Evaluation of Institutional Policies and Engagement at the GEF

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

- Draft Approach Paper -
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Point of contact:
Kate Steingraber, Evaluation Officer, ksteingraber@thegef.org
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I. Background and Context

a. Introduction

1. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a multilateral financial mechanism established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, to help tackle our planet’s most pressing environmental problems. Since then, the GEF has provided $14.5 billion in grants and mobilized $75.4 billion in additional financing for almost 4,000 projects. The GEF has become an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector to address global environmental issues. The GEF serves as financial mechanism for the five key international conventions and provides grants and concessional funding to cover the "incremental" or additional costs associated with transforming a project with national benefits into one with global environmental benefits in – Biodiversity, Climate Change, Chemicals & Waste, Land Degradation, International Waters and Sustainable Management of Forests and REDD +. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) guide GEF work on forests, biodiversity conservation, and land degradation.

2. Since inception, the GEF has been explicit about the importance of involving stakeholders, initially described as “the public”, in GEF-financed interventions. This is stated in the original GEF Instrument and reflected in a series of policies, guidance, and strategies that have evolved over time to ensure that GEF Agencies are applying a uniform approach inclusive of a diverse set of stakeholders across the GEF Partnership. The initial focus of engagement centered on information disclosure, and consultation and participation around GEF-financed activities. Since then, the approach has evolved from a focus on risk mitigation—i.e. “do no harm”, to language that speaks to inclusion and participation in recognition that this can lead to better development results—i.e. “do good”.

3. This evaluation looks at the application of a set of three policies at the GEF – the Stakeholder Engagement Policy, the Gender Equality Policy, and the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards. The common thread between these policies is that they address the people part of the human-environment nexus that is commonly referenced at the GEF and in the broader development community. For GEF-financed activities, implemented through GEF Agencies, these policies establish minimum requirements to ensure engagement, inclusion, and avoidance of harm to people and the environment. The underlying issues addressed by these policies (empowerment of women, inclusivity and stakeholder engagement, and safeguarding against risks) have received increasing attention over the past decade within the GEF. This evaluation will assess the operational relevance of these policies and look at whether there is any evidence that the application of these policies has led to increased engagement, inclusion, and risk mitigation, and whether this has improved outcomes from GEF interventions over time. This will lead to better understanding of whether the application of these policies moves beyond a compliance exercise, and whether they lead to behavior change which drives improvements in design of GEF-financed interventions.
b. Background

4. The GEF relies on engagement and interaction among its stakeholders to deliver global environmental benefits. Policies, guidelines, and strategies have evolved over time to support, encourage, and in some cases mandate engagement between stakeholders across the Partnership. The current definition of a ‘stakeholder’ from the GEF Stakeholder Engagement Policy is “…an individual or group that has an interest in the outcome of a GEF-financed activity or is likely to be affected by it, such as local communities, Indigenous Peoples, civil society organizations, and private sector entities, comprising women, men, girls and boys." This definition includes the stakeholders outside the partnership, but equally relevant are the internal stakeholders at the GEF: Council, Secretariat, STAP, IEO, international environmental convention staff, Operational and Convention Focal Points, and the Civil Society Network.

5. The GEF Instrument reflects the importance of public participation, stating that “GEF Operational Policies […] shall provide for full disclosure of all non-confidential information, and consultation with, and participation as appropriate of, major groups and local communities through the project cycle” (GEF 2019b pg. 8).

6. The Public Involvement Policy (PIP) (GEF 1996) was approved by the GEF Council in 1996 at the 7th Council Meeting. The policy included a rationale for public involvement, describing it as critical to the success of GEF-financed projects. The policy mentions both women and indigenous peoples (as disadvantaged populations) as part of a definition of stakeholder participation. The PIP remained in place for close to 20 years with reviews of its efficacy carried out in starting in 2014, as described in the following section. During the intervening time period, policies and guidance for safeguards, gender, information disclosure, monitoring and evaluation, and other topics build on and refer to this foundational document.

7. The GEF Partnership expanded in 2010, after a decision by the 39th Council to broaden the partnership through the accreditation of GEF Project Agencies. As the Partnership grew there was a need to ensure that all GEF Agencies were consistent in their policies and approaches for GEF-financed activities, including, inter alia, measures for safeguarding against environmental and social risks, ensuring adequate attention to gender and sufficient stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder Engagement

8. After the 1996 Public Involvement Policy was issued, 18 years passed before the corresponding guidelines were issued. In 2013 – 2014 the GEF CSO Network conducted a review of the Public Involvement Policy and issued a report to Council in 2014 (GEF 2014b). In addition, IEO conducted a sub-study on CSO Engagement in the GEF as part of OPS5 (GEF IEO 2013a). Recommendations from both

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1. This is the definition from the 2017 Stakeholder Engagement Policy, the Guidelines expand upon this definition, adding: “They can include, among others, relevant ministries, local governments, and locally-affected people, national and local NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), Indigenous Peoples organizations, women’s groups, private sector companies, farmers, and research institutions, and all major groups identified, for example, in Agenda 21 of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and many times again since then”.

2. According to the policy rationale, this was to occur through four mechanisms: 1) enhancing country ownership of an accountability for, project outcomes; b) addressing social and economic needs of affected people; 3) building partnerships among project executing agencies and stakeholders; 4) making use of local skills experience and knowledge.
documents are reflected in the *Guidelines for the Implementation of the Public Involvement Policy* (GEF 2014d) approved at 47th Council Meeting in October 2014. The guidelines provide detail on steps to achieve and implement the principles stipulated in the policy. They reference the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, highlighting the importance of country ownership for GEF-financed projects.

