



• PHOTO: PATRIZIA COCCA/GEF •

Improving fisheries management and promoting sustainable fishing practices is a strategic priority in the GEF's international waters focal area. GEF investments in fisheries management focus on fostering and enhancing multistate cooperation and catalyzing investments to support sustainable fisheries. This includes interventions for improving policies, governance arrangements, management approaches and institutional capacity. This study focuses on the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of GEF interventions in fisheries.

REVIEW OF GEF EXPERIENCE IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

This desk-based review assesses the relevance and the performance of Global Environment Facility (GEF) interventions in the fisheries sector. It includes a portfolio of projects and programs approved between GEF-1 and GEF-7 that are either completely focused on fisheries or have a substantial fisheries component.

- How have GEF interventions to sustainable fisheries in large marine ecosystems and areas beyond national jurisdiction responded to the overexploitation of marine fishery resources?
- What are the performance, the global environmental benefits, and the social benefits generated by GEF-supported fisheries projects, and what are the factors affecting the achievements?
- To what extent does the GEF ensure long-term sustainability of its interventions?



• PHOTO: PATRIZIA COCCA/GEF •

GEF support to sustainable fisheries is relevant and is responding to the overexploitation of marine fishery resources. The large marine ecosystems (LMEs) that received the most GEF funding are those at a higher risk. The fisheries portfolio is dominated by investments in the LMEs, which account for 69 percent of total GEF grants. The GEF has supported fisheries projects in 20 LMEs and the Pacific Ocean Warm Pool (figure 1), and it is expanding to cover more areas. The 10 LMEs with the most GEF funding are at the highest risk level when assessed for risk factors related to fish and fisheries, pollution, ecosystem health, and human development.¹

Funding allocated to projects in freshwater fisheries has been limited.

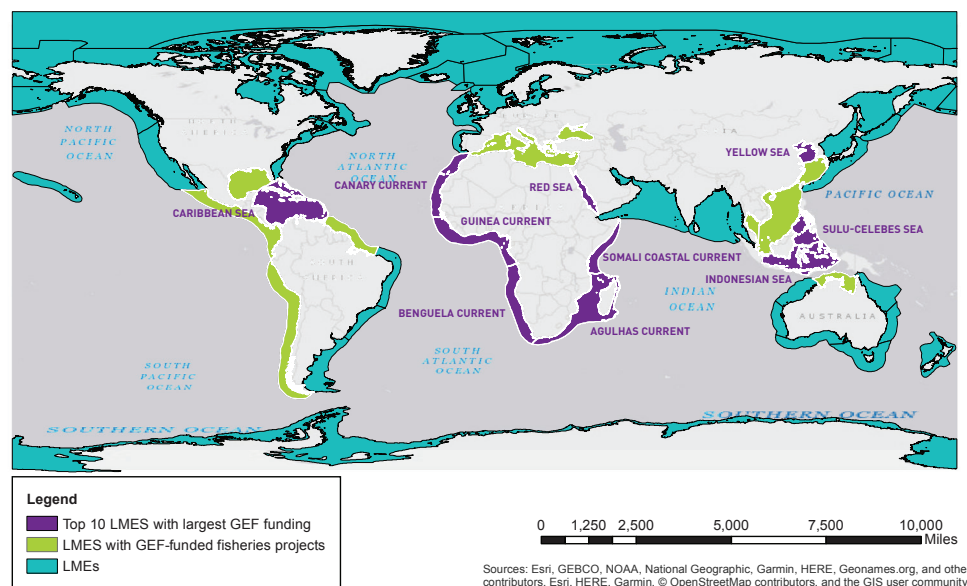
Freshwater fisheries is the least subscribed theme in the fisheries portfolio, with \$21.2 million for three projects in the Caspian Sea, Lake Edward, and Lake Albert. Two freshwater fisheries projects that operated in the Caspian Sea in GEF-3 and GEF-4 contributed to the ratification and implementation of the Tehran Convention, which is the first formal legal commitment among the five Caspian countries. The freshwater fisheries project in GEF-5 has been working on integrated fisheries and water resources management in Lake Edward and Lake Albert.

