

MOPAN ASSESSMENT REPORT

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# Global Environment Facility (GEF)

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Published 2025

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# Global Environment Facility (GEF)

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## EXPLANATORY NOTE

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MOPAN is the only collective action mechanism that meets member countries' information needs regarding the performance of multilateral organisations. MOPAN provides comprehensive, independent, and credible performance information through its institutional assessment report to inform members' engagement and accountability mechanisms.

MOPAN's assessment reports tell the story of the multilateral organisation and its performance. The reports support members' decision making regarding multilateral organisations and the wider multilateral system by detailing the assessment's major findings and conclusions, along with the organisation's performance journeys, strengths, and areas for improvement.

This document is published under the responsibility of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN). MOPAN is an independent body governed by a steering committee composed of representatives of all its member countries and served by a permanent secretariat hosted at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and bound by its administrative rules and procedures. MOPAN is independent in terms of financing and the content and implementation of its work programme.

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# PREFACE

## ABOUT MOPAN

The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) promotes an effective multilateral system, trusted to deliver solutions to evolving global goals and local challenges. As at 17 April 2025, it comprised 21 members.

MOPAN members share a common interest in assessing the performance of the major multilateral organisations they fund given their mandate, operating model and the contexts in which they work. A MOPAN assessment report provides a diagnostic assessment, or snapshot, of an organisation and tells the story of its current performance, within its mandate. Box 1 describes MOPAN’s mission and vision.

FIGURE 1: MOPAN MEMBERS (AS AT 17 APRIL 2025)



### Box 1: MOPAN's Mission and Vision

MOPAN is a network of members who assess multilateral organisations, shape performance standards, and champion learning and insights to strengthen development and humanitarian results and promote accountability.

Capitalising on the Network's unique cross-multilateral system perspective and expertise, MOPAN members work together to deliver relevant, impartial, high-quality, timely performance information as a public good through an inclusive and transparent approach.

MOPAN's performance information mitigates risks, informs decision-making and supports change. It helps to increase knowledge and trust amongst stakeholders, and ultimately to achieve a stronger, better performing multilateral system.

MOPAN's shared vision is to promote an effective multilateral system, trusted to deliver solutions to evolving global goals and local challenges.

MOPAN's assessments provide a comprehensive overview of organisational effectiveness, including how an organisation is positioned to address its current and future challenges. The assessments support MOPAN members in their governance and decision-making regarding the multilateral organisations they fund, and also support the leadership of multilateral organisations in implementing reforms that reflect multilateral good practices.

MOPAN also produces a range of analytical insights into the multilateral system. For the full range of its performance evidence and analysis see <https://www.mopan.org/>.

#### Ecosystem based adaptation in Sudan

Under a UNEP-led project, a large water harvesting reservoir has been constructed near Um Naam Um village in Sudan's southern White Nile state to trap water in the wet season and store it year-round.

Photo: © GEF



## FOREWORD

MOPAN assessments are conducted through a rigorous and collaborative process to ensure that the findings are based on strong evidence base and resonate with an organisation and its stakeholders.

This report is composed of two parts:

### Part I: Analysis Summary

- *Performance at a Glance* provides an overall summary of the assessment;
- *Chapter 1: Introducing GEF* provides key information about the organisation being assessed, including its mandate, governance structure, business model and operations;
- *Chapter 2: Assessment conclusions and future trajectory* lays out the overall conclusions of the assessment and identifies forward-looking considerations for the organisation and its governing body;
- *Chapter 3: Findings and Ratings* describes the findings of the assessment against MOPAN's framework and Key Performance Indicators.
- *Chapter 4: About this Assessment* provides information about the methodology and approach, including timelines for implementation and key activities.

### Part II: Technical and Statistical Annex of GEF Assessment (available online) contains:

- *Annex A: Performance analysis* describes the analysis underlying the assessment ratings.
- *Annex B: Evidence list of documents.*
- *Annex C: Results of the partner survey.*

### HISTORY OF MOPAN ASSESSMENTS FOR GEF

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This report provides a diagnostic assessment and snapshot of GEF and tells the story of its performance within its mandate. This is the second MOPAN assessment conducted for GEF and covers the period from the first MOPAN assessment in 2017-18 (available on the MOPAN website\*).

\* <https://www.mopan.org/en/our-work/performance-evidence/gef/mopan-assessment-gef-2017-18.html>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The MOPAN assessment of GEF was conducted under the overall strategic guidance of Suzanne Steensen, Head of the MOPAN Secretariat. It was managed and guided by William Norris.

MOPAN is very grateful to Australia, Richard Bontjer, and Sweden, Anders Arvidsson and Karin Seydlitz, for championing this assessment on behalf of the MOPAN membership.

The assessment was conducted in cooperation with Universalia. The team was led by Eric Abitbol, the principal author of the report. A team including Phil Cox and Esther Rouleau also supported the assessment and contributed to the final report. The report also benefited from an external peer review, conducted by Paul Balogun and Moira Reddick.

The partner survey was managed by Cristina Serra-Vallejo from the MOPAN Secretariat who, together with Corentin Beudaert-Ugolini supported the implementation and finalisation of the survey.

The report was prepared for publication by Camille Hewitt, proofread/copy edited by Deborah Glassman and graphic design by Baseline Arts Ltd. David Anonuevo and James Cornsilk produced the web infographics and data visualisations.

MOPAN would like to convey its appreciation to Jonathan Caldicott and Cyril Blet from GEF, who co-ordinated the process and provided substantive feedback on the report.

This assessment would not have been possible without the close engagement and valuable contributions from many senior officials and technical staff from GEF as well as representatives of development partners who participated in interviews and the survey.

Finally, MOPAN is grateful to all Steering Committee representatives for supporting the GEF assessment, and to its member countries for their financial contributions, which have made the report possible.



### Nepal

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Catalysing ecosystem restoration for climate resilient natural capital & rural livelihoods in degraded forests and rangelands of Nepal.

Photo: © GEF

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>AF</b>	Adaptation Fund	<b>MAR</b>	Management Action Record
<b>BBNJ</b>	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction	<b>MCF</b>	Multilateral Climate Funds
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity	<b>MDB</b>	Multilateral Development Banks
<b>CBIT</b>	Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency	<b>MEA</b>	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
<b>CES</b>	Country Engagement Strategy	<b>METT</b>	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
<b>CIF</b>	Climate Investment Funds	<b>MOPAN</b>	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
<b>CoP</b>	Community of Practice	<b>MSP</b>	Medium Sized Project
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation	<b>MTR</b>	Mid-Term Review
<b>CSP</b>	Country Support Programme	<b>NAP</b>	National Adaptation Plans
<b>ECW</b>	Expanded Constituency Workshop	<b>NGI</b>	Non-Grant Instrument
<b>ERM</b>	Enterprise Risk Management	<b>NPIF</b>	Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund
<b>ESS</b>	Environmental and Social Safeguards	<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>FCV</b>	Fragility-Conflict-Violence	<b>OFP</b>	Operational Focal Points
<b>FIF</b>	Financial Intermediary Fund	<b>POP</b>	Persistent Organic Pollutants
<b>FOLUR</b>	Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration	<b>PSEAH</b>	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
<b>FSP</b>	Full Sized Project	<b>PSES</b>	Private Sector Engagement Strategy
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal Year	<b>RBM</b>	Results Based Management
<b>GAP</b>	Gender Action Plan	<b>RFS</b>	Resilient Food Systems
<b>GBFF</b>	Global Biodiversity Framework Fund	<b>SC</b>	Sustainable Cities
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund	<b>SCCF</b>	Special Climate Change Fund
<b>GEB</b>	Global Environmental Benefit	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>GEEW</b>	Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	<b>SEA</b>	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility	<b>SGP</b>	Small Grants Programme
<b>GEF-IEO</b>	GEF Independent Evaluation Office	<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing States
<b>GGP</b>	GEF Gender Partnership	<b>STAP</b>	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
<b>IAP</b>	Integrated Approach Pilots	<b>STAR</b>	System for the Transparent Allocation of Resources
<b>ICI</b>	Inclusive Conservation Initiative	<b>UNCCD</b>	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institutions	<b>UNCCD</b>	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
<b>IPAG</b>	Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group	<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>KM&amp;L</b>	Knowledge Management and Learning	<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>LDC</b>	Least Developed Country	<b>WCED</b>	World Commission on Environment and Development
<b>LDCF</b>	Least Developed Countries Fund		
<b>LTV</b>	Long-Term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence and Collaboration between the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility		

**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT  
FACILITY**  
PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE





**Brazil – Pink Dolphins in Novo Arao**

The Amazon Region Protected Areas Program (ARPA) for the GEF has demonstrated the interconnections between biodiversity protection, climate change mitigation, erosion of ecosystem services, and economic security for the people of the Amazon Region.

Photo: © Baljit Wadhwa / GEF.

# GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY: PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE

GEF was established in 1991 shortly before the Rio Earth Summit, with a core mission to ensure nature's protection and sustainable use (GEF, 2021b). It was created to help address some of the planet's most challenging environmental and related issues, building on the critical and timely work of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) and its seminal publication, *Our Common Future* (1987) (United Nations, 1987). The GEF is mandated to deliver global environmental benefits (GEBs) that respond to national and international commitments of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and associated protocols (GEF, 2021b).<sup>1</sup> The GEF's mandate covers core areas of biodiversity, chemicals and waste, climate change adaptation, climate change mitigation, forests, freshwater, land degradation, and ocean health (GEF 2024j).

Over time, the GEF has evolved to become a multilateral family of funds for the environment. Its mission is to support developing countries address the root causes of environmental degradation and meet their commitments to environmental conventions and agreements by producing GEBs as well as economic and social well-being (i.e., co-benefits).

The MOPAN assessment of GEF considers whether the organisation is positioned to deliver results in line with its mandates adheres to the highest standards of ethics and integrity, and works coherently across the multilateral system to support delivery of environmental goals. It assesses the organisation's performance between January 2019 to July 2024 (with additional evidence undertaken in Q3/Q4 for certain performance areas).

## KEY FINDINGS

As a family of funds and a partnership, GEF continues to play an important role in the system-response to the environmental crisis. Its role in the multilateral system is underpinned by a broadly-recognised set of comparative advantages. These include its reach across the Rio Conventions and an increasing number of MEAs, focal areas and geographies which provide it with a unique ability to address environmental challenges in an integrated manner in line with Leaders' Pledge for Nature and relevant COP guidance. Its unique System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) and set-asides provides funds in a transparent and predictable manner, whilst its focus on grant-making means it is well placed to address specific MEA priorities and act as a catalyst and innovator, complementing other sources of multilateral finance and private finance.

As a partnership, the GEF mobilises a broad spread of comparative advantages, organisational capacities and competencies which supports delivery across all Focal Areas. At a portfolio level, there are signs that the partnership is better capitalising on the diverse capacities of its implementing agencies, including the appointment of new agencies to manage the Small Grants Programme and decrease in the concentration of projects administered by the largest three agencies. At a country-level, the assessment heard positive feedback of support provided to help mobilise the most qualified agencies to lead projects, but in some cases the agency selection continues to be driven by non-technical factors that may ultimately impact on the achievement of objectives. Overall, GEF's progress in strengthening partnerships is less easy to track on account of a lack of relevant indicators in corporate reporting.

**GEF has been at the forefront of promoting collaboration across multilateral agencies in the environment and climate space, with enhanced multilateral collaboration supporting a coherent system-wide response to the**

1. GEF investments are predicated on the delivery of global environmental benefits in biodiversity, climate change mitigation, international waters, land degradation and forests, and chemicals and waste.

**environmental crisis based on comparative advantages.** Early in the assessment period, GEF agreed to a Joint Long-Term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence and Collaboration with the Green Climate Fund (GCF). This led to the agreement of collaboration principles into GEF-8 and in GCF's Updated Strategic Plan, joint programming pilots at a country level aimed at aligning investment planning and programming cycles, and knowledge sharing. More recently, engagement with the other Multilateral Climate funds culminated in the agreement of the Multilateral Climate Funds Joint Action Plan, highlighting complementarities between the funds, identifying steps to leverage financing on a larger scale to meet country priorities, and committing to regular reporting on progress to governing bodies. As such, the Joint Action Plan sets an important example for other parts of the multilateral system for how organisations and funds can respond to fragmentation and strengthen the system-wide response to global and local challenges.

**GEF has advanced on integrated programming but there is an ongoing need to understand impact and support learning.** GEF has been advancing a global change agenda anchored in a country-level, strategic engagement approach, balancing calls for an ambitious integrated response to global environmental goods with support for delivery of country priorities and MEA commitments. Premised on recognised drivers of environmental degradation, integrated programming approaches seeking system change demonstrate alignment to country priorities according to the assessment. Successes notwithstanding, the pace, coverage and sometimes inherent implementation complexities of GEF's integrated programming approach is a source of concern to some stakeholders, and upcoming evaluation evidence will be scrutinised carefully.

**GEF's policies, processes and systems increasingly reflect good practice and standards.** Overall, GEF has made good progress in reforming policies and structures to address development areas identified in the previous MOPAN assessment. In particular, GEF has taken actions to clarify the delineation of roles and layering of responsibilities between the Secretariat and the agencies. Results frameworks have been streamlined, and reporting on results and portfolio performance is granular and comprehensive, strengthening accountability and reflecting best-practice in the multilateral system. Secretariat resources have been restructured to support delivery of its strategic commitments and mandates but remain streamlined with the Secretariat function accounting for a 3.5% of GEF's budget. Whilst a lean and focused Secretariat function is particularly important given the uncertain multilateral funding environment, staff resources allocated to certain important functional areas (e.g. private sector partnerships, blended finance, gender) remain modest and could be expanded further to drive forward work in these important areas.

Many reforms are recent. Continued attention is required to maintain momentum to ensure that planned benefits are delivered in full. For instance, the agreement of a Risk Appetite including statement and framework, creates an important opportunity for the GEF to review its approaches in the next replenishment to strengthen its impact. Additional guidance is required elsewhere to ensure that implementing agencies operationalise new policies in a consistent manner.

Whilst more time is required to establish the impact of some of the more recent reforms, the assessment finds that GEF increasingly has the policies, processes and tools to deliver on its mandate. However, there are several areas where further attention is required which are set out below.

**Enhanced engagement with diverse stakeholders is supporting more successful investments, but places additional onus on Operational Focal Points (OFPs) to support successful programming and projects.** GEF's commitment to support system transformation through a whole-of-government/whole-of-society engagement responds to multilateral guidance for inclusivity and integration. Evaluative evidence supports this strategic direction, demonstrating that stakeholder engagement is associated with a higher achievement of outcomes, greater sustainability, scaling and is an important driver for innovation. The assessment found clear examples of how

GEF's engagement mechanisms support structured dialogue in setting policy, fostering alignment between project portfolios and convention commitments, and optimising the use of GEF resources.

However, the shift towards a more inclusive and integrated approach is placing additional demands on the OFPs who are responsible for coordinating GEF country-level activities. For example, OFPs are required increasingly to lead and coordinate national stakeholders, prioritise resource use, ensure alignment with both national and global environmental objectives and mobilise agencies with the most relevant expertise. In some cases, these additional demands outstrip OFPs' capacity, constraining the successful implementation of GEF's approach.

OFP mechanisms may need to evolve to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose. Case studies undertaken for this assessment indicate that alternative structures such as national steering committees can facilitate a whole-of-government/whole-of-society approach, and serve as a conduit to relevant, larger strategic initiatives and help forge lateral linkages across the country portfolio.

**Performance evidence is key to supporting further scrutiny and learning.** The effectiveness of all multilateral actors is under increasing scrutiny, particularly those operating in areas with long-term returns on investments (such as environment and climate funds). Whilst GEF is well equipped to meet these needs through its strong monitoring, reporting and evaluation functions, there are some gaps where it remains difficult to assess the impact its activities, including integrated programming and support for priorities such as gender equality. Important steps are already underway in this regard. Upcoming evaluations will provide important insights on integrated programming to inform learning, and on gender, the new indicators adopted in the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework (RMF) will support scrutiny and analysis in the future replenishment period. GEF should maintain this progress and further align its results framework and monitoring to better meet stakeholders' needs.

**GEF is mobilising co-financing increasingly, but ambitious steps are required to deliver on its potential.** GEF prioritises the use of replenishment funds to leverage additional financing. It has stepped up mobilisation of co-financing through its new Blended Finance Programme, non-grant instruments (NGIs) and private sector engagement, and has a successful record in meeting its co-financing targets.

It is of paramount importance that GEF continues this progress and steps up its mobilisation efforts to better address growing financing needs. To achieve this, it must address the cautionary stance among some GEF recipient countries to take on loan finance and a reticence to programme country allocations from the STAR towards the private sector. This will require GEF broaden its engagement with recipient countries including ministries more accustomed to working with MDBs, promoting awareness of the advantages of NGIs, and reinforcing incentives to encourage uptake.

GEF should also focus on stimulating the engagement of new financiers in programmes and projects. Deepening its partnerships with the MDBs is a crucial part of this. Actions agreed by Council following the Working Group on Streamlining report, as well as Joint Action Plan commitments, set a clear roadmap for GEF to streamline, simplify and harmonise its project cycle processes and facilitate MDB participation.

