

# Third Joint GEF-UNDP Small Grants Programme Evaluation

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Offices of the GEF and UNDP)

## - Approach Paper - March 2020

**Abstract:** this Approach Paper defines the terms for the conduct of the third joint GEF-UNDP Small Grants Programme evaluation. The evaluation will focus on: 1) effectiveness, 2) innovation, upscaling and sustainability and 3) operational and governance issues, including the upgrading process. It will be presented to the 59<sup>th</sup> GEF Council meeting in December 2020 and to the Annual Session of the UNDP Executive Board in 2021.

**Lead evaluators:**

Anna Viggh, Senior Evaluation Officer, [aviggh@thegef.org](mailto:aviggh@thegef.org)

Elisa Calcaterra, Senior Evaluation Specialist, [elisa.calcaterra@undp.org](mailto:elisa.calcaterra@undp.org)

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## Abbreviations

CBO	community-based organization
CPMT	central programme management team
CPS	country program strategy
CSO	civil society organization
FSP	full-size project
GEF	Global Environment Facility
LDC	least developed country
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MSP	medium-size project
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OFP	operational focal point
OP	operational phase
OPS4	Fourth Overall Performance Study of the GEF
OPS5	Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF
OPS6	Sixth Overall Performance Study of the GEF
RAF	Resource Allocation Framework
SGP	Small Grants Programme
SIDS	small island developing states
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
UCP	Upgraded country program
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services

# I. Background and Context

## a. Introduction

1. The Small Grants Programme (SGP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) will be evaluated jointly by the independent evaluation offices (IEOs) of the GEF and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The joint evaluation was included in the GEF IEO work program that was approved by the GEF Council in June 2019.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation will build on the 2015 Joint GEF-UNDP Evaluation of the SGP and will focus on the period July 2014 to June 2019.

2. Building on the 2015 joint evaluation, this evaluation will focus on SGP's strategic mission, upgrading policy, use of full-size projects (FSPs) as a modality, and governance, management and operations. A shared budget of \$200,000—\$100,000 each from the independent evaluation offices of the GEF and UNDP—for this evaluation has initially been approved by the Joint Steering Committee of the evaluation on 12 September 2019. This approach paper has been developed jointly by the IEOs of GEF and UNDP. The joint evaluation will be submitted to the GEF Council in December 2020 and presented to the UNDP Executive Board in June 2021.

## b. Background and Context

3. The GEF created the SGP in 1992 with the explicit aim of developing community-led and -owned strategies and technologies for reducing threats to the global environment—notably in connection with biodiversity loss, mitigating climate change, land degradation and protecting international waters, chemical and waste management—while addressing livelihood challenges. The principal strategy of the SGP is to provide small grants—up to a maximum of \$50,000<sup>2</sup>—to needy communities to support the use of practices and technologies that benefit the global environment.

4. The SGP is a corporate GEF program implemented by UNDP. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the executing agency of the global program, provides financial and administrative support to the program at the country and global levels. Overall strategic and programming directions, supervision and technical support are provided by a Central Programme Management Team (CPMT) based in New York.<sup>3</sup> Each participating country has a locally recruited SGP

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<sup>1</sup> GEF/ME/C.56/03, Four-Year Work Program and Budget of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office – GEF-7, May 14, 2019. Available from: [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN\\_GEF.ME\\_C56\\_03\\_IEO\\_GEF-7\\_Work\\_Program\\_May\\_2019\\_Rev\\_01\\_0.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.ME_C56_03_IEO_GEF-7_Work_Program_May_2019_Rev_01_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Grants are up to a maximum of \$50,000 while in practice the average grant amount is approximately \$25,000. Through a strategic projects window, grants up to \$150,000 are provided to better enable scaling up, and to cover a larger number of communities within a critical landscape or seascape. At the time of writing 81 active projects have a budget of more than \$50,000.

