

Evaluation of Socio-Economic Co-Benefits of GEF Interventions

Concept Note

August 2024

Background

1. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) supports addressing global environmental concerns related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, chemicals and waste. Since its inception in 1991, the GEF has provided over US\$25 billion in grants and mobilized \$138 billion in co-financing through more than national and regional projects spread over 160 countries. These grants are implemented through a network of 18 accredited agencies. The GEF receives its funds through a four-year replenishment.
2. The GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO) has a central role in ensuring the independent evaluation function within the GEF. The GEF IEO is undertaking the Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS8) to inform the replenishment process for the GEF-9 period. The audience for the OPS8 comprises replenishment participants, the GEF Council, the GEF Assembly, members of the GEF, and external stakeholders. To prepare OPS8, the GEF IEO will draw from its evaluations, including this evaluation of socio-economic co-benefits of GEF interventions.
3. The IEO undertakes independent evaluations on issues relevant to GEF's performance. These cover issues related to GEF policies, processes, projects, and programs funded by the GEF. Recognizing a gap in the broader literature on evaluations of socio-economic co-benefits of environmental interventions and the limited tracking and analysis of these co-benefits, the GEF IEO is undertaking a study to understand the socio-economic co-benefits of GEF-funded interventions. The evaluation on the environmental and socio-economic co-benefits of GEF Interventions will provide one of the first systematic, global-scope explorations of the environmental and the associated socioeconomic co-benefits of GEF activities.

Overview of Socio-Economic Co-Benefits in the GEF

4. GEF projects often deliver socio-economic benefits that improve people's lives in addition to delivering global environmental benefits (GEBs). A 2021 report from the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) highlights that co-benefits for local stakeholders are important to ensure GEB durability and they may also increase the overall rate of return on GEF investment. Past IEO evaluations affirm that GEF projects have delivered socio-economic co-benefits, including improved livelihoods, jobs, human health, and food security.
5. Since GEF-6, socio-economic indicators have been included in the GEF results architecture. The GEF-8 Programming Directions, especially those concerning Integrated Programs, highlight the potential for GEF projects to produce socio-economic co-benefits. The GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework includes an indicator measuring the number of people benefitting from GEF-financed investments, disaggregated by gender. However, the indicator does not capture other types of specific socioeconomic co-benefits that can stem from GEF projects.

6. As a component of the OPS8 programming exercise, the GEF has drafted a document outlining its approach to co-benefits. These co-benefits refer to positive outcomes resulting from GEF investments that extend beyond its formal set of global environmental benefits and are crucial for ensuring the sustainability of GEF benefits. These co-benefits include, inter alia, improvements in incomes, livelihoods, health, employment, gender equality, market development, and improved access to services.

Objectives, scope, and approach of the evaluation

7. The evaluation aims to draw evidence of GEF's contribution to socio-economic co-benefits. By furthering understanding of the co-benefits of GEF interventions, this evaluation also aims to foster a deeper appreciation of the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic outcomes, leading to synergistic benefits facilitated by GEF support. This evaluation builds on an IEO pilot study in Uganda, which measured income benefits alongside environmental outcomes.
8. This evaluation will focus on the following themes:
 - Description/taxonomy of the immediate outcomes, secondary effects, and longer-term impacts
 - Size and coverage and 'depth' of the co-benefits
 - Causal/etiological factors involved in generating the co-benefits.
 - Sustainability factors that can support/hinder the continuation of positive benefits and the reduction of negative benefits.
 - Project and policy design relevance, including lessons learned to adjust project design and maximize positive co-benefits while minimizing negative ones.
 - The comprehensive study will include findings from several country case studies (Chad, Mexico, and Nepal) selected considering geography and the implementation stage.
9. To systematically assess the socio-economic co-benefits of GEF interventions, this evaluation will combine quantitative results from a quantitative analysis involving geospatial and socioeconomic survey data, a portfolio analysis involving the review of GEF project documents as well as existing GEF policy, programming, and strategy documents, and in-depth country case studies. Findings from different sources will be synthesized following a mixed-methods approach.
10. The evaluation will use a range of methods, including text mapping and classification of project documents using an AI-powered tool; comprehensive desk-based assessment of existing GEF policy, programming, and strategy documents, project documentation, policy documents from case study countries, and previous IEO evaluations; portfolio analysis; geospatial analysis; stakeholder interviews; participatory methods; and field observations.
11. The case studies will focus on several countries in different regions of the world and help deep dive into the findings of the global analysis conducted as part of this evaluation. The evaluation team will review key documents related to the implementation, outcomes, and likelihood of outcome sustainability of GEF projects in each country. These may come from academic, government, media, or other reputable sources. Any pertinent data on environmental or socio-economic indicators related to GEF projects in each country—if available from government, academic, or related sources—will be collected and analyzed to enrich the analysis. In each case study, the evaluation team will conduct site visits as well as interviews with stakeholders, such as government entities, project beneficiaries, implementing agencies, academics and researchers, private sector representatives, and civil society organizations.
12. Field visits for case studies are proposed in Nepal, Mexico and Chad. Case studies will be designed and analyzed based on patterns, themes, and key findings related to the intervention's opportunities, constraints, and geography-specific lessons (country level) that will feed into the overall evaluation findings that will combine use of socio-economic survey data and data from satellite remote sensing. These countries are selected based on initial findings from geospatial analysis from survey data and geospatial analysis. The evaluation will also report on similarities,

common lessons, differences, and factors that influence the variation in results.

13. For each case study, the evaluation team will interview relevant stakeholders, including government entities, project beneficiaries, implementing agencies, academics and researchers, private sector representatives, and civil society organizations.
14. At the completion of the data collection and analysis phase, the information gathered will be triangulated to discern patterns, identify key insights, and enhance the validity of evaluative evidence. Stakeholders will be consulted during the process to validate preliminary outcomes and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the findings.

Quality Assurance

15. In line with IEO's quality assurance practice, quality assurance measures will be set up for this evaluation. An IEO internal reviewer will provide feedback and comments on the concept note, the preliminary findings, and the evaluation report.

Timelines, Deliverables, and Dissemination

16. The evaluation timeline is between June 2024 and March 2025. The table below presents an initial work plan.

Deliverables	Estimated Due Date
Concept Note	August 2024
Interview Protocols and the Case Study Framework	September 2024
Completion of the desk review, interviews, surveys	December 2024
Site Visits; Case Study Drafts	September 2024-January 2025
Final Evaluation Report and Strategic Brief	March 2025

17. The evaluation report will be presented to the GEF Council. The full report will be submitted as a Council document in June 2025. It will be distributed to the Council members, the GEF Secretariat, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, GEF country focal points, and GEF Agency staff. A graphically edited version will be published as open access on the IEO's website.

Stakeholder engagement

18. Key stakeholders include the GEF Secretariat, STAP, and GEF Agencies. These stakeholders would be engaged through interviews and consultation. In addition, the GEF's Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) will also be engaged.

Evaluation Team

19. Fabrizio Felloni, Deputy Director and Anupam Anand, Senior Evaluation Officer are the co-task Team Leaders of this evaluation. Eki Ramadhan, Evaluation Analyst, will lead the data analyses. The GEF IEO has engaged expert consultants Prof. Hari Prashad Dhungana in Nepal, Mr. Fernando De Jesus Aragon Durand in Mexico, and Mr. Ezechiel Dingamadj in Chad. Anna Vigg, Senior Evaluation Officer, will serve as an internal peer reviewer. Geeta Batra, GEF IEO Director, will oversee the evaluation.