2015 Joint evaluation. This makes it sound as if there is insufficient support for the transition in	The text has been edited in line with the comments.

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		project design and arrangements for implementation, when in reality UNDP provides support by a dedicated programme officer and a senior consultant, along with expert project consultants hired with PPG resources. The examples provided (Pakistan and Philippines TEs) in fact led to a number of lessons learned from OP5 which were reflected in the OP6 and OP7 project design and implementation arrangements, including inter alia the provision of PPG funds for project preparation activities during OP6 and OP7, differently from OP5. OP5 was indeed an almost experimental period for the first cohort of UCPs. The two examples given here are not really the best for exemplifying the effects of procedural delays, as both represent outlier experiences. For example, delays with the Philippines project were strongly accentuated by the fact that the original country programme team was no longer working with SGP. The reference to standard staffing is fairly specific to the Philippines i.e., this has not been a factor in other countries. Initiation of the Pakistan OP5 UCP was affected by the considerable government delay in signing the ProDoc. Related evaluation text: Upgrading is a learning-by-doing process for countries, without enough support for the transition in project design and implementation arrangement	
32	Page number: 15 Para: 52 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error In the case of Egypt, delays in securing government clearance on grant agreements and authorizations for nomination, is independent of its status as UCP. Related evaluation text: Upgrading places SGP within the STAR allocation, which increases the influence of government. Whereas the SGP was originally designed as the GEF funding window for NGOs and CBOs, for UCPs, this “dedicated window” is no longer independent from government. The impact of increased government control on funding can be seen in the case of Egypt, where its first operational phase as a UCP encountered nearly three years of additional delay because of the added need to secure government security clearances, the need to secure authorizations for nomination, and disagreements about control and accountability.	The evaluation team understand that the delays in Egypt were independent of its UPC status, however the case study interviews, and MTR noted that these delays were specific to the SGP, because the government wanted to exert additional control on grants flowing to NGOs.
33	Page number: 15 Para: 53 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Para 53 is confusing. If UNDP sits on the National Steering Committee which reviews and approves the Project Document, decides the eligibility of proposals for funding, participates in M&E and monitors the Country Programme’s implementation overall, how is it that UNDP has no control over a “full-fledged national project,” even though it is executed by UNOPS? The National Coordinator often sits in the UNDP Country Office and forms part of the UNDP country team. It is common among all SGP Country Programmes, regardless of their status as UCP or global programme, to rely on the provision of execution services (e.g., signature of MOA, local procurement, etc.) by UNDP CO on behalf of UNOPS. This does not constitute UNDP taking over execution. Related evaluation text The UNDP representative mentioned a similar confusion of roles and increased accountability risks for both UNDP and the government that sign-off a full-fledged national project that they have no control of since it is implemented by UNOPS. Indeed, it	The paragraph has been rephrased for clarity.

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		was confirmed during interviews that there seems to be a certain level of discomfort among UNDP Country Offices, who become accountable for funding in which they are not involved. This is similar to when Bolivia (GEF ID 4481), Costa Rica (GEF ID 4382), and Ecuador (GEF ID 4375) upgraded in OP5, where the absence of UNOPS in the country entailed that UNDP had to take over some executing agency roles.	
34	Page number: 16 Para: 54 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Establishment and operations of SGP National Steering Committees (including TORs) are carried out in accordance with the SGP Operational Guidelines and templates provided by SGP Global. During OP6 and OP7, the UCP Global Coordinator has provided recommendations to CPMT on revisions of the NSC TORs which are currently being reflected in the OP7 NSC TORs. Related evaluation text: Upgrading requires a modification of the responsibilities and composition of the NSC. Lessons learned from the completed UCPs point out that the NSC should assume more of a strategic planning and oversight role, which allows it to focus on steering the overall programme by proactively designing calls for proposals so that the portfolio of SGP projects represents a clear and focused strategy to achieve global environmental benefits. However, it is reported that the Terms of Reference for the NSC remained unchanged in Ecuador, Egypt, India, Kenya, and Mexico during their first operational phase as upgraded countries.	This has mostly occurred after the evaluation’s cutoff date. This evaluation is suggesting to consider this in the next evaluation of the SGP.
35	Page number: 16 Para: 55 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error NSC members are not “representatives” of certain category of sectors. They are individual members, besides the UNDP CO and GEF OFP, who are institutional representatives. Replace “representatives” with “members”. Related evaluation text: The NSC was also set up so as to promote multi-stakeholder governance and limit the possibilities for any sector or organization to control the process. During OP6, the NSC in Costa Rica lost some of its civil society representation, leaving more government representatives than civil society. A similar situation happened in Egypt as well in OP6, when the mid-term review of the Sixth Operational Phase of the GEF Small Grants Programme in Egypt (GEF ID 6956) found that civil society members were not well represented on the NSC. As Requested by the mid-term review, increasing participation of NGO representatives and addressing representation of the beneficiaries in the target landscapes are needed to adjust the composition of the NSC to better fit the specific scope of the full-size project, and to maintain the spirit of the SGP.	Representative has been changed to members.
36	Page number: 16 Para: 55 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error The sentence “civil society members were not well represented on the NSC” is confusing. The sentence also gives the impression that civil society members were no longer in the majority keeping with the Operational Guidelines, which is not the case. The MTR in Egypt recommended to have additional CSO representatives from the target landscapes to have a stronger CSO representation more attached to the target areas. Related evaluation text:	The MTR mentions that “There is room for improvement with respect to the composition of the NSC and involvement of the appointed members. Based on meeting minutes of the NSC meetings held, there does not seem to be a majority of civil society members on the committee, some of the governmental stakeholders have not attended and representatives of the local governments of the target landscapes are not included.”

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		A similar situation happened in Egypt as well in OP6, when the mid-term review of the Sixth Operational Phase of the GEF Small Grants Programme in Egypt (GEF ID 6956) found that civil society members were not well represented on the NSC. As Requested by the mid-term review, increasing participation of NGO representatives and addressing representation of the beneficiaries in the target landscapes are needed to adjust the composition of the NSC to better fit the specific scope of the full-size project, and to maintain the spirit of the SGP.	
37	Page number: 19 Para: 62 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Two new criteria were included in OP6: - countries with STAR allocations higher than US\$10 million; and - countries where government is willing to commit to the civil society raison d'être of the SGP. The criteria were also reviewed again and internally discussed as part of the development of the OP7 Implementation Arrangement Paper (GEF-led document). At the time recommendations were made from UNDP for upgrading to be a gradual process (rather than having a large number of countries to upgrade all at once) and revisiting the criteria should be informed by the SGP Steering Committee, based on lessons learned from both OP5 and OP6, and be part of a wider discussion on the vision and strategy for SGP moving forward. Revising criteria without appropriate consideration and consultation with civil society and government stakeholders could possibly result in unpredictable negative reactions from the countries to the SGP, GEF, and UNDP. During the 2020 Steering Committee Meeting, the UCP Global Coordinator participated as an observer (first time observers were allowed), and discussions were made on the importance to create a technical working group to review the issue of upgrading. • “Internal discussion” was held for OP7, based on the 2015 Joint Evaluation findings and recommendations which was completed just before the start of GEF-7. Please add OP7 in addition to OP6. • Based on the internal discussion at that time, it was also recognized that there are currently no reliable global mechanisms and dataset to assess capacity of CSOs as potential criteria for UCP. Request rewriting with additional sentences: “Internal discussion was held for OP7, including review of existing criteria and possible inclusion of CSO capacity as requested under the 2015 evaluation. However, it was recognized that there were no reliable existing mechanism/ datasets that SGP could consider and adapt at that point.” Related evaluation text: To our knowledge, the criteria for upgrading have not yet been improved, although UNDP and GEF report they were internally discussed at the start of OP6.	Text has been changed to: To our knowledge, the criteria for upgrading have not been sufficiently improved, although UNDP and GEF report they were internally discussed at the start of OP6 and OP7. In the OP6 SGP Execution Arrangements, the original criteria from OP5 are maintained but an additional threshold is added “to ensure that countries with STAR allocations below \$10 million would not be subjected to upgrading” and that governments committed to follow the SGP operational guidelines.
38	Page number: 19 Para: 62 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error	The text has been edited to: In this context, the “net” financial benefit of upgrading would be received by the global programme and not by the country that upgrades. Also, while net fiscal space is created in the global

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		“The net benefit of the upgrading is received by the global programme...” is not really the fact as loosing mature countries as UCPs and adding new countries have resulted in increased operational costs as well as weaker programmatic results (given newer status and limited experience of new countries) at least during the first years for the global programme. Request deleting this sentence, and adding “Also, while net fiscal space maybe created in the global programme with countries upgrading, its equivalence to cost of inducting new countries does not hold true due incurrence of high operational costs to initiate a new programme, especially in fragile and least development contexts.” Related evaluation text: Additionally, the creation of fiscal space in the SGP is done at the expense of fiscal space in each country’s STAR allocation under the GEF Trust Fund. The “net” benefit of upgrading is received by the global programme and not by the country that upgrades.	programme, it may be reduced by the cost of inducting new countries, especially in fragile and LDC contexts. The evaluation has found this to be unlikely.
39	Page number: 19 Para: Footnote 21 Chapter: 4.1	Type: Factual error Request adding a date for the relevant document cited (i.e., UNDP management response) Related evaluation text: UNDP Management Response, Evaluation Resource Center; SGP in the GEF Management Action Record.	A date has been added.
40	Page number: 20 Para: 67 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error “The number of participating LDCs has increased from 44 percent in 2007 to 68 percent in 2020”. 68 percent represents total of LDCs and SIDS, not just LDCs, also please note multi-focal area nature of SGP’s work. SGP grantees are asked to choose dominant/primary focal area for reporting purpose while most SGP projects are multi-focal in nature. Request revising as: “The number of participating LDCs and SIDS....”, “In addition, biodiversity remains the most funded focal area in the SGP, followed by climate change and land degradation. Most SGP projects are multi focal and this description simply reflects the primary focal area selected for a given project” Related evaluation text: The number of participating LDCs has increased from 44 percent in 2007 to 68 percent in 2020. In addition, biodiversity remains the most funded focal area in the SGP, followed by climate change and land degradation (table 8).	This has been edited/corrected in the text.
41	Page number: 20 Para: Table 6 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error/political sensitivity Request including a footnote on OP6, and note “OP6 is still under implementation and at a midpoint, thus the number of projects and amount does not provide the full picture of the operation.” Considering the large difference in number with OP5, this is an important footnote to include.	The footnote has been added.
42	Page number: 21 Table: 8 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error On table 8, please change source to “2015 SGP Evaluation Report, SGP Database”	The source has been added/corrected.