Corporate policies and targets also need to be reviewed to deliver on this goal. For instance, GEF should revisit portfolio co-financing targets to ensure these strike the right balance between the need for increased ambition whilst remaining sensitive to other priorities embedded in its approach. It should also seek new opportunities to use its resources more effectively, including optimising the balance between grants and NGIs including guarantees and loans. And it should aim for greater consistency with other funds in measuring and reporting on mobilisation and co-financing to facilitate learning and comparative analysis.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

**GEF now has key elements in place to scale-up its impact under GEF-9, but evolving opportunities and risks will require it to maintain its reform trajectory.**

In the face of global necessity and urgency, GEF has responded positively over the assessment period to deliver on its strategic objectives and heighten its contribution to transformative change.

It has implemented significant adjustments to its policies, guidance, processes and feedback mechanisms with the results that these are increasingly fit-for-purpose and in line with international standards and best practices. As a result of these efforts, GEF is now well positioned to scale up its impact in the next replenishment period.

### Box 2. Main strengths and Improvement opportunities

#### Main strengths

- Strong coordination across the multilateral architecture with a clear action plan that guides an effective system-wide response.
- A strategy and operating model which balance calls for an ambitious integrated response to global environmental goods, with support for delivery of country priorities and Multilateral Environmental Agreement commitments.
- A strong partnership mobilising diverse competencies and capabilities to deliver joint planning and programming to address environmental goals.
- A transparent resource allocation approach providing countries with predictable funding, alongside set-asides which allocate funds for GEF priorities and groups.
- Operating policies and procedures which increasingly reflect international norms and best practices, underpinned by a clear and appropriate layering of responsibilities between the Secretariat and Agencies. A cost-efficient and restructured Secretariat aligned to vision, strategy and delivery of results.

#### Improvement opportunities

- Reinforce Operational Focal Point mechanisms to ensure they are equipped to drive GEF's whole-of-government/society approach.
- Stimulate demand for Non-Grant Instruments by recipient countries by raising awareness of opportunities in this area, building links with ministries accustomed to working with Multilateral Development Banks, and strengthening incentives to programme country allocations towards the private sector.
- Mobilise new financiers and incentivise deeper participation by Multilateral Development Banks through promoting efficiencies, streamlining and harmonising processes.
- Ensure sufficient Secretariat resources are allocated to key functions (including implementation of the private sector engagement strategy and gender equality policy and requirements).
- Support consistent implementation of recent reforms across agencies through guidance and capacity building.
- Promote accountability by further aligning results frameworks, monitoring and reporting with stakeholder needs to ensure that programmes and interventions supported can be tracked to their impact.

Looking ahead, in a highly fragmented funding environment, coordination and collaboration will continue to underpin GEF's role in the system-wide response. In recent years there has been an increasing awareness of the need for greater coherence and efforts towards reducing fragmentation. Maintaining the alignment of GEF's approach with guidance from COPs, and implementing commitments set out in joint action plans with other multilateral actors, will be key to GEF's ongoing relevance and impact.

As a partnership, the diverse priorities of its constituencies will require careful navigation. Enhanced performance information that demonstrates the effectiveness of GEF's new approach will be important to inform a coalescence of views and help forge shared purpose. Country-level structures will need to evolve to reflect the increased onus on OFPs to lead and coordinate national stakeholders, prioritise resource use and mobilise relevant partners to deliver on environmental objectives. With other multilateral climate and environment actors engaging increasingly with diverse ministries, enhanced cooperation including capitalising on existing coordination platforms, will be key to effective interventions and efficient engagement with recipient government administrations.

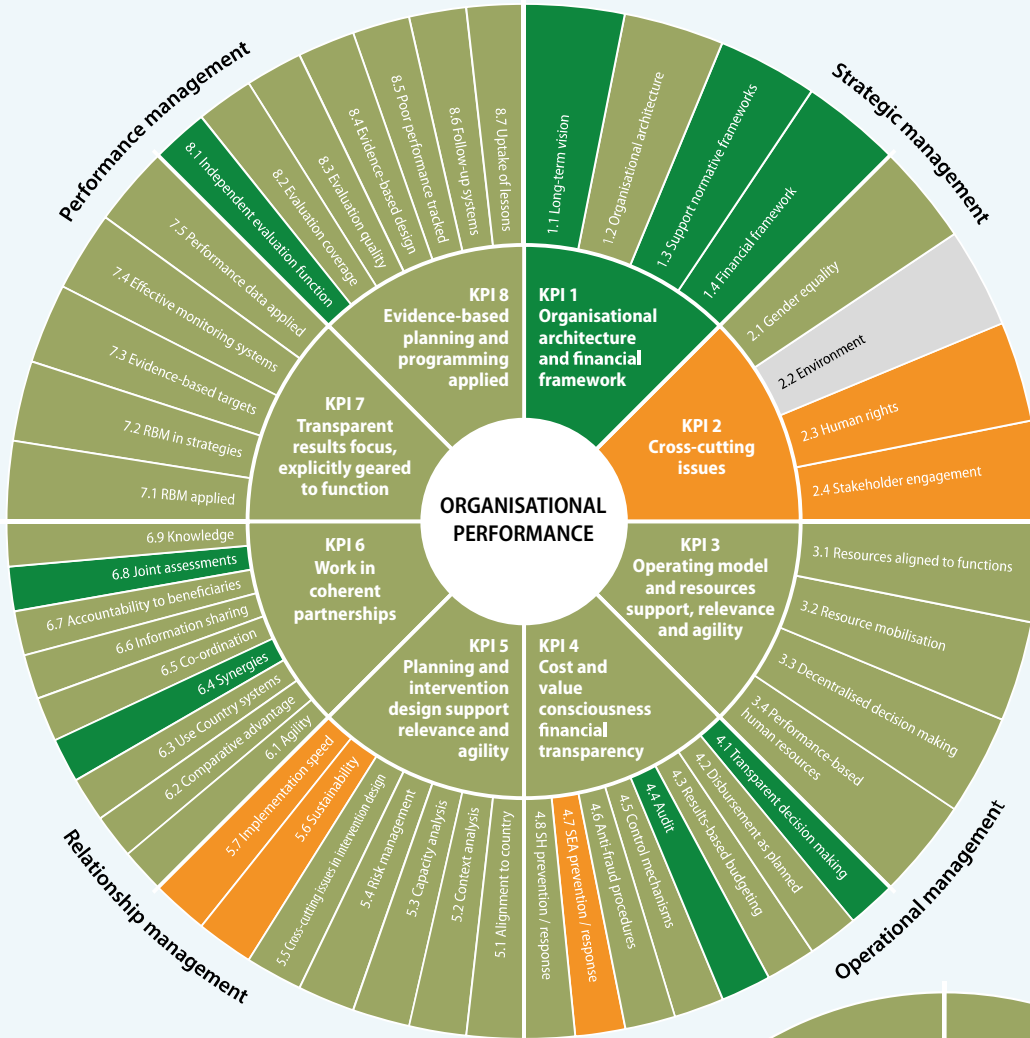
And as a fund, GEF's ability to respond to growing pressures on multilateral funding by mobilising new sources of finance, optimising the use of these funds, and deepening its relationship with the MDBs will be crucial to maximising impact. Delivering on its streamlining agenda, harmonising processes and definitions, and deepening engagement with ministries with greater familiarity with loan finance and NGIs will help strengthen the availability of finance, build demand, and support learning.



#### **Burkina Faso – Integrated ecosystem management to combat natural resources degradation in watersheds**

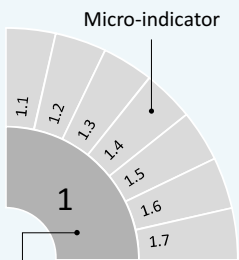
GEF learning mission to Burkina Faso to observe and understand how the Integrated Ecosystem Management approach used in combating natural resources degradation. Photo: © GEF

FIGURE 2: GEF SCORING OVERVIEW

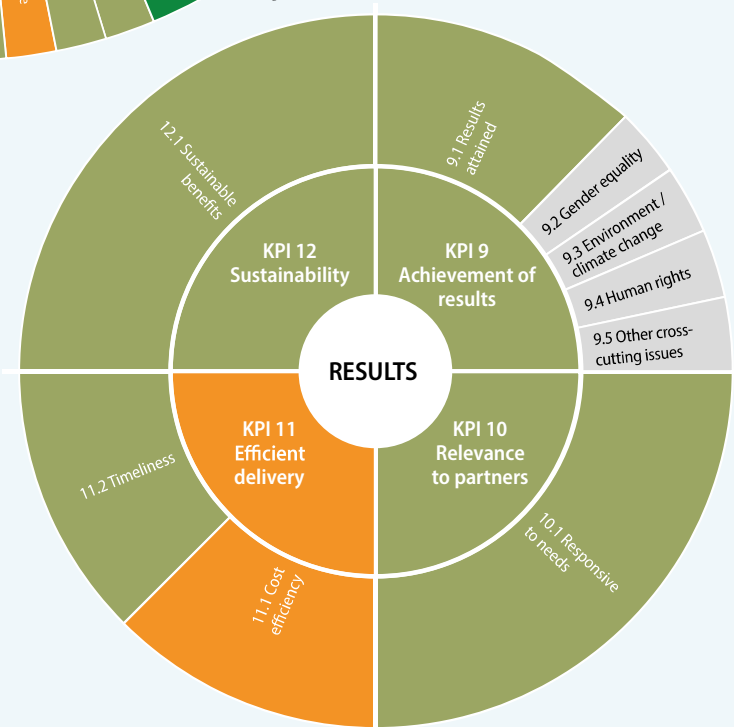


**Note:** The 2025 MOPAN assessment of GEF was undertaken using the MOPAN 3.1 assessment methodology introduced following the previous assessment. Under the revised approach rating thresholds were raised to reflect the increasing expectations for organisational performance across the multilateral system. To facilitate a comparison with the findings of the previous assessment, GEF’s scoring overview with application of MOPAN 3.0 rating scale is presented in Figure 16 on page 86.

**How to read these charts**



- █ **Highly satisfactory** (3.51-4.00)
- █ **Satisfactory** (2.51-3.50)
- █ **Unsatisfactory** (1.51-2.50)
- █ **Highly unsatisfactory** (0-1.50)
- █ **No evidence / Not applicable**



# INTRODUCING GEF





## PROJECT POSTCARDS

Highlights from the GEF portfolio, drawn from the 2024 Monitoring Report



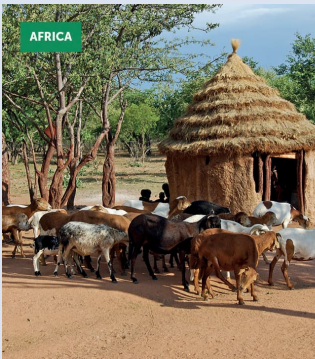
LATIN AMERICA

### SUPPORT FOR HEALTHY SOILS, FLOOD RESPONSE

In **Costa Rica** and **Panama**, GEF support for cooperation in the Sixaola River Basin is helping improve soil practices on banana farms and is strengthening early warning systems for emergencies including floods.

Project ID 10172

Implemented by:  
UNDP



AFRICA

### GOAT-REARING, ORGANIC HARVESTING TO HELP THE FOREST

In **Namibia**, the GEF is funding participatory training in forest and rangeland management, including goat-rearing, organic harvesting, and water conservation measures including boreholes. This is improving land health and preventing deforestation, reducing local exposure to heavy rains and droughts.

Project ID 9426

Implemented by:  
UNDP



ASIA

### SEA TURTLE HATCHLINGS AND SUSTAINABLE LOCAL LIVELIHOODS

In **Timor-Leste**, GEF support for sustainable fisheries and agriculture around protected areas is yielding new livelihoods for local people from community-based ecotourism and biodiversity conservation, including a focus on sea turtle hatchlings.

Project ID 6920

Implemented by:  
UNDP



GLOBAL

### REDUCING HARM FROM GARMENT-MAKING

The **Fashion Pact** is a CEO-led initiative driving sustainability in the clothing supply chain. It is helping 60+ companies align with targets related to raw materials, mining, and land use practices, helping address biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution. The Fashion Pact spans 160+ brands including Kering, Inditex, J.Crew, H&M, and Ralph Lauren.

Project ID 10658

Implemented by:  
Conservation International



GLOBAL

### SAFE DISPOSAL OF PCBs FOR BETTER HEALTH

Countries and waste management companies are working with GEF support to safely dispose of toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) through the decontamination of electrical transformers; dichlorination of oils; and treatment of complex waste.

Project ID 5816, ID 5646, ID 4782, ID 4446, ID 3775

Implemented by:  
UNDP, UNIDO  
World Bank



GLOBAL

### GOLD ORE PROCESSING WITHOUT MERCURY

Through **planetGOLD**, GEF funding is helping small-scale gold miners in countries worldwide including the **Philippines** access mercury-free processing equipment to prevent toxic exposure and emissions. Globally, nearly 20 million people work in small-scale gold mining, including an estimated 5 million women and children.

Project ID 9695, ID 9697, ID 10606

Implemented by:  
UNEP, UNDP, UNIDO  
Conservation International



LATIN AMERICA

### ELECTRICAL UPGRADES BENEFIT PUBLIC HEALTH

In **Argentina**, GEF funding is helping both the public sector and private industry eliminate hundreds of tons of mercury-contaminated waste and remove thousands of tons of PCB waste from electrical equipment including transformers and capacitors.

Project ID 10094

Implemented by:  
UNDP



ASIA

### SEED BANKS HELP LOCAL FARMERS AND DISASTER RESILIENCE

In **Nepal**, GEF funding for community seed banks has supported the planting of hundreds of varieties of rice, millet, barley, and amaranth, and training on locally adapted seeds and seed maintenance, helping biodiversity and improving resilience against natural disasters.

Project ID 4464

Implemented by:  
UNEP



AFRICA

### SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE = SUSTAINABLE JOBS

In **Tonga**, GEF support for improved land and agricultural practices is improving soil quality and boosting farm production, creating more sustainable jobs. This has included the introduction of keyhole gardening, organic pest control with seaweed, and improved pig-rearing techniques, and has yielded new national land use policies.

Project ID 5578

Implemented by:  
UNEP

## GEF postcards

Highlights from the GEF portfolio, drawn from the 2024 Monitoring Report.

## MISSION AND MANDATE

Established in 1991 shortly before the Rio Earth Summit, the GEF’s core mission is to ensure nature’s protection and sustainable use (GEF, 2021b). It was created to help address some of the planet’s most challenging environmental and related issues, building on the critical and timely work of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) and its seminal publication, *Our Common Future* (1987) (United Nations, 1987). The GEF is mandated to deliver GEBs that respond to national and international commitments of MEAs and associated protocols (GEF, 2021b).<sup>1</sup> The GEF’s mandate covers core areas of biodiversity, chemicals and waste, climate change adaptation, climate change mitigation, forests, freshwater, land degradation, and ocean health (GEF 2024j).

Over time, the GEF has evolved to become a multilateral family of funds for the environment. Its mission is to support developing countries in addressing the root causes of environmental degradation and meet their commitments to environmental conventions and agreements through the production of GEBs as well as economic and social well-being (i.e., co-benefits).

The GEF is the financial mechanism for six multilateral conventions (Figure 3):

1. The [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD)
2. The [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC)
3. The [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants](#) (POPs)
4. The [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (UNCCD)
5. The [Minamata Convention on Mercury](#)
6. The [Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction](#) (BBNJ) Agreement (GEF, 2024).

These conventions also provide broad strategic guidance to the two governing bodies of the GEF: the GEF Council and the GEF Assembly. This guidance is then converted into operational criteria or guidelines for GEF projects (GEF, 2024).

In addition to the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund, GEF manages five funds associated with the multilateral conventions (see Box 3).

FIGURE 3: THE CONVENTIONS FINANCED BY THE GEF



Source: The GEF at a Glance (GEF 2024i)

1. GEF investments are predicated on the delivery of global environmental benefits in biodiversity, climate change mitigation, international waters, land degradation and forests, and chemicals and waste.

### Box 3. Funds Managed by the GEF

The **GEF Trust Fund** is GEF's main financial mechanism. It provides grants to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meet the objectives of international environmental conventions and agreements.

The **Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)** helps Least Developed Countries address their unique short, medium, and long-term climate resilience needs and reduce climate change vulnerability in priority sectors and ecosystems. Its priority sectors include water, agriculture, food security, health, infrastructure, and disaster risk management. The Fund supports countries in implementing their National Adaptation Programmes of Actions and National Adaptation Plans.

The **Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)** is a multilateral climate adaptation finance instrument established to help vulnerable countries address negative climate impacts. It supports all adaptation activities of developing countries party to the UNFCCC in sectors like water resources management, land management, coastal management, health, and agriculture. The SCCF targets two priority areas of action: (i) supporting the adaptation needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and (ii) strengthening technology transfer, innovation, and private sector engagement.

The **Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT)** helps developing countries build and strengthen national institutional and technical capacity to meet enhanced climate transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement. It assists countries with tools and training while promoting transparency in three key areas: inventories, action, and support.

The **Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund (NPIF)** supports countries that are signatories to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation. It encourages private sector engagement with actors interested in exploring the economic potential of economic resources and facilitates the transfer of appropriate technologies.