<sup>3</sup> CPMT consists of eight staff including a global manager, a deputy global manager, program advisers on the GEF focal areas, a program specialist for knowledge management, a monitoring and evaluation specialist and two program associates. Together, they provide global supervision and day-to-day programmatic and operational guidance to over 125 countries that are part of the SGP global program. In the 15 upgraded countries, CPMT is

national coordinator, and often a program assistant. The national coordinator is often associated with and supported by the UNDP country office or hosted in a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that acts as a national host institution. Each participating country develops a country program strategy (CPS) for each SGP operational phase that adapts the SGP global strategic framework to specific country conditions<sup>4</sup>. National steering committees provide major substantive contributions to and oversight of their respective SGP country program as key governance structure at the country level. The national steering committee, whose members are volunteers, typically comprises representatives from local civil society organizations (CSOs), government, academia, UNDP and occasionally other GEF Agencies such as Conservation International, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and World Wildlife Fund, as well as other cofounding donors, indigenous peoples' organizations, the private sector, and the media; a majority of members should be nongovernmental, respecting the CSO-led nature of the program. Grants are awarded directly to community-based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs. The use of local CSOs and/or CBOs as grantee partners implies a built-in preference for projects requiring community involvement.

5. SGP aims to contribute to resolving global environmental and sustainable development challenges by providing small grants to communities and CSOs for projects aligned with the strategic priorities of the GEF and within the framework of sustainable development. The SGP targets community-level initiatives across the range of global environmental issues addressed by the GEF and seeks to integrate actions that lead to poverty reduction with a participatory approach (table 1).

**Table 1<sup>5</sup>: SGP distribution by GEF focal area**

Focal Area <sup>a</sup>	Projects		Total grant amount	Cofinancing in cash	Cofinancing in kind	Total cofinancing
	Number	Percentage	Million \$			
Biodiversity	11,039	46.0	289.75	174.56	212.32	386.88
Capacity development	725	3.0	22.89	7.00	9.19	16.19
Chemicals and waste	674	2.8	19.4	10.48	10.97	21.45
Climate change	4,774	19.9	140.68	95.07	90.55	185.62
Climate change adaptation	650	2.7	19.77	6.51	13.39	19.90
International waters	970	4.0	25.06	15.79	22.83	38.62

responsible for coordinating knowledge management activities as well as to 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".

<sup>4</sup> For UCPs, the full-size GEF project document is considered as the country program strategy.

<sup>5</sup> Cumulative SGP projects (both Global and UCPs) since 1992, with June 30, 2019, as the cut-off date. SGP projects have an integrated approach with multi focal benefits. The distribution is indicative of the primary entry point as identified by projects. The three main primary entry points (biodiversity, climate change and land degradation) represent 79 percent of the portfolio.

<b>Land degradation</b>	3,545	14.8	99.38	56.34	69.88	126.22
<b>Multifocal area</b>	1,614	6.7	35.74	17.88	20.54	38.42
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,991</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>652.67</b>	<b>383.63</b>	<b>449.67</b>	<b>833.30</b>

**Source:** SGP Database; grand totals reflected in Annual Monitoring Report, 2019

6. As of June 2019, the SGP has provided about 23,990 small grants with a total of \$653 million in grants. Most of the projects are multi-focal in nature, however, for reporting purpose, grantees are asked to select the most dominant focal area. Historically, biodiversity projects have constituted the largest share of the global SGP portfolio. Climate change projects (including adaptation) come second after the biodiversity ones and are followed by land degradation projects. These three SGP project areas constitute the large majority of the global SGP portfolio, corresponding to 83 percent of the total number of projects, and 84 percent of the total grant budget.

7. The SGP is a tool for the GEF to achieve global environmental benefits while addressing the livelihood needs of local populations, paying special attention to reaching the poor and the marginalized, as well as promoting gender equality. Since the start of the SGP, the number of participating countries has grown from 11 to 125. Of these countries, 40 are Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and 37 are Small Island Development States (SIDS), with several countries in fragile situations.

8. Currently 110 countries are in the SGP global program and 15 are upgraded countries. The SGP global program is funded by core funding agreed by the GEF replenishment for each replenishment cycle. During GEF-5, countries with the longest standing and most mature of SGP country programs 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. As of June 2019, there are 15 upgraded countries (see table 2) and one is under development (Malaysia) under GEF-7. Country programs in upgraded countries are funded through full- or medium-size projects utilizing endorsed funds from the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) funds of their respective country. There is a total of 26 projects, amounting to \$92.85 million in grants and \$152.92 million in co-financing, in the upgraded country programs.