9. In 2014 the *GEF2020 Strategy* was approved and included “mobilizing local and global stakeholders” as a core operational principle (GEF 2014a). The strategy describes roles and responsibilities for national and local governments, the private sector, and civil society stakeholders and highlighted cross country partnerships and dialogue processes as critical processes. There is an emphasis on stronger engagement with CSOs and indigenous peoples to develop knowledge and mobilize public action leading to increase effectiveness of GEF-financed activities. Gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment are also highlighted.

10. In 2015 the Working Group on Public Involvement was established to review and update the Public Involvement Policy with a view to achieving more effective stakeholder engagement in GEF operations.³ At the 51st Council meeting, the Working Group recommended an update to the policy.⁴

11. The *Updated GEF Stakeholder Engagement Policy* was approved by the Council in 2017 (GEF 2017b). The new policy differed from the original Public Involvement Policy in the following ways:

- It was written exclusively in mandatory language, providing clarity for application and accountability;
- Clear minimum standards were identified for Agencies, to build on and complement those already established through safeguards and fiduciary standards;
- Clear requirements were established for project and program level monitoring and reporting by Agencies, and portfolio-level monitoring and reporting by the Secretariat;
- Specific, mandatory documentation requirements were set out for the project cycle, including a stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent at the CEO Endorsement/Approval stage.

12. The Policy sets out mandatory requirements in three areas: a) project and program cycles; b) activities led by the Secretariat; and c) Agency policies, procedures and capabilities.

13. The *Guidelines on the Implementation of the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement* were issued in December 2018 (GEF 2018b). This document provides information on how Agencies and Secretariat should identify and adopt practical approaches to achieve the principles set forth in the Policy. Specific guidance is provided on the following: meaningful consultation (including key elements); effective and inclusive engagement; incorporating local knowledge and viewpoints; ensuring gender equality and women’s empowerment (with reference to the Gender guidelines); culturally appropriate consultations

³ The Working Group included representatives of the GEF Secretariat, the CSO network, the Council, GEF Partner Agencies, the GEF Indigenous People’s Advisory Group, the IEO and GEF Operational Focal Points.
⁴ An associated Council Document had more specific recommendations which included the following: 1) Policy requirements regarding stakeholder engagement should apply to ALL projects; 2) Require development of stakeholder engagement plans; 3) Ensure stakeholders have access to full project information at the Agency-level; 4) Revise GEF’s templates, review and tracking systems for stakeholder engagement in GEF project development and approval 5) Strengthen GEFSEC access to information policies and practices; and 6) Develop a plan for revising GEF’s Public Involvement Policy.
and Free Prior and Informed Consent (with reference to the Safeguards policy); access to information; and meetings and multi stakeholder dialogues. Detailed guidance on mandatory requirements at each stage of the GEF project cycle, including stakeholder engagement plans, is also provided.

Gender

14. The Policy on Gender Mainstreaming was approved by the Council at the 40th Council Meeting in May 2011 (GEF 2011). The Policy was initially adopted as an annex of the GEF Policies on Environmental and Social Safeguards Standards and Gender Mainstreaming but was later issued as a stand-alone Policy.

15. IEO conducted a sub-study on the GEF’s Policy on Gender Mainstreaming (GEF IEO 2013). Some of the recommendations from this sub-study were reflected in the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) (GEF 2014c), approved at the 47th GEF Council in October 2014. The GEAP covered the time period FY 15 – 18 and aimed to operationalize the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming, including a workplan with concrete steps and key actions and outputs addressing five key elements: project cycle; programming and policies; knowledge management; results-based management; and capacity development. To implement the activities under the GEAP, a GEF Gender Partnership was established, and remains active to date. The GEAP called for a review and, as necessary, an update of the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming by July 2018.

16. In 2017 the IEO presented its Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the GEF to Council (GEF IEO 2018b). This evaluation recommended revising the Gender Mainstreaming Policy, developing an action plan for implementing the policy during GEF-7, and ensuring adequate resources are made available for gender mainstreaming activities.

17. An updated Policy on Gender Equality (GEF 2017a) was approved by the 53rd GEF Council in November 2017. The updated policy refers to increased attention to gender by the conferences of the parties to the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) as well as the SDGs. The Policy explicitly recognizes “GEF’s ambition to better seize the strategic opportunities to address gender inequality and support women’s empowerment where these can help achieve global environmental benefits”. There is a marked shift from a risk mitigation approach to a proactive gender responsive approach. Changes to the policy include:

- Clarification of GEF’s approach to mainstream gender and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- Formalization and clarification about GEF requirements for addresses gender equality in GEF-financed activities; and
- Introduction of a clearer focus on results, including requirements for project and program0leve monitoring and reporting on gender by Agencies, and portfolio-level monitoring and reporting on performance and results by the Secretariat.

18. The Gender Implementation Strategy (GEF, 2018a) was approved at the following Council Meeting in June 2018. The Strategy describes three specific inequalities and gaps that are relevant to GEF’s work, namely: unequal access to and control of natural resources; unequal opportunities in environmental decision-making and leadership; and uneven access to socio-economic benefits and
services. Strategic entry points to address these gaps for GEF-7 are identified in the strategy and so are priority action areas, including:

- Gender-responsive approaches and results are systematically promoted in GEF programs and projects;
- Strengthened capacity of GEF’s Secretariat and its partners to mainstream gender and seize strategic entry points to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment;
- GEF’s connection with partners to generate knowledge and contribute to learning on links between gender and the environment are improved; and
- GEF’s corporate systems for tracking and reporting on gender equality results are enhanced.