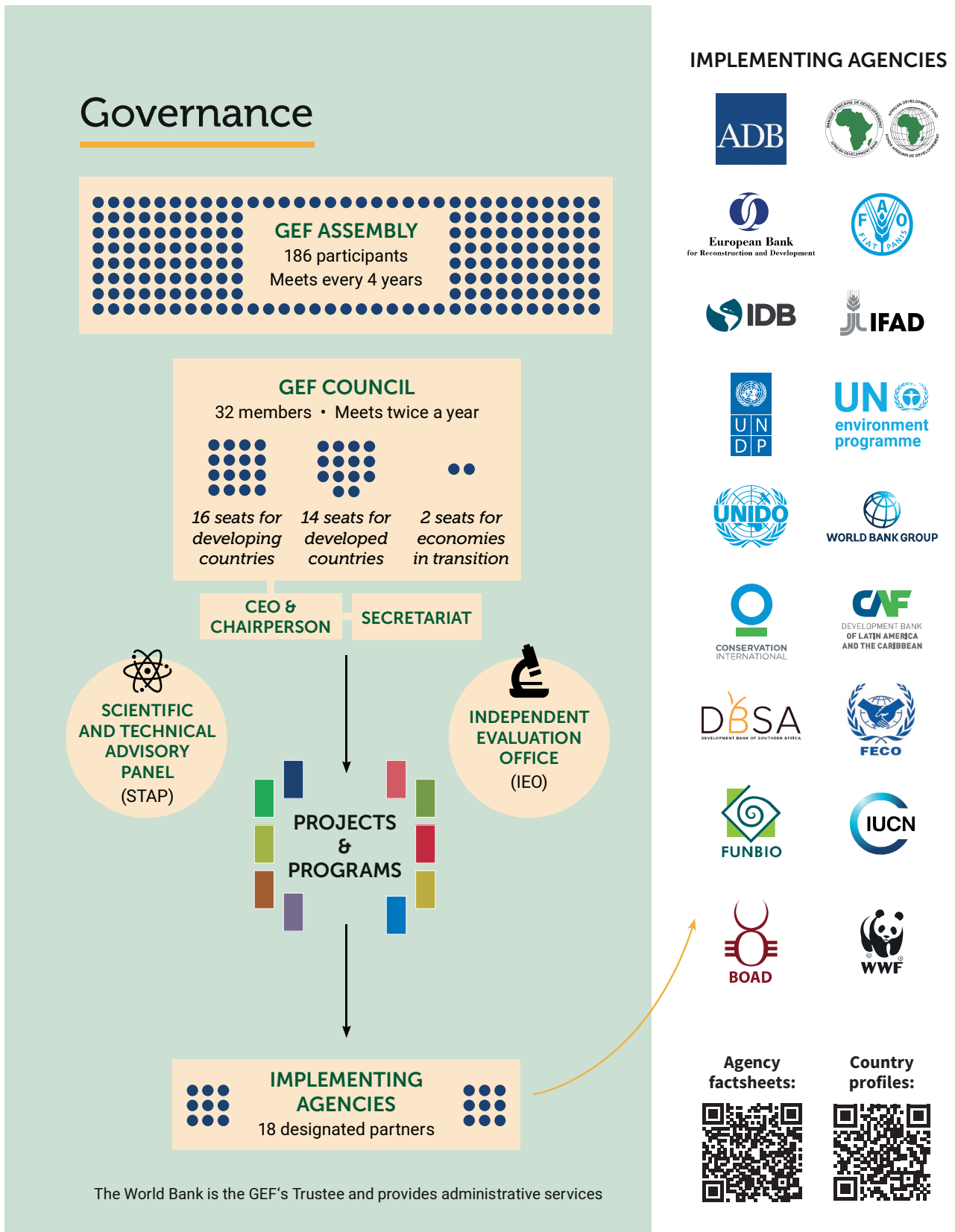
The **Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF)** aims to help countries achieve the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework goals and targets with a strategic focus on strengthening national-level biodiversity management, planning, policy, governance, and finance approaches. The fund was ratified by 186 countries and launched at the GEF Assembly in August 2023 (GEF, 2024i).

## GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The GEF is a country-driven organisation founded on the principles of collaboration and partnership (GEF, 2024f). The GEF partnership has grown and expanded over the years and currently includes 186 member countries and 18 implementing agencies in addition to engagement from civil society organisations (CSOs), indigenous peoples, and private sector actors (GEF, 2024f). The GEF's governance structure consists of an Assembly, Council, Secretariat, GEF Implementing Agencies, Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and an Independent Evaluation Office (GEF-IEO). Figure 4 illustrates the GEF's governance arrangement.

- The GEF Assembly consists of 186 member countries, referred to as participants, that meet every four years. The Assembly reviews general policies, evaluates the GEF's operations based on reports submitted to the Council, reviews the membership of the Facility; and considers, for approval, amendments to the [Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility](#) based on recommendations by the Council (GEF, 2024b)

FIGURE 4: GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENT AT THE GEF



Source: The GEF at a Glance (GEF 2024i)

- The GEF Council comprises 32 members appointed by constituencies of GEF member countries of which 16 are from developing countries, 14 from developed countries, and two from economies in transition. The Council is the “main governing body” of the GEF and meets twice a year to develop, adopt, and evaluate operational policies and programmes of GEF-financed activities. The Council also reviews projects submitted for approval, making decisions by consensus (GEF, 2024b).
- Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Secretariat oversees and coordinates the implementation of GEF activities, programs, policies, and decisions taken by the Assembly and Council. The Secretariat also chairs inter-agency group meetings to foster collaboration between GEF Agencies and coordinates with Secretariats of the six conventions the GEF finances. It is headed by the CEO and at the time of writing, has 82 staff members (GEF, 2024g). The Secretariat is responsible for setting minimum requirements for monitoring and publishing monitoring reports and related tools and documents (GEF, 2019).
- The 18 Implementing Agencies form the operational arm of the GEF and are responsible for designing and implementing GEF projects and programmes in close collaboration with key stakeholders such as government agencies and CSOs (GEF, 2024b).
- The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (provides independent scientific and technical advice to the GEF on “policies, operational strategies, programs, and projects” (GEF, 2024b). The Panel consists of six members who are “internationally recognised experts” and is supported by a global network of experts and institutions (GEF, 2024b). The STAP Secretariat is hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which acts as a liaison with the GEF (GEF, 2024b).
- The GEF-Independent Evaluation Office is responsible for setting minimum requirements for evaluations, overseeing the quality of evaluation systems at programme and project levels, and sharing evaluative evidence with the GEF, including lessons learned and best practices (Independent Evaluation Office, 2021). The GEF-IEO undertakes strategic-level independent evaluations, institutional evaluations, project and programme evaluations, as well as semi-annual evaluations of the GEF (GEF, 2019). As the name suggests, the GEF-IEO is functionally independent from the Secretariat and reports directly to the Council.
- Each member country has designated government officials that are responsible for GEF activities and act as liaisons between the Secretariat and GEF Agencies. While all GEF member countries have Political Focal Points (PFPs) that are concerned with governance and relations between member countries and constituencies, only Recipient Countries have additional Operational Focal Points (OFPs) that are responsible for the operations of GEF activities within their countries such as “reviewing and endorsing project proposals to ensure they are in line with national priorities and strategies” (GEF, 2024b).

The World Bank administers the GEF Trust Fund and has fiduciary and administrative responsibilities, including mobilising resources for the GEF Trust Fund, financially managing the GEF Trust Fund (i.e. regarding investment, fund disbursement to GEF Agencies, preparation of financial reports), maintaining records and accounts, monitoring the application of budgetary and project funds, and preparing financial and budgetary reports (GEF, 2024b). In addition to its role as trustee and agency of the GEF, the World Bank is also host to the GEF Secretariat and the GEF-IEO. In this capacity, it provides administrative support services.

## STRATEGY

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The GEF's strategic operations are currently guided by the GEF 2020 Strategy which aims to enhance the GEF's role as a financial mechanism for MEAs, support transformative change, and achieve GEBs on a large scale (GEF, 2015).

To achieve this vision, the GEF is pursuing five strategic priorities: (1) address the drivers of environmental degradation; (2) deliver integrated solutions; (3) enhance resilience and adaptation; (d) ensure complementarity and synergies, especially in climate finance, and (5) focus on choosing the right influencing model. These priorities are accompanied by three core operational principles underpinning the GEF 2020 Strategy and enabling the GEF to deliver on its strategic priorities: mobilising local and global stakeholders; improving operational efficiencies; and strengthening results management (GEF, 2015).

GEF's current four-year replenishment cycle, GEF-8, began in 2022. GEF-8 outlined the organisation's strategic priorities and programming directions that continue to focus on addressing major drivers of environmental degradation with a vision of building a healthy, productive, and resilient planet that can secure the health and well-being of human societies at local, national, and global levels. This is set out in GEF's Healthy Planet, Healthy People framework (GEF, 2021b) and GEF-8 Theory of Change (Figure 5):

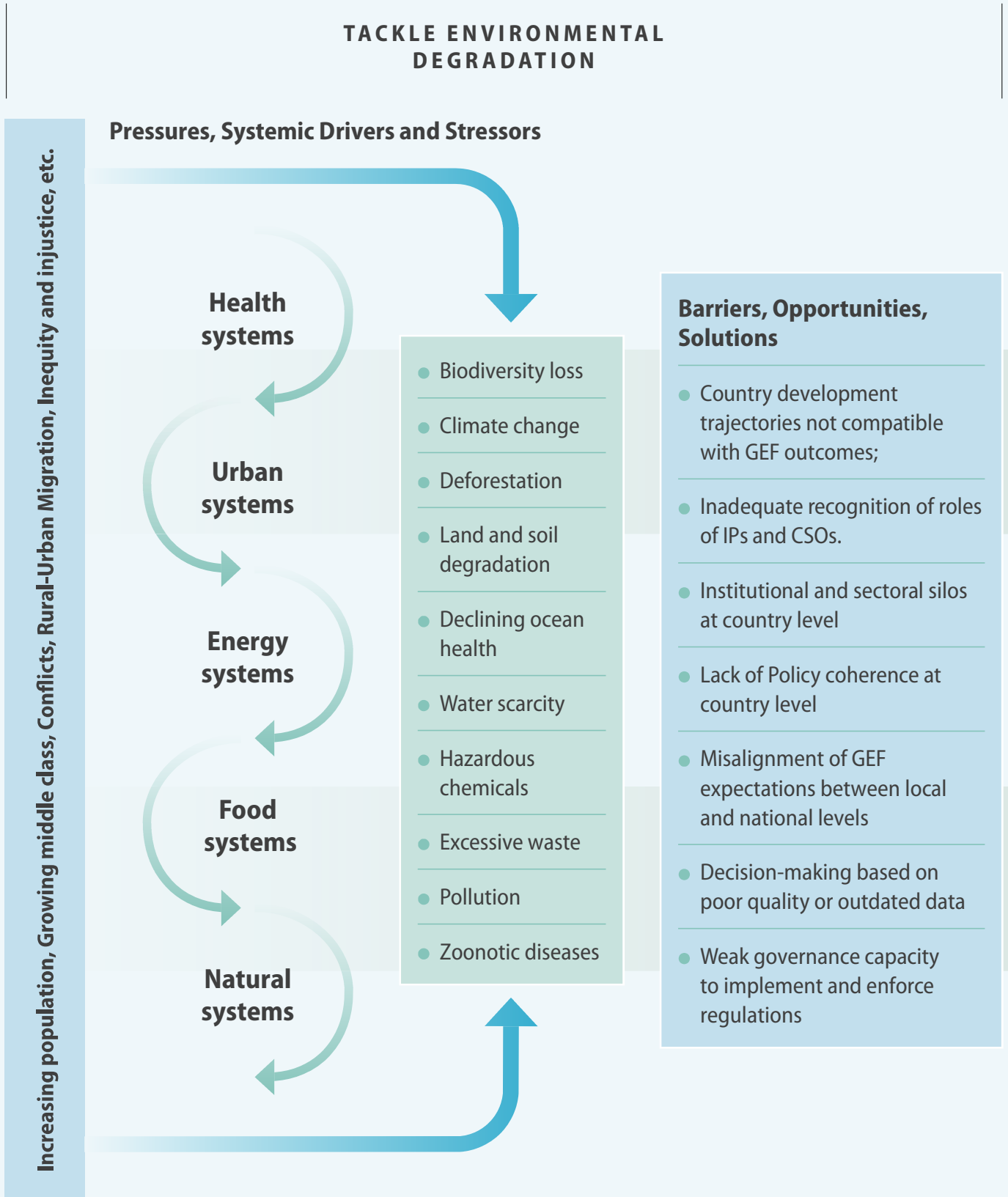


### Ethiopia – Sustainable Land Management Program

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Donor members and GEF staff visit GEF Sustainable Land Management Program in Ethiopia, during the 2nd GEF-7 Replenishment meeting in Tigray, Ethiopia. Photo: © Mohammed Bakarr / GEF

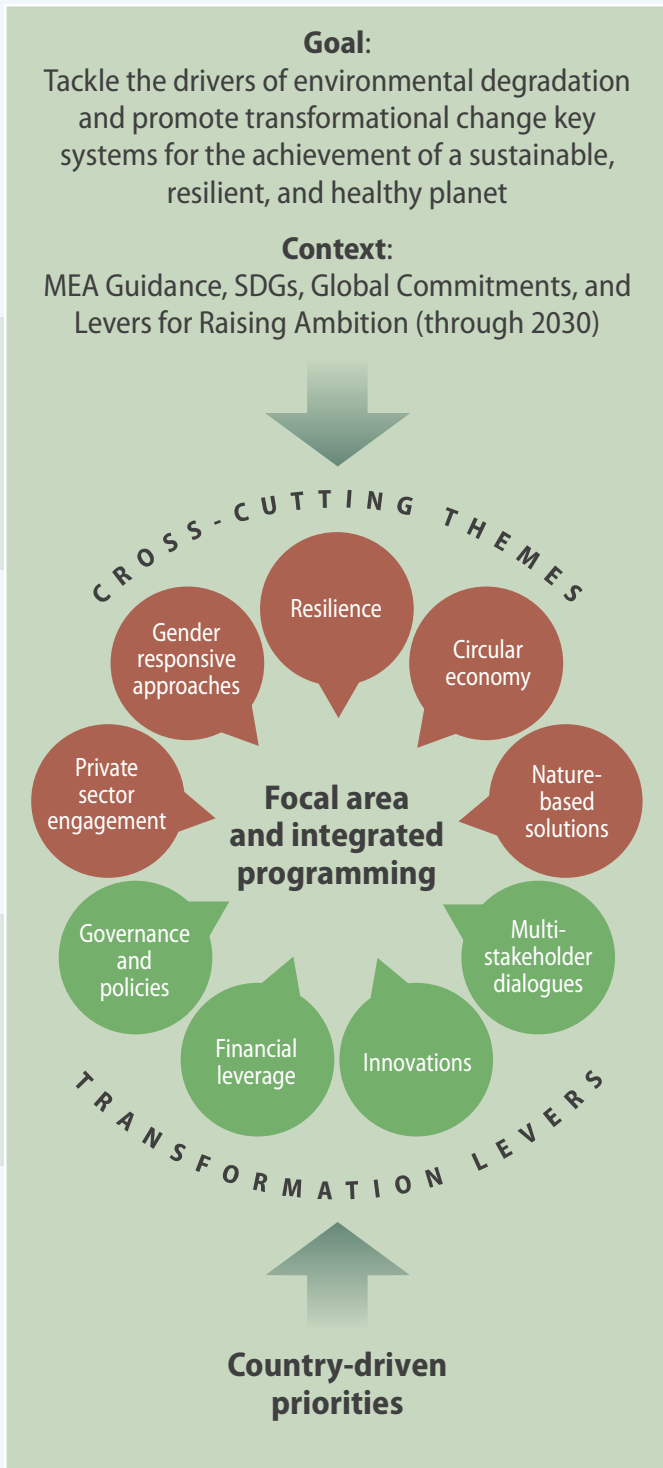
FIGURE 5: GEF-8 THEORY OF CHANGE



Source: GEF-8 Strategy & Programming Directions (GEF, 2021)

## INVEST IN NATURE AND SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

## GENERATE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS



### Outcomes (through 2030)

- Post-COVID19 strategies by state and non-state actors scale-up “green” and “blue” recovery actions in priority landscapes and seascapes
- Incentives and improved policy options promote innovations and behavior change for sustainability and resilience in target systems
- Natural capital, naturebased solutions and ecosystem services underpin transformation of target systems
- Circularity promoted in value / supply chains to increase efficiency and reduce or eliminate negative externalities

Area protected (land & water) increased

Area under sustainable management increased

Carbon stocks secured or sequestered

GHG emissions avoided or reduced

Fisheries under sustainable management

Freshwater resources under sustainable management

Area of habitats and landscapes restored

Deforestation avoided

POPs / mercury reduced or eliminated

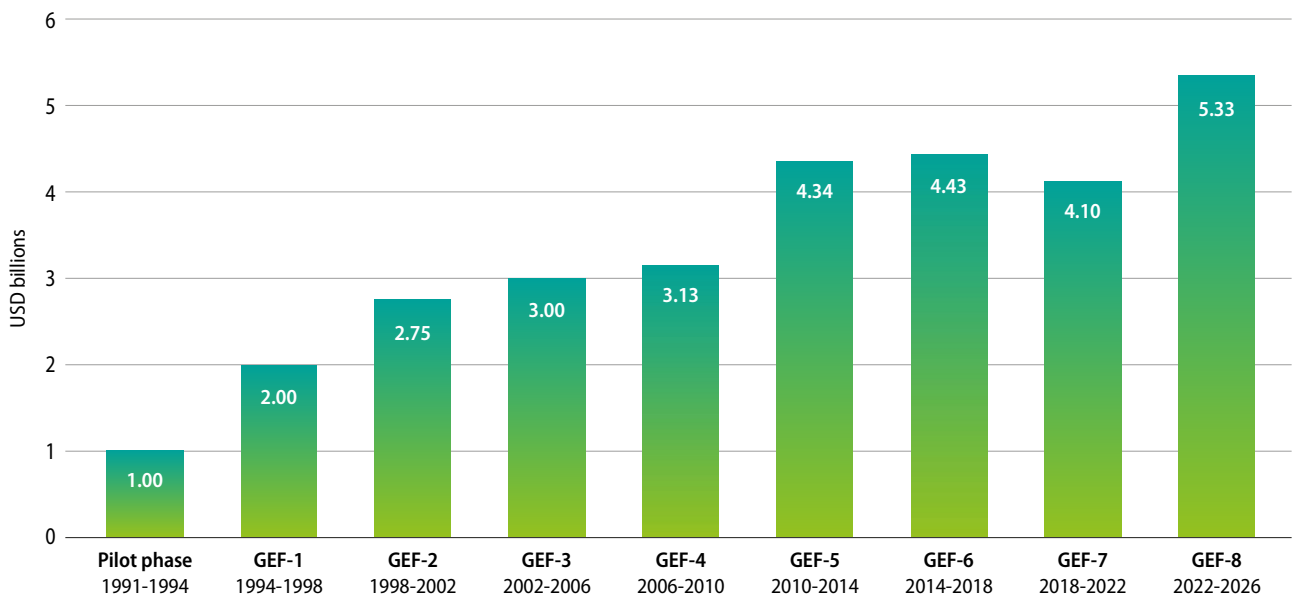
Hazardous chemicals eliminated

**Healthy and resilient systems**

## RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The GEF Trust Fund is replenished in four-year cycles, with financial contributions from donor countries (Figure 6). In GEF-8 (2022-26), 29 donor countries pledged a record USD 5.33 billion, marking an increase in funding of over 30% from GEF-7 (USD 4.1 billion) (GEF, 2024c). Figure 7 lists the largest 10 contributors since the creation of the GEF Trust Fund.