The GEF's additionality in promoting sustainable fisheries is observed through building institutional capacities for informed decision making and promoting regional and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms for improved governance of transboundary fisheries. The creation of the Benguela Current Commission and the establishment of the Southwest Indian Ocean Strategic Ecosystem Alliance are good examples of bringing diverse stakeholders together to formulate policies for sustainable management of transboundary fishery resources.

GEF support for knowledge generation, synthesis, and exchange builds institutional capacities for informed decision making and harmonized management. The Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) program has been working on improving public understanding of the ecosystem threats and services related to ABNJ and strengthening global capacity for effective management in ABNJ.

The evolution of GEF-supported interventions indicates increased integration in fisheries management approaches that benefit both the environment and social and economic

FIGURE 1 Distribution of GEF-funded fisheries projects by LME

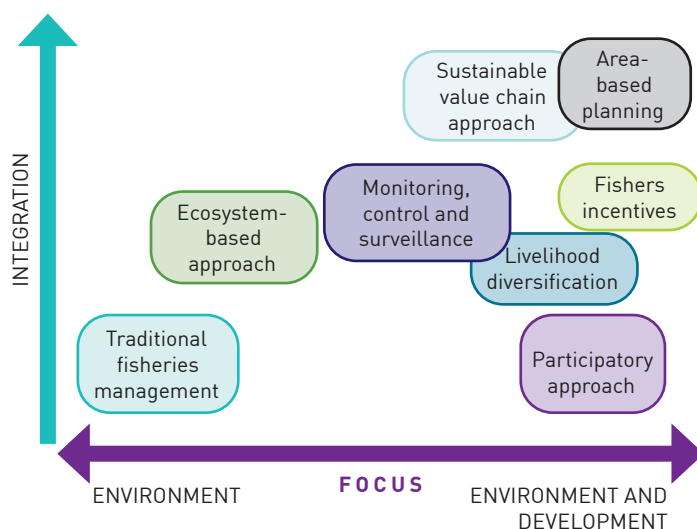


SOURCE: The LME layer was downloaded from IW: Learn <http://geonode.iwlearn.org/layers/geonode:lmes>. GEF investment data were retrieved from the GEF Portal.

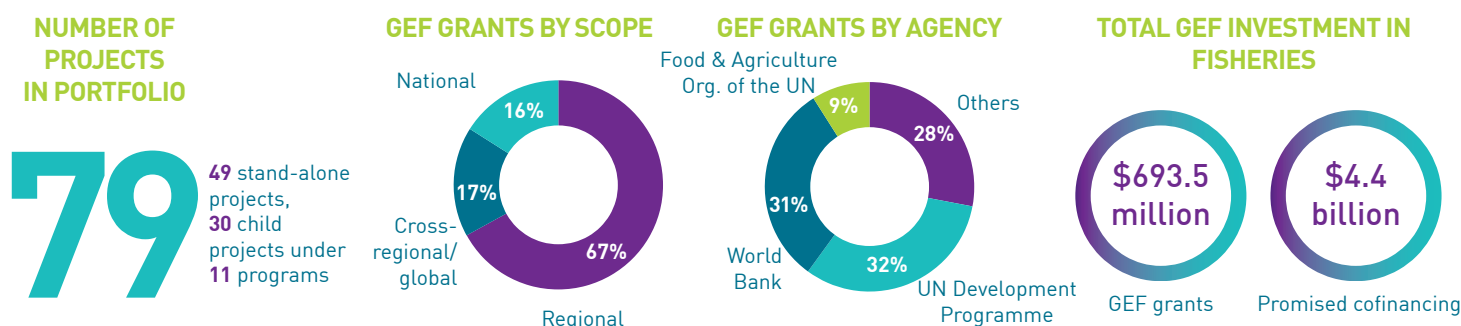
development. The GEF supports fisheries management approaches to improve how fishing is done through developing management plans and incentives to promote best practices. Figure 2 presents the various management approaches implemented by the GEF. Over the GEF phases, GEF-supported sustainable fisheries interventions have evolved to increase integration in fisheries management interventions with other sectors; this benefits both the environment and social and economic development.