19. The Strategy also includes roles and responsibilities for implementing the Policy on Gender Equality and the Strategy for the GEF Council and the Secretariat. Finally, the Strategy presents a GEF-7 Results Framework on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment with indicators, baseline data (if available), and verification methods for two outcome areas: Gender-responsive GEF program and project design and development and Gender-responsive program and project reporting and results.

Safeguards

20. The GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF 2011) was approved in November 2011 at the 41st Council Meeting. The provisions for the GEF Minimum Standards were established in the guideline document Application of Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards. The GEF Minimum Standards had the objective of preventing and mitigating any unintended negative impacts to people and the environment that might arise through GEF operations. According to the policy, the new minimum standards used the approach and criteria contained in the World Bank’s safeguards policy as a starting point. It also builds on the GEF’s Public Involvement Policy. There were seven GEF Safeguard Standards approved in 2011: Environmental and Social Assessments; Natural Habitats; Involuntary Resettlement; Indigenous Peoples; Pest Management; Physical Cultural Resources; Safety of Dams.

21. In 2017, the IEO presented its Review of the GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF IEO 2018c). The Review identified a range of gaps in thematic coverage of GEF Safeguards that appeared germane for the risks present in the GEF portfolio. Consequently, one of the recommendations of the evaluation was to review and potentially update the GEF Safeguards policy. Another finding from the evaluation was the GEF agencies would welcome increased opportunities for knowledge sharing and capacity building regarding challenges in addressing safeguards issues, leading to the recommendation for support to capacity development, experiment convening and communications regarding safeguards. Finally, the evaluation recommended improvements in how the GEF tracks and reports on social and environmental risks at the portfolio level, ensuring a flow-through of monitoring information on the implementation of safeguards.

22. The 55th GEF Council approved an Updated Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF 2018c) in December 2018. The updated policy reflected specific recommendations from the IEO Review,

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5 Operational Policy 4.00: Piloting the Use of Borrower Systems to Address Environmental and Social Safeguard Issues in Bank Supported Projects
and from the IEO Evaluation of GEF Support to Indigenous Peoples. Guidelines for the Policy (GEF 2019a) were approved in December 2019.

23. The updated policy expands the minimum standards to new areas including: labor and working conditions; community health, safety, and security; climate and disaster risks; disability inclusion; disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals or groups; and adverse gender-related impacts, including gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. The policy strengthens protections for indigenous peoples, requiring agencies to ensure that Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of affected Indigenous peoples is obtained under certain conditions. It also adds new requirements for documenting and reporting on environmental and social risks and potential impacts, and their management, and roles and responsibilities for Agencies and the Secretariat.

c. Previous Evaluations

Stakeholder Engagement

24. This is the first IEO evaluation to cover the Stakeholder Engagement Policy, however there are IEO evaluations that cover engagement with specific groups (see Appendix 4: Civil Society, the CSO Network and Indigenous Peoples). Due to the cross-cutting nature of this topic it is likely that there are relevant findings across the portfolio of IEO evaluations, this evaluation will seek to incorporate and build on these findings where they are applicable.

25. In February 2020 the Climate Investment Fund published an independent evaluation on local stakeholder engagement in the Climate Investment Funds (CBI 2020). The CIF evaluation focused on three learning questions about local stakeholder engagement: 1) How was local stakeholder engagement envisioned in the CIF’s design?; 2) How has it been implemented in each of these areas of CIF’s work (governance, investment planning, project design and implementation and program monitoring and evaluation)?; 3) What lessons can the CIF and other climate investment funds and their stakeholders learn from the CIF’s experiences with local stakeholder engagement? There were several findings that are salient for the planned IEO evaluation. The CIF evaluation found variation in effectiveness of local stakeholder engagement during investment planning, identifying factors that led to more effective engagement such as existing institutions and norms, and processes that built on effective stakeholder engagement in country forums. In terms of project design and implementation, the CIF evaluation found that local stakeholders have benefited from their engagement in CIF projects through enhanced individual and community capacities, improved livelihoods and market opportunities and greater energy access, with the caveat that evidence is preliminary. The findings from this evaluation, especially the third learning question, can be used to help the evaluation team shape criteria to use when assessment engagement in GEF-financed interventions.

26. In 2018, the World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) conducted an evaluation of citizen engagement at the World Bank Group (World Bank 2018). This evaluation describes the long history of citizen engagement at the WBG, noting that the concept of “engagement” evolved from risk management (with the introduction of environmental and social safeguards) to proactive engagement in projects, policies, and strategies. The evaluation assessed the extent to which citizen engagement activities incorporate four quality principles: aiming for results, closing the feedback loop, ensuring
inclusion, and building citizens’ and government’s capacity to engage. Findings included, inter alia, the following: there was awareness and buy-in of the citizen engagement agenda among senior management and staff; the number of projects with a citizen oriented design and citizen engagement indicators had increased but the applications of quality standards in the design, implementation and monitoring, has been limited that aspects related to quality of engagement are given insufficient attention at design and monitoring stages; and indicators rarely tracked results, and reporting was insufficient; the insufficient attention to quality and an emphasis on tools rather than results risks undermining the objective to mainstream citizen engagement to improve development outcomes; and more focus on capacity building and learning is warranted. A number of these findings are relevant for the current evaluation and have been reflected in the evaluation questions. These include: the extent to which there is buy-in for the policies; the quality standards used during the review process; the extent to which indicators used to track progress are adequate; and an examination of capacity development to support implementation of the policies.