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43	Page number: 21 Para: 70 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error wrt. referencing, and Political sensitivity Request adding reference, “As noted in SGP M&E Strategy, the results of the SGP are as much a factor of “what” the SGP is doing as of “how” it is doing it.” Also request elaborating “co-benefits” delivered by the SGP- socio, economic and inclusion-based co-benefits. (i.e., work on gender, with Indigenous Peoples and youth). This will help current discussions with donors with respect to co-benefits during the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations. Related evaluation text: The results of the SGP are as much a factor of “what” the SGP is doing as of “how” it is doing it. However, the GEF monitors only results and indicators related to GEBs, and largely classifies the other types of results as “co-benefits.” As a result, the GEF reporting system does not provide enough nuance to allow for a full consideration of the scope of SGP ‘s results.	The reference has been added and text has been edited
44	Page number: 25 Para: 87 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error - The AMR reports and data over the past years provide evidence that the Grantmakers plus and other initiatives have led to increased/improved capacity development, inclusion, and advocacy initiatives under the Country Programmes (i.e., percentage of women, IPs led projects, peer to peer learning through S-S cooperation, policy linkage, etc). These initiatives are implemented through regular grants and country operational budget by the NCs at the country level, and not by global-level expenditures. Request reviewing the evidence and also adding: The Annual Monitoring Reports of SGP shows improved and higher levels of capacity development, inclusion, and advocacy. The grantmakers plus initiatives are implemented through regular grants and country operational budget at the country level. - Further, Grantmakers Plus was introduced in OP6 in 2016, not “in the midst of a complex and sometimes difficult debate between the GEF and UNDP on the division between “grant-making activities” and so-called “non-grant activities” - which started in 2018 under the new GEF leadership. Request reformulating the sentence as grant maker plus is from OP6. Related evaluation text: From the perspective of this evaluation, it is not clear whether this new designation has actually led to higher levels of capacity development, inclusion, and advocacy or whether it has been an exercise in labeling designed to allay concerns regarding global-level expenditures. It should be remembered that this terminology emerged in the midst of a complex and sometimes difficult debate between the GEF and UNDP on the division between “grant-making activities” and so-called “non-grant26” activities. This is explored further in section 3.3 on efficiency.	Text has been added to the preceding paragraph for clarification: These initiatives are implemented through regular grants and country operational budget by the NCs at the country level, and not by global-level expenditures. As noted in the 2015 Joint evaluation, the grant vs. non-grant issue has been a topic of discussion between GEF and UNDP since at least 2008.
45	Page number: 26 Para: 88 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error/Material omission Para 88 suggests that the SGP landscape approach only originated in OP6. This is factually inaccurate. The SGP landscape and seascape approach was first introduced in OP2 (i.e., COMPACT approach initially in 6 countries) and progressively mainstreamed	Paragraph has been edited and historical background has been integrated in a previous paragraph.

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		throughout the portfolio (including through COMDEKS and UCPs) culminating in the more widespread and universal adoption during OP6 and OP7. Related evaluation text: For example, in 2015, for OP6, the SGP made a shift toward landscape and seascape approaches, in an attempt to “concentrate”—at least geographically—its results for higher impact.	
46	Page number: 26 Para: 90 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error - The term “Integrated focal area strategies (IFAS)” is not in line with the terminology used at SGP and GEF. It is termed in all documents and widely known as “SGP Strategic Initiatives” and it is a “multi-focal area approach” in line with the overall strategy of GEF in OP6, and “in response to the reduction in SGP resources in GEF-6 as well as to promote mainstreaming and scaling up.” (GEF/C46/13 GEF-6 SGP implementation Arrangement). Request replacing “IFAS” with “SGP Strategic Initiatives”. - The following statement is also factually inaccurate: “In addition to these, participants in the SGP sixth operational phase could also use thematic programmes, of which there were five—sustainable agriculture and fisheries; low-carbon energy access benefits; community-based threatened ecosystems and species conservation; land and water; local to global coalitions in chemicals and waste management; and catalyzing sustainable urban development.” Requests: Replace “thematic programmes” with “SGP Strategic Initiatives” . Replace “sixth operational phase” with “seventh operational phase” as these are SGP Strategic Initiatives were identified for OP7, and not OP6. (refer OP7 Implementation Arrangement paper and Project Document) - This paragraph could also benefit by adding the following explanation: “The difference between OP6 and OP7 was to further streamline the landscape and seascape approach as an overarching approach as it applies to all Strategic Initiatives, and further clarify the biodiversity conservation related approach with the introduction of OP7 threatened ecosystems and species conservation, and add one new Strategic Initiative on the Sustainable Urban Solution, based on interest expressed by stakeholders through extensive regional consultations (through ECWs and others).” - It is important to note that OP6 and OP7’s strategic initiatives are largely unchanged with the understanding and consideration that these changes take time to implement and not to constantly change the focus. Related evaluation text: Over the years, the SGP has gradually added a number of themes, initiatives, and special interest programmes to its programming framework. In OP6, the landscape and seascape approach was part of four “integrated focal area strategies” (IFASs), designed to reflect the fact that many projects could fit under multiple focal areas, like many of the GEF projects. The other three IFASs are Climate Smart Innovative Agro-ecology, Low-Carbon Energy Access Co-benefits; and Local to Global Chemicals Management Coalitions (UNDP 2016). In addition to these, participants in the SGP sixth operational phase could also use thematic programmes, of which there were five—sustainable agriculture and fisheries; low-carbon energy access benefits; community-based threatened	Noted, however, the term “integrated focal area strategies” was taken from the UNDP project document for OP6, p.15. It is noted however that the terminology did not remain in use. The evaluation maintains that the shift in terminology contributes to creating unnecessary complexity and confusion.

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		ecosystems and species conservation; land and water; local to global coalitions in chemicals and waste management; and catalyzing sustainable urban development.	
47	Page number: 26 Para: 91 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error/Material omission - Para 91 implies that the OP6 Innovation Programmes and Global ICCA Support Initiative add complexity to the fundamental mandate of the SGP, but also recognise the considerable added value of the landscape and seascape approach (i.e., Para 97). Please also consider reflecting the benefits to countries which participate in the COMDEKS, COMPACT, ICCA GSI and other ‘aggregator’ platforms of results – which are also directly relevant to South-South exchange and generation of lessons. - Para 91 also appears to contradict Para 98 which places value on the ability of SGP to form multi-stakeholder partnerships- kindly rectify. - For the OP6 Indigenous Peoples Fellowship programme, the evaluators are requested to further reflect the views of Indigenous Peoples and the GEF IPAG on the value of this initiative (they have generally widely welcomed the Innovation Programme).	Noted, however this paragraph only refers to the “existence” of these programs, without making any inferences about their results. These are covered and their benefits highlighted in later sections.
48	Page number: 26 Para: 92 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error/Material omission While one can agree that “reinventions” lead to increased complexity, it’s important not only to keep up with the “themes of the day”, but also try new approaches and initiatives. The fact that the program uses the same modality and ethos is good, as the program needs to evolve, while building on past achievements. If found inefficient, the changes can be discarded or replaced by different modalities. Kindly note the purpose/objectives of taking these integrated, multi-focal area approaches and added value through the grantmakers plus were to scale-up the initiatives, rather than taking the traditional single focal area approach, are clearly articulated in both OP6 and OP7 implementation arrangement papers (GEF/C46/13 and GEF/C54/05). This is indeed to be also in line with the overall GEF Programming Direction and UNDP Strategic Plan that promotes integrated approaches and respond better to the reality on the ground where issues to address are multi-faceted. Request adding: “The purpose of these updates in SGP programming framework over the years were in large part to align the SGP strategic initiatives toward the overall GEF and UNDP programming directions, which promoted multifocal area projects and integrated approaches. It also reflects SGP’s effort to better describe and categorize SGP’s consistent focus and investment at the local level over the past decades, which reflects integrated approach with multiple benefits, rather than the previous strategic approach which focused on individual focal area.”	Reinventions has been changed to repackaging. The evaluation recognizes the need for balancing, however, the purpose is already highlighted in the last sentence of the paragraph. Here the evaluation is suggesting that the SGP needs to balance the drive for repackaging with the need for constancy and depth of impact.
49	Page number: 28 Para: 100 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Material omission	The language refers to incomplete strategies, which encompasses the issues of capacity and finance. Recent progress in addressing this shortcoming was also noted in the paragraph.

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		Kindly note the issue may not be the “lack of strategy” as there are existing KM/Comm strategies under the SGP global and UCPs as noted in the evaluation report, but more in terms of lack of capacity and finance to implement the strategy at country and global levels, due to limitations in so called “non-grant costs” allocation of budget. Request deleting “this may be particularly the case in UCPs” below. Evidence on strategies is added here. Related evaluation text: Incomplete knowledge management and communication strategies were reported by several countries as a factor preventing or hindering upscaling, despite high volumes of information being generated. This may be particularly the case in UCPs, as the global programme makes efforts to share the costs of knowledge management across countries. As pointed out in the terminal evaluation of the Sixth Operational Phase of the GEF Small Grants Programme in Pakistan (GEF ID 9331), and the terminal evaluation of the Fifth Operational Phase of the GEF Small Grants Programme in Kenya (GEF ID 4362), knowledge management and exchange were not sufficiently prioritized or planned in the project. In OP6 knowledge management strategies were prepared for four out of the 12 upgraded countries. In response to this challenge, CPMT has provided a series of knowledge management guidance documents, technical advice and other support for both UCPs and global country programmes.	
50	Page number: 28 Para: 100 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error Correction: “In OP6 (still under implementation) knowledge management strategies were finalized for “seven (not four as indicated) out of the 12 upgraded countries (Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, Sri Lanka, Thailand). It is also important to note the overarching SGP Knowledge Management and Communication Strategies are applied by both UCPs and SGP Global Country Programmes. Knowledge Management is a key component of the community-based landscape approach implemented by the UCPs. All target landscape strategies include a knowledge management component focused on upscaling. Related evaluation text: In OP6 knowledge management strategies were prepared for four out of the 12 upgraded countries. In response to this challenge, CPMT has provided a series of knowledge management guidance documents, technical advice and other support for both UCPs and global country programmes. Additionally, all the newly approved UCPs in GEF-7 have identified specific knowledge management activities that will promote replication and upscaling across the landscapes, across the country and to the global SGP network. Finally, the SGP as a whole produces a high volume of knowledge products, such as publications, fact sheets, forums, and databases, which can be leveraged to support upscaling.	Please recall that the evaluation cutoff date is February 2020. Some of the documents that were submitted are activity plans, or lists of activities, but do not qualify as full-fledged strategies.
51	Page number: 30 Para: 104	Type: Factual error Request considering inclusion of following text: In Burkina Faso, the dialogue between SCO and government is at its beginnings with the creation of a network to fight against the misuse of chemicals, the network of traditional gold miners and the development of the national network of ICCAs which has already succeeded to include ICCAs in the national monograph.	It is understood that this is early days for Burkina Faso policy dialogue, as coined in the term “embryonic”. The work may also have occurred after the evaluation cutoff date, as it did not come up clearly in the case study.