**Table 2: Overview of SGP upgraded country programs (Million \$)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Year upgraded</b>	<b>Number of upgraded country programs</b>	<b>Sum of GEF grant amount</b>	<b>Sum of cofinancing</b>
<b>Bolivia</b>	2011	2	7.80	18.10
<b>Brazil</b>	2011	2	9.48	15.00
<b>Costa Rica</b>	2011	3	8.80	15.22
<b>Ecuador</b>	2011	3	8.05	12.03
<b>Egypt</b>	2016	1	2.84	4.07
<b>India</b>	2011	2	9.47	17.00
<b>Indonesia</b>	2016	1	3.56	11.75
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	2016	1	2.65	4.70
<b>Kenya</b>	2011	2	8.56	11.16

<b>Mexico</b>	2011	2	9.09	12.23
<b>Pakistan</b>	2011	2	5.44	6.69
<b>Peru</b>	2016	1	3.20	5.75
<b>Philippines</b>	2011	2	9.02	10.50
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	2016	1	2.50	3.30
<b>Thailand</b>	2016	1	2.38	5.41
<b>Grand Total</b>	-	<b>26</b>	<b>92.85</b>	<b>152.92</b>

**Note:** Upgrading of country programs became operational under GEF-5. Depending on which year a country qualified as upgraded, it can have a maximum of three upgraded country programs as of now. Year upgraded refers to the year of CEO endorsement.

9. In the SGP strategic directions for GEF-6 (2014-2018),<sup>6</sup> a three-pronged approach was used that focused its work on globally recognized ecosystems, establishment of institutional and financial support mechanisms, and systematic development of capacity of local and national civil society stakeholders. SGP introduced four multi-focal platforms for the implementation of its microprojects at the country level: community landscape and seascape conservation, climate smart innovative agro-ecology, low-carbon energy access cobenefits, and local to global chemicals management coalitions. Under the strategic directions, SGP country programs would acknowledge gender differences and support actions to promote women’s role in implementation of programs and projects.

10. Under GEF-7 (2018-2022), the SGP places greater emphasis on promoting strategic and results-based investments at the local level, in alignment with GEF-7 focal area strategies and impact programs.<sup>7</sup> The SGP intends to focus more on supporting innovation and scalable initiatives at the local level to tackle global environmental issues in priority landscapes and seascapes. To improve effectiveness, the SGP is adopting and strengthening key approaches including: empowering local communities, targeting support to LDCs and SIDS, supporting community innovation on emerging issues, promoting partnerships and broader adoption: scaling up and replication results, and serving as a dependable global community-based grant mechanism and platform for the environment. Five strategic initiatives are designed to promote alignment with GEF integrated approaches to key global environmental issues and complementarity to focal areas and impact programs at the community level. These include 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. In line with the GEF gender policy and UNDP gender strategy, country programs intend to actively support actions to

<sup>6</sup> GEF/C.46/13, GEF Small Grants Programme: Implementation Arrangements for GEF-6, April 30, 2014. Available from: [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/GEF.C.46.13\\_GEF\\_Small\\_Grants\\_Programme\\_-\\_Implementation\\_Arrangements\\_for\\_GEF-6\\_April\\_30\\_2014\\_1.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/GEF.C.46.13_GEF_Small_Grants_Programme_-_Implementation_Arrangements_for_GEF-6_April_30_2014_1.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> GEF/C.54/05/Rev.01, GEF Small Grants Programme: Implementation Arrangements for GEF-7, June 26, 2018. Available from: [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN\\_GEF.C.54.05.Rev\\_01\\_SGP.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.54.05.Rev_01_SGP.pdf)

promote the role of women in project implementation, particularly relating to gender equality and women's empowerment, relevant to the local context.

### c. Previous Evaluations of the SGP

11. The 2008 joint evaluation was presented to the Council in November 2007 and assessed the relevance of SGP results to the GEF and to country and environmental priorities, the effectiveness of the SGP in generating global environmental benefits, and the efficiency of the SGP in engaging community-based groups and civil society organizations. The most recent joint evaluation of the SGP was presented to the GEF Council in June 2015 and to the UNDP Executive Board in September 2015 and built on the 2008 joint evaluation of the SGP. The evaluation covered four main areas: (1) current role and results of the SGP: effectiveness in achieving global environmental benefits while addressing livelihoods, poverty, and gender; (2) broader adoption issues; (3) the SGP's strategic positioning; and (4) efficiency issues, including monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Particular attention was given to the upgrading of SGP country programs and related policies.