Gender

27. As part of OPS5, IEO commissioned a sub-study on GEF’s Policy on Gender Mainstreaming in 2013 (GEF IEO 2013a). This sub-study assessed trends in gender mainstreaming as well as implementation progress and appropriateness of the policy. Building on this sub-study, the IEO undertook an Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the GEF for OPS6 and presented to the Council in May 2017. The evaluation covered three areas: 1) the extent to which the Policy had been implemented by means of the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP); the appropriateness of the policy for the GEF and its implementation in line with international best practices; and the trends of gender mainstreaming in the GEF since OPS5.

28. Main findings of the evaluation included the following:

- According to the 2017 IEO Evaluation, trends in gender mainstreaming in the GEF showed modest improvement over the previous OPS period (OPS5).
- Very few projects conducted gender analyses despite it being one of the minimum requirements of the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming. For a cohort of projects from OPS6, only 13.9 percent of medium-size projects and full-size projects in a quality at entry review and 15.7 percent of completed projects had done a gender analysis prior to CEO endorsement/approval. Those projects that did conduct a gender analysis achieved higher gender ratings.
- The Policy on Gender Mainstreaming increased attention to and performance of gender in GEF operations, but there was a lack of clarity around its framework and certain provisions and implementation. The 2017 evaluation found that the policy left too much room for interpretation on gender analysis and on the responsibilities of the GEF Agencies vis-a-vis the GEF Secretariat regarding its implementation.
- Institutional capacity to implement the policy and achieve gender mainstreaming was found to be insufficient within the GEF Secretariat.
- The 2017 evaluation found that the Gender Equality Action Plan has been a relevant and effective framework for implementing the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming. The GEAP facilitated implementation, annual reports provided by the Secretariat were seen as useful and
the evaluation emphasized that a strong action plan facilitates strategic priority setting and can promote the agenda on gender mainstreaming.

Safeguards

29. In response to a Council request, IEO conducted a Review of the GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF IEO 2018c). This evaluation focused on four questions: 1) The extent to which the GEF Safeguards have added value to the GEF Partnership; 2) The degree to which they are aligned with relevant international best standards and practices; 3) How the GEF is informed of safeguard related risks in supported operations; 4) Recommendations on how the GEF Safeguards might evolve in coming years. The review found that the GEF Safeguards served as an important catalyst to strengthen policies among some GEF Agencies, however there was a range of environmental and social risks in the portfolio. The evaluation recommended a review of the GEF safeguards, improvements to the tracking systems in place for monitoring and reporting on safeguards, and support for capacity development, expert convening, and communications.

II. Purpose, Objectives, and Audience

a. Purpose

30. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide evidence on the relevance and application of three GEF policies that promote inclusivity, engagement, and avoidance of undue harm to stakeholders: the Stakeholder Engagement Policy; the Gender Mainstreaming Policy; and the GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards.

b. Objectives

31. The objective of the evaluation is to assess how these policies have been applied over time, and to what extent there is any evidence they have impacted how the GEF identifies, designs, and implements GEF-financed interventions. The evaluation will look at these policies against the following criteria: strategic alignment, operational relevance, and contribution to additional benefits beyond the objectives of GEF-financed interventions.

c. Audience and Stakeholders

32. The primary audience for this evaluation is the GEF Council, the GEF Secretariat, and the GEF Agencies. Other important stakeholders include the executing agencies, operational focal points (OFPs), country governments, the Civil Society Network, staff at international environmental conventions, civil society organizations, and community members affected by GEF-financed interventions.

33. In line with IEO’s standard approach, the evaluation will form a Reference Group, composed of representatives from the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies (including UN agencies and an NGO Agency), and civil society representatives. The Reference Group will: (i) provide feedback and comments on the approach paper, the preliminary findings and the evaluation report; (ii) help ensuring evaluation
III. Evaluation Questions and Coverage

a. Key Evaluation Questions

- **Coherence/Strategic Alignment**: To what extent is there both internal and external coherence and consistency between the three policies?
- **Operational Relevance**: To what extent is there buy-in across the Partnership and support for implementing these policies?
- **Effectiveness**: Is there any evidence that these policies shape the way that GEF-financed interventions are identified, designed, and implemented?
- **Impact**: To what extent does the application of the policies matter for achievement of development objectives? Is there any evidence that these policies have led to benefits beyond the GEF environmental objectives?

34. Additionally, under this program of work, two previous IEO evaluations will be updated. These evaluations assessed engagement with and support to specific stakeholder groups and the updates will look at the extent to which the recommendations from the *Evaluation of the GEF–Civil Society Organization Network* (GEF IEO 2016) and the *Evaluation of GEF Engagement with Indigenous Peoples* (GEF IEO 2018a) have been followed. The work to update these evaluations will be conducted in parallel with the evaluation of the application of the policies laid out in this approach paper and will contribute evidence to assess how engagement with civil society (and the CSO Network) and indigenous peoples has been reflected in GEF projects. See Appendix 4 for more information.

a. Coverage

35. These policies apply to the Secretariat, GEF Agencies and all GEF-financed interventions, the evaluation design will reflect this coverage, making every effort to ensure that interactions occur with all GEF Agencies. The timeline covered by this evaluation includes interventions financed under GEF-5 through those approved before July 1, 2020. Figure 1 below shows the key milestones for these policies, relative to the GEF periods. Including interventions financed under GEF-5 through the present allows for an analysis of change over time for key evaluation criteria related to the application of the policies.