Fisheries projects perform similarly to the rest of the international waters portfolio on most dimensions (figure 3). Factors

FIGURE 2 Management approaches supported by GEF in the fisheries portfolio



¹ For patterns of risk among LMEs, see One Shared Ocean, <http://onesharedocean.org/lmes>.



that have negatively affected sustainability include project designs with overly ambitious objectives, an unrealistic number of activities, and a wide geographic coverage relative to the project funding level and project time frame. Unclear articulation of the theory of change and poorly specified indicators in the logic framework are also mentioned as factors that have hindered project implementation and measurement of long-term trends for the completed fisheries projects.

GEF support has contributed to reduced stress on fishery resources and improved management of marine habitats. Of the 35 completed projects included in this study, 15 reported achievement of positive environmental outcomes in the terminal evaluations, mainly in the forms of increased marine habitat under sustainable management (11) and reduced stresses on fisheries (9). Two fisheries projects that received allocations from the climate change focal area also reported achievements in successful pilot testing of climate adaptation measures, such as community-based mangrove reforestation in Indonesia and a marine ecotourism-based payment for ecosystem services scheme in the Philippines.

GEF-supported fisheries projects contribute to the achievement of social and economic benefits related to increased income, food security, and gender quality. In 16 out of 35 completed projects, positive social and economic outcomes were observed at

project completion, mainly in terms of increased income (9) and gender equality (6).

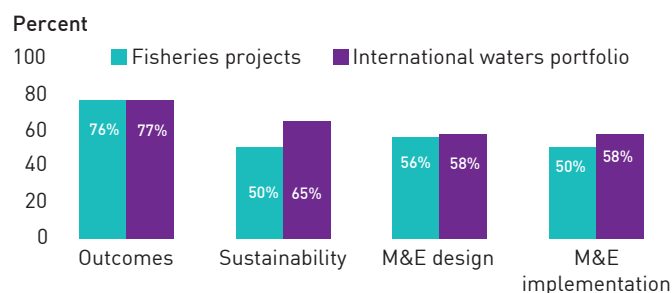
GEF-supported fisheries projects have achieved positive outcomes related to food security. As demonstrated by the GEF-3 West Africa Regional Fisheries Program, improved management of transboundary fisheries resources has been reported to build resilience in the recipient countries to buffer external shocks and address food security needs during the Ebola crisis.

Women in fishing communities have been observed to actively participate in the fisheries sector. An example is the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Strategic Ecosystem Management Project, which has successfully supported women's participation in creating alternative livelihoods. The project helped reduce pressure on the marine environment while contributing to increasing women's assets, income, and meaningful participation in project activities. In the ongoing portfolio, 21 out of 41 projects include sex-disaggregated indicators (9 from GEF-5, 12 from GEF-6); this was before the Policy on Gender Equality came into effect. Of these, 13 projects track indicative benefits related to gender equality and women's empowerment that are expected at project completion—mainly by promoting better working conditions in the fish processing stage of the supply chain, and engaging women in the community decision-making process.

Most of the ongoing fisheries projects have put in place conditions to sustain project benefits, particularly through sustainable financing arrangements. Eighty-nine percent of the 41 ongoing projects have incorporated sustainable financing arrangements in project design, mainly through promoting suitable economic instruments to generate financial support after project completion, and conducting feasibility studies to identify a potential pipeline of investable businesses.