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52	Page number: 32 Para: 107-109 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error “The SGP’s ability to incentivize and foster innovation is perceived unevenly across different regions and stakeholders.” It is important to recognize and note here that ability and capacity to foster innovation largely differs among countries and regions, and SGP takes into consideration country context and capacity – thus one cannot expect innovation can be equally promoted in all regions and countries. Europe and Central Asia and LAC in general have higher capacity among CSOs/CBOs to incentivize and foster innovation, while relative capacity in Arab states and Asia are limited in pursuing such innovation. Request revision of the statement to “The SGP’s ability to incentivize and foster innovation is perceived unevenly across different regions and stakeholders, largely due to differing country context and capacity”	The survey results provided no evidence to substantiate a reason for the differing perceptions. The evaluation is not in a position to make this change.
53	Page number: 32 Para: 108 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Material Omission/ Political sensitivity Most of the examples are from UCPs. For your convenience, a short text on innovation in global programme. Also, the portfolio review countries had many noted innovations. Evidence is attached here Request adding some text to clarify (suggested text below): SGP global programme focusses on promoting and supporting innovative and scalable initiatives at the local level. Just to provide some examples, in Venezuela a project in the region of the Llanos to promote the recovery of family farming and sustainable use of resources local agrobiodiversity, introduced innovations in climate-smart agroecology, and also included measures to promote ecotourism development in the indigenous community. In Barbados, a project promoting utilization of renewable energy innovated with a sustainable financing mechanism for social interventions such as educational and rehabilitation programs and services that support vulnerable men, women and children – a model that was rarely implemented in the Caribbean region. In Albania, a sustainable transport project promoted use of bicycles mobilizing community support for bicycle path design, construction and marking in Tirana. Protected bike lanes delineate space on the road for bikes and prevent cars from infringing on that space, significantly increasing the use of bicycles. Likewise, in South Africa, SGP projects supported innovations with water saving technologies and waste management technologies as part of the COVID-19 response efforts. Many SGP projects also won awards for their innovation (e.g. the St. Lucia project on smart agriculture won the Prime Minister’s Award for Innovation).	Thank you for the additional information. The evaluation recognizes many of the examples used in this section are from UCPs, however, there are other GCP related examples throughout the report as well. At this stage it is not possible to further verify or triangulate added information and examples.
54	Page number: 32 Para: 109 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error Kindly consider this as part of text in para 109. Please consider the ability of a program to foster innovation broadly may be contradictory to its ability to generate innovation. By their nature, SGP projects are riskier and more innovative and, therefore, more likely to fail. Business model may be the next stage. Perhaps, the reason for less evidence of fostering innovation is lack of larger funding, which could provide a bridge from 50,000 to multimillion-dollar project. Larger financing targeting broader group of beneficiaries (including private sector) could fill this role with SGP smaller grants serving as incubators of innovative approaches.	Please note that the evaluation makes a distinction between fostering and incentivizing. The evaluation concurs with your analysis of the riskiness of innovation.

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55	Page number: 34 Para: 113 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error “There is a difference in how the SGP at the country level and UNDP Country Offices each approach and implement gender-related activities “. It would be useful to add a sentence to clarify if this is due to the difference in country context and how the issue of gender equity and women’s empowerment is perceived in general (i.e., not necessary for SGP activities only).	This paragraph has been clarified; the difference is in perception, although it is not clear precisely to what this perception is attributed.
56	Page number: 36 Para: Box 5 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error Requesting considering following case of Samoa to Box 5, if possible: A prominent businesswoman in Satuiatua initiated the first MPA site as a tourist attraction for her beach resort located next to the MPA which resulted from the project. She is a recognized chief of the village council and had worked in the government for many years. The project committee led by the Pulenuu and representatives of each of the village factions – chiefs, women, youth, and untitled men – continued this woman’s work to what is now known as a successful and valued marine reserve in Samoa. Several women are matais or chiefs in Satuiatua’s village council. (Reference: Satuiatua fact sheet)	Thank you for the additional information. All examples quoted in the box are verified in the case studies. Since this is not a factual error, it has not been included.
57	Page number: 39 Para: 121 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Factual error It could be worth noting that increase in IPs led projects were enabled through concerted and combined efforts under the grantmakers plus initiatives, ICCA cofinance, and innovation programmes which all played a major role.	Thank you for the information. As the evaluation does not have independent evidence to verify this, it has not been included it.
58	Page number: 39 Para: 122-123 Chapter: 4.2	Type: Material omission On youth, please also consider: Evaluation may wish to consider noting the fact that over 40 percent of the SGP projects involve youth (as evidenced through AMR 2019 and previous years). The very popular and impactful SGP’s youth engagement through Video Competitions in partnership with UNFCCC, CBD, and UNCCD as well as contribution at the Youth Summit at the relevant COPs could be also highlighted here (evidence provided by email earlier on the SGP’s engagement at MEA COPs).	The sentence on the youth involvement in the SGP has been added.
59	Page number: 40 Table: 17 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error Please correct label and source of table to “SGP Report Card”. In its called SGP score card, which can be confusing.	This has been corrected.
60	Page number: 40 Para: 127 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Material omission Para 127 – the title of this finding seems to be focused on the communications between the SGP Steering Committee, GEF Secretariat and CPMT. However, the bulk of the Para goes on to refer to potential to improve the working relationship between the SGP Country Programme and the UNDP CO. It would therefore seem that this Para is incomplete and may benefit from being divided into two separate Paras.	The paragraph has been significantly revised.

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		The SGP Steering Committee is consisted of UNDP, GEF SEC, and CSO Network as members, and CPMT acting as secretariat. In this context, the statement of “SGP governance is not delivering its full potential due to miscommunications and ambiguous responsibilities between the SGP steering committee, GEF Secretariat, and CPMT” may need more clarification. Request reformulating it as “SGP governance is not delivering its full potential due to miscommunications and ambiguous responsibilities of the SGP steering committee, including the relationship between GEF Secretariat, UNDP, CSO Network, and CPMT”.	
61	Page number: 41 Para: 130 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Omission “Most GEF focal points and SGP national coordinators perceive the SGP as "implemented by UNDP, but is a stand-alone GEF corporate programme with limited (note: Request to add words- GEF corporate programme) linkage to other UNDP projects or programmes.” It would be important to provide the background and historical context to this statement as it was pursued and direction provided by GEF council through GEF Secretariat for many years to position the SGP in such context, while the evaluation could request that it is timely to review this and explore further to mainstream within UNDP. As part of the coherent coordination/mainstreaming at UNDP CO, it is worth highlighting also examples where SGP is playing a key role as delivery mechanism of UNDP IW projects, IAPs child projects in OP6, and other GEF FSP and other donor-funded projects, including food security in Uganda, Wildlife Management in Zimbabwe, Plastic management in Vietnam and more.	The last part of the comment has been noted. However, the evaluation cannot change the phrasing of the survey question or retrace the full historical background of this issue here.
62	Page number: 41 Para: 133 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Political sensitivity - Not sure whether the reference to debate between the two different visions correctly reflects the actual status of SGP. It is a GEF corporate program implemented by UNDP. SGP can mobilize co-financing and may serve as a centrepiece of UNDP local programming, but its status remains the same, as of now. “However, among CPMT, UNDP (note: request adding UNDP) and GEF Secretariat stakeholders, as noted during interviews, there appeared to be a debate between two different visions of the SGP: one in which the SGP is a UNDP programme financed by the GEF among other donors, and one in which the SGP is (exclusively) a GEF programme implemented by UNDP with cofinancing from other donors.” - We believe there is also a third vision, where we are trying to find a balance: “SGP as a GEF corporate programme implemented by UNDP, while also mainstreaming SGP within UNDP and take full advantage of the technical expertise, outreach and scaling up impacts that UNDP could offer.” For many, it is not about taking side of either of the two different visions that is stated above, but rather trying to find a middle ground and most constructive/productive pathway. Request adding this as third vision, to the two visions stated above. Related evaluation text:	This section was moved to para 129. It has been updated and reflects more explicitly the links between UNDP and SGP and the potential for increased mainstreaming.