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6 See Appendix 1 for the evaluation design matrix

7 The Gender Equality Policy also applies to the Council.
IV. Evaluation Design, Quality Assurance, and Limitations

a. Evaluation Design

36. The evaluation will use a mixed methods approach, and is expected to include the following elements:

- **Document and literature review**: To answer questions about coherence and strategic relevance, the evaluation team will review council documents, GEF policies, guidance, and strategies as well as policies, guidance and strategies from other climate finance mechanisms. Project/program documents (especially at the PIF/PDF approval and CEO endorsement phase), terminal evaluation reports, and document templates will be reviewed to answer questions about effectiveness and impact.

- **Benchmarking Exercise**: The three policies will be reviewed and compared with similar policies at other development organizations and with other climate finance institutions. This assessment will help answer the evaluation questions on strategic relevance of GEF policies and coherence with best practice and approaches used by the broader development community.

- **Interviews/Focus Group Discussions and Stakeholder Workshops**: This evaluation will rely heavily on feedback from stakeholders across the partnership. Interactions will take place with staff and volunteers from the following stakeholder groups: GEF Secretariat; GEF Agencies; executing agencies; GEF Focal Points; the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group; GEF CSO Network; Focal convention staff; and project level stakeholders including local communities and direct project beneficiaries. Input from these stakeholders will be used to answer questions about operational relevance, effectiveness of the application of policies, and the impact of the policies on GEF-financed interventions.
• **Online Surveys**: An online survey will be conducted with different modules targeted at specific stakeholder groups (Operational Focal Points, Council Members, CSO Network, CSO members, Agency staff). The evaluation team will coordinate survey efforts with other IEO evaluations to ensure efficiency and avoid over taxing respondents. Perceptions from stakeholders are an important input that will be used across the evaluation.

• **Network Analysis**: The GEF Partnership is a complex entity, comprised of 183 countries, 18 Agencies, Civil Society Organizations, Indigenous Peoples and the private sector. A network analysis conducted at the beginning of the evaluation will help the evaluation team unpack important institutional dynamics, better understand how the Secretariat functions relative to the other members of the Partnership and learn more about the utility of the policies from a range of stakeholders. This tool will allow the evaluation team to refine and hone criteria that will be applied to the portfolio review and field work. It is also anticipated that this exercise could reveal examples of excellence in terms of institutions or individuals that apply the policies well.

• **Field Visits**: The evaluation will carry out field visits to project sites to conduct interviews with project stakeholders to gain an in-depth understanding of whether these policies, when applied holistically, have intended or unintended impacts. The selection of countries and intervention types will be informed by the portfolio analysis, network analysis, and stakeholder interviews and be guided by the following criteria: GEF Agency, type of executing agency, geographical distribution, and GEF focal area. The evaluation plans to carry out eight field visits. Potential synergies for field work between this evaluation and both the *Evaluation of SFM and REDD+* and the *Formative Review of the GEF Integrated Approach to Tackle the Drivers of Environmental Degradation* will be explored.

• **Portfolio Analysis**: The evaluation will conduct a portfolio review based on PMIS data and Annual Performance Reports. The portfolio will include projects from GEF-5, GEF-6, and GEF-7. A database will be compiled including basic project information such as GEF activity cycle information, financing (including co-financing), implementing institutions involved, focal areas, countries, main objectives, key partners, and implementation status. A Project Review Template (PRT) will be developed to assess the programs in a systematic to ensure that key evaluation questions are addressed coherently and allow for aggregation. The portfolio analysis will include a quality-at-entry review to look at how designs of GEF-financed interventions (vis-à-vis the policies) have changed over time, and a review of completed projects, to look at reported results. Using the review template, the evaluation team will rate projects along criteria related to application of the policies and look for any relationship between these ratings and project performance (as reflected in terminal evaluation ratings). To the extent possible, the evaluation intends to build off the portfolios already constructed and reviewed from previous evaluations of Gender and Safeguards. Portfolio composition and considerations are discussed in Appendix 3.

**b. Quality assurance**

37. In line with IEO’s quality assurance practice the evaluation secured two Peer Reviewers, one internal and one external. Internal IEO review will be provided by a Senior Evaluation Officer (Carlo Caruggi). Chris Nelson, Manager, World Bank Independent Evaluation Group is the external Peer
Reviewer. The role of the Peer Reviewers is to advise throughout the evaluation process on: (i) the soundness of evaluation design, scope, questions, methods and process described in the approach paper; and (ii) implementation of the methodology and implications of methodological limitations in the formulation of the conclusions and recommendations in the draft and final reports. On March 19, 2020, Mr. Caruggi and Mr. Nelson provided multiple insights into the scope, evaluation questions, and methods during a review meeting with IEO staff. These inputs have been incorporated into this approach paper.

38. Triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative information gathered will be conducted at completion of the data analysis and gathering phase to determine trends and identify the main findings, lessons and conclusions. Stakeholders will be consulted during the process to test preliminary findings. The approach paper will be circulated to the GEF Secretariat, the CSO Network, the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group, and implementing agencies and the evaluation report will be shared with the same stakeholders plus relevant executing agencies and other stakeholders consulted for the evaluation. In addition, the evaluation team met with the Secretariat for an initial meeting on evaluation ideas and will continue to request feedback on evaluation design, theories of change, and other issues/ideas that arise.

c. Limitations

39. For the recently updated policies, the portfolio of projects approved or under implementation is small, and there are no completed projects. This limits the ability to look at higher order impacts of the new policies. The evaluation will review the small portfolio that falls under the new policies, however the sample size is a limitation and therefore the results from analysis of the small portfolio will be reported with this caveat. This will not diminish the ability to look at trends in application of these policies over time, given the long history and previous versions of the policies being evaluated. Conducting an evaluation at this point allows for a better understanding of factors within the Partnership that matter for effective implementation of these policies. The broader impacts of the new policies could be covered as part of future IEO evaluations.