12. The main conclusions of these evaluations were:

- As of 2015, the SGP continued to support communities with projects that are effective, efficient, and relevant. Replication, scaling-up, and mainstreaming are occurring, building on the 2008 conclusion 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 2008, the evaluation found that the management model had reached its limits and was not suitable for a new phase of growth. In 2015, the SGP governance and management structures were found to be adequate but were increasingly strained by an ever rapidly changing context. The 2008 joint GEF-UNDP SGP evaluation was crucial in shaping the way forward for the SGP and provided the foundation for the implementation of several important changes, some of which were essential for making it possible to broaden the program to more countries. In 2015, the evaluation noted that the introduction of upgrading and related policies contributed to the evolution of the SGP by setting out expectations for country programs and their development over time. The new policies have resulted in increased resources for the SGP but also brought challenges. The SGP was found to have remained coherent while staying flexible, but the global or long-term vision of the SGP had not been updated. It was recommended that the criteria for upgrading be reviewed.
- In 2008, the evaluation highlighted the need to strengthen audit processes and oversight. In 2015, the evaluation noted significant improvements but stressed that M&E was not adequately supporting decision making and remains too complex. In relation to the upgrading process, the evaluation found that the "implementation of the SGP through two separate mechanisms (as FSPs and under the CPMT)" undermined knowledge management and complicated M&E.

13. Apart from the key conclusions presented above, previous evaluations drew the following conclusions on priority issues for the current evaluation (see section II):



- Innovation: While the 2008 evaluation did not focus on this aspect and only highlighted that one program was found to act as “incubator,” the 2015 evaluation concluded that SGP, in its delivery of global environmental objectives, put an emphasis on “innovation and piloting,” but could not independently verify available monitoring information and concluded that in some cases, the “type of innovation” introduced was not clear.
- Sustainability and broader adoption: In 2008, the evaluation found that benefits from most of the completed projects were likely to continue in the future. In 2015, the evaluation concluded that the achievements of the SGP were being replicated at the local scale, up-scaled and mainstreamed into local and, at times, national development processes. In terms of broader adoption, the 2015 evaluation could verify that it was taking places in several cases, including through replication and upscaling, but also mainstreaming, especially in more mature programs. In 2008, the evaluation had already highlighted that SGP was contributing to institutional and policy change.
- Gender: The 2008 evaluation assessed the gender component of SGP under the framework of an assessment of progress in targeting efforts to benefit the poor and marginalized. It concluded that while there was room for improvement in targeting the poor, indigenous peoples, and women, the extent to which SGP grants targeted these groups seemed adequate, given overall program objectives. The evaluation found that 21 out of the 22 reviewed countries included women as a priority target group. In 2015, the evaluation concluded that SGP was continuing to promote gender equality and empowering women: 20 of the 30 CPSs reviewed were found to have a relatively strong approach to gender and national SGP stakeholders generally believed that attention to gender and women’s empowerment has strengthened the country’s ability to meet environmental objectives.

## II. Purpose, Objectives, and Audience

### a. Purpose and Objective

14. The overall purpose of this joint evaluation is to examine the GEF SGP, an important corporate program of the GEF, and to determine whether any changes are required to improve effectiveness of the SGP. The aim of the joint evaluation is to provide the GEF Council and the UNDP Executive Board with evaluative evidence of the SGP’s relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

15. The main objective of this joint evaluation is to build on the findings of, and evaluate progress made, since the 2015 joint SGP evaluation and the extent to which the SGP is achieving the objectives set out in its strategic and operational directions under GEF-6 (2014-2018) and GEF-7 (2018-2022). The evaluation will also assess the relevance and strategic positioning of the SGP within the GEF and provide recommendations on the way forward for the SGP.

## b. Stakeholders and Audience

16. The primary stakeholders are the GEF Secretariat senior management and staff, UNDP senior management and staff, UNOPS, the SGP CPMT, GEF Council members and UNDP Executive Board members. Secondary stakeholders are SGP national coordinators and their program assistants, national steering committees, staff from Governments, CSOs, beneficiaries and other GEF stakeholders.

17. The evaluation's target audience are the GEF Council members and UNDP Board members, other GEF and UNDP stakeholders, as well as the general public and professionals interested in development and small grants programs.