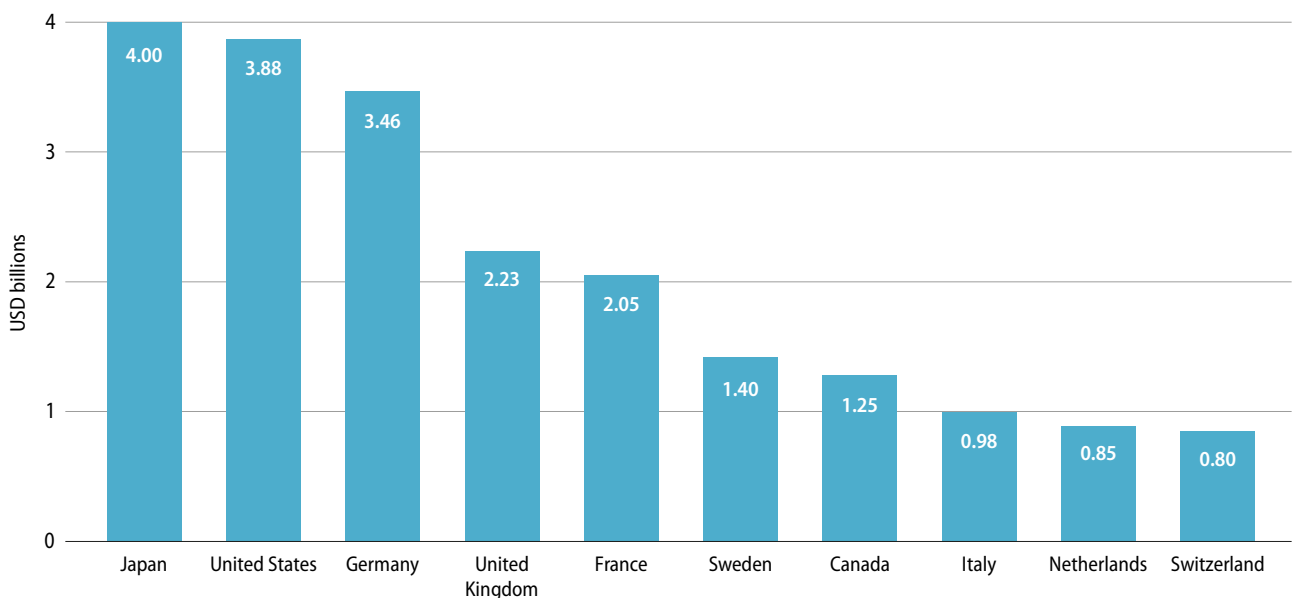
FIGURE 6: GEF REPLENISHMENT CYCLES PILOT PHASE TO GEF-8



Source: The GEF at a Glance (GEF 2024i)

FIGURE 7: TOP 10 CONTRIBUTORS TO THE GEF TRUST FUND SINCE ITS CREATION

Total amounts paid by the 10 largest contributors as at March 2025



Source: World Bank Financial Intermediary Funds website

Some recipients (e.g. China and Brazil) are also donors to the GEF Trust Fund.

In GEF-8, programming accounts for 96.5% of resource allocation compared to 3.5% for administration costs (GEF, 2024i).

Almost half (46%) of GEF resources is allocated through the STAR which uses three to ensure predictability in funding for tackling environmental challenges:

1. Global Benefit Indices measure a country on its potential to generate global environmental benefits.
2. The Country Performance Index scores a country on its actual performance on projects, the state of its environmental commitments and institutional frameworks, and the quality of its public management.
3. The GDP-based Index adjusts allocations based on a country's economic needs.

STAR resources are complemented by various set-asides that serve as incentives for addressing issues in any given replenishment period. Certain changes are underway to the STAR, results and monitoring systems and practices, focal area programming, integrated programming, the approach to private sector engagement and investment to align with the GEF-8 vision and strategy. The STAR will be evaluated by the GEF-IEO as part of its Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS8) to inform the negotiations on the ninth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund.

For GEF-8, USD 75 million has been “notionally allocated” to the LDCF to address climate issues among developing countries which are most affected, and typically least resourced, for addressing vulnerability and building resilience. Prior to the GEF-8 period, the LDCF relied on voluntary contributions that fluctuated from year to year (GEF, 2022b). For example, in fiscal year (FY) 2021, annual contributions totalled USD 95.2 million, compared to USD 129.9 million in FY 2020. A multi-year pledging modality was agreed for GEF-8 (GEF, 2022b).

Whilst SCCF had limited resources through the GEF-7 period, funding increased in the GEF-8 revitalization effort. LDCF received additional pledges of USD 413 million at COP26 (GEF,2021), USD 70.6 million at COP 27, and a further USD 141.7 million at COP28. Additional funding pledged to the SCCF was USD 35 million at COP27 and USD 32.5 at COP28.

For both LDCF and SCCF, operations and administrative costs are separate from the GEF Trust Fund (GEF, 2022a). In FY 2023, the budget request for the funds was USD 2.5 million for the LDCF and USD 0.94 million for the SCCF (GEF, 2022a).

As of 2014, nearly all NPIF funds have been allocated; however, it was determined that the Fund would remain operational until the end of FY 2022-23 to continue to support active projects.

Finally, as of October 2024, USD 396 million has been pledged to the GBFF, to address biodiversity challenges and further scale-up financing. The GBFF was adopted in August 2023 after being ratified by 186 countries. The Fund will scale up financing for the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and help countries achieve its goals and targets with a particular focus on strengthening national-level biodiversity management, planning, policy, governance, and finance approaches (GEF, 2024d). During the 67th meeting of the GEF, the GBFF adopted its first work programme amounting to USD 37.8 million.

In terms of GEF Trust Fund's programming architecture, investments are delivered through a mix of integrated programming and targeted focal area actions to support convention needs and expectations set out in Box 4.

#### Box 4. GEF Trust Fund: Principal Programming Mechanisms

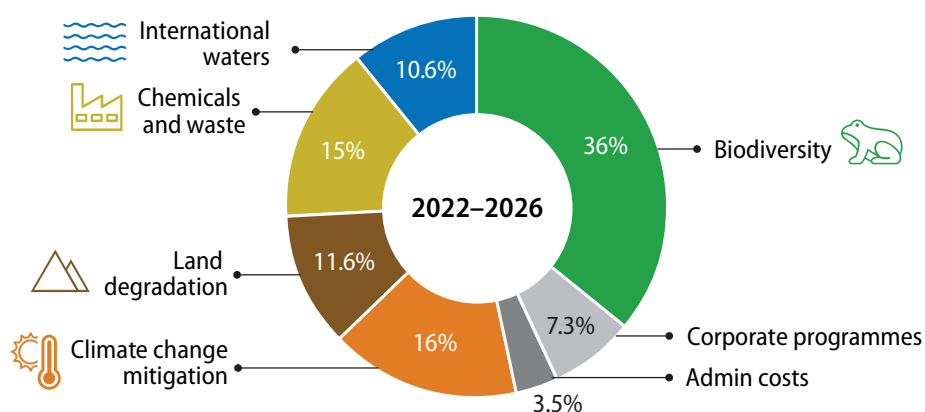
**Integrated Programmes (IPs)** are targeted initiatives designed to address major drivers of environmental degradation and/or deliver multiple benefits across the many thematic dimensions the GEF is mandated to deliver. They reflect a shift from standalone projects to strategic, interconnected solutions that contribute to the global environmental agenda. The growing focus on Integrated Programs, which now account for approximately a third of GEF’s resource allocation, is in line with calls from various multilateral forum, including the Leaders’ Pledge for Nature and Multilateral Environmental Agreement COPs, to end silo thinking and address environmental challenges in an integrated and coherent manner.

The programmes aim to achieve GEBs by integrating efforts across GEF’s focal areas, while also creating innovative pathways for transforming these systems toward durability and resilience. To maximize the potential for transformative change, Integrated Programmes take into consideration “levers” for advancing systems transformation (governance and policies, financial leverage, multi-stakeholder dialogues, and innovation and learning). At a global level, Integrated Programmes establish links with relevant platforms and initiatives that foster multi-stakeholder dialogue and collective action to transform food systems. At a country level, they support the development of a holistic, systemic approach to environmental challenges.

GEF-8 identifies 11 Integrated Programmes. This includes allocations under the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources and the set-asides for the Global Platform and Child Projects which are used to encourage countries to move more of their programming through the Integrated Programs). Development of Integrated Programmes is initiated by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration with multiple stakeholders and under the guidance of Council. Implementing Agencies are selected by the Secretariat based on the required capacities and comparative advantages.

While the integrated programmes will deliver substantial global benefits across the different focal areas of the GEF (Figure 5), many elements of guidance from conventions can be dealt with best through distinct focal area complementary investments directed at objectives that are not fully reflected within the set of proposed Integrated Programs. GEF therefore provides **targeted investments** alongside Integrated Programmes to ensure that all Convention commitments are addressed.

FIGURE 8: GEF-8 RESOURCE ALLOCATION



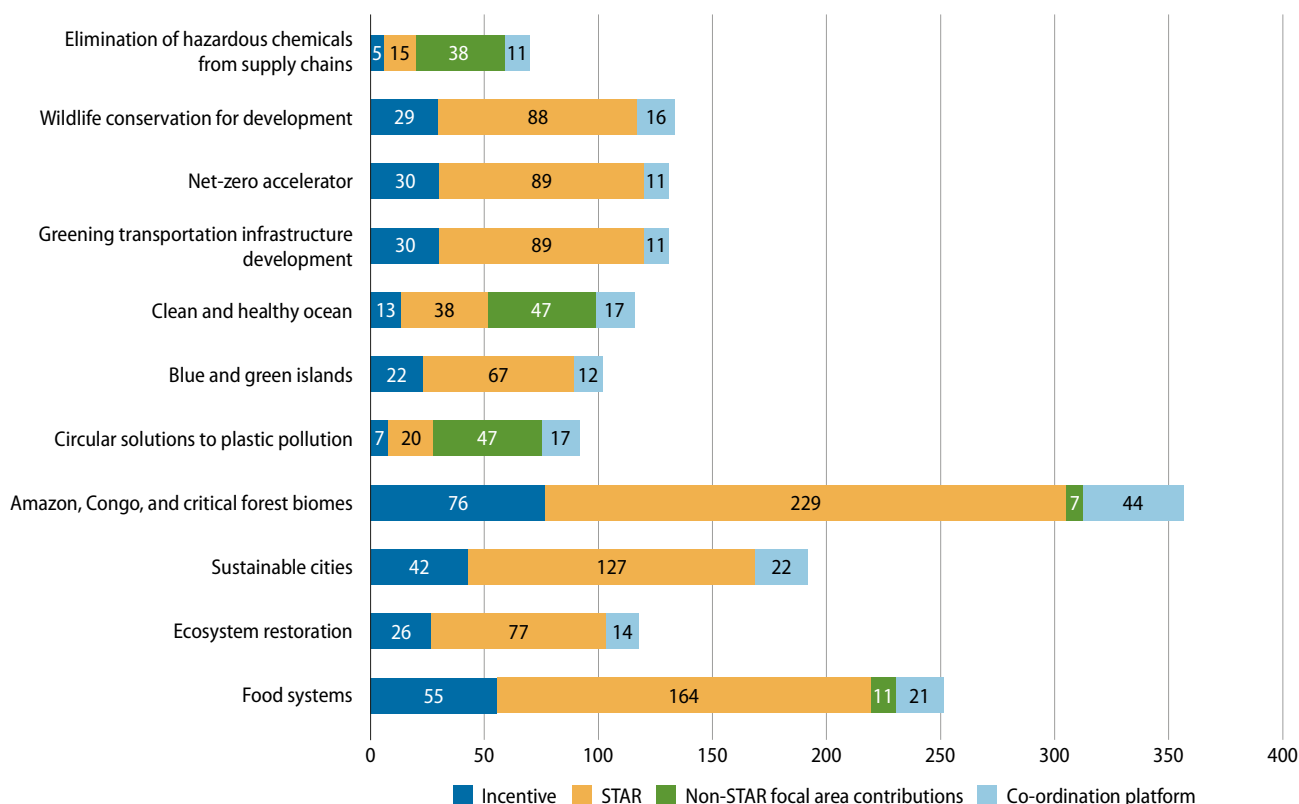
Source: The GEF at a Glance (GEF 2024i)

In contrast to the Integrated Programs, targeted investments are led at a country-level through a structured process that ensures alignment with national environmental priorities, GEF’s strategic objectives and global environmental goals. This process involves collaboration among the recipient country, GEF agencies and other stakeholders.

GEF-8 recognises the important role that non-state actors and civil society can play to arrest environment degradation and climate change, the knowledge, skills and partnerships with civil society and community-based organizations that need to be mobilized at an unprecedented scale. The **Small Grants Programme (SGP)** seeks to provide a demand-driven grant mechanism for local actions and support to local communities and marginalized groups that typically lack technical/institutional capacity to address environmental challenges and access to needed financial resources. Under this program, the GEF makes available grants up to USD 75,000 and strategic project window for grant making up to USD 150,000 for scaling up and supporting initiatives that cover many communities, critical landscapes/seascapes or thematic priorities aligned with the GEF-8 strategy and focal area priorities.

Under GEF-8, two new agencies (Conservation International and FAO) have been appointed alongside UNDP to administer the Small Grants Programme on behalf of the GEF Partnership. Under GEF-8 the organisation has expanded its funding 22% to USD 135 million available to be shared equally across GEF eligible countries as core resources, on top of which countries may allocate up to 10% of their STAR allocation to a maximum of USD 5 million. In addition, two complementary SGP windows were initiated in GEF-8 with USD10 million of GEF funding each: the SGP CSO Challenge Programme, implemented by IUCN and the SGP Microfinance Initiative, to be implemented by the World Bank.

FIGURE 9: GEF-8 NOTIONAL INTEGRATED PROGRAMME ENVELOPES FOR COUNTRY PROGRAMMING (USD MILLION)



Source: Report on the Eighth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund

In most cases, the GEF provides funding to support government projects and programs. Governments decide on the executing agency (governmental institutions, civil society organizations, private sector companies, research institutions). Criteria for GEF funding are set out in Box 5. Processes for project development and approval vary between funds.

### Box 5. GEF Project Eligibility Criteria

All projects or programmes must fulfil the following criteria to be eligible for GEF funding.