40. Another limitation is related to the unreliability of PMIS data on projects and programs, which will be addressed through cross-checking data with the Secretariat and with GEF Agencies. Finally, given the large and heterogeneous nature of the Partnership and the implementation contexts for GEF-financed interventions, another limitation is the number of field visits that can be carried out within the resource envelope (time and finances) for this evaluation. This will be mitigated, to the extent possible, by conducting field missions jointing with other evaluations as described above.

V. Deliverables and Dissemination

41. Preliminary evaluation findings will be drafted by December 2020. The evaluation report will be finalized by March 1, 2021 for presentation as an information document at the June 2021 GEF Council Meeting. A formatted, finalized version will appear on the GEF IEO website soon after. A four-page evaluation brief with the main messages will be published for the evaluation. The evaluation brief and the final evaluation report will be posted on the IEO website and included in the IEO newsletter. The
evaluation team will make every effort to ensure that stakeholders consulted as part of this work receive the evaluation outputs or are informed of where to find the evaluations. As requested or relevant, external presentations will be given to support broader dissemination of the work.

VI. Resources

a. Timeline

Table 1. Gantt chart of project activities.

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¹ When possible, interviews will be planned to take advantage of times when there are planned stakeholder gatherings – for example Council Meetings (June/December) and the Agency Retreat (March). ECWs may also be used as an opportunity to conduct interviews.
b. Team and skills mix

42. Kate Steingraber, Evaluation Officer, will lead the design and implementation of the evaluation with oversight from Geeta Batra, Chief Evaluation Officer. Anna Viggh, Senior Evaluation Officer, will support the review of the Gender Equality Policy. Other IEO staff will support different components of the evaluation, time permitting.

43. The evaluation team will include 2 expert consultants (C) who have deep knowledge of GEF policies and engagement. Phil Cox, a core team member from the previous evaluation, will work on the updates to the evaluations that cover engagement with two groups – CSO Network and Indigenous Peoples. Bruce Jenkins will lead the work on strategic alignment and coherence of the policies. IEO staff will conduct the review of the updated gender policy. A research analyst consultant (RA) will support the portfolio review and online survey data collection and analysis.

44. Additional information on engagement with country level stakeholders will come from the planned IEO evaluation of the Country Support Program evaluation. These include questions related to activities covered under the Stakeholder Engagement Policy under the category of GEF-Secretariat Led activities (National and Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues).
## VII. Appendix 1: Evaluation Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Indicators/basic data/what to look for</th>
<th>Sources of Information</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Coherence/Strategic Alignment** | - Comparison of GEF Policies with GEF strategy documents  
- Review evolution of the policies compared with changes in the GEF strategy | -GEF Policy and Guidelines/Guidance, Strategy Documents | -Desk Review |
| | -Perceptions on consideration of strategy when formulating updated policies | -GEFSEC Staff | - Interviews |
| | -Evidence on internal consistency between policies (cross-referencing, harmonization across the policies, etc) | -GEF Policy and Guidelines/Guidance, Strategy Documents | -Desk Review |
| | -Perceptions on internal consistency and clarity of policies | -GEFSEC Staff, Agency Staff | - Interviews |
| | -Similarities/differences of the policies compared to other international organizations, including climate finance mechanisms based on international standards | -Policy documents, GEFSEC Staff | -Benchmarking exercise |

| **Operational Relevance** | -Perceptions/stakeholders reflecting understanding of/agreement with the rationale behind these policies  
-Perceptions of how manageable, realistic, operationally relevant and efficient these policies have been to GEF’s portfolio  
-Perception of value add for GEF-financed interventions (versus a box ticking exercise)  
-Perceptions of cultural aspects or operational realities that influenced buy-in | -GEF Agency Staff, GEF Secretariat Staff, Council Members, OFPs | -Interviews  
-Online Surveys |
| | -Resources allocated to ensuring application of these policies (staff time, dedicated financing) | -Administrative data | -Desk review |
| | -Activities undertaken by the GEF to increase knowledge and capacity to apply policies, and associated outputs (online and in-person training, one-on-one support, guidelines and guidance issued, communities of practice, etc) | -Documents  
-Online learning  
-GEF Secretariat Staff, GEF Agencies | -Interviews and Surveys  
-Document Review  
-Network Analysis |
| | -Existence of review processes and quality assurance mechanisms to ensure application of policies | -Templates for document review and PIF-CEO Endorsement  
-GEFSEC Staff | -Document Review  
-Interviews |
<p>| | -Perceptions of how holistically these policies are applied. | -GEF Agency Staff, GEF Secretariat Staff, Council Members, OFPs | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
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</table>
| Is there any evidence that these policies shape the way that GEF-financed interventions are identified, designed, and implemented? | Presence of the minimum requirements associated with each policy at relevant stage (PIF/CEO Endorsement) (Policy requirements change over time)  
-Quality of gender analysis, socioeconomic analysis or equivalent, identification of safeguard risks, quality of stakeholder engagement plans  
-Representation of viewpoints of stakeholder groups (indigenous peoples, women, CSOs, local communities) in project documents  
-Evidence in GEF documentation of how the policies are being applied in GEF-financed interventions  
-Perception on whether these policies have resulted in substantial inclusion or whether this is a box ticking exercise (look for examples to illustrate) |
| GEF Agency Staff, GEF Secretariat Staff, Council Members, OFPs | Document review protocol |
| Evidence of increase in resources for application of policies (number of people trained or specializing in safeguards, gender, inclusion) in Agencies and perceptions about the extent to which this relates to GEF policies | GEF Agency Staff, GEFSEC Staff  
-Administrative data |
| Perception on whether these policies have resulted in substantial inclusion or whether this is a box ticking exercise (look for examples to illustrate) | Interviews  
-Online survey |
| Impact                                                                         | Methodology                                                                 |
| To what extent does the application of the policies contribute to achievement of development objectives? | Evidence of improved effectiveness (TE ratings) for interventions that are rated higher in application of policies |
| Project Documents, TE Ratings | Document review protocol |
| Is there any evidence that these policies have led to benefits beyond the GEF environmental objectives? | Evidence of catalytic effect of the policies: Do GEF Agencies report that they changed their internal policies or approaches based at least in part on the GEF policies?  
-Likely more relevant for a subset of Agencies  
-Evidence of interventions that are more inclusive (of the perspectives of women, indigenous peoples and local communities, and other stakeholders)  
-linkages between project documents (gender analysis, stakeholder engagement plans, identified safeguards) and on the ground perceptions of inclusion, local perspectives, and risk mitigation |
| GEF Agency Staff  
-Project staff  
-Project beneficiaries | Document review protocol  
Portfolio Analysis, Interviews  
-Field visits |
VIII. Appendix 2: References