For example, the GEF-6 Coastal Fisheries Initiative Challenge Fund project has been providing technical assistance for small-scale fisheries businesses to develop investable projects, covering Indonesia, West Africa (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal), and Latin America (Ecuador and Peru). In the Seychelles, the world's first sovereign blue bond was launched in 2018 with the support of the GEF and the World Bank. The blue bond raised \$15 million from international investors to support sustainable fisheries, demonstrating the potential for countries

FIGURE 3 Annual performance report rating comparisons



SOURCE: GEF IEO Annual Performance Report data set 2020.

NOTE: M&E = monitoring and evaluation. $n = 34$ (fisheries); for international waters portfolio, $n = 169$ (outcomes), $n = 159$ (sustainability), $n = 163$ (M&E design) and $n = 150$ (M&E implementation). Differences are not statistically significant.

to harness capital markets for financing the sustainable use of marine resources.

The sustainable value chain approach has been supported by the GEF through fisheries projects to engage the private sector in mainstreaming sustainability in fisheries supply chains and creating markets. For industrial fisheries, such as tuna fisheries, GEF investments focus on leveraging the influence of a few large companies in the supply chains and use the demand for sustainably sourced marine commodities as a driver to incentivize good fisheries management and sustainable exploitation. Market-based tools such as supply chain roundtables, sustainable marine commodities platforms, and fishery improvement projects have been adopted in the GEF-5 Global Sustainable Supply Chains for Marine Commodities project. While these interventions are still ongoing, the midterm review has reported issues related to how to institutionalize the newly established national sustainable marine commodities platforms to secure long-term impact.

For small-scale fisheries, the needs of small and medium-size enterprises differ from those of multinational companies. A newly designed GEF-6 project, Catalysing Implementation of a Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of Shared Living Marine Resources in the Humboldt Current System, will implement pilots to develop value chains of nontraditional products (anchoveta, jibia/pota, macro-algae) for direct human consumption in national markets in Chile and Peru. Given that there is limited demand for certifications that ensure

sustainability and responsible fishing in the domestic markets of the participating countries, this project is exploring ways to better facilitate engagement with a diverse range of public and private sector partners to create markets.

Results measurement has improved in recent projects. Environmental outcomes related to reduced stresses on fisheries are often documented as observed changes with limited measurement in the completed portfolio. The various forms of reported results made it difficult to aggregate results at the corporate level. In GEF-6, the GEF adopted a new results framework and set a corporate-level target of bringing 20 percent of globally overexploited fisheries to more sustainable levels. This represents an improvement in results reporting.

Discrepancies between the targets set at the program level and the child projects need to be reconciled. Based on a formative review of ongoing fisheries projects in GEF-6, 9 out of 11 stand-alone projects and 4 child projects under three programs together aim to bring 16 percent of overexploited fisheries to sustainable levels; this is close to the 20 percent target set in the GEF-6 programming direction document. The GEF-6 Coastal Fisheries Initiative program set a target to bring 8 percent of overexploited fisheries to sustainable levels when its program framework document was developed, while targets in the child projects only add up to 0.24 percent. Based on this, the overall indicative corporate-level achievement would be reduced to 8.24 percent, instead of the planned level of 16 percent.

Conclusions

1 GEF interventions address overexploitation of marine fishery resources. Funding allocated to projects in freshwater fisheries has been limited. The performance of the completed fisheries portfolio is consistent with the overall international waters portfolio on most dimensions.

2 Global environmental benefits in terms of reduced stress on fishery resources and improved management of marine habitats have been achieved. Discrepancies between global environmental benefit targets set at the program level and for child projects in GEF-6 need to be reconciled.

3 GEF projects have resulted in social and economic benefits in terms of increased income, food security, gender equality, and women's empowerment.

4 Fisheries projects are working on engaging a diverse range of private sector partners with various capacities and needs through fisheries supply chains at different levels, and through improved financing arrangements, to increase sustainability.



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