## III. Coverage and Evaluation Questions

### a. Coverage

18. The focus of this evaluation will be on developments since July 2014, which was the cut-off date for the 2015 joint evaluation of the SGP, to December 2019. The 2015 joint evaluation provided an assessment of the relevance and strategic positioning, effectiveness, and efficiency, of the SGP with a strong emphasis on country results. This current evaluation will also assess relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency while emphasizing SGP's strategic mission and upgrading policy, innovation, gender considerations, governance structure, and sustainability of outcomes in UCPs.

19. Attention will be given to the promotion of innovation. Under GEF-7, the SGP, once operationalized, will have a stronger focus on supporting innovative initiatives at the local level to protect the global environment in priority landscapes and seascapes. SGP is encouraged to support projects that could be incubators of innovation for potential broader replication of successful approaches financed by the GEF or other partners.<sup>8</sup> According to the SGP implementation arrangements for GEF-7, the SGP is launching programs to support emerging new themes under its strategic initiatives.<sup>9</sup> The joint evaluation will assess innovation in the SGP using the following definition: innovation is the application or introduction of a technology, product, process, or practice that is new or perceived to be new for a specific context with a purpose to catalyze greater global environmental benefits. It is context-specific; what is new and innovative in one context is not necessarily new and innovative in another.

20. The 2015 joint evaluation assessed sustainability of SGP outcomes and found sustainability ratings comparable to those for other GEF projects. This joint evaluation will focus on the sustainability of UCPs, including in relation to the implementation modalities. The joint evaluation will assess the likelihood of the sustainability of outcomes of all UCPs. For completed projects, the assessment will also include the ratings and discussion of sustainability of outcomes in terminal evaluations.

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<sup>8</sup> GEF/R.7/19, GEF-7 Replenishment Programming Directions, April 2018.

<sup>9</sup> GEF/C.54/05/Rev.01, GEF Small Grants Programme: Implementation Arrangements for GEF-7, June 2018.

21. As it was in the 2015 joint evaluation, gender will be a key component in this evaluation. Gender equality and women's empowerment are central objectives of the SGP at the global and local levels. In line with the GEF policy on gender equality<sup>10</sup> and the UNDP gender equality strategy<sup>11</sup>, SGP uses two complementary approaches to achieve its gender equality and women's empowerment objectives.<sup>12</sup> The first approach is to mainstream gender at the project, national and global levels, using various mechanisms to ensure the portfolio addresses the needs of both men and women to ensure both benefit from the project results. At the national level, gender is an integral component of the CPS, and SGP country program teams support CSO and CBO partners on gender considerations in project design and implementation. Secondly, SGP implements program and projects specifically targeting women providing access to financial and technical resources. Guidelines for gender mainstreaming and empowerment in the SGP are provided in annex B. The focus of this joint evaluation will be on evidence regarding the implementation of the key features of gender mainstreaming.

## b. Key Evaluation Questions

22. Based on the evaluation purpose and objectives, as well as the coverage defined in the preceding section, this joint evaluation will seek to answer the following key questions<sup>13</sup>, based on evidence from 2014 to December 2019.

### Relevance

- To what extent is the SGP guided by a vision, policy and strategy which ensures coherent and effective implementation of a program which remains relevant to national priorities, and GEF and UNDP priorities?
- To what extent is the upgrading process providing a strategic long-term mechanism to ensure the effective deliverable of environmental benefits at community level, both in UCPs and in the global program countries?

### Effectiveness

- To what extent is the SGP contributing to the delivery of global and local environmental, and socio-economic benefits? What are the key factors affecting achievement of results?
- To what extent is the SGP promoting innovation?
- How effective are the SGP gender mainstreaming and inclusion of Indigenous People's approaches in delivering the SGP objectives?

### Efficiency

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<sup>10</sup> GEF/C.53/04, Policy on Gender Equality, October 2017.

<sup>11</sup> UNDP, Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> UNDP, Women as Environmental Stewards: The Experience of the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> In line with both the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) current guidance frameworks.

- To what extent is the current governance structure ensuring the oversight and delivery of the SGP’s mandate? What are the key areas for improvement, if any?
- To what extent is the operational and organizational structure providing an efficient and effective support mechanism to ensure the delivery of the SGP’s objective? What are the key areas for improvement, if any?