----- . 2014d. “Guidelines for the Implementation of the Public Involvement Policy.” GEF/C.47/Inf.06. GEF, Washington, DC.


IX. Appendix 3: Portfolio Composition

45. Contemporary updates for the three policies under consideration came or will come into effect (with dates for newly approved and ongoing activities staggered by one year) between July 2018 and July 2020. The Stakeholder Engagement Policy and the Gender Equality Policy came into effect for new activities in July 2018, and for activities under implementation (implementation reports, midterm reviews, and terminal evaluations) in July 2019. The Safeguards Policy came into effect for new activities in July 2019 and will come into effect for activities under implementation in July 2020.

46. The proposed approach divides the portfolio into cohorts aligned with milestones (policy updates, issuance of guidance). These changes occurred at different points of time over the past decade, therefore the proposed portfolio review reflects this, as demonstrated in Figure 2 below. Where possible, the evaluation intends to build off the portfolios already evaluated from previous evaluations of Gender and Safeguards.

Figure 2. GEF Policies and proposed portfolio cohorts

For Gender:
- Cohort 1: Projects that were CEO endorsed before the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming was approved
- Cohort 2: Projects were CEO endorsed after the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming was approved
- Cohort 3: Projects that were CEO endorsed after the Policy on Gender equality was approved

For Stakeholder Engagement:
- Cohort 1: Projects that were CEO endorsed before the Guidelines to Implement the PIP
- Cohort 2: Projects that were CEO endorsed after the Guidelines to Implement the PIP
- Cohort 3: Projects that were CEO endorsed after the Updated Stakeholder Engagement Policy

For Safeguards:
- Cohort 1: Projects that were CEO endorsed prior to the issuance of the ESS Policy
- Cohort 2: Projects after the issuance of the ESS Policy
- Due to the recent and future effectiveness dates of this policy (July 2019 for new activities, July 2020 for ongoing), there is no cohort 3

The portfolio review will have two components:

1. **Quality-at-entry Review.** This assessment will review documentation from a sample of projects at CEO Endorsement, this may include Project Framework Documents (PFDs), Project Identification Forms (PIFs) and supporting documentation (e.g. gender analysis, socioeconomic analysis or similar, safeguards documentations and any gender plan, stakeholder engagement plan or risk mitigation plan). All projects will be reviewed using a Project Review Template (PRT) to assess the interventions in a systematic manner to ensure that key evaluation questions are addressed coherently and that results can be aggregated. Review criteria will be set by the evaluation team after preliminary interviews and document review (some examples could include inclusiveness, level of engagement of stakeholder groups, documentation of consultations, risks identified, etc). The review template will reflect the mandatory requirements under each respective policy (which changed over time) but will also look for evidence of a more holistic application of the topics the policies address. This analysis is being carried out to assess whether the policies have changed the identification and design of GEF-financed interventions over time.

2. **Completed/ongoing Projects.** This analysis will look at a sample of completed and ongoing projects through a review of project documents including midterm reviews, implementation reports, and terminal evaluations. There will also be a PRT that will review closed and ongoing projects along the same criteria. This analysis will contribute to an assessment of whether the policies have changed the implementation and evaluation of GEF-financed interventions over time. There may be a small set of projects are reviewed for quality at entry, and also assessed at closure to determine whether the application of the policies at design was also seen through implementation and reporting of results.

The proposed application of the two portfolio review components by cohort is presented in the table below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quality at Entry</th>
<th>Completed/ongoing Projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Cohort 1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Cohort 1, 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Engagement</td>
<td>Cohort 1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Cohort 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safeguards</td>
<td>Cohort 1, 2</td>
<td>Cohort 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current size of the portfolio for the recently approved policies follows:

1. New activities
2. Ongoing activities

- Mid-term Reviews: A review of the active GEF/LDC-SCCF portfolio (provided by the Secretariat in January 2020) shows that there are 25 projects (20 GEF, 5 from LDC-SCCF) that completed an MTR after the policies became effective for ongoing activities.