- **Eligible country:** Countries may be eligible for GEF funding if the country has ratified the conventions the GEF serves and conforms with the eligibility criteria decided by the Conference of the Parties of each convention, or if the country is eligible to receive World Bank (IBRD and/or IDA) financing or if it is an eligible recipient of UNDP technical assistance through its target for resource assignments from the core (specifically TRAC-1 and/or TRAC-2).
- **National priority:** The project must be driven by the country (rather than by an external partner) and be consistent with national priorities that support sustainable development.
- **GEF priorities:** To achieve the objectives of multilateral environmental agreements, the GEF must support country priorities that are ultimately aimed at tackling the drivers of environmental degradation in an integrated fashion. For this reason, the focal areas (Biodiversity, Climate Change, Land Degradation, International Waters, and Chemicals and Waste) remain the central organizing feature in the GEF-8 Programming Directions and provide countries with the opportunity to participate in selected Integrated Programmes which aim to address major drivers of environmental degradation and/or deliver multiple benefits that fall under the GEF's mandate (for more details, see the GEF-8 Programming Directions).
- **Financing:** The project must seek GEF financing only for the agreed incremental costs on measures to achieve global environmental benefits.
- **Participation:** The project must involve the public in project design and implementation, following the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement and the respective guidelines

Source: GEF website

## GEF IN THE MULTILATERAL CLIMATE FINANCE ARCHITECTURE

Reflections on the effectiveness of the multilateral system response to the climate and environment crisis and identifying opportunities for further improvement has been a key area of focus of multilateral climate funds, COPs and multilateral forum over the assessment period. These efforts and outcomes are explored in Chapter 2.

The GEF is the oldest and “largest” multilateral fund dedicated to addressing the broad range of global environmental challenges with over 1600 active projects and programmes being implemented across 149 countries, (GEF, 2021).

Its unique mandate in the global environment and climate financing architecture spans across multiple domains, helping deliver GEBs related to biodiversity, land degradation, and international waters, among many others. The GEF does so to help developing countries adhere to international environmental conventions and address their priorities for environmental action (GEF, 2015). Since 1991, the GEF has allocated over USD 24 billion with partners committing an additional USD 138 billion in co-financing for projects aimed at generating global environmental

benefits (Independent Evaluation Office, 2024). Its capacity to provide the vast proportion of its support through grants – in contrast to many peer funds and the MDBS – is another important advantage.

The other major multilateral climate finance institutions – the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund (AF), and Climate Investment Funds (CIF) – are structured principally around the challenges of climate change more specifically. The AF seeks to enhance climate adaptation efforts in developing countries and is the smallest of the four funds having raised USD 1 billion cumulatively since 2010. CIF was established in 2008 and with over USD 11 billion pledged by contributor countries, to test new technologies, create markets, and catalyse transformational change to steer the world towards a more equitable climate economy. The GCF’s vision is to foster a paradigm shift towards low-emission climate-resilient development pathways in developing countries. With the GCF’s second replenishment (GCF-2), as of December 2023, a total of USD 12.8 billion was pledged for this climate finance organisation to support global climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Its portfolio of over USD 13.5 billion include projects in over 120 countries (GEF, 2023; Green Climate Fund, 2021).

## SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The period covered by this assessment has been marked by ongoing and accelerating pressures across all GEF’s Focal Areas. “The bottom line is that greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, as is the rate of biodiversity loss; there is still net land degradation; aquifers are being depleted; waste is increasing; most fisheries are overfished; and ocean pollution is becoming more pervasive” (STAP, 2020). Deterioration of these environmental elements is linked to greater systemic risks to livelihoods and well-being, and the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the disruptive consequences of “a direct collision of between natural and human systems” (GEF, 2021a).

Amidst this deepening environmental crisis, all of GEF’s focal areas are under pressure. Country policies and actions remain largely inconsistent with global environmental commitments, even in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic after countries committed to “build back greener”.<sup>2</sup> The shortfall between investment in biodiversity, reduction in pollution, nature conservation, climate change mitigation and associated action required to protect and restore ecosystems remains significant.

Attempts to address the deepening global crisis continue to be constrained by what is termed, the “nature funding gap”.<sup>3</sup> Multilateral finance, driven by a surge in MDB financing, has increased in some focal areas. Multilateral development providers’ contributions to biodiversity have also increased significantly, currently accounting for around 30% of total development finance for biodiversity from a range of actors (e.g. DAC members, South-South and triangular co-operation providers, philanthropies and other private actors) over 2015-22. However, the relative share of biodiversity-related activities in their total multilateral development finance portfolio has remained low (2%-3% on average over the period) and would need to increase for these institutions to contribute meaningfully to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.<sup>4</sup>

Given this financing gap, partner countries emphasise the urgency of multilateral funds providing timely and easily accessible support to meet commitments set out in multilateral environmental agreements. GEF’s role in supporting adherence to international agreements and encouraging countries to address climate and biodiversity issues in their development planning in an inclusive way is therefore becoming increasingly relevant.

2. Reference is made in the GEF-8 positioning paper to the Greenness of Stimulus Index, an initiative of the Financial Biodiversity Initiative. Their 2021 examination of post-COVID economic stimulus packages showed that 70% of those packages studied were not founded on a “build back better” approach. See: <https://www.vivideconomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Greenness-of-Stimulus-Index-5th-Edition-FINAL-VERSION-09.02.21.pdf>

3. The nature funding gap is defined as, “the difference between current financing to the environment and what is needed to achieve critical global goals to 2030 and beyond.” It is derived from 2020 research carried out by the Paulson Institute, The Nature Conservancy and the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability to determine the “biodiversity financing gap” that can be accessed at: <https://www.paulsoninstitute.org/conservation/financing-nature-report/>

4. OECD Multilateral Development Finance Report 2024

## PREVIOUS MOPAN ASSESSMENT

Published in 2019, the previous MOPAN assessment of the GEF concluded that it is a “relevant, capably managed and effective facility” that is moving towards the achievement of its mandate and occupies a unique position as a financial mechanism for MEAs (MOPAN, 2019). The GEF was found to have a “strong track record” in delivering results as well as “strong operational management processes and financial controls” stemming from its relationship with the World Bank. The assessment noted that GEF plans and programmes were thoroughly reviewed and comprehensively evaluated.

At the same time, it found that the GEF did not have comprehensive systems and frameworks addressing each stage of the project cycle or its entire portfolio and that sustainability and efficiency needed to be strengthened. It also found that the knowledge produced at the GEF remained “difficult to access” and was underutilised.

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### Kenya – Spraying bacteria substance

Mosquito larvae, a potential cause of malaria, live in wet rice paddies. Given the fact that DDT kills mosquito larvae but is harmful to the environment and human health, alternatives have been introduced. One of them is spraying Bti, an environmentally-safe biopesticide.

Disease Prevention and Control in the WHO AFRO Region.

Photo: © GEF

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# EXAMINATION OF OVERALL PERFORMANCE





**Comoros Islands**

This UN Environment implemented GEF project, aims to build climate resilience in the Comoros by rehabilitating watersheds and forests and diversifying adaptive livelihoods. Photo: © Hannah McNeish / UN Environment

This chapter analyses GEF’s response to the accelerating environmental crisis over the assessment period.

The first section sets out GEF’s strategic response to the environmental crisis. The second section considers GEF’s performance journey since the previous assessment, including how it has revised its policies, systems and behaviours to deliver on the strategic commitments set out in GEF-8 to support transformative change, as well as actions taken to address development areas identified in the previous MOPAN assessment. The third section provides a deeper analysis of the impact of these reforms on GEF’s “organisational response” to the environmental crisis, and identifies constraints and opportunities for further improvement.

The final section reflects on GEF’s future trajectory, including the potential pressures it might face, and identifies issues that MOPAN members and senior management of the organisation should consider.

These findings set out in this chapter build upon analysis of GEF’s policies, systems and behaviours against the best practices and standards set out in MOPAN’s framework. This analysis and ratings are summarised in more detail in the next assessment chapter, and set out in detail in the supporting technical annex (Annex A) available on the MOPAN website.

## GEF’S RESPONSE TO THE ACCELERATING ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

The ‘GEF 2020 - Strategy for the GEF’ is the overarching Strategic Planning document for the Global Environment Facility, which has been updated through subsequent strategic positioning documents formulated as part of the seventh (July 2018 to June 2022) and eighth (July 2022 to June 2026) replenishments of the GEF Trust Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF).

GEF-8 sets out the organisation’s ambition to “halt nature loss and ensure that the world is nature-positive by 2030 and carbon neutral and pollution-free by 2050” with a strong focus on transformational change (GEF, 2021).<sup>1</sup> Its investment strategy combines top-down and bottom-up approaches and is guided by Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It responds to the findings of the GEF-IEO’s OPS-7 comprehensive evaluation. The GEF-8 Strategy includes a commitment set out in the Leaders’ Pledge for Nature at the UN Summit on Biodiversity in 2020 emphasising the importance of addressing health and environmental sustainability in an integrated manner. It also adopts the “Healthy People, Healthy Planet Framework” that underscores interlinkages and dependencies between human and planetary health and views a healthy environment as the foundation for economic and social development (GEF, 2021a).

In line with this framework, the GEF has identified four goals to be achieved by 2030:

1. Scale up “green” and “blue” recovery actions in priority landscapes and seascapes through post-COVID-19 strategies by state and non-state actors.
2. Provide incentives and improved policy options that promote innovations and behaviour change for sustainability and resilience in target systems.
3. Transform target systems by maintaining and enhancing natural capital and ecosystem services through nature-based solutions.
4. Promote circularity in value/supply chains to increase efficiency and reduce or eliminate negative externalities (GEF, 2023a).

1. The STAP defines transformative change as follows: “...the GEF should require that a transformative investment involves a pathway to durable change at a sufficient scale to deliver a step improvement in one or more global environmental benefits (GEBs).” Source: <https://www.stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/achieving-transformation-through-gef-investments>

Targets are formulated around these goals. Progress is regularly and transparently monitored and assessed.

The GEF-8 strategy emphasises an integrated approach and calls for integrated programming to be strengthened, building on the progress made in GEF-6 and GEF-7. Seven cross-cutting themes are also identified as priorities for programming: (1) gender-responsive approaches; (2) private sector engagement; (3) nature-based solutions; (4) circular economy; (5) resilience; (6) environmental security, and (7) behaviour change.

A corresponding set of four levers for transformational change are to serve as “criteria and entry points” for GEF-8 investments and be applied to all integrated programs: (1) governance and policies; (2) financial leverage; (3) innovation and learning; and (4) multi-stakeholder dialogues. GEF-8 programming, thus, builds on the “dual approach” of “investing in integrated programming and associated focal areas” (GEF, 2021a).

### GEF’S PERFORMANCE JOURNEY SINCE THE PREVIOUS MOPAN ASSESSMENT

The MOPAN 2017-18 assessment identified GEF’s main strengths as: the utilisation of its comparative advantage to deliver multi-focal area programming; robust cyclical priority setting and replenishment process, and in its programming through a diverse partnership; progress made to that point in mainstreaming gender equality; a high level of confidence regarding GEF financial procedures and standards, on the transparency of resource allocations (with reference to the STAR policy) and success in meeting co-financing targets. The assessment also highlighted GEF’s overall success in achieving outcomes.

Areas requiring additional attention included: the widening gap between the resources available to the GEF and the scale of need; GEF engagement with the private sector, development of innovative financing models and means to improve policy/regulatory environments to support private sector participation; systems and frameworks for reporting on programme/project and corporate results so that they are comprehensive and reliable, and GEF’s capacity to capture, synthesise and disseminate lessons learned from GEF supported programmes and projects.



#### Maldives – GEF Small Grants Programme project visit

GEF CEO Carlos Manuel Rodriguez visited a pilot farm and nursery supported by the GEF Small Grants Programme.  
Photo: © Malvika Monga/GEF

The GEF-IEO’s Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF-7 replenishment period (issued in 2022) also drew attention to the gap between GEF performance (albeit positive in its limited way) and the deteriorating global environment, characterising it as a “micro-macro-disconnect”. The evaluation stated that it would take GEF, “leveraging, mainstreaming, and risk taking to move the needle on macro-impacts.”

This MOPAN assessment finds GEF holding to an ambitious, appropriate strategic vision that draws on the partnership’s diverse competencies to respond to global and country priorities.

Overall, at this juncture in GEF’s performance journey, this assessment observes GEF’s strategic development, organisation and financial framework strongly supporting implementation of its convention/MEA mandates. In a complex, challenging operating environment, the GEF is mobilising financial, knowledge and organisational resources at increasing levels to support its strategic and very necessary ambitions; it is engaging and aligning stakeholders at multiple levels for heightened impact; and it is employing boundary-spanning programming approaches in the way it implements its mandate with increasing effect.

The assessment also observes the GEF Secretariat advancing as a proactive (“thought leader”) actor in the GEF Secretariat – Agency – Recipient Country triad. Multiple dimensions of GEF’s work – notably, fund mobilisation, integrated programming, country engagement, coherence and complementarity with other environment/ climate finance actors, knowledge management, and results-based management - are each developing in their own right and in relationship to one another.

For GEF, it is a formative time partly because of its raised ambition to address the micro-macro disconnect given deepening environmental challenges. It is an effort underpinned by an institutional leadership highly attuned to the diversity of interests across the partnership (donor-recipient; large biodiverse country – LDCs)/SIDS; states – non-state actors) and to the tensions associated with pursuing global (integrated) programming solutions within an organisational model grounded in “country ownership”.

A summary of the key developments identified by the assessment team is set out below:

### **As a family of funds and a partnership, GEF continues to play an important role in the system-response to the environmental crisis**

GEF’s role in the multilateral system continues to be underpinned by a broadly recognised set of comparative advantages. These include its reach across the Rio Conventions and MEAs, focal areas and geographies providing it with a unique ability to address environmental challenges in an integrated and holistic manner - in line with guidance from international leaders and MEA COPs. The recent addition of the GBFF to the GEF portfolio reinforces this capability. Its System for Transparent Allocation of Resources provides funds in a transparent, accessible and predictable manner, with set-asides and financial mechanisms providing funding on globally agreed priorities that ensure access to the most vulnerable countries among other things. Its focus on grant-making places it well to address specific MEA priorities and act as a catalyst and innovator, complementing other sources of multilateral and private finance.

Progress regarding GEF’s partnership dimensions is less easy to track for a want of indicators in corporate reporting. There are some signs that GEF is better mobilising actors in the partnership, including the recent appointment of additional GEF agencies to manage the Small Grants Programme, and the ongoing decrease in the concentration of projects administered by the largest three Agencies. However, despite heightened support to the OFPs to identify the agencies best placed to support projects and programmes, agency selection continues to be driven by non-technical factors in some cases, which may affect the achievement of objectives.

### **Operating policies have been strengthened albeit with scope for continued improvement**

GEF has updated key policies and processes since the previous assessment. Whilst significant steps have been taken to address weaknesses previously identified, several important areas need ongoing attention.

New policies have promoted a clearer delineation of roles and layering of responsibilities between the Secretariat and the implementing agencies, which the previous assessment identified as an improvement area. Key measures introduced include the Updated Minimum Fiduciary Standards, which GEF Agencies are required to comply with to ensure transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of GEF financing for projects and programs, and a new Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards. In some of these areas, such as Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Harm, GEF has opportunities to develop clear guidelines to support operationalisation in a consistent manner by the agencies.

Risk management is a second area of significant progress. GEF's recently endorsed Risk Appetite defines key project/ portfolio risks and articulates the level of risk and measures that GEF is prepared to take in its ambition to achieve GEBs. As such, it provides an important framework for GEF to review its approaches in the next replenishment period to ensure that it capitalises on new opportunities to optimise effectiveness and impact.

### **GEF operations are increasingly evidence-based**

GEF's performance management, monitoring and reporting is generally strong, which facilitates effective Council oversight. Results reporting has been streamlined around core indicators and structured around results and operational effectiveness. Currently, the Council receives detailed reports on achievement of GEF-8 targets (through the Corporate Scorecard) and aggregate reporting on GEF project and programme results, and portfolio performance (through the Monitoring Report) which is now based on actual results achieved. Additionally, and in line with best practice observed in larger multilateral organisations, the GEF-IEO provides an annual overview of the performance of GEF activities, processes, and factors affecting project performance, quality of monitoring and evaluation systems, and the management action record.

At the same time, some "blind spots" in areas of data capture continue to hinder GEF's ability to track the effectiveness of projects and programmes. For example, indicators do not yet adequately address the drivers of environmental degradation, system-level change, and policy impact nor do they track the socioeconomic co-benefits of GEF activities. Whilst GEF reporting provides evidence that GEF-projects are increasingly targeting gender equality, a lack of gender-sensitive monitoring and reporting limits the ability to track gender-interventions to their impacts.

GEF's new Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning responds to concerns of fragmentation identified by the previous MOPAN assessment. It sets out how the organisation will adopt a demand-orientated approach by acting on its role as knowledge broker and think-tank across the partnership.

### **GEF is increasingly mobilising financing, but ambitious steps are required to deliver on its potential**

GEF has increased its mobilisation of resources. Significant growth in the GEF-8 replenishment envelope (29%) is attributed to GEF successfully articulating an elevated ambition, expanding its mandate as a financial mechanism under additional conventions/MEAs, and incentivising co-financing with targets being exceeded. Nonetheless, the nature funding gap remains large. GEF's success depends on further progress in this area.

The ability of countries and the private sector to secure GEF resources and move to implementation and execution has been a key focus for the GEF. The importance of this issue was identified in the GEF-7 Comprehensive Evaluation in 2020, and most recently highlighted by the G20 Independent High-Level Expert Group Review of the Vertical Climate and Environmental Fund in 2024.



### Antigua & Barbuda

Building climate resilience through innovative financing mechanisms for climate change adaptation. Communal loans seek to help Antigua and Barbuda brace for hurricanes.

Photo: © UNEP/  
Marcus Nield

In response, GEF has updated its Blended Finance Programme and NGI policies, strengthened engagement with the private sector particularly through the Integrated Programmes. Overall, the assessment finds that GEF's institutional and policy environment has become more conducive for engaging with business associations.