### Sustainability

- Are adequate processes in place to ensure long-term sustainability of SGP results, with a focus on UCPs?
- To what extent are innovative practices being replicated and upscaled and what are the factors favoring or hindering this?

### c. Assessing Performance

23. The SGP’s performance will be assessed in terms of the degree to which the SGP has operated in accordance with the GEF SGP implementation arrangements for GEF-6 and GEF-7, and has achieved UNDP-established objectives and indicators for its implementation of the SGP program. Regarding the country level, both the performance related to achievement of emerging results of upgraded country programs and of the SGP Global Program will be assessed against stated goals.

## IV. Evaluation Design

### a. Methodology

24. The evaluation’s methodological approach is expected to include the following main elements:
- **Document review:** Review of documentation will include GEF Council and GEF Secretariat policy and operational guidance papers; SGP Steering Committee documents; SGP global knowledge management, communications, and technical guidance products; SGP CPSs and project documents; UNDP and CPMT planning documents; annual reports and PIRs; and country and UCP terminal evaluations. Also, a systematic review, to the extent that they are available, evaluations and reviews of small grants programs administered by other donors and international organizations.
  - **Portfolio review:** The assessment of the environmental and socio-economic benefits delivered by SGP will be based on a review of data and information from the SGP database maintained by the CPMT and UCP terminal evaluations as well as on an analysis of available evaluative evidence, other literary review (e.g. independent academic studies) complemented by a review of the quality at entry of the project documents for full-size projects, a limited number of case studies, surveys and targeted interviews based on survey results.

- **Meta-assessment:** Since the 2015 joint SGP evaluation the GEF and UNDP IEOs and independent evaluation units of the GEF Agencies have conducted evaluations related to the SGP—including the OPS6 evaluation of the STAR, country evaluations, and terminal evaluations. A meta-assessment will be conducted to aggregate findings from all relevant and available evaluations.
- **Interviews:** The evaluation team will interview a wide range of stakeholders including SGP staff from UNDP and UNOPS, UNDP staff involved with the GEF in New York, and GEF Secretariat staff in Washington, DC, SGP-involved staff and stakeholders at the regional (mainly UNDP technical regional teams) and country levels (SGP national coordinators and their program assistants, and national steering committee members where possible). Additional interviews will be conducted at the country level as part of the case studies. Interview protocols will be developed.
- **Country visits:** Five country visits including two to three countries with upgraded programs, plus one country with a program that is likely to be upgraded in the coming two phases, one country which joined SGP recently and a long standing participant to the program. Countries identified through the portfolio review as being innovative will be given a preference. Specific terms of reference, interview protocols, and review protocols aimed at capturing evaluative evidence in response to the main areas of inquiry will be developed for these visits.
- **Triangulation:** The evaluation team will conduct an analysis of, and triangulate, data collected to determine trends, formulate main findings, lessons and conclusions. Different stakeholders will be consulted during the process to test preliminary findings. Also see “V. Quality Assurance.”

## b. Design Challenges

25. In addition to advantages, there are well recognized challenges in conducting joint evaluations. Lesson from the 2008 and 2015 joint evaluations of the SGP show that institutional arrangements can become time consuming and a limitation to the evaluation. The evaluation will take care to keep arrangements simple, especially those regarding the activities of the joint steering committee.

26. Another limitation is that due to time and budget constraints only a small number of participating countries will be visited, which limits country and project level data that can be collected from stakeholders and the assessment of effectiveness at the project and country levels. This will be mitigated by combining country visits with other ongoing evaluations or evaluation work by the IEOs of the GEF and UNDP.

27. The lack of complete and comprehensive information in the Project Management Information System (PMIS), especially on project status, and the transition to the new GEF portal may pose challenges to the underlying analysis. Data will be compared with Council work program documents and the CPMT will be requested to verify the data prior to analysis.