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		However, among CPMT and GEF Secretariat stakeholders, as noted during interviews, there appeared to be a debate between two different visions of the SGP: one in which the SGP is a UNDP programme financed by the GEF among other donors, and one in which the SGP is (exclusively) a GEF programme implemented by UNDP with cofinancing from other donors.	
63	Page number: 43 Para: 139 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Political Sensitivity Request adding the following statement: “This evaluation examined new available information and confirms that the findings of the 2008 and 2015 evaluations remain valid, including programme activities, including capacity development and workshops, knowledge management and communication, monitoring and evaluation, technical assistance, are not to be considered as management cost”.	This has been reflected in the report and in the new tables.
64	Page number: 43 Para: 141 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error The following two sentences seem to be contradictory. Should this read: “ . . . have reported difficulties in managing the project cycle; they have experienced significant delays and interruptions in programme implementation, and report difficulties in managing the requirements for planning, financial management, reporting, or M&E. Nevertheless, analysis of available terminal evaluations for the upgraded country programme also showed that 100 percent of the completed UCPs (n = 12) were rated in the satisfactory range for efficiency.” This paragraph is mainly focused on UCP’s transaction. It may be better reflected in the opening sentence as “Notwithstanding the high efficiency ratings, a number of improvements could be made in reducing transaction costs, particularly of UCPs.” Related evaluation text: Many upgraded countries have reported difficulties in managing the project cycle; they have experienced significant delays and interruptions in programme implementation, and report difficulties in managing the requirements for planning, financial management, reporting, or M&E. Analysis of available terminal evaluations for the upgraded country programme also showed that 100 percent of the completed UCPs (<i>n</i> = 12) were rated in the satisfactory range for efficiency.	The text has been edited.
65	Page number: 44 Para: 141 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error, Material omission “...These must also be followed by multiple project proposals, each with successive alignment to the evolving trends of GEF programming (e.g., landscape approaches, programmatic and impact programme approaches, etc. “ Request to consider deleting the sentence “... each with successive alignment to the evolving trends of GEF programming (e.g., landscape approaches, programmatic and impact programme approaches, etc. “ as there is only one consistent SGP Project Document for the global programme for the OP, and each tranche project proposal does not make successive alignment changes. “In OP6, SGP submitted two funding programme requests for the global programme”: it was not 2, but 4 requests including 2 PIFs for SGP core resources and 2 PIFs for STAR.	This has been deleted, and edits have been made.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
66	Page number: 44 Para: 142 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error and material omission Request to consider including a brief sentence in the paragraph on the project cycle analysis for the global programme, not only for UCPs, which shows high efficiency with elapsed time from first receipt of the project concept to project start with an average 13.5 months for OP5 and 14.3 months for OP6. This is also supported by the rolling modality of the SGP that enables continued and uninterrupted support to the CSOs and CBOs at the country level. (data based on the PIMS+ and UNDP-certified financial report on SGP)	There is no implementation start dates of SGP global programmes in the AMR. Based on GEF portal the average is 13 months for OP5. The evaluation was not able to verify this number for OP6, since the dates in the GEF portal dataset are not correct. A reference has been made for the data quoting the source as CPMT.
67	Page number: 44 Para: 143 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error/Material omission - Para 143 states “In some cases, a new operational phase of SGP began when the previous phase hadn’t been fully disbursed”.. This is not factually accurate. In all SGP core/global Operational Phases from the Pilot Phase to OP7, the previous OP overlaps with the next Operational Phase. This has been part of the SGP rolling modality as a Corporate Programme of the GEF and contributes directly to increasing programme efficiency (i.e., the high ‘beginning’ and ‘end’ tail costs to start and close FSP projects is avoided) thereby enabling the programme to continually disburse funds to CSOs. The efficiencies of the overlapping Operational Phases of the SGP core funding (which also assists in the longitudinal analysis of programmatic results, including coalition-building and multi-partner platforms) is under-examined in this evaluation and could benefit from further analysis. - The average duration noted in this paragraph reflects the duration of global programme and not of the UCP. As recognized in other parts of the evaluation, the rolling modality enables the continuous, long term support that is required for CBO/CSO activities. - Request deleting or revising the sentence “In some cases, a new operational phase of SGP began when the previous phase hadn’t been fully disbursed” with “Based on the rolling modality of SGP that enables the programme to continuously support and disburse funds to CSO, a new operational phase of SGP begins while the previous phase disbursement is ongoing”. - It is also important to note that, as we made significant progress in closing the operational phases in reasonable timeframe, the SGP global involves 110 countries that are very different in capacity to deliver and it is critical to allow flexibility to some countries, particularly SIDS/LDC to deliver fully with appropriate longer timeframe.	The sentence on the rolling modality has been replaced and edited for clarity.
68	Page number: 45 Para: 146 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error	Text has been added for clarity.

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		“10 country audits were planned but were cancelled due to the pandemic.” - the 2 UCPs’ audit moved forward even during the pandemic, so that we can learn from the process and methodology and possibly apply to country audits for the global Country Programmes. Request considering this update.	
69	Page number: 45 Para: 148 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Material omission/Political sensitivity We appreciate the positive assessment and conclusion on M&E improvements. Request to please elaborate on para 148 with more details on improvements made in global M&E as many of the 2015 evaluation findings and lessons were followed up in that context. Of the 6 paras in M&E section, only one is dedicated to global M&E. This is also of pertinence in the grant- non grant debate context, and subsequent GEF-8 negotiations. Request for more inclusion from global M&E, and providing additional details and evidence at this link	Text has been added in line with this comment.
70	Page number: 45 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Material Omission Request reflection and addition in text on this important fact: “It is important to note that while linkages exist between global and UCPs and can be strengthened, there cannot be one M&E for both as there is a differentiating GEF monitoring policy. As per GEF Monitoring Policy, there are differentiated requirements for global and UCP mechanisms”. Please also consider adding: “ M&E linkages have been strengthened between Global and UCPs: In line with new M&E strategy, linkages have been strengthened between global and upgraded country programmes. While, GEF monitoring policies (pg.16) require UCPs to be guided by policies that require PIRs, MTEs and TEs as with other FSPs/MSPs, all UCPs also report as part of SGP annual monitoring reporting (AMR) process since OP5, and also comply with SGP global database completion requirements. AMR quality assurance process since 2017 has also included UCPs.”	This is now reflected in the report under para 156.
71	Page number: 45 Para: 149 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error “UCP M&E require some adjustments”. Limitations are linked to the FSP modality. This is an important paragraph. For maximum clarity, the following paragraph could be used: “M&E design for UCPs follows the same process as regular Full-Size Projects in the GEF. Even though the UCPs are now considered as Full-Size Projects by the GEF, they remain umbrella programmes comprised of many individual demand-driven grant projects. Unlike a regular Full-Size Project where a project team carries out the project activities and achieves results by themselves with support from partners, the UCP does not implement actions directly to achieve its targets. It defines a set of objectives, outcomes, and indicators at the design stage and then works to achieve them through different calls for proposals to fund activities carried out by third parties (CBOs, NGOs, and others) with SGP funding. Hence, the standard M&E design is not adequate to address the disconnect between both the indicator and target and the corresponding grant project activities for the UCPs, because the grant projects included in the portfolio are not identified when the project results framework is developed.” Additionally, please note that under GEF-6 and GEF 7, UCPs have also enhanced further community consultation and participatory landscape planning and community-based M&E tools, including the use of Indicators of Resilience in Socio-Ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes. This was highlighted as a lesson learned and best practice in the 2015 Joint Evaluation.	This paragraph has been reformulated

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
72	Page number: 46 Para: 150 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error “Targets were determined arbitrarily without any reference or basis at the design stage” – Please consider rephrasing. Targets were identified based on the National Coordinator’s previous experience in the area with CBOs, partners and others, understanding of the global environmental issues and their local manifestations, knowledge of SGP grant project cycles, etc. Additionally, it is important to note that PPG funds were not allocated to UCPs under OP5 to support project design. This has been corrected under OP6 and OP7.	This paragraph has been reformulated.
73	Page number: 46 Para: 151 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error With reference to SGP Country Programme Strategies (CPS), Para 151 states “Only one of the 21 projects met the Timebound criteria; the other 20 projects had no specific timeline for their planned results”. This is factually inaccurate. The timeframe for all of the CPS results is stated on the first page of the document, namely the four-year period of the relevant SGP Operational Phase (which is not necessarily then repeated again throughout the document).	The evaluation understands that CPS themselves are time-bound however, to be SMART, indicators should at least mention the time frame of their achievement (e.g. by the end of the cycle/project/4 years).
74	Page number: 46 Para: 152 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error “The compilation of results from individual grants was not completed at the terminal evaluation time, because only part of the funded projects was completed.” Please provide further context. Grant projects are funded year to year with the aim of allocating the last grant funding in time for the grantees to finish their project before the TE. Although grantees may be encouraged to finish their activities to meet the demands of the GEF OP cycle, they often meet with local obstacles and delays that cannot be overcome quickly or safely. It would also be helpful for the reader to have a sense of the ratio of completed versus non-completed grant projects to avoid feeding erroneous conclusions. Note that in OP6 and OP7 as in line with UNDP guidance, Terminal Evaluations are conducted three months prior to operational closure.	Text has been added to address this comment.
75	Page number: 46 Para: 153 Chapter: 4.3	Type: Factual error Example is mischaracterized as M&E: The EQUIPATE system is aimed at supporting the execution of grant projects in a number of fairly remote regions by providing technical assistance and closer accompaniment. This was aimed at raising the quality of the individual grant projects and ensuring their integration within a regional planning or landscape framework. The monitoring done in this system is not equivalent to the Project Management monitoring which is Country Programme focused and aimed at ensuring fulfilment of Country Programme goals and objectives. The Ecuador Country Programme places a high priority on knowledge management which is fed by the reports and information from regional EQUIPATES. This decentralized approach to Country Programme implementation of remote landscape planning/management requires a more sustained field presence to ensure synergies among projects, participation of CSOs on landscape multi-stakeholder platforms, and more effective learning-by-doing by the CSOs in their grant projects.	The evaluation agrees that this is not akin to project M&E, and the NGOs were set up to support the projects, however, the example provides a useful way to illustrate adaptive management within M&E. The TE mentions the role of the NGO is to “monitor and support.”

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
76	Page number: 47 Para: 155 Chapter: 4.4	Type: Material omission “This finding is repeated in this evaluation because the conditions in which the programme is being delivered have not changed.” This statement is not entirely correct, and please reflect important role of strategic grants. One significant change that has happened since 2015 based also on the evaluation findings is the introduction and increased use of “Strategic Grant” in SGP by both global and UCPs. There are significant numbers of Strategic Grants to replicate and scale up the successful work within the landscape/seascape as well as in other parts of the country.	A reference has been added to strategic grants, however, strategic grants are not in themselves a way to secure long-term sustainability.
77	Page number: 50 Para: 166 Chapter: 4.4	Type: Material omission Similar to the case of innovation, SGP faces limits to ensuring sustainability through broader adoption due to limited funding and mandate. Larger funding modality and a broader group of beneficiaries (e.g., local government, businesses) could help ensure sustainability and broader adoption. Another important note, SGP limits the amount of money CSOs can spend on themselves. In this situation, it may be difficult for them to continue work outside of the limited duration of the project. Reasonably increasing permissible overhead costs of the grantee organizations can also contribute to sustainability.	This has been addressed in paragraph 158.
78	Page number: 51 Para: 168 Chapter: 4.4	Type: Factual error On cofinancing, the following statement is not accurate: “There is a low likelihood of meeting cofinancing targets for OP6, given that it is already extending two years into GEF 7.” OP6 is still at slightly beyond mid point and grant commitment and disbursement are still ongoing until the operational closure of Dec 2022. The cofinancing targets for OP6 is likely to be met. Request revising the sentence to “The cofinancing of OP6 currently shows low as the operation is still under implementation. The 1 to 1 cofinancing ratio would likely be met like previous operational phases with the additional two years of operation until 2022.”	This has been clarified in the text.
79	Page number: 52 Table 21 Chapter: 4.4	Type: Factual error For internal evaluator use: The co-financing ratio for OP5 should be 1.09 instead of 1.00 to keep text and table compatible. Please see. (Paragraph 168... Table 21 shows that by OP5, every \$1 of GEF funding is matched at \$1.10)	This has been corrected in the text and table.
80	Page number: 53 Para: 172 Chapter: 4.4	Type: Omission/Political sensitivity Para 172: “The fact that donors outside the GEF are also using the SGP as an instrument to deliver their programming (e.g., Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative or Indigenous Peoples and Community-Conserved Territories and Areas) also speaks to the credibility of the mechanism globally.” Could we also request in this section that the evaluation to note on the important and complementary role of ICCA, CBA, CBR+, COMDEKS (with various donors) in addition to the GEF finance, particularly in addressing areas such as CC adaptation, IPs empowerment, and landscape/seascape approaches. The evaluation could highlight on the important progress made in having the continued partnership and cofinancing with the new phases of ICCA and COMDEKS from Government of Germany and Japan, and	Text has been added to the paragraph to clarify.