- Terminal Evaluations: The current IEO TER database does not have any TEs that were completed after the policy became effective. This is likely due to time lags in submission and cataloging. Looking at submission data from last year (2019), if 2020 is similar, there will likely be around 45 TEs submitted that were completed after July 2019.

---

[1] This data was obtained from the GEF Extended Report, downloaded from the GEF Portal on 2/20/2020. The data was initially filtered by Replenishment phase (GEF-7). This is a preliminary presentation of data; final numbers will be confirmed with the Secretariat.

[2] This was obtained by applying the filter “Project Status For Agencies (CEO Endorsement Cleared)”

[3] This was obtained by applying the filter “Project Status For Agencies (Council Approved)”
Appendix 4: Updates to previous IEO Evaluations – CSO Network and Engagement with Indigenous Peoples

47. The evaluation of policies will be supplemented with information from updates of two previous evaluations described briefly below. Update questions stem from the recommendations of these evaluations. The updates will be carried out in parallel with the policy evaluation, ensuring synergy where possible.

Civil Society Organizations

48. For OPS 5, IEO published a technical document, *Civil Society Organizations Engagement* (GEF IEO 2013a), which looked at tendencies and trends in civil society engagement by the GEF. It found that the Public Involvement Policy was outdated, not systematically implemented and largely ineffective, and that guidelines to strengthen existing mechanisms were lacking. The study also found that a systematic approach to monitor CSO engagement in the GEF was lacking. Investment by civil society (reflected through the FSP/MSP and SGP portfolios) in the GEF was described by the evaluation as “stop(ing) short of being meaningful”. Recommendations included, *inter alia*, updating policies and guidance, incorporating practical indicators for measuring CSO engagement at multiple phases in the project cycle, and a regular review of the CSO Network as a the main GEF link to civil society.

49. The CSO Network was first evaluated in 2005, a second evaluation followed up on recommendations and actions stemming from the first review and explored new elements. The *Evaluation of the GEF-Civil Society Organization (CSO) Network* (GEF IEO 2016) covered two key evaluation questions:

- To what extent is the GEF-CSO network meeting its intended goals and strategic objectives and adding value to the GEF partnership and its members?
- How are Network features contributing to the effective and efficient functioning of the Network?

50. The 2016 evaluation found that the GEF-CSO Network received good to excellent marks regarding progress against its objectives. As well, the CSO Network was found to be relevant and delivering results to the GEF partnerships. However, the Network’s activities were found to be distant from the country level where GEF projects make their mark and from where the majority of Network CSOs operate. Four recommendations were issued: 1) a contemporary vision for the Network should be created, including a modality to finance Network activities; 2) clear rules of engagement should be developed to guide cooperation and communication; 3) the Network should continue to build itself as a mechanism for strengthening civil society participation in the GEF and 4) the Network should strengthen its governance.
Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

51. The Evaluation of GEF Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (GEF IEO 2018a) was an input into OPS 6. The purpose of the assessment was to assess the GEF’s engagement activities with Indigenous Peoples and provide lessons and insights leading to recommendations to strengthen GEF collaborations. This evaluation found that significant steps have been taken by the GEF to increase engagement and participation of Indigenous Peoples in the GEF and provides an overview of the history of the mechanisms that emerged to support this engagement. The evaluation reviewed the performance of the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group, and found that while there were some significant accomplishments, progress was hindered by constraints on performance including communication issues (language barriers), lack of capacity, staffing capacity in the Secretariat and the Agencies, and coordination. The evaluation also looked at the applicable safeguards minimum standard, and the GEF portfolio. The evaluation issued the following recommendations: 1) Establish and Strengthen dedicated funding opportunities for indigenous peoples projects/organizations; 2) Update relevant policies and guidelines to reflect best practice standards concerning indigenous peoples, including a right-based approach to engagement; 3) Review the IPAG’s role for operational constraints; 4) Facilitate dialogue between indigenous peoples and local communities and government focal points; 5) Monitor application of Minimum Standard 4 and the indigenous peoples portfolio.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Engagement with stakeholder groups (CSO Network and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities) 9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CSO Network</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the new vision for the CSO Network clarified the Network’s role, set out a shared understanding of the Network’s contribution in guarding the global commons and identified a modality to finance Network activities?</td>
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<td>Has this led to any changes that enable the CSO Network to better meet its goals and objectives?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have clear rules of engagement to guide cooperation and communications for the CSO Network been developed? If so, how do they help the CSO Network achieve its goals?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the CSO Network continued to build itself as a mechanism for strengthening civil society participation in the GEF, emphasizing membership development, capacity building and value-added working relationships across the partnership?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have there been any changes and improvements to the CSO Network’s governance structures (annual work plans, cooperation with IPAG, terms for the Network’s Regional Focal Points and complaints process)?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How has the GEF established and strengthened dedicated funding opportunities for indigenous people’s projects/organizations?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Review design of Inclusive Conservation program/window</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the new GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (Minimum Standard 5: Indigenous Peoples) and related Guidelines reflect best practice standards concerning indigenous peoples, including a rights-based approach to engagement?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has there been a review of the IPAG’s role for operational constraints? If so, have the operational constraints been addressed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent does the GEF facilitate dialogue between IPLCs and GEF Government focal points?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the role of IPs in GEF projects and at ECWs and Council workshops?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does the GEF monitor the application of Minimum Standard 5?</td>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent to agencies report on project safeguard risk categorization for projects involving IPs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does the GEF monitor the portfolio of projects that engage IPs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do midterm and terminal evaluations capture engagement with IPs and results?</td>
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</table>

9 These evaluation questions build off the recommendations of the previous evaluations.