## V. Evaluation Management and Quality Assurance

28. As was the case in the earlier joint evaluations, this Joint GEF-UNDP SGP Evaluation will be a shared effort by the GEF and UNDP evaluation offices as equal partners. The execution structure of the evaluation will be composed of three tiers:

- The Steering Committee, co-chaired by Juha Uitto, Director of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) and Indran Naidoo,<sup>14</sup> Director of the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO); and composed of Carlo Carugi, Senior Evaluation Officer, GEF IEO and Alan Fox, Chief of Section, UNDP IEO. The committee reviews and approves the approach paper, the joint management arrangements, including the management of the budget (see VII. b.), selection and hiring of consultants, and the evaluation report. It ensures that sufficient and timely resources (human and financial) are made available for the evaluation. The committee will jointly chair a formal meeting with agency representatives and stakeholders to discuss the emerging findings of the evaluation. This committee will also review and resolve disputes if they arise.
- The management team, formed by two task managers, Anna Viggh from the GEF IEO and Elisa Calcaterra from the UNDP IEO, will be responsible for the overall development and execution of the evaluation. These comanagers will be responsible for the identification, hiring, and supervision of consultants in accordance with mutually agreed-upon terms of reference and institutional procedures; coordination of evaluation activities carried out by both offices; quality control of products and processes; and the timely delivery of evaluation products. The comanagers will be supported by Peixuan Zhou, Evaluation Analyst from the GEF IEO and Harvey Garcia, Associate Lead Evaluator and Jonathan Vegan, Research Associate at UNDP IEO.
- The evaluation team will be composed of one lead consultant and one national consultant per country study. Consultants will respond directly to the management team and conduct specific tasks as directed by the management team.

29. In line with the offices' quality assurance practice, quality assurance measures have been set up for this evaluation. The draft approach paper and draft evaluation report will be circulated and validated before finalization through a comprehensive stakeholder feedback process with the key stakeholders. In the case of the draft evaluation report this will take place prior to the December Council in 2020 and Executive Board in June 2021. Key stakeholders include the GEF Secretariat, UNDP and UNOPS, the SGP CPMT, and select SGP national coordinators. Comments, feedback and suggestions will be considered, and the approach paper and final report will be adjusted accordingly. Additionally, the draft approach paper will be internally reviewed in the GEF and UNDP IEOs.

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<sup>14</sup> At the time of writing.

## VI. Deliverables and Dissemination

30. The main findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be presented to the GEF Council and UNDP Executive Board in the required report formats. For the GEF IEO the Council document will be presented to the December 2020 Council meeting. It will be distributed to the Council members, GEF Secretariat, UNDP, and GEF focal points. A graphically edited version will be published as open access on the GEF IEO's website and will also be made available to interested parties through email. A four-page summary of the report will be produced and posted on the website. The above-mentioned outputs will be distributed through existing IEO mailing lists as well as to stakeholders involved in the conduct of the evaluation. To reach a wider audience the evaluation will also be presented through webinars and at relevant evaluation conferences and workshops such as Adaptation Futures.

31. For the UNDP IEO, the draft report will be shared with UNDP senior management for comment (15 working days) and a management response (20 working days) will be prepared based on the final draft report (a revised report for management response no later than 15 days after receiving consolidated comments). An Executive Board paper (submitted at least 8-12 weeks in advance of the session targeted), including the report summary and the management response will be edited and translated by UN translation services. The final report will be uploaded to the Executive Board website (at least 6 weeks before the board session) and presented at the Executive Board session in June 2021. The final report will also be publicly available on the UNDP IEO's website.

## VII. Resources

### a. Timeline

32. The joint evaluation of the SGP will take place between September 2019 and December 2020. The initial work plan is shown in table 3 and will be further revised and detailed as part of the further preparation.

**Table 3: Evaluation timetable**

Year	Month	2019				2020												n
		September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
<b>Evaluation Design</b>																		
	First steering committee meeting	X																
	Draft approach paper		X	X	X													
	Feedback process				X	X												
	Finalized approach paper					X												
	TORs & protocols																	
<b>Evaluation Context</b>																		
	Systematic review																	
	Meta-assessment review																	
	Evaluation matrix																	

<b>Data Collection</b>															
Documentation review															
Portfolio analysis															
Interviews															
Country visits															
<b>Analysis</b>															
Data analysis															
Triangulation brainstorming															
Gap filling															
Draft report															
Feedback and comments															
<b>Outreach</b>															
Final report for GEF Council & UNDP Board															
Presentation to GEF Council															
Published edited report															
Dissemination and outreach															
Presentation to UNDP Executive Board															

**b. Budget (internal)**

33. A shared budget of \$200,000—\$100,000 each from the independent evaluation offices of the GEF and UNDP—for this evaluation has initially been approved by the Joint Steering Committee of the evaluation on September 12, 2019. The budget will be managed in a fully transparent and equal way. A further breakdown of cost elements will be provided.