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		also mobilizing new resources from MAVA foundation for Western Africa and Mediterranean region, SOS-Sahel partnership in the Sahel region, and others.	
81	Page number: 54 Para: 174 Chapter: 4.4	Type: Material omission Very relevant and important points are articulated under the Additionality section, which we fully support. Just a small omission in para 174 that SGP also address “Chemical and Waste Management” issues in addition to all the focal areas that are stated.	This has been corrected in the text.
82	Page number: 55 Para: Conclusion 3 Chapter: 5	Type: Factual error “Policy and operational ambiguities – particularly regarding the upgrading process”. The policy is quite clear and unambiguous, such as it is, and has led to a number of unintended consequences, both good and bad. It would be helpful to define “operational ambiguities” as the operational procedures and processes are quite clear – the problem has been to fit the round peg of a SGP Country Programme into the square hole of a GEF FSP. The operational issues are directly related to the difficulties of converting a SGP Country Programme with a rolling modality and secure funding into a four-year GEF project with project indicators, targets, reporting and other factors. – As noted earlier, the difference in visions are not necessarily “conflicting” but shows the different elements of the SGP’s focus which is comprehensive and complex as shown in the ToC. Different stakeholders have focused and emphasized one element over another but not necessary conflicting. – Request removing the word “conflicting” and simply note “Different stakeholders hold diverging visions of the SGP....”	The wording has been slightly edited.
83	Page number: 55 Para: Conclusion 4 Chapter: 5	Type: Factual error / political sensitivity “The potential disadvantages and risks of upgrading are not made explicit or fully understood by stakeholders, including CPMT, SGP country programmes, UNDP, and the GEF.” This conflicts with practice in a) first discussing with CPMT the potential country programmes that they have identified as fulfilling the criteria for upgrading; b) alerting the identified National Coordinators of the new UCPs of the approach of upgrading and explaining the process and consequences; c) briefing UNDP Country Offices on GEF upgrading policy; d) when possible, meeting with the National Steering Committees to explain upgrading; and e) briefing UNOPS regarding the new UCPs and the corresponding execution arrangements. As noted earlier, all the actors above, particularly CPMT and SGP CP are all aware of some of the risks associated with UCP, including programming gaps, difficulty in securing STAR finance, interruptions or even closure, which could lead to the loss of a unique GEF funding window that is dedicated for CSOs and small grants in developing countries. In perspective, it has been considered that taking these risks and becoming UCPs are considered as better option than having no funding from the GEF by “graduating.”	The text of conclusion 4 has been edited/corrected.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		Request rewording this conclusion to: “The disadvantages and risks of the upgrading process are being recognized through the implementation of over two SGP operational phases. The potential disadvantages and risks of upgrading are not made explicit or fully understood by some stakeholders, including GEF Council and country stakeholders.” “To make assumptions about civil society capacity and the ability of countries to generate global environmental benefits”: the way this sentence is formulated seems to question the ability of “countries” to generate global environmental benefits, which surely can’t be the intent. The general aim of this sentence seems to be that the assumption about civil society capacity to generate GEB may be wrong, but this would constitute a very broad generalization perhaps contested by UCP country governments. “Country stakeholders view the upgrading process in a less positive light as the possibility approaches.” Please clarify if “country stakeholders” only SGP NCs or NSCs?	
84	Page number: 55 Para: Conclusion 6 Chapter: 5	Type: Material omission Conclusion 6 states that ‘The pace at which the SGP reinvents itself in response to changing programming trends is not effective, because the impact of new programmatic frameworks is not felt at the local level’. The conclusion also refers positively to the uptake of the landscape/seascape approach. Kindly consider additional evidence for rephrasing: Global ICCA Support Initiative funded by the Government of Germany (\$15M for Phase 1, and \$17.5M Phase 2), which is delivered by the SGP in 45 countries is an integral part of the wider SGP landscape and seascape governance approach. The ICCA GSI has been explicitly referenced by the CBD Secretariat as a key contribution to the Aichi Target 11 and has been instrumental in positioning the contribution of IPLCs in CBD negotiations, as well as towards the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. With respect to the local level, the ICCA GSI has been the main partner in support of the formation of the Global ICCA Consortium which has expanded its membership to 130+ grassroots and CSO organisations, who are in effect leading the advocacy efforts at the international level. SGP programmatic frameworks have not been changed from OP6 to OP7, i.e., over total of 8 years. It is not changed frequently. Considering the capacity of the country programme and partners on the ground, it has been intentionally kept consistent for the two operational phases with little change, i.e., only adding a new strategic initiatives on sustainable urban solution which was requested from country level partners. The change in OP6 from OP5, i.e. take an integrated approach rather than a siloed focal area approach, was necessary to address the complex issues on the ground that are more multi-focal in nature, and also to be in line with the UNDP and GEF strategic directions. Further, reinventing and adjusting SGP’s strategy and approach is considered necessary and important to adapt to the changing global/country situation and continue to attract support from donors and partners. Therefore, we request that the conclusion be further developed with new evidence. Suggested change: “SGP’s programming framework which includes strategic initiatives, focal area results, innovation programmes, and grantmakers plus initiatives are rather complex, and it takes time for the impact of the new programmatic frameworks to be felt at the local level, especially in changing exogenous country contexts.”	Some details have been added to this paragraph in line with the comments.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
85	Page number: 56 Para: Conclusion 8 Chapter: 5	Type: Factual error The governance structure is indeed complex, however it’s not clear from this text or the report in general what is meant exactly by “the upgrading process has complicated the lines of accountabilities even further”. The issue with governance structure is more to do with the limited frequency and weakened roles and responsibilities of the SGP Steering Committee as also stated in the report. The statement that “NSCs and national coordinators have insufficient support to enable the SGP to tap into more of its current social capital and leverage additional partnerships at the national level” doesn’t seem to follow the first sentence of the Conclusion i.e., it isn’t readily understandable how complexity of governance, complications in the lines of accountability, and “insufficient support to enable SGP to tap into more of its current social capital” are directly or logically linked. The statement that says “the global level, the relationship between the UNDP-based CPMT and the GEF has been weakened and responsibilities and accountabilities are ambiguous” is not accurate and has not been substantiated with evidence in the report. Request revising the statement to: “At the global level, the relationship between UNDP, GEF, CPMT, and UNOPS as well as responsibilities and accountabilities among these key stakeholders remain rather ambiguous.”	The last sentence has been edited however, the first part of the paragraph has been retained as the evaluation is referring to the relationship between NSC and UNDP CO.
86	Page number: 56 Para: Conclusion 9 Chapter: 5	Type: Factual error The transferal of a large number of operational risks and transaction costs to developing countries is without question, however, the listing of the consequences is unclear and may lead to confusion for the reader. Request redefining some words- like “dissatisfaction” can have multiple meanings depending on who is expressing it; “sub-optimal M&E” is unclear if “optimal” M&E isn’t defined or understood; “competition or conflict” is unclear – presumably this has to do with the STAR allocations? “Conflict” would seem to be an exaggeration unless you can point to a credible example.	All of these are discussed in the report and the paragraph has been edited.
87	Page number: 56 Para: Conclusion 10 Chapter: 5	Type: Politically sensitivity Thank you for your positive conclusion on M&E improvements. Welcome your additional feedback, and request you please consider rewording with the ensuing grant- non grant discussion, and need for continued M&E investments at all levels. Please see suggested changes in “....” to the body of main conclusion in the evaluation text. Conclusion 10. The improvements made to the SGP’s overall M&E framework have been significant, and more could be done to leverage the benefits of M&E in the future. The M&E system has been enhanced by the adoption of a new strategy and guidelines, indicators, and data monitoring system. “Continued investments in M&E at global, country and project levels are important. This is especially important in the grant- non grant debate context. With rollout of OP7, SGP M&E strategy requires each country programme to conduct an evaluation at least once per operational phase. It is key to administer it as it is at this level that broader adoption can be appropriately assessed, be it successes or lessons learned in scaling up, mainstreaming or replication. The M&E system also needs to be further advanced to provide sufficient granularity in the tracking of grants and grantees to support targeting of beneficiaries and to measure CSO capacity and maturity.”	The text of the conclusion has been edited.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		Here, also request deletion/rephrasing of line, “M&E protocols and processes between the global programme and UCPs are not harmonized, and there are questions as to the formulation of indicators used to measure SGP results”. As noted earlier, and re-noting for your convenience, both global and UCP M&Es are directed by different GEF requirements in M&E. Two key M&E protocols and processes harmonize them- (i.) UCPs reporting in AMRs; (ii.) reporting in SGP database. In OP7, a set of harmonized and mandatory indicators (as noted in M&E strategy) will also be administered. We realize this is forward looking and coming up, but request you please delete the sentence it may not be practically feasible to over emphasize the importance of M&E to connect global and UCP programmes, which are directed by different requirements per <u>GEF Monitoring Policy</u>. (pg. 16).	
88	Page number: 57 Para: Recommendation 3 Chapter: 6	Type: Factual error/political sensitivity “The SGP should reconsider whether it needs a continued upgrading policy. If upgrading is maintained, the SGP should rethink the means for its implementation in order to reduce the risk borne by countries and CSOs”. Should SGP be replaced with GEF here? The means for the implementation of the upgrading policy should be reflected in a GEF policy and are included in the implementation arrangements paper for SGP which is a GEF-led document. It is unclear what it means by saying “rethink the means for its implementation in order to reduce the risk...” Further clarification would be useful – is this about upgrading criteria or operational modality (i.e., programmatic approach, standalone FSPs, etc)? Further clarification would be helpful. Revise “.... potential for global economic benefit” to “global environmental benefit”.	By SGP the evaluation means all stakeholders involved in policy making for the SGP.
89	Page number: 57 Para: Recommendation 4 Chapter: 6	Type: Factual error SGP does not have “thematic programmes”. It has established “strategic initiatives” that address multiple focal areas through an integrated approach. Kindly delete this terminology as it is not been used under OP6 nor OP7 and it is confusing.	The text of the recommendation has been edited.
90	Page number: 57 Para: Recommendation 5 Chapter: 6	Type: Factual error This recommendation, which covers both global and national level governance structure, should be addressed to GEF and UNDP (also as key members of the Global Steering Committee) and CPMT, rather than to the Global Steering Committee.	GEF and UNDP are included as members of the GSC. The Steering committee allows for some CSO participation.
91	Page number: 58 Para: Recommendation 6 Chapter: 6	Type: Factual error “CPMT should ensure that adequate knowledge management strategies are in place...” - As it was noted above in the KM section, CPMT has developed KM and Comm Strategies and this contradicts with the findings. Revise the wording to “CPMT should ensure adequate capacity is in place to implement the knowledge management strategy that are applicable to all SGP participating countries including global programme and UCPs, and would allow....”	The text of the recommendation has been edited.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
92	Page number: 58 Para: Recommendation 7 Chapter: 6	Type: Material omission Appreciate this finding, and request a small change. Any measurement needs to follow an approach towards sustainability, which is built on consensus. These evaluation findings will be of help to develop such a SGP wide sustainability approach across global, country and project levels. Otherwise, just relying on measurement before an approach is developed to improve/harness sustainability will result in simply adding a few indicators without much political gravitas or use. In our view, an approach followed by suitable measurement of it will be effective. Request slight rewording to reflect above thinking in the main body of the text. Please see as appropriate. Suggestions is : “An approach towards sustainability, and subsequent measurement of it, should be developed to capture and use the tangible and intangible benefits of the programme for sustainable gains. A first layer of sustainability could be determined at grant or project level, while another could be at the level of grantees. A measure of sustainability in this context may be whether the organizations continue to operate in the environmental space after the SGP grant is concluded. A scale of CSO capacity could also be devised that would allow for long-term tracking of SGP grantees and their progression along the development continuum, especially for those who receive repeat funding or whose activities are replicated or upscaled through new projects.”	The text of the recommendation has been edited.
93	Page number: 58 Para: Recommendation 8 Chapter: 6	Type: Factual error While agreeing on the recommendation, it is also important to note that many of the initiatives supported by SGP would NOT necessarily make business cases, and it would require continued public and donor support, e.g., conservation initiatives in very remote areas. Related evaluation text: The CPMT should create operational mechanisms to improve and incentivize innovation and business-oriented approaches in country programmes. These mechanisms would maximize the potential for environmental benefits and social inclusion while creating opportunities for long-term viability of supported SGP projects. The social economy model provides a useful avenue for the SGP to expand to new beneficiaries and to optimize the sustainability of its results. Enhanced synergies between UNDP and the SGP at the country level could facilitate this process. Examples include priority selection of innovative projects, varied scales of financing for business-oriented initiatives, and the broader adoption of SGP projects into UNDP programming.	This is noted by the evaluation. No changes to the text were made.
94	Page number: 58 Para: Recommendation 9 Chapter: 6	Type: Factual error “Activities related to CSO capacity building, monitoring, knowledge, and communication should not be considered part of the management cost even if they are expenditures incurred by UNDP and UNOPS in their capacity as Implementing Agency and Executing Agency.” By definition, the costs of UNDP oversight of GEF projects are covered by the Agency Fee, not the project budget. Request updating the sentence with underlined words below: “The appropriateness of the level of management expenditures should be a factor of the level of management activities <u>and services</u> that are required of SGP and <u>not to be measured by percentage of the GEF grant</u>.... Activities related to CSO capacity building, monitoring, knowledge, and communication as well as <u>Agency Fee and</u>	This recommendation has been updated based on the addition of the new tables on programmatic costs. The issue of the fee is highlighted in the main text of the report.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		<u>Executing Cost</u> should not be considered part of the management cost even if these expenditures are incurred by UNDP and UNOPS in their capacity as Implementing Agency and Executing Agency.”	
95	Page number: 59 Para: Chapter: 7	Type: Factual error The two references below point to the same document: — . 2017. “Small Grants Programme Report: Management of Core Funding And Results Framework For GEF-7 (prepared by UNDP).” GEF/C.55/Inf.05. GEF, Washington, DC. — . 2018a. “Small Grants Programme Report: Management of Core Funding And Results Framework For GEF-7 (prepared by UNDP).” GEF/C.55/Inf.05. GEF, Washington, DC. The two references below point to the same document (Part II): — . 2014. "GEF Small Grants Programme-Sixth Operational Phase (Part I) project document (GEF ID 6931)." — . 2016. “GEF Small Grants Programme--Six Operational Phase (part II) project document (GEF ID 9209).”	This has been corrected in the list of references.
96	Annex page number: 18 Annex 2	Type: Factual error On Annex 2 on SGP Report Card- please reflect source as “SGP Annual Monitoring Reports and Quality Assurance Process”.	This has been corrected in the text.
97	Annex page number: 19 Annex 3	Type: Factual error Table 1 Global programme and upgraded programme samples for portfolio analysis The following countries were confirmed part of the portfolio analysis and request they are included in the table: Congo Brazaville, Cameroon, South Africa, Yemen, Djibouti, Tunisia, Lebanon, Cambodia, Nepal, Micronesia, Iran, Macedonia, Turkey, Haiti, Jamaica	These countries were identified in the initial sample list but due to time constraints, they were not included in the actual analysis
98	Annex page number: 93 Annex 9	Type: Factual error • Doley Tshering, Diana Salvemini- correcting spellings • Nick Remple’s former title is SGP Deputy Global Management and UCP Global Coordinator.	These have been corrected.
99	Overall report	Type: material omission As noted in the methodology section, a constraint of the methodology was that the evaluation had not been able to conduct in-person meetings with key stakeholders or undertake field visits to project sites. A major methodology is to conduct a survey which treats all respondents’ responses with the same weight, while it should be recognized that these respondents do not necessarily have the same level of understanding, knowledge and experience with SGP. For example, National Steering Committee members usually have very little contact with CPMT or GEF, hence their responses about these key stakeholders could be a bit skewed due to their lack of interactions with these stakeholders.	Point taken. However, the evaluation disaggregated some responses to avoid misrepresentation.