Stakeholders broadly recognise that GEF needs to strengthen the efficiency of its model and processes in principle, as part of its efforts to further strengthen co-financing. There are some signs of progress in this area. GEF has succeeded in accelerating project cycles in recent replenishment periods in line with institutionally agreed upon targets, though a recent report from the Working Group on Streamlining indicate gains may have flatlined in recent years.

GEF has dedicated much attention to this issue in the assessment period, and adopted an inclusive approach to tackle this challenge through a Council Working Group. Important actions have recently been undertaken - including raising the financing threshold significantly for MSPs, and further options for streamlining proposed by the Working Group on Streamlining are currently under consideration. However, at this stage, it remains difficult to assess the future impact these changes.

While there is still strong impetus among a broad range of stakeholders to build further efficiencies into the project cycles, there is also a concern to give due consideration to variables associated with inclusion, quality delivery, risk management and sustainable impact.

### Important steps have been taken to strengthen GEF's capacity to deliver

For the first time since GEF-6, the GEF Secretariat has been restructured and reinforced to better deliver on its strategic commitments and increased resources. Headcount has grown to around 100 staff (from around 65 at the time of the previous assessment), but the Secretariat remains streamlined accounting for 3.5% of GEFs budget. Whilst a lean and focused Secretariat function is particularly important given the uncertain multilateral funding environment, staff resources allocated to certain important function areas (e.g. private sector partnerships, blended finance, gender) remain modest given the need to drive forward work in these important areas.

At a country level, GEF has intensified its support to partner countries through a Country Engagement Strategy to help them achieve impactful outcomes with its resources. The strategy is closely aligned with GEF's integrated programming approach and includes: socialising the GEF strategy across multiple stakeholder groups and supporting strategic country portfolio development; providing direct support to the OFP function with a focus on nurturing whole-of-government operational models and greater policy coherence; strengthening operational capacities of Council members, Convention Focal Points, civil society, and private sector organisations to participate in GEF; and fostering knowledge exchange and learning.

### IMPACT OF GEF REFORMS: A DEEPER DIVE ON GEF'S POSITIONING FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

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The following section considers the extent to which GEF policies, processes and behaviours position it to deliver on its strategic commitments. The analysis is structured around three areas of interest identified by stakeholders during inception aligned to the “levers” identified by GEF to drive action in pursuit of transformative change:

- **Mobilisation** – focused on organisational, financial and knowledge resources, all needed to *facilitate* the GEF Partnership's effects in the direction of transformative change, i.e. through leveraging funds, innovation and learning;
- **Inclusion and Engagement** – process-oriented and trained on the pursuit of stakeholder *alignment* across stakeholder groups, across sectors, and across geographies, also needed for transformative change, i.e. through leveraging solution-finding multi-stakeholder dialogues; and
- **Integration** – primarily programmatic, focused on the coalescing of “investment” effort in the Partnership to yield *demonstrable value* to stakeholders, which is again instrumental in the pursuit of transformative change, i.e. through leveraging coherent action at a country level in support of convention/ MEA commitments.

#### Mobilisation

Mobilisation has been an important area of focus as GEF seeks to deliver on its raised ambitions and strengthen its impact in a dynamic environment/climate finance space. Mobilisation efforts have focused on increasing financing, leveraging the comparative advantages of its Agencies and strengthening knowledge-sharing. Whilst still formative in nature with modest system-wide impact to date, these areas of mobilisation show strong potential to be impactful across GEF's landscape in the next replenishment period.

#### **GEF is increasingly mobilising co-financing targets, but ambitious steps are required to deliver on potential (Indicators 1.4, 3.2, 4.2, 6.4)**

Since its 2020 strategy was introduced in 2015, GEF has made it a strategic priority to use public funds generated through replenishment to leverage additional funding through the private sector, national governments and partner agencies. In the assessment period, GEF has made new inroads in sourcing public and private sector finance to match assessed costs under diverse environmental commitments.

GEF is exceeding its co-financing targets. Actual co-financing reported in June 2024 was 1:8.5 compared to the target of 1:7 and is a noteworthy 1:24.5 for NGI projects. The IEO's evaluation of GEF's Policy on Co-Financing confirms that GEF projects generally achieve expected levels of co-financing, albeit with variations across country contexts and agency types. At the same time, the evaluation highlights a need for GEF to assess whether the cofinancing targets at the portfolio level are sufficiently ambitious while remaining realistically achievable to maintain credibility; to establish precise criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of cofinancing components; and to assess the adequacy and quality of cofinancing within project proposals.

GEF's track record on co-financing appears to compare favourably with peer vertical funds, although direct comparison is not possible. GEF's policy allows for greater variation in contribution types and sources than do the policies of similar funds. As well, variations in operating models and country-experience ward against comparison with other funds.

Co-financing successes notwithstanding, against a backdrop of the enormous presence of managed assets that could be made available to address the nature funding gap, GEF and other vertical funds have limited achievement in attracting private sector finance. The commitment of the GEF Secretariat to assess the ambition and realism of co-financing targets at the portfolio level as part of the GEF-9 replenishment is therefore to be welcomed.

In addition, as highlighted by the G20 Independent High Level Expert Group, creating a uniform approach across funds to measuring and reporting on mobilisation and co-financing would be of significant value, helping to monitor progress in this area and facilitating learning.

Impetus for private sector mobilisation has been driven by its heightened profile in GEF-8 under the new Blended Finance Programme and the successful piloting and roll-out of NGIs that came before it involving a mix of debt, equity and loan guarantees.

NGI-related programming under the Blended Finance Program is distributed across focal areas to maximise impact. This includes by allocating Blended Finance Programming to sectors which have seen limited private sector investment due to perceived risks and uncertain returns. By increasing blended finance allocations, the GEF aims to de-risk these investments making them more attractive to private capital. For example, under GEF-8 a growing share (43%) has been allocated to Climate Change and Mitigation, and Biodiversity.

GEF has strengthened its financing partnership with MDBs which exceeded the 10% target for participation in GEF programming for the first time in June 2024 (GEF, 2024c). MDBs are an increasingly significant source of non-grant finance, but they could contribute more to GEF's resource mobilisation effort.

**Scaling-up co-financing will require additional measures to strengthen demand for NGIs as well as the availability of finance (Indicators 3.2, 4.2)**

Further strengthening co-financing is critical to helping countries achieve environmental goals. To achieve this, GEF needs to address constraints identified in interviews with stakeholders, country case-studies, and documents including the GEF-IEO Evaluation on Co-Financing in the GEF.

On the one hand, further steps need to be taken to build country demand for loan finance and NGIs. The assessment found some GEF recipient countries cautious about taking on loan finance to address climate/ environment issues and reticent to programme country allocations from the STAR towards the private sector. In part this reflects the location of OFPs within environment ministries usually rather than in ministries more accustomed to working with

**Box 6. GEF Co-Financing at a Glance**

- 1:7 – GEF Co-Financing Target (all types)
- 1:8.5 – Actual (June 2024)
- 1:12 – Private Sector Engagement Portfolio (GEF-7)
- 1:24.5 – Non-Grant Instrument Projects (June 2024)

Source: GEF Corporate Scorecard, 2024

MDBs in development planning and coordination roles (e.g. Ministries of Finance). GEF should therefore consider how it can build on its existing support to countries to further encourage and incentivise demand for loan finance, and recipient countries should consider whether their OFP structures should evolve to strengthen coordination between Ministries for Environment and Ministries of Finance.

On the other hand, steps also need to be taken to stimulate the engagement of current and new financiers in GEF programmes and projects.

A key need is to address perceptions among some stakeholders interviewed that GEF's project management procedures are cumbersome and result in long project cycles. GEF should draw on its growing list of successful partnerships in this area to build case studies that demonstrate progress made and opportunities for the private sector. GEF's Private Sector Engagement Strategy should serve as an important advocacy tool.

Stakeholders also highlighted the lack of alignment of GEF policies and procedures with those of the MDBs, resulting in high transaction costs for certain financing modalities. This is particularly true for the MSP which is perceived to impose high transaction costs for relatively modest levels of GEF funding, discouraging engagement of the MDBs. These findings are echoed by the G20 Independent High-Level Expert Group which recommended that accelerating and simplifying business processes as a critical ingredient in fostering government and private sector investments in transformative development.

In response, GEF is actively pursuing efforts to streamline and simplify processes to foster greater co-financing and exploring opportunities for greater compatibility across business/project cycle processes with other funds. However, GEF's ability to deliver on the streamlining agenda will need to be balanced against other priorities embedded in its approach. For instance, consistent with COP guidance, GEF has placed increased emphasis on the use of "national implementation". In some quarters this is seen as integral to building country capacity to engage in environmental finance; in others it is a source of concern to the extent that they could reduce efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, many stakeholders interviewed highlighted the importance of maintaining inclusive processes to build and deliver relevant and sustainable projects and programmes, and maintaining focus on quality and managing risks.



#### **Vietnam – land erosion**

Bioengineering demonstration measures will help to stabilize a part of the cut slope on one side of Road 108 in Phong Lap Commune, which requires protection from erosion caused by flash floods.

Photo: © ICEM

### Box 7. Examples of Solution-Finding Collaborations

- IFC/GEF Green Global Supply Chain Decarbonisation Platform – GEF-8, Concept Approved (\$163+ million) – catalysing investment to support companies in removing carbon emissions from their supply chains and adopting safer chemical alternatives (earlier piloted in the textile and apparel sector).
- Good Food Finance Network – convened by EAT Foundation, FAIRR, Food Systems for the Future, UN Environment Programme and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Collaborators include: the World Bank, Rabobank, S2G Ventures, UNEP FI, PRI, GEF, JRT. Currently developing a new financing mechanism to expand finance into sustainable and equitable food systems.
- GloMEEP, GloBallast, GloFouling and GloNoise public-private partnership projects involving the International Maritime Organization, GEF, and UNDP – addressing environmental issues of GHG emissions reduction, invasive aquatic species transferred through ship’s ballast water and biofouling on ships and underwater radiated noise in the marine environment. Activities include: research, policy development, convention management, monitoring and compliance.

Stakeholders highlighted several other cofinancing constraints:

- Private sector companies do not understand fully the benefits that GEF-supported projects can provide.
- Insufficient GEF Secretariat staffing to fulfil ambitions of the Private Sector Engagement Strategy. At the time of writing, this is at being addressed at least partly by creating a new Partnerships unit within the GEF Secretariat and an additional staff position dedicated to the Private Sector Engagement Strategy and the management of the Blended Finance Program.
- A lack of fiscal regimes at country level that incentivise private sector investment.

To address these constraints, the GEF is building relationships with potential financiers in line with the Private Sector Engagement Strategy. This includes engaging with corporations of different scales, chambers of commerce and industry, and private foundations), engaging with multi-stakeholder platforms (e.g. industry/sector or supply chain focused), stimulating innovative models of private sector engagement and reporting value added. It is also undertaking action to address these impediments through its country engagement and knowledge management resources, for example, considering policy and regulatory environments that condition private sector participation (Box 7).

#### **Continued attention is required to better mobilise agencies’ expertise (Indicators 1.2; 6.2)**

The GEF partnership mobilises a broad spread of comparative advantages, organisational capacities and competencies which supports delivery across all focal areas. At a portfolio level, the partnership is starting to improve how it capitalises on the diverse capacities of its agencies. For example, additional agencies have been appointed to manage the SGP, and under GEF-8 there is a decrease in the concentration of projects administered by the largest three agencies.

At a country-level, the partnership mobilisation works well in general, with agencies usually selected by OFPs based on their comparative advantages and the country priorities. However, the choice is sometimes influenced by non-technical factors such as in-country presence of agencies, or previous working relationships with the OFP, which may affect attainment of the objective. The GEF Secretariat is tackling this challenge through increased support to OFPs (through agency factsheets to enhance accountability and provides information on agency capacity and activities), streamlining the GEF project cycle to incentivise participation of regional development banks and other agencies



#### India – Top soil retention

Terraces in the Himalayas Nainital District are helping farmers to keep the top soil and reach a higher degree of water penetration.

Photo: © GEF

with low shares of GEF projects, and by improving monitoring and reporting on agency participation. Whilst some interviewees recognised the additional efforts being by GEF to help countries select agencies on a more strategic basis, it remains too early to fully assess how much these initiatives have led to more systematic selection of agencies.

The situation is more straightforward for Integrated Programmes where the GEF Secretariat develops selection criteria to ensure that selection is based on technical criteria. The model therefore allows agencies to utilise their strengths in integrated programming. However, where multiple agencies are involved in programme delivery, the quality of cooperation varies. The development of clear incentives for coordinated work and fully defined rules of engagement would help promote inter-agency collaboration.

#### **GEF delivers knowledge which is valued, particularly by recipient countries (Indicators 6.6; 6.9)**

GEF programming has long featured the production of knowledge. Knowledge management and learning has been built in as project components designed to share lessons learned or socialise new ideas, build stakeholder capacity or to foster the sustainability of project outcomes. From the Integrated Approach Pilots (IAPs) forward, the creation of knowledge platforms has assumed a prominent catalytic role in the design and implementation of child projects, albeit with varying degrees of efficacy across the portfolio.

The knowledge generated through GEF activities is highly appreciated, particularly in recipient countries where over 80% of respondents in MOPAN's partner survey indicated that knowledge had informed policy dialogue and/or advocacy. Other studies have indicated progress in capturing, sharing and integrating knowledge originating from diverse sources across the partnership.

GEF's 2024 Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learnings sets out an intention for GEF to be more systematic as a knowledge broker. This entails linking knowledge, including that produced by GEF-IEO, more directly to GEF's investment decision-making, facilitating knowledge exchange and flow through platforms and partnerships, and creating enabling environments (e.g. incentivising knowledge sharing and investing in capacity building). Specifics of the strategy will be disclosed as the GEF Secretariat configures itself to implement it into GEF-9.

### Inclusion and Engagement

GEF's strategic documents set out a commitment to build broad buy-in to support transformative change through more inclusive and coherent policy development (i.e., mainstreaming of environment priorities with fewer losses to the environment from counterproductive investments), more effective programs, and projects aligned to Convention commitments and priorities identified by countries. GEF evaluations and monitoring reports demonstrates that this objective is well founded, with evidence that stakeholder engagement in GEF projects is associated with higher achievement of outcomes, greater sustainability and scaling, ownership and was also noted as an important driver for innovation.

GEF has advanced on its commitment to be inclusive across its stakeholder landscape. It has re-imagined its country support programming to be “instrumental” to its ambition to generate country-owned, integrated policy and programming solutions. GEF's explicit commitment to a whole-of-government/whole-of-society approach to engagement makes its' interface with countries necessarily more nuanced and potentially more productive. Here too, the work to date is formative and promising for the future more than it is impactful in the present.

#### **GEF is strengthening inclusivity in governance, policy making and operations but at varying pace (Indicators 2.4; 5.5; 6.4)**

The assessment finds that GEF has appropriate structures and policies in place to strengthen its engagement with stakeholders, with varying effectiveness.

At the governance level, mechanisms are in place that seek to ensure representation from stakeholder groups and support informed dialogue in policy setting, programming and oversight. These include the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group which was found to be strategically focused on how it advises the GEF Secretariat, providing advice and insights on policies and programmes.

CSO participation at the Council level has been more halting, continuing a trend evident in the last assessment period. Available data indicates that CSO participation in GEF governance has seen little if any improvement over time, with an overreliance on the CSO Network as the main channel to promote CSO engagement despite its lack of strategic direction and longstanding governance issues. CSOs at a country level see value in having a structured means to engage with Council. They express a need for greater voice in the governance of the partnership and clarity regarding how the GEF Secretariat and Council wish to engage with civil society, including broadening engagement with CSOs beyond the Network. The recent strategic review and management changes, create important opportunities for the CSO Network to strengthen its participation and contribution going forward. Increased CSO participation in the 7<sup>th</sup> GEF Assembly and in the Partnership Forum in 2023 indicates a move in the right direction.

Finally, the role of the STAP was recognised in providing expertise in GEF Focal Areas, although following responses to the MOPAN partner survey, consideration should be given to whether the STAP has sufficient resources in cross-cutting priorities such as gender in light of evolving demands.

At an operational level too, GEF policies and operations support engagement and participation with stakeholder groups. Assessing GEF's progress in this area is limited by corporate reporting which is process-orientated and hampers outcome measurement, especially at an aggregate level. However, the evidence suggests that GEF is making stronger progress at operationalising its vision for private sector engagement than for civil society. For example, Corporate Scorecards reveal a slight decrease from 46% to 42% between 2020 and 2024 for consultation with CSOs, Indigenous Peoples and local communities during project identification, compared to an increase in with consultation with the private sector (from 76% to 98%). OFPs' lack of understanding regarding their role with respect to stakeholder engagement is a factor in this regard.

That said, the assessment found examples of where GEF is strengthening inclusivity.

The flagship SGP has long been recognised for its role in facilitating CSO engagement in GEF projects and programmes through community-based approaches and demonstrating environmental and socio-economic impact at grassroots level. At the December 2024 Council meeting, GEF introduced new measures to enhance the programme's ability to contribute to transformative change and address the systemic resourcing gap and inadequacy of mechanisms to scale successful SGP projects. The CSO Challenge Programme was introduced to help identify, reward, support, and foster replication and scaling up of high-impact innovative environmental approaches and solutions spearheaded by CSOs and actors, for the benefit of people and the planet. The GEF CEO's commitment to raise funding given directly to civil society to 10% by 2030 signals the increased importance the GEF Secretariat places on civil society within the partnership.

GEF is also committed to better engage indigenous peoples and local communities in recognition of the fact that Indigenous-managed lands often have better conservation outcomes (Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2024). Resource allocations are made for programmes and projects engaging indigenous peoples in GEF-7 and GEF-8. At the same time, GEF's approach to engaging with indigenous peoples and local communities has been tempered by their structural alignment with sovereign states through the Council, leaving indigenous peoples and local communities marginalised at times from decision-making and resource allocation. Country government recognition of "indigeneity" and approaches to managing land and customary rights are an important variable in this regard, particularly since government endorsement (by OFP sign-off) is required for projects financed through STAR and non-STAR resources.

In the face of this, a commitment in the 2023 establishment of the GEF-managed GBFF to allocate at least 20% of resources to support actions by indigenous peoples and local communities is welcomed (though with misgivings in some quarters about the aspirational nature of the target).

### **Country-level mechanisms support diverse stakeholder engagement (Indicator 6.3)**

GEF's country-level multi-stakeholder processes are well established, integral to the programme/ project cycle and well regarded across the partnership. The new Country Engagement Strategy (CES) provides the strategic framework to deliver an expanded and coordinated approach that empowers countries in the ownership of their portfolios. Feedback indicates that Expanded Constituency Workshops and National Dialogues – components of the CES – have helped gather a wide range of country stakeholders at the beginning of the replenishment cycle for strategic discussions regarding the use of GEF resources, which has helped foster alignment between project ideas/concepts and country convention commitments as part of the development of the country portfolio.

However, GEF's commitment to these inclusive processes also brings challenges. Firstly, these multistakeholder approaches place the onus on OFPs to act as leaders and convenors, drawing participation from within and outside of government, and to play a catalytic role configuring transparent, best-fit agency-executing entity configurations based on country priorities. Secondly, some key informants noted the delicate nature of these stakeholder dialogues given their potential to challenge sovereign positions in countries where interpretations of GEF's inclusion and engagement principles differ or are in tension with perspectives of country-drivenness.

Successful application of GEF's integrated and inclusive processes depends on OFP presence, capacity and leadership, to convene stakeholders and coordinate across projects/departments/climate funds. However, in some cases, the effectiveness of the OFP structure is often challenged by operational vulnerabilities beyond GEF's sphere of influence. These may include capacity gaps, high turnover rates amongst OFPs/frequent administrative re-organisation, inconsistent access to operating funds, and positioning of the OFP within national environment ministries whose political and operational sway in government administrations is often limited.

Given these challenges, some countries have introduced new organisational governance models using whole-of-government or whole-of-society approaches (e.g. Indonesia’s National Steering Committee). Key informant interviews revealed that these approaches can serve as a conduit to relevant, larger strategic initiatives (GEF funded and other) and enable the OFP to forge lateral linkages across the country portfolio, and offer a potential solution to many of the constraints faced under the “traditional” OFP structure.

**GEF’s strengthened approach to gender should now be applied to other priority areas (Indicators 2.1, 2.3)**

The GEF has a clear policy on gender equality in line with international good practice. Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW) has been integrated into project design and project reporting across the portfolio. The GEF Gender Partnership is a promising platform and community of practice to leverage skills and share experience on GEEW across the Partnership. Members recognise GEF’s efforts in promoting this priority; more than 80% of MOPAN survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that GEF promotes gender equality.

Going forward, resources allocated to promote GEEW will need to be carefully monitored. The assessment found that implementation of certain aspects of GEF’s policy on gender equality was constrained by human and financial resources both at the level of the GEF Secretariat and among GEF agencies (e.g. follow-up on gender action plans). The hiring of a senior gender specialist has improved internal capacity, but the absence of a dedicated corporate budget line for implementing gender equality policy and requirements continues to hinder progress in advancing GEEW.

Another challenge to be addressed concerns reporting results. Whilst GEF has good reporting on gender on a project level, the aggregation of gender equality to portfolio level was identified as a concern by the GEF-7 Comprehensive Evaluation. Changes have since been introduced to GEF-8 project endorsement and reporting templates for projects under implementation and at completion including a dedicated text field for progress toward gender equality. However, at present, GEF cannot demonstrate its effectiveness in promoting gender equality across its portfolio for earlier periods.



**New protected areas and innovative financing**

In Papua New Guinea, GEF is supporting community-led conservation work and opens the door to new innovative financing such as a potential debt-for-nature swap and blue bond, supporting new protected areas.  
Photo: © Strelyuk

Elsewhere, GEF's policy towards promoting the inclusion of other vulnerable groups is more nascent, and opportunities exist to develop approaches in line with the promotion of gender equality. In 2024, the GEF Secretariat conducted a gap analysis to identify any potential gaps in existing policies, processes and systems that might hinder the integration of inclusion across GEF operations. To date, evaluations and interviews with GEF Secretariat staff point to ongoing gaps in terms of addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in GEF programming, beyond youth, which has gained significant traction in recent years.

### **Integration**

Within the partnership and across its landscapes, the GEF has elevated its use of integrative, boundary-spanning approaches in implementing its mandate. In the assessment period, this is most obvious in the championship of integrated programming approaches applied across scales, sectors, disciplines, and jurisdictions with broad stakeholder engagement. But it is also emerging in the way GEF seeks policy environments to be less detrimental and more enabling of GEBs, and in how it works to leverage impact in synergy with other actors in the environmental finance.

#### **GEF has advanced on its use of integrated programming as intended; upcoming evaluations will be key to support analysis and learning (Indicators 1.1, 1.2)**

Premised on recognised drivers of environmental degradation, integrated programming approaches demonstrate alignment to country priorities.

GEF has demonstrated continuity and expansion of the themes covered by its integrated programmes since their introduction in GEF-6. For example, the GEF-6 Resilient Food Systems and Good Growth Partnership set the stage for the GEF-7 Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration, and GEF-8 Food Systems; while the Sustainable Cities programme has now entered its third iteration. Under GEF-8, Integrated Programme designs reflect the uptake of several lessons learned from the GEF-6 and GEF-7 programme iterations. and are generating broad engagement, as evidenced by their uptake by countries at the outset of GEF-8.

Based on a sample of three Integrated Programmes, the MOPAN assessment observes the emergence of multi-stakeholder platforms which, in the case of the Food Systems Integrated Programme, is helping to scale sustainable practices and improve transparency. Broadly constituted governance bodies are present, at times spanning country borders, (as evidenced by the Clean and Healthy Ocean Integrated Programme, applying sustainable management practices to rehabilitate and protect landscapes and seascapes). And enabling policies have emerged which, in the case of the Sustainable Cities Integrated Programme are making way for more suitable urban development and rural land use planning.

Successes notwithstanding, the pace, spread, and inherent implementation complexities of GEF's integrated programming approach are noted as a source of concern among Agencies, executing entities and OFPs. Some breaks in continuity and inefficiencies are observed in programmes across cycles. For example, synchronicity has been lacking between global knowledge and coordination platforms at the programme level, with individual associated "Child Projects".<sup>2</sup> This has hindered exchange and learning across "Child Projects" within Integrated Programmes and among participating countries, hampering efforts to compile a coherent results story at a programme level. Challenges adapting global learning tools to address needs across unique child project settings, and an insufficient standardisation of data collection and reporting are also noted in this regard. On this, more specific expectations and guidance have been issued in GEF-8 to remedy the situation. Under-budgeting of project activities and managing the sequencing of activities over government transitions are also mentioned as implementation challenges.

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2. Child Projects are individual projects which contribute to the overarching objectives of Integrated Programmes while focusing on specific components or regions.

From a recipient country perspective, the initiation of the integrated programming cycle by selected lead agencies brings a benefits trade-off. The prospect of enhanced learning, collaboration and global impact to be obtained through the current integrated programming arrangement is set against the customary advantages associated with GEF's country-ownership orientation. Country participation is voluntary, though GEF appropriately incentivises countries to invest their STAR resources in Integrated Programmes through the application of matching funds from non-STAR set-asides.

There is no evaluation evidence available yet to inform a substantive understanding of programming impact, as well as support scrutiny of key aspects. Upcoming GEF-IEO evaluations programmed to inform the replenishment will be a key opportunity to examine progress toward integrated programming outcomes and, in so doing, to draw additional lessons on design and implementation aspects. This should include the length of time taken to move from programme origination to child project approval, time pressures associated with the project development portion of that sequence, and the degree to which country decision-making is affected through participation in a global initiative.

### **Global and country-level processes are strengthening coherence across multilateral actors**

GEF engages strongly with other key actors in the environmental and climate space, strengthening its complementarity with other actors in the multilateral architecture and the system-wide response to environmental challenges.

GEF is delivering on its policy commitment to strengthening coherence and complementarity with other funds. The first step in this process was the agreement with the GCF in 2021 of a Long-Term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence and Collaboration. A jointly commissioned comparative analysis of GEF and the GCF also informed this process by identifying entry points (Baastel, 2023). Pursuant to these exercises, GEF-GCF activities have encompassed: integrating agreed collaboration principles into GEF-8 and into GCF's Updated Strategic Plan for 2024-27; undertaking joint programming pilots at a country level aimed at aligning investment planning and programming cycles; and knowledge sharing. One area where GEF has already drawn from GCF experience is in the design of the newly created GBFF.

A further milestone was the agreement of the Multilateral Climate Funds Action Plan which sets an important example for how multilateral organisations can respond to fragmentation and strengthen the system-wide response to global and local challenges.

Presented to GEF Council in June 2024, this Action Plan highlights the complementarities of the four Funds, their collective potential both to leverage financing on a much larger scale, and to help set up "robust climate country platforms built on principles of country ownership and driven by ambitious national climate plans and strategies". Of note in this regard, the Climate Funds Collaboration Platform on Results, Indicators and Methodologies for Measuring Impact, is regarded by GEF Secretariat as instrumental in the common effort to learn from one another's practice and move towards harmonised and comprehensive results indicators. A CBD, COP-16 decision in November 2024 on Biodiversity and Climate Change adds a reinforcing backdrop to fund level initiatives like those itemised in the Action Plan, calling on the COPs of the two conventions to strengthen multilateral cooperation with a view to creating a joint work programme of the three Rio Conventions (CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD) (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2024). Reporting requirements set out in the Action Plan ensure that the GEF Council and other governing bodies are informed on progress against action commitments.

At a country and regional level, there is a considerable degree of co-existence among the funds. As the oldest mechanism among environment and climate funds, GEF has portfolios of projects completed, in progress and in the pipeline in most geographic areas where other funds are now also active. Areas of realised and un-realised complementarity are evident across the GEF portfolio. These include where the GEF, GCF and other climate funds

are building on respective comparative strengths – for example, GEF innovating and piloting, and the larger GCF scaling where there is proof of concept (GEF-IEO & UNDP-IEO, 2021). In another area of convergence, GEF and GCF (through its Readiness Programme) both support the development of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). The Action Plan is attentive to these gaps and opportunities with agreed outcomes related to country-level capacity building and programming as well as broad-based knowledge exchange and communication about climate knowledge and climate finance.

From the country vantage point, the factors observed to work against greater coherence and complementarity across the funds are highly practical in nature. These can include funds interfacing with different OFPs (or different ministries), different project processes and timelines for approvals, and distinct eligibility requirements for taking up implementation roles. The absence of an environment and climate finance-wide country programming process is also noted. Overall, country stakeholders are attracted to the prospect of greater coherence and complementarity among the climate funds, and look to the leadership of the funds to provide the impetus for it to occur.

### **Attention to policy coherence has accelerated, supported by new policies, processes and monitoring (Indicators 5.3, 5.6)**

GEF's focus on transforming policy and regulatory environments is driven by the recognition that policy coherence is key to the foundation of sustainable societies in line with SDG 17<sup>3</sup>. GEF's attention to this area has strengthened over successive strategic periods. Today, it has been adopted as a cross-cutting principle in recognition that country level action on policy and regulatory environments requires attention across sectors, levels of governance, and over time.

Building on commitments set out in the GEF-8 replenishment, Council approved a suite of policy coherence related activities for inclusion in the current GEF cycle. For example, policy coherence is mainstreamed in project design and implementation, and monitoring takes place through child projects' results frameworks. Country-driven investments focusing on support for development of effective policies have been incentivised through a competitive funding window. Furthermore, a separate innovation window has been established with the scope to accommodate an exploration of policy coherence. Policy coherence is also supported by other GEF policies such as the CES which anticipates policy coherence being addressed through National Dialogues and by helping OFPs to play a facilitation role.

The share of the number of projects that contributed to the policy coherence dimension is growing rapidly from 11% in GEF-6 to 90% with the inclusion of the full June 2023 Work Program. However, the introduction of these policies, activities and processes remains relatively recent, and the extent to which they enable policy coherence to be advanced through GEF's initiative, leadership and programming will be watched closely through GEF-9.

## **GEF'S FUTURE TRAJECTORY**

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In the face of global necessity and urgency, GEF has responded positively over the assessment period to deliver on its strategic objectives and heighten its contribution to transformative change.

It has implemented significant adjustments to its policies, guidance, processes and feedback mechanisms. These are increasingly fit-for-purpose and in line with international standards and best practices.

As a result, GEF is now well positioned to scale up its impact in the next replenishment period. However, its success will also depend on its capacity to adapt and respond to a number of opportunities and challenges. These include:

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3. The Council paper "Enhancing Policy Coherence in GEF Operations"(GEF/C.65.04), quotes the following definition of policy coherence: "The systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies creating synergies towards achieving the agreed objectives" Anita Breuer, Hannah Janetschek and Daniele Malerba (2019), Translating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Interdependencies into Policy Advice, Sustainability 2019, 11, 2092; doi:10.3390/su11072092



**Tanzania – loading medical waste into autoclave for proper disposal**

Demonstrating and promoting best techniques and practices for reducing health-care waste to avoid environmental releases of dioxins and mercury  
Photo: © GEF

### **In a highly fragmented funding environment, coordination and collaboration will continue to underpin GEF’s role in the system-wide response**

The multilateral response to climate change and environmental goals is highly fragmented with many separate initiatives, funds, and programs working on distinct and sometimes overlapping aspects of climate and environmental action. However, in recent years, awareness of the need for greater coherence has been growing along with efforts to reduce fragmentation. Key elements are in place for GEF to participate in a coordinated system-wide response.

In the multilateral system, COP meetings are a rare example of platforms that convene all multilateral actors and provide opportunities to coordinate, review progress and advocate. COPs are a critical interface for the GEF. Their guidance has informed GEF’s strategy. They are platforms for GEF to demonstrate delivery on commitments. And they are convening mechanisms that facilitate engagement with other actors. The regular tempo of COP meetings will continue to underpin the system-wide response to the environmental crisis. GEF’s relevance and impact as a key actor within this system will continue to depend on maintaining the alignment of its approach, policies and processes with guidance from the COPs, and consistency between the discourse at the COPs and in the GEF Council.

Complementing these system-wide initiatives, joint action plans and vision statements with other multilateral actors will continue to provide a clear roadmap for strengthening GEF’s effectiveness, with reporting structures to track progress and facilitate learning.

### **Diverse interests and priorities of the partnership require careful navigation**

GEF has been advancing a global change agenda anchored in a country-level, strategic engagement approach. It is an approach that seeks to bring whole-of-government/ whole-of-society dynamics and policy coherence to bear, while simultaneously honouring GEF’s adherence to country ownership.

When designing GEF-8 programming directions, Council constituencies considered this approach necessary. However, whilst there are many partisans of GEF’s approach, support is not unanimous, illustrating the difficulties in responding to the diverse priorities of its constituencies.

In this context, the ability of the institutional leadership to articulate GEF’s vision, forge shared purpose and balance competing interests will be key to capitalising on the alchemy of the partnership.

**Maintaining its focus on co-financing is key to strengthening impact; deepening its partnership with MDBs is a crucial part of this**

As many donors' contributions to multilateral organisations are under increasing pressure, GEF's approach of prioritising the use of replenishment funds to leverage additional financing is increasingly pertinent. GEF has taken important steps to better mobilise co-financing through its programmes and private sector partnerships. These will bear fruit in the next replenishment period, but further progress should be prioritised to meet financing needs. To do so, GEF must deliver in three areas.

Firstly, it must facilitate the participation of new financiers in its programmes and projects. MDBs are increasingly mainstreaming nature into their strategic plans (as set out in their COP 26 Joint Statement on Nature, People and Planet) and boosting finance in focal areas like climate, which creates important new co-financing opportunities. GEF must follow-up on options identified by the Working Group on Streamlining, as well as the Joint Action Plan, to simplify, accelerate and harmonise its programme and project processes.

Secondly, achieving progress will require GEF to address the cautionary stance in some GEF recipient countries to take on loan finance and the ongoing reticence to programme country allocations from the STAR towards the private sector. It can do so by broadening its engagement with recipient countries, promoting awareness of the advantages of NGIs, and reinforcing incentives to encourage uptake.

Thirdly, GEF should continue to review opportunities to maximise efficient use of replenishment resources. This should include optimising the balance between grants and NGIs in a manner which is consistent with its comparative advantages and role in the multilateral system, and ensuring that they are tailored to the needs of recipient countries and potential financing partners. As part of this process, GEF should revisit portfolio co-financing targets to ensure they strike the right balance between the need for greater ambition whilst remaining sensitive to other priorities embedded in its approach. Greater consistency with other funds in measuring and reporting on co-financing can facilitate benchmarking and learning in this area.

**Country mechanisms must evolve to deliver a whole-of-government approach and strengthen coordination with other actors**

GEF's commitment to support system transformation through a whole-of-government/whole-of-society engagement is aligned with multilateral guidance for inclusivity and integration. However, it increases the onus on OFPs to lead and coordinate national stakeholders, prioritise resource use, ensure alignment with both national and global environmental objectives, and play a catalytic role in forming transparent, best-fit agency-executing entity configurations.

Going forward, GEF must work with recipient countries to ensure that they all have OFP mechanisms able to perform these roles, and are backed by appropriate GEF policies, resources and engagement.

Whilst national steering committee structures which have been introduced by some recipient countries offer a potential way forward, the approach adopted will need to be tailored to individual contexts and reflect other country-platforms that may already be in place. With other multilateral actors in the climate and environment space increasingly engaging with diverse line ministries<sup>4</sup> and operating through their own country-coordination platforms, GEF's country mechanisms must take advantage of existing structures wherever possible to strengthen coordinated action and minimise additional requirements on recipient government administrations.

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<sup>4</sup> This is set out in the MDB Principles for Long Term Strategies.

### **More comprehensive performance evidence is required to support scrutiny and learning**

Whilst GEF already has strong monitoring and evaluation functions and systems in place which support effective oversight and strategic reflections by Council, opportunities remain for further improvement. In particular, GEF's results and evaluative information should be more comprehensive to support analysis of the full range its GEF investments. Gaps identified include evidence concerning the impact of GEF's integrated programming and support for gender equality.

Important steps are already underway in this regard. Evaluation reports programmed in 2025 will help meet the strong demand for evidence about the impact of GEF's integrated programming and inform how GEF can refine its policies, systems and behaviours. On gender, new indicators incorporated into GEF-8 templates will support scrutiny and learning in the future.

#### **Box 8. Main strengths and areas for improvement**

##### **Main strengths**

- Strong coordination across the multilateral architecture with a clear action plan that guides an effective system-wide response.
- A strategy and operating model which balance calls for an ambitious integrated response to global environmental goods, with support for delivery of country priorities and Multilateral Environmental Agreement commitments.
- A strong partnership mobilising diverse competencies and capabilities to deliver joint planning and programming to address environmental goals.
- A transparent resource allocation approach providing countries with predictable funding, alongside set-asides which allocate funds for GEF priorities and groups.
- Operating policies and procedures which increasingly reflect international norms and best practices, underpinned by a clear and appropriate layering of responsibilities between the Secretariat and Agencies. A cost-efficient and restructured Secretariat aligned to vision, strategy and delivery of results.

##### **Improvement opportunities**

- Reinforce Operational Focal Point mechanisms to ensure they are equipped to drive GEF's whole-of-government/society approach.
- Stimulate demand for Non-Grant Instruments by recipient countries by raising awareness of opportunities in this area, building links with ministries accustomed to working with Multilateral Development Banks, and strengthening incentives to programme country allocations towards the private sector.
- Mobilise new financiers and incentivise deeper participation by Multilateral Development Banks through promoting efficiencies, streamlining and harmonising processes.
- Ensure sufficient Secretariat resources are allocated to key functions (including implementation of the private sector engagement strategy and gender equality policy and requirements).
- Support consistent implementation of recent reforms across agencies through guidance and capacity building.
- Promote accountability by further aligning results frameworks, monitoring and reporting with stakeholder needs to ensure that programmes and interventions supported can be tracked to their impact.

Looking ahead, it is important that GEF continues this progress and further aligns its results framework and monitoring to deliver performance information that meets stakeholders' needs in other priority areas (such as youth) to support scrutiny of its impact and inform learning.

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# OVERVIEW OF SCORING





**Critical environment projects**

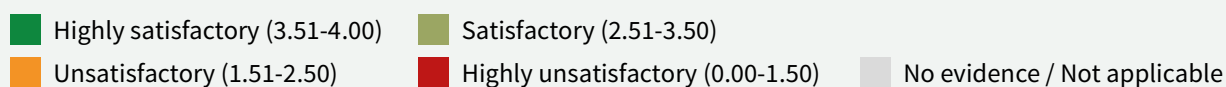
Women are a fundamental component for the success of the GEF Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management Projects. Photo: © GEF

## SCORING GEF ON PERFORMANCE

This chapter provides a more detailed assessment of GEF’s performance across the five performance areas – strategic management, operational management, relationship management, and performance management and results – and the key performance indicators that relate to each area, accompanied by their score and rating. It illustrates findings and highlights feedback from stakeholders (e.g., from the survey).

The MOPAN performance scoring and rating scales are listed below.

**FIGURE 10. MOPAN 3.1 PERFORMANCE SCORING AND RATING SCALE**



The assessment key findings draw on information from the evidence sources (document reviews, survey, interviews and case studies – see Chapter 4 for more information).

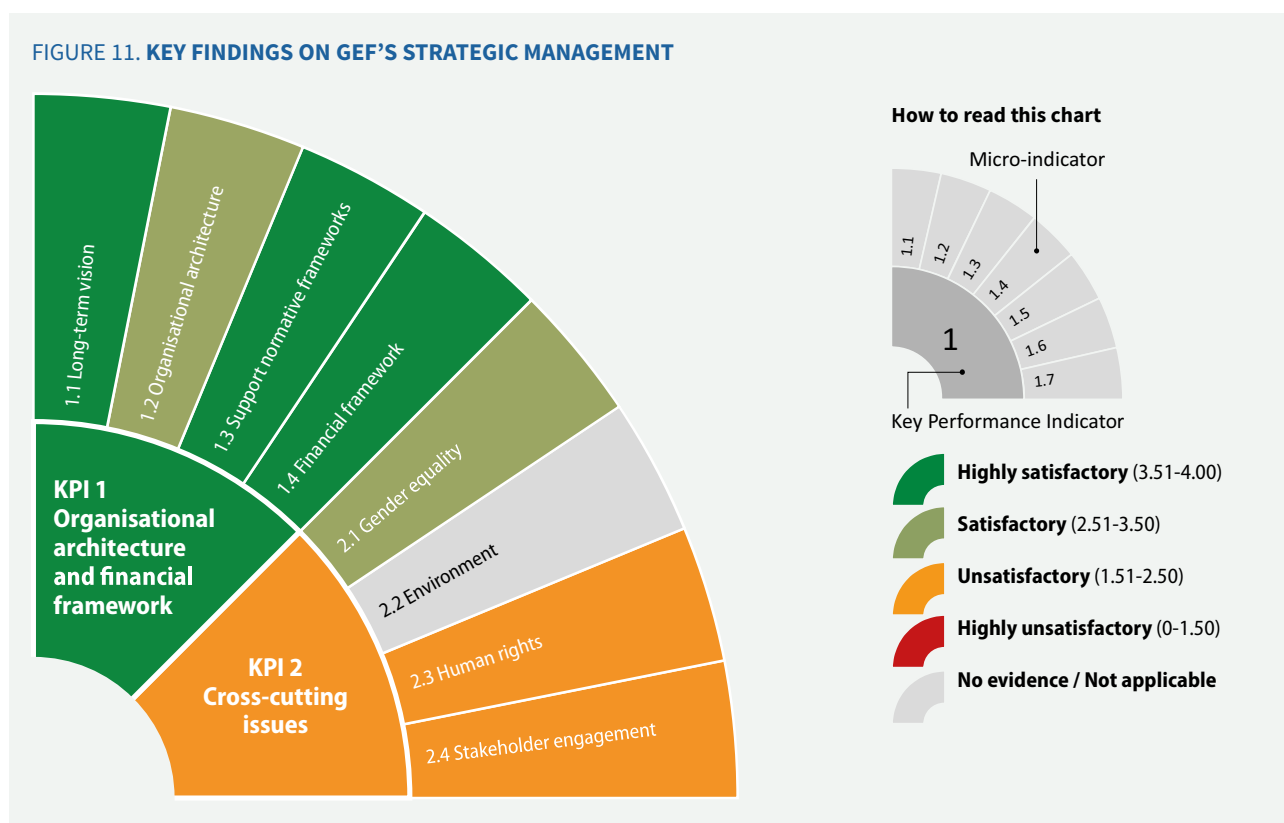
Further analysis per micro-indicator (MI) and detailed scoring, as well as the full survey results, can be found in Part II: Technical and Statistical Annex of the MOPAN Assessment of GEF.

## KEY FINDINGS ON GEF’S ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

### STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

*Clear strategic direction geared to key functions, intended results and the integration of relevant cross-cutting priorities.*

**FIGURE 11. KEY FINDINGS ON GEF’S STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**



## KPI 1: Organisational architecture and financial framework enable mandate implementation and achievement of expected results

Highly satisfactory

3.63

This KPI focuses on the extent to which GEF has articulated a coherent and strategic vision of how and for what purpose it has organised its activity and assets to deliver results.

**In many areas covered in this KPI, GEF’s policies, systems and practices are at the upper end of international good practice, underpinning the overall rating of Highly Satisfactory. Areas of particular strength include a clear long- term vision based upon comparative advantages and directly aligned to global commitments, and mechanisms to ensure that GEF funds target priority areas.**

GEF’s strategic development, organisation and financial frameworks have strongly supported its capacity to implement its convention mandates. The strategy outlined in the ‘GEF 2020: Strategy for the GEF’ (2015), and updated through each four-year replenishment, shows a deepened understanding of the interdependency between people and planet, and a recognition that human activity is “dangerously impinging on some of the Earth’s vital life support systems...” reflecting guidance and calls from various multilateral fora including MEAs and COPs.

The most recent GEF-8 strategy advances the Healthy Planet, Healthy People framework, which explicitly links biodiversity and ecosystem services, abundant and clean freshwater, the maintenance of a stable and liveable climate, a clean and hazardous-chemical free environment, and healthy oceans on the one hand, with resilient livelihoods and human health, on the other. The STAP and the GEF-IEO provide scientific and programmatic insight to support replenishment discussions. To support the GEF-8 replenishment, for example, the STAP produced an advisory document that reviewed what a science and technology perspective can bring to upcoming replenishment discussions, while the GEF-IEO produced a comprehensive evaluation report on GEF-7.

Since GEF-6, GEF’s programming has expanded beyond its traditional focal area strategies to incorporate an increasingly integrated programming approach geared to address the major drivers of environmental degradation. At the same time, GEF’s anticipated results have been trained on a set of GEBs and core indicators associated with convention targets. The positioning of the GEF as an instrument of the COPs and the emergence of the GEF Secretariat as a proactive (“thought leader”) actor in the GEF Secretariat – Agency – Recipient Country triad is widely observed.

Processes for fund replenishment are considered thorough, transparent, science-informed, and increasingly results-focused. Processes for fund allocation under the STAR allocation system are considered fair and consistent with the held value of country ownership, including also a series of set- asides that earmark funds to support specific GEF initiatives and priorities such as Enabling Activities, Integrated Programmes (Global Platform and child projects), and more.

Strategy under the larger GEF Trust Fund and the specialist LDCF and SCCF has been operationalised for the GEF-7 and GEF-8 replenishments through separate programming directions documents which elaborate Focal Area strategies and delineate Integrated Programs which integrate efforts across GEF’s Focal Areas.

For the most part, the way GEF mobilises and deploys resources reflects the diverse needs of recipient countries and in particular those more vulnerable in LDCs, SIDS and Fragility-Conflict-Violence (FCV) affected states.

GEF’s financial mechanisms demonstrate sensitivity to the diverse needs of recipient countries and are in line with international best practice. These mechanisms include:

- The STAR allocation formula, which allocates resources to countries based on a series of indices (e.g. Global Benefit Indices measuring a country on its ability to generate global environmental benefits, the Country Performance Index, and GDP-based Index which adjusts allocations based on a country’s economic needs) to account for country context and vulnerability (described in Chapter 1).
- The use of ‘set asides’ to the STAR allocation (averaging close to 8% of the total resource allocation over the past three GEF cycles) to provide the means to advance global prerogatives identified in the GEF Strategy – e.g., in relation to integrated programming approaches, inclusive conservation, and blended finance.
- The presence of dedicated funds for least developing countries, namely the LDCF and SCCF which collectively received USD 174 million of additional pledges at the recent COP28.
- The funding modalities tailored to support interventions across a range of scales, including the Enabling Activities, Country Support Programme (CSP), Small Grants Programme (SGP), MSPs, FSPs, Integrated Programmes and a host of other Programmes.

GEF’s governance arrangements are inclusive, open and transparent (with on-line streaming). The Council acts separately for the trust funds it manages – the original GEF Trust Fund, LDCF, SCCF, Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT), Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund (NPIF) and, as of February 2024, for the GBFF. Whilst separate meetings are necessary given the slightly different rules of procedure in the various funds, this approach also necessitates several days of meetings which requires additional time for delegates.

In addition to robust recipient- and donor-country representation at Council, GEF’s inclusive approach is supported by national and regional stakeholder dialogues, and adherence in the Partnership to inclusion policies and standards are identified as factors contributing to this overall assessment.

Diverse interests and priorities are inherent within the GEF partnership. Broadly stakeholders consulted were positive about the way that GEF’s leadership manage this diversity of interests including the tensions associated with the pursuit of global (integrated) programming solutions with an organisational model grounded in the values of country ownership.

#### **KPI 2: Structures and mechanisms support the implementation of global frameworks for cross-cutting issues at all levels, in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda principles**

Unsatisfactory

2.44

This KPI looks at the articulation and positioning within GEF’s structures and mechanisms of the cross-cutting priorities to which the organisation is committed, in pursuit of its strategic objectives including Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, advancement of human rights and the protection of vulnerable people, and the promotion of stakeholder engagement in line with GEF’s whole-of-society approach.

**Overall, GEF is improving the way in which it addresses global issues and cross-cutting themes, particularly in GEEW. However, whilst the direction of travel is positive, progress has been uneven, and there are opportunities to further develop its approach into other demographic groups. GEF has tools and policies in place to deliver on its commitment to stakeholder engagement, though opportunities remain to ensure more consistent uptake and implementation.**

GEF has a clear policy and implementation strategy on gender equality which, despite some gaps, has contributed to a greater integration of GEEW across its portfolio. Gender equality indicators are integrated into the organisation's corporate objectives and there is evidence of application and monitoring on progress towards gender equality results.

However, there is scope for the GEF to develop more comprehensive indicators – beyond sex-disaggregated indicators – that could measure more accurately the GEF's contribution to gender equality results across all focal areas and to support aggregation. To address this need, GEF-8 PIF and CEO endorsement templates have fully integrated gender components within the main project description, allowing for a more coherent narrative on gender across projects. GEF's work in this area can be further enhanced through additional guidance to agencies to set out GEF's expectations on issues such as promoting women's access to resources, increasing Secretariat resources to help drive gender, build capacity and support assessment integration of gender into project proposals, and ensuring that the STAP is equipped with sufficient gender expertise.

Elsewhere, attention to social inclusion and vulnerable groups has increased with ongoing efforts to adapt organisational processes and systems to support the implementation of the 'Inclusion Agenda' set forth by the GEF-8 Programming Directions. These include integration of inclusion into the updated Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards and through new guidance on projects and programmes in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations with special attention to vulnerable communities (issued in November 2024) which included guidance for special attention to vulnerable communities including women, children, indigenous peoples, persons with disability, SOGI, and minorities.

However, opportunities remain to improve policies to ensure that GEF programming addresses the needs of vulnerable groups comprehensively. Whilst projects are increasingly engaging youth and indigenous people and local communities, there is more limited integration of broader inclusion aspects including those related to disability or to the non-binary notion of gender. Achieving further progress in this area will require developing an overarching narrative on inclusion for key GEF policies, enhancing engagement with diverse groups, aligning policies with ongoing GEF reforms and partnerships, and explicit non-discrimination measures and better communication of requirements. Another step would be to strengthen GEF's indicators and corporate reporting under GEF-9 for monitoring GEF's promotion of human rights, including the needs of vulnerable and diverse demographic groups through its activities.

With regards to strengthening GEF's engagement with stakeholders in line with its inclusive approach, the assessment finds that GEF has appropriate structures and policies in place, but that their effectiveness varies.

For example, compliance with the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement varies by Agency and by category of stakeholder. Progress has been most visible operationalising GEF's vision for private sector. Aside from an increase in CSO participation in constituency workshops, CSO participation – especially in GEF governance – has long been steady. Corporate Scorecards reveal a slight decrease for consultation with CSOs, Indigenous peoples and local communities during project identification from 46% to 42% between 2020-24, compared to an increase in the level of private sector consultation (from 76% to 98%). One factor is the variance across OFPs in their disposition and level of resourcing to engage stakeholders.

In interviews, representatives from civil society highlight the need to not only engage CSOs in projects but to ensure that CSOs have a stronger voice in the governance of the GEF partnership. They observe a continuing ambivalence at the GEF Secretariat and at Council on the question of how best GEF should engage with civil society. Central to this is the question on the extent to which GEF should rely upon its longstanding relationship with the GEF CSO Network or forge new engagements with civil society beyond the network, for example through the accreditation of CSO entities. Whilst the CSO Network has not been evaluated by the GFE-IEO since 2016, it has recently undergone a