# Annex A: Conclusions and Recommendations of the 2015 Joint Evaluation of the Small Grants Programme

## Conclusions

In the joint evaluation of the Small Grant Programme, the Independent Evaluation Offices of the GEF and UNDP reached the following five conclusions:

Conclusion 1: The SGP continues to support communities with projects that are effective, efficient, and relevant in achieving global environmental benefits while addressing livelihoods and poverty as well as promoting gender equality and empowering women. Replication, scaling-up, and mainstreaming are occurring.

Conclusion 2: The introduction of upgrading and related policies contributed to the evolution of the SGP by setting out expectations for country programs and their development over time. The new policies have resulted in increased resources for the SGP, but have also brought challenges. The current criteria for selecting countries to upgrade to full-size projects are not optimal.

Conclusion 3: As a global program that acts nationally and locally and is grassroots driven, the SGP must align to GEF, UNDP, national, and local priorities. Within this context, the SGP has remained coherent while staying flexible. However, different perspectives and changing contexts create tensions. The global or long-term vision of the SGP has not been updated.

Conclusion 4: The SGP governance and management structures have been adequate, but are increasingly strained by an ever rapidly changing context. The GEF corporate nature of the SGP and the role and value added of UNDP as the GEF Agency are not clearly articulated.

Conclusion 5: Despite important progress, M&E does not adequately support decision making and remains too complex.

## Recommendations

In the joint evaluation of the Small Grant Programme, the Independent Evaluation Offices of the GEF and UNDP reached the following four recommendations:

To the GEF

Recommendation 1: Revitalize the SGP Steering Committee to support high-level strategic thinking in developing a long-term vision for the SGP, to foster dialogue between UNDP and the GEF, and to advise the Council as appropriate on strategic decision making.

To the GEF and UNDP

Recommendation 2: Continue upgrading, building on strengths while addressing the weaknesses identified. The criteria for selecting countries for upgrading should be revisited.

To UNDP

Recommendation 3: Ensure that the SGP is implemented under a single, coherent global program framework.

To UNDP and the CPMT

Recommendation 4: Continue efforts to improve M&E, designing more streamlined and useful M&E tools and activities that balance the need to measure with the need to provide support to local communities in tackling environmental issues.

## Annex B: Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming and Women Empowerment in SGP<sup>15</sup>

- Gender is one of the main criteria considered for the approval of grants.
- Promotion of gender mainstreaming at the earliest stages of the project cycle starting with carrying gender analysis where men and women analyse their roles in the community and project, and participate in project conception, approval, implementation and monitoring. This helps minimize conflict among different stakeholders during and after the project cycle with respect to roles in project activities and sharing of project benefits.
- Document the contribution of women to project activities in key areas where women already figure prominently (e.g., biodiversity management, in situ conservation of agrobiodiversity, conservation of medicinal plants, etc.). This contributes significantly to enhanced integration of gender considerations in current and future projects.
- SGP National Steering Committees employ a checklist and criteria to assess and screen projects for how they mainstream gender. Moreover, some SGP countries have developed gender guidelines to mainstream gender into the project cycle.
- SGP’s demand-driven approach at the local level increases the likelihood of receiving proposals from women and marginalized groups.
- SGP holds “proposal writing workshops” and accepts project proposals in local languages and even in oral formats through participatory video proposals. Thus encouraging maximum participation by women, indigenous peoples and youth.
- SGP encourages women stand-alone projects in line with the GEF focal areas.
- Grantees are encouraged to participate in the global peer-learning network.
- Field evaluation, including monitoring and evaluation and participatory appraisals, incorporates gender-based indicators to track the status of gender mainstreaming in projects.
- Gender-focused training and sensitization workshops are provided for National Coordinators at the regional level and for grantees at the national level.
- National Steering Committees—a voluntary body that makes all decisions on grant making—are required to include a gender specialist.
- National Coordinators performance is explicitly assessed with respect to results achieved in promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

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<sup>15</sup> Women as Environmental Stewards: The Experience of the Small Grants Programme, UNDP, 2018, p. 8.