#	Chapter/Section/ Para Number	Suggestions/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team

External Reviewer (Dennis Garrity) comments

	Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
1.	Is the analysis relevant to the development context and roles that GEF and UNDP can have as a multilateral organization? Yes. To a large degree the analysis is quite relevant. However, I do wish to highlight some areas where the analysis can be further improved to be more relevant to the development context. The overall purpose of the joint evaluation is to examine the GEF SGP performance, to determine whether any changes are required to improve effectiveness of the SGP, and to provide the GEF Council and the UNDP Executive Board with evaluative evidence of the SGP’s relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The evaluation also attempted assess the relevance and strategic positioning of the SGP within the GEF and provide recommendations on the way forward for the SGP. Previous reviews had concluded that SGP is a cost-effective way for the GEF to generate global environmental benefits while addressing country priorities and responding to the needs of local populations. In addressing the question: To what extent is the SGP contributing to the delivery of global and local environmental, and socioeconomic benefits? ...the answer to this question would seem to depend to very significant extent on the impact per dollar invested in this program, and in particular its impact compared to the impact per dollar invested in the conventional GEF projects that make up 85% of the expenditures. Overall, the SGP portfolio represents only 15 percent of the UNDP-GEF portfolio, for a total of \$1,229.13 million over the entire SGP existence. The SGP funding pool is quite small compared to the conventional GEF funding pool. Thus, the evaluation’s examination of effectiveness and efficiency should have also compared the impact metrics for SGP projects to those of the pool of conventional GEF projects, and it should have determined whether and to what degree SGP investments have greater or lesser impact on the GEF mission than those of the conventional projects. That analysis would provide a basis for determining the appropriate proportion of the GEF funds that would optimally be invested in the SGP in the future. The SGP was originally conceived as a funding window into the GEF for small-scale activities to complement the larger GEF work programme. The optimal distribution of funds between these two windows is a critical question that deserves to be dealt with in such a review. Another aspect that is quite relevant to the development context is whether the GEF should be putting in place increased direction and monitoring for the inclusion of more resources to grassroots NGOs, or a higher proportion of resources to them, from the larger, conventional GEF projects. Such an analysis might look at this question from both the standpoint of the upgraded countries and from non-upgraded countries.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. The team has added some aspects in the report to reflect the suggestion of the reviewer such as the ratio of the SGP within the overall GEF portfolio, and the importance of SGP as a global mechanism.

	Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
	More emphasis is needed in the evaluation on how effectively the SGP's five strategic initiatives are designed and implemented to promote alignment with GEF integrated approaches to key global environmental issues and complementarity to focal areas and impact programs at the community level. And also, how such alignment might best occur. Para 100 states that <i>'Incomplete knowledge management and communication strategies were reported by several countries as a factor preventing or hindering upscaling, despite high volumes of information being generated.'</i> Perhaps high volumes of information is not the key. One question related to effectiveness is to what extent has the SGP developed networks among grant beneficiaries to link them with each other. The role of social media in the SGP to share information and experiences among the grantees might be an excellent device to build camaraderie among grantees, and to enable a much broader opportunity for best practices to be permeated among the grantees and beyond them. It seems that this opportunity to improve effectiveness and efficiency was not adequately considered in the review. But it could be a fundamental element in building greater appreciation by governments of just what SGP grantees are accomplishing, and thus prompt governments to be more forthcoming in including grants to large and small NGOs in their GEF projects. Another related concern about the SGP is that its work in the countries lacks visibility. And without visibility, the aspirations of grant-receiving grassroots organizations to have any impact in scaling-up or in policymaking is going to be very limited. The evaluation should have a look at this visibility issue in relation to the effectiveness of the programme.	
2.	Is the methodology used clear, appropriate and sufficiently consistent with the TOR? One significant methodological question is the independence of the evaluation. The independent evaluation offices of the GEF and UNDP conducted the review. Thus, it is somewhat equivalent to an internal audit, as the heads of the IEO report to the heads of the GEF and UNDP. Given the long history of the program, the question arises as to the need for a true external review of the program, analogous to an external audit. The committee was composed of the two directors and two senior evaluators of the Independent Evaluation Offices of the GEF and UNDP. Shouldn't there also have been independent members of the committee? The survey provided a rich source of data for the evaluation, and much of that data was appropriately included as a series of tables. And a very large portion of the report dwelt on these tables and their interpretation. The portfolio review and meta-assessment. These included (1) a sampling of 22 country programme strategies from the global country programme. The sampling method for the choice of countries was not given. It is stated that there were country case studies conducted in eight countries. The criteria by which the case study countries were selected was not stipulated. A thorough description of that process should be given to provide evidence of the representativeness of the sample.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. Additional clarification in the text have been made. As for the issue raised on independence, this evaluation was conducted by the two independent evaluation office of the GEF and UNDP. A Steering Committee was formed with the two directors of GEF and UNDP IEOs to guide the evaluation process. In the future evaluation conducted by an external entity could be considered. The evaluation team has edited/corrected/clarified the text in the report to reflect these comments.

	Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
	There were nine questions that guided the evaluation. Each of these questions would have had some unique methodological aspects to be considered in determining answers to the questions. The methodologies to come up with answers should be spelled out for each question to the degree that it is practical and relevant to do so. Projects ratings were discussed in para 76: <i>Most of the projects reviewed in the case studies have satisfactory outcome ratings, as illustrated in table 9. There was a marked increase in positive rating, from 77 percent of projects in the satisfactory range in the 2015 evaluation to 92 percent in this evaluation.</i>²³ <i>For the upgraded country programmes, 100 percent of the completed projects (n = 12) are rated in the satisfactory range for outcomes in the terminal evaluations, compared to 88 percent for the completed GEF projects (n = 153) from the GEF-5 period (GEF IEO 2020b).</i> This paragraph and the table should be accompanied by a description of the methodology by which the ratings were done – to give the reader some idea of how the ratings were derived.	
3.	Is the report well written, with a clear line of argument? The report strictly follows the questions as an organizing outline. This seems reasonable and useful as an organizing structure. The report was quite well-written overall. There were, however, a number of statements that were sufficiently vague that it was not possible to understand them very clearly. A list of some of these passages proposed for further editing is attached.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team.
4.	Are the findings clear and triangulated? The report says that <i>‘The evaluation team conducted triangulation on data collected and across the methods used to determine trends and formulate main findings and conclusions. Different stakeholders were consulted during the process to test preliminary findings.’</i> Overall, the findings appear to be clear and well-triangulated. However, the process by which the triangulation process was achieved was not explained as clearly or thoroughly as it could be. For example: How were the stakeholders selected to participate in the triangulation? How were they consulted? Interviews? Surveys? Did those consulted have access to the data, methods, and tentative conclusions? There were 193 interviews conducted for the evaluation, which is a large and admirable cross-section of the stakeholders. These interviews would have unearthed a great number of valuable observations about the performance of the program, and how it could be further improved. Thus, a section of the report that quoted a wide range of the most insightful observations by these stakeholders should be included. These observations will complement the hard data with a real sense of what the stakeholders are thinking about the program. And some of the stakeholders’ suggestions for improvement will undoubtedly be very interesting. This collection of stakeholders’ observations might possibly be accompanied by the evaluators’ interpretations of these comments and suggestions as they pertain to the various components of the report -- as a valuable element of the triangulation process.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. The evaluation team suggests a separate evaluation product to make use of the data gathered, specifically the survey.

	Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
5.	Are the conclusions and recommendations appropriate to the findings and the assessment criteria used for the analysis? The conclusions seem to be appropriate to the findings and will undoubtedly be useful. However, the narrative for each conclusion is somewhat too brief to fully clarify the meaning and implications of the conclusion. The narrative should be at least doubled or tripled in length to provide the proper context for each of the conclusions. This will be valuable to clarify the full meaning and the indications of the conclusions, thus assisting the readers to fully comprehend them, and assist the SGP to respond knowledgeably to each of them. The recommendations also seem appropriate to the findings and assessment criteria. However, it is disappointing that the recommendations to not include a reference to how the linkages between the SGP projects and conventional GEF projects should or could be improved. The recommendations should include an expectation for the GEF to ensure that SGP projects be better connected to conventional GEF projects, and to build more vigorously and explicitly on successful SGPs in designing new GEF projects. Also, it is useful to consider including a review of the appropriate proportion of total GEF funding that is allocated to the SGP, based on a comparative assessment of the value for dollar invested in SGP grants vs conventional projects (see also my comments under Question 1.) The review seemed quite internally focused. It lacked sufficient context in recognizing and interpreting the SGP experience vis-a-vis the rapidly changing and intensifying strength of civil society engagement on the environment in recent years, regarding climate change, biodiversity, and land restoration. It would have been useful for the review to have examined this context as a foundation for how the SGP should consider evolving in relation to this rapidly changing situation. Also, it would have been useful for the evaluation to have examined how the SGP might better relate to other non-GEF programs that are geared to support common environmental objectives at the grassroots. For example, how might grants under the Landscapes and Seascapes theme relate to the 1000 Landscapes Program coordinated by EcoAgriculture Partners, or how grants under the agroecological farming theme might relate to the program of Global Landcare. <i>Regarding Conclusion 3. Different stakeholders hold conflicting and diverging visions of the SGP, which has an impact on its overall governance, policies, and future directions. The lack of a unified vision leads to policy and operational ambiguities—particularly regarding the upgrading process.</i> It would have been quite useful to document the nature of these ‘<i>conflicting and diverging visions</i>’, and their sources, in order to give the reader a better understanding of what these were. This narrative could include quotations from a wide range of the stakeholders that provided their views on the topic. Conclusion 8 reads in part: <i>At the global level, the relationship between the UNDP-based CPMT and the GEF has been weakened and responsibilities and accountabilities are ambiguous.</i>	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. The evaluation team has edited/corrected/clarified the text in the report to reflect these comments.

	Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
	This statement needs further elaboration as to what about the relationship has been weakened, and what responsibilities and accountabilities are ambiguous. Such background is necessary to give the reader clarity about these issues.	
6.	Any other feedback to strengthen the report? The costs of the administration of the program should have been reviewed more deeply in relation to the amount of grant funding administered. The evaluation could have examined this issue by examining the metrics of grant administration in comparison to other comparable programs both within and outside the GEF to draw conclusions relevant to the efficiency aspect of the review. <i>Table 11: Distribution of Upgraded Country Programmes by Country (million \$).</i> It would be useful that this table also include columns for the number of small grants making up the program in each country, and a column on the average size of the grants. <i>P 28. Additionally, all the newly approved UCPs in GEF-7 have identified specific knowledge management activities that will promote replication and upscaling across the landscapes, across the country and to the global SGP network.</i> The evaluation didn't focus quite enough attention on this critical issue, of how well did the grants empower and facilitate the projects to scale up significantly. <i>P 48. There are only one or two cases (e.g., Egypt) where the results of an SGP project were then picked up by the government through a full funding proposal for the GEF, or through UNDP.</i> This is a somewhat alarming observation: SGP projects are not being recognized in government GEF requests. The reasons why this is not happening should have been investigated more deeply and reported on in the document. And measures for dramatically improving this metric ought to have been discussed in some detail in the evaluation. After all, this is an important aspect of the scaling question of <i>'to what degree have the small grants of SGP stimulated significant scaling-up beyond the term of the project'</i>? One of the benchmarks of the success of scaling-up SGP grants would be the extent to which their outcomes are taken up by the larger GEF grants in the same country. <i>Para 166. As for the factors contributing to the replication and upscaling of the SGP, survey respondents agreed that the efforts of the national coordinator and the steering committee, as well as the quality of project design, were the main contributing factors.</i> This is an interesting result, but it begs the question of how and why were these efforts so fundamental to the success of upscaling? In other words, what is the pathway by which the national coordinator and the steering committee can and do influence the process of enhancing the scaling up of the outcomes of the SGP projects? That pathway needs to be articulated, and then understood and covered more explicitly in the narrative. The evaluation's target audience is the GEF Council members and the UNDP Board members, other GEF and UNDP stakeholders, as well as the general public and professionals interested in development and small grants programs.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. The evaluation team has edited/corrected/clarified the text in the report to reflect these comments.

	Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
	Para 127 states that <i>‘The SGP provides a useful model for small grant-making that could provide valuable lessons for other areas of UNDP work.’</i> Indeed it does. But the SGP experience has relevance far beyond UNDP. As the world’s largest small grants program, the structure, functions and impacts of the SGP can provide enormous insights into the utility of small grants programs in general. But that issue was not addressed directly in the evaluation. It would be useful to address it because the relative value of making small grants to small NGOs is a much-debated topic in the development arena. Indeed, many donors shy away from funding programs that involve making small grants to small organizations, especially grassroots organizations that lack experience in financial reporting and monitoring. The experience of the SGP, with its unparalleled experience in this domain, can have tremendous influence on the direction of this important debate. One outcome may be that the SGP experience may build more confidence among donors across the board in the value of investing more of their resources in small organizations, and may provide valuable guidance as to how to do that. This is a point upon which the evaluation would encouraged to address in more depth. The section entitled <i>‘The Grant versus Non-grant Debate’</i> that begins with paragraph 134 is a fairly lengthy exposition of the struggle to resolve differences in interpreting the classification of GEF expenditures. It notes that <i>‘the so-defined “management” expenditures were more than 31 percent of the total SGP envelope...’</i> Indeed, this seems to be an inordinately large segment of the total SGP costs. Thus, the proportion of true management costs vis-à-vis support costs that include <i>‘the provision of technical support to grantees, training, knowledge management and communications, workshops and monitoring, and evaluation of projects on the ground’</i> is an important distinction. It would be helpful to provide tables to show the breakdown of the costs that are described textually in this section, and to also provide more clarity on exactly what are the alternative options for displaying these costs that are being so hotly debated. Finally, in examining the sustainability of local organizations’ efforts, it is frequently observed that the most crucial factor in the success of a grassroots organization is the presence of a selfless, visionary and persistent leader, who is willing to make great sacrifices over many years to build social capital and achieve impact. Small grant support to such kinds of local leaders can be highly effective, because they tend to carry on regardless of outside assistance. Providing support to such organizations has been called ‘drip-feed support’. Thus, it would be useful for the evaluation team to examine this phenomenon, and to consider creating a metric to determine the capabilities and proven dedication of the grassroots organizations’ leadership as a major basis for SGP investments. Passages to revise for more clarity in articulating the meaning Para 89. It should be pointed out that this is not a good argument against the landscape and seascape approach, but rather of geographically extending the approach too widely.	

	Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
	Para 127. This para begs for more clarity and detail as to the nature of what are these miscommunications and ambiguous responsibilities. Para 135. What is this ‘hierarchy’? And why are non-grant elements to be perceived as less legitimate? Para 136. A bit hard to digest. Para 153. The text doesn’t seem to clearly elaborate on the opening statement. Conclusion 1. Needs more clarification on the type of activities and the way in which they are implemented to ground this statement. Conclusion 2. ‘The means of such expansion are not fully clear’ needs to be clarified to make the point more understandable. Conclusion 3. The statement begins by focusing on the vision (or perhaps more specifically the need for a clear vision statement) but then switches over to aspects of how the overall direction has been affected by a number of management changes and other considerations. These seem to be somewhat independent factors, thus, leaving the reader somewhat confused. Conclusion 4. Two phrases are confusing: ‘Could lead to the loss of a unique GEF funding window’ and ‘Country stakeholders view the upgrading process in a less positive light as the <i>possibility approaches</i>.’ Conclusion 7. What is meant by ‘different models’? Doesn’t this somewhat contradict Conclusion 6 which argued against changing programmatic frameworks too frequently? Conclusion 8. How has the relationship been weakened? What is ambiguous about responsibilities and accountabilities? Conclusion 12. This one is quite confusing to interpret. Needs further clarification of the meaning and logic. Recommendation 1. Isn’t what is meant here an updated vision <u>statement</u>? Recommendation 3. Is that ‘economic benefits’ or rather ‘environmental benefits’? Recommendation 9. The second and fourth sentences are not clear and should be restated.	

External Reviewer (Celine D Cruz) comments

		Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		Overall comments: - Given the scale at which organizations like the GEF and UNDP operate it is very impressive that SGP was designed specifically for CSOs and communities with the belief that small funding to local projects on the ground can cumulatively benefit the global environment. - There is a lot of work gone into this evaluation report, which is evident from the qualitative and quantitative information presented. The report fulfills the objectives of the evaluation. This evaluation reflects the vision and commitment of GEF and UNDP and the national and local actors to SGP. - At the same time, the larger the program becomes, the more challenging it becomes to link the global and local agendas and even more challenging to evaluate the intangible results. - SGP is at a juncture in its history where it has scope to grow and make a difference. The learning from this evaluation shows that SGP at its best has the potential to benefit many more communities and CSOs and influence how GEF and UNDP can respond to strengthening this agenda. - There is the aspiration from GEF and UNDP to make SGP more relevant, more effective, more efficient and more sustainable. One way has been through the upgraded country program (UCP) while continuing with the SGP global program at the local level. The present evaluation shows the challenges for SGP as it tries to straddle between these two paths and find its way forward. - The learning from this evaluation has bearing on national and local actors and building their capacity to encourage local solutions that benefit the environment. However, this evaluation should aim to encourage SGP’s vision and strengthen SGP’s strategy to open the space to bring more local voices to the table. - There is also the challenge of trying to measure the evidence-based data and the science to back up the linkage between the development work and the environmental benefits. - There is also scope to have a more rounded analysis by linking the environmental agenda and the SDGs. - The intention of this feedback is to strengthen this already well prepared evaluation document with suggestions that make it more accessible and readable while tightening the main messages.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team.

		Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		1. Is the analysis relevant to the development context and roles that GEF and UNDP can have as a multilateral organization? The analysis on the whole is relevant to the development and environmental context and roles of GEF and UNDP. It would have been useful to have more scientific and evidence-based data to show the environmental benefits. Suggest separating the analytical spaces for the two pathways; SGPs and UCPs. Suggest categorizing the countries as LDC, SIDS, CVC (Climate Vulnerable Countries) for the SGPs and UCPs analysis so the understanding is more nuanced.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. It was not possible to totally separate the discussion of the GCP and UCP because there are integrated within the SGP. The evaluation team has clarified how the GCP and UCP overlaps in paragraph discussing the structure of the report. The evaluation team edited/corrected/clarified the text in the report to reflect these comments.
		2. Is the methodology used clear, appropriate and sufficiently consistent with the TOR? The methodology is straightforward and consistent with the objective of the study and meets the standard research requirements. Many interviews and country case studies have been collected. However, the methodology is weak in collecting and collating information from the voices from the frontlines. Covid19 was an additional challenge and it will be useful to understand if there was anything done to mitigate this gap. The evaluation could do a better job of linking the voices from the environmental scientist (external knowledge) and the indigenous voices (local knowledge) to get a better understanding of SGP's environmental benefits, making the case with sound scientific data.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. The 'external voices' requested are part of the case studies through the NSC interviews.
		3. Is the report well written, with a clear line of argument? The report meets the requirements of the TOR. However, there is room to keep the language of the report more accessible, simple and reader friendly. For example, the "approach paper" has clarity in language. Tackling all the different moving parts of an evaluation and bringing it together is not always easy. One suggestion to achieve this is to structure the analysis and tables separately for SGP and UCP in every section. This visual separation will have the power to sieve out the lessons and give a more nuanced understanding of the two pathways, SGP and UCP. Presently, it is hard to get that at one shot and one has to read extensively before one gets to the idea.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. It was not possible to totally separate the discussion of the GCP and UCP because there are integrated within the SGP. The evaluation team clarified how the GCP and UCP overlaps in paragraph discussing the structure of the report.
		4. Are findings clear and triangulated? The evaluators have applied the necessary statistical analysis and used different methods of triangulation to verify and check the data. The data visualization is very satisfactory and the information and tables are easily understood to a lay person.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. The text boxes are where the evaluation team attempted to bring in local voices out of the 125 countries of the SGP.

		Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
		The report can be made more alive if it would incorporate more community voices, especially women, to reflect gender inclusion. Presently, It is not easy to get a sense of the intangible benefits of the SGP.	
		5. Are the conclusions and recommendations appropriate to the findings and the assessment criteria used for the analysis? The conclusions and recommendations are coherent and align with the key questions and analysis. Please continue to maintain the separation between the SGP and UCP for clarity. It would be useful to have the recommendations in both narrative and in a diagram for each of the actors GEP, UNDP, CPMT.	The comments here are noted by the evaluation team. It was not possible to totally separate the discussion of the GCP and UCP because there are integrated within the SGP. The evaluation team clarified how the GCP and UCP overlaps in paragraph discussing the structure of the report.
		6. Any other feedback to strengthen the report? If available, please include local stories of voices from the front lines. Will also help to have the abbreviations described earlier on. Use of diagram to describe the organizational structure at the global, national and local level.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. The text boxes are the space in the report to bring in local voices out of the 125 countries of the SGP.
1	Chapter1, Para1	introduction: It is not very clear if this evaluation is only about UCP or if it also includes the SGP global program. (The Approach Paper clearly states UPC in the first para. However, the evaluation paper seems to be alternating between the two pathways. It would be good to mention the two pathways and how they fit in the overall structure right in the beginning.	Has been clarified in para 4.
2	Chapter 2, Section 2.1	- Overview of SGP: it will be good to also have the Overview of the UCP in a separate para and rename this Chapter so the reader gets the context and has clarity on the two pathways. - Add a diagram to show the relationship between the key organizations globally, nationally and locally. This will make it easy to get the whole picture at a glance. - Objectives: While there is reference to SGP there is no mention of UCP in the objectives. Not clear if the UCP falls under the SGP global program or if it is a separate pathway. Needs clarity.	A figure has been added after para 4.

		Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
3	Chapter 3. Para14 Chapter3, Para15 Chapter3, Section 3.2	- Methodology: The thrust of the SGP is about CSOs/local Communities. However while there is some minor reference to communities in the list of those interviewed, it is not clear who and what constitutes the “community”. Will need to define the word “community” in the SGP context. It would help to understand the details of which voices from the local communities were targeted, and how and why they were chosen. Making a distinction between CSO and community voices is important especially since the SGP is designed specifically for this group. - Evaluation Questions: Once again separate SGP global program from UCP in each of the 4 categories Relevance; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Sustainability. There is mention of UCP in the first section on “Relevance” but the analysis for the rest of the three categories also needs to mention UCP. - Limitations: Will be good to understand which voices were easier to be heard during COVID compared to others. What were the limitations in listening to some of the significant voices? How was this mitigated? If not, what were the challenges? E.g. the voices from the front lines.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. The definition of a community in this report refers to its common use in project management. The text boxes are the space in the report to bring in local voices from the 125 countries of the SGP. The level of data disaggregation did not allow much differentiation of CSO/CBOs and “local communities.”
4	Chapter 4. Section 4.1 Chapter4, Section 4.2 Chapter4, Section 4.3 Chapter4, Section 4.4 Chapter4, Para173	4/4.1: Relevance: This is a good example of how the two spaces have been separated for “SGP” and “UCP” in the questions and analyses section. Needs to be followed throughout the other sections of the analysis. Can do with better labelling. 4/4.2: Effectiveness: Like above, the questions posed for this section need to reflect the separation between SGP and UCP. While the analysis does reflect UCP, the questions and analysis need to align like in 4.1. Would it be possible for the tables to also reflect this distinction? The same pattern can be followed for innovation & gender in both the SGP and UCP. - Would be useful to have a Table for the “GrantMaker” section, listing activities that fall in this category. This section is significant and needs to be better visualized so as to help the reader better understand the policy and institutional engagements between CSOs and government in SGP and UCP. 4/4.3: Efficiency: Once again, the key questions and the analyses for this section need to be aligned and reflect the separation of SGP and UCP - Sustainability: Need for greater clarity and alignment between key questions and analysis for SGP and UCP. - The section on “Additionally” mentions 6 areas but then describes only 2 of the 6 areas (para 174,175). Will be good to have a para on all the 6 areas.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. It was not possible to totally separate the discussion of the GCP and UCP because there are integrated within the SGP. The evaluation team has clarified how the GCP and UCP overlaps in paragraph discussing the structure of the report

		Comments/Feedback	Reply/Action by Evaluation Team
5	Chapter5	Conclusions: Stay with the same pattern separating conclusions for SGP and UCP in each of the 4 main areas of analysis.	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. It was not possible to totally separate the discussion of the GCP and UCP because there are integrated within the SGP. The evaluation team has clarified how the GCP and UCP overlaps in paragraph discussing the structure of the report
6	Chapter6	Recommendations: Follow pattern of separating recommendations for SGP and UCP for the strategic/ programatic/ operational areas. It may also help to have recommendations for each of the actors shown separately on a table GEF, UNDP, CPMT, Global Steering Committee, national and local teams	These comments have been noted by the evaluation team. The evaluation team edited/corrected/clarified the text in the report to reflect these comments.
7	References	No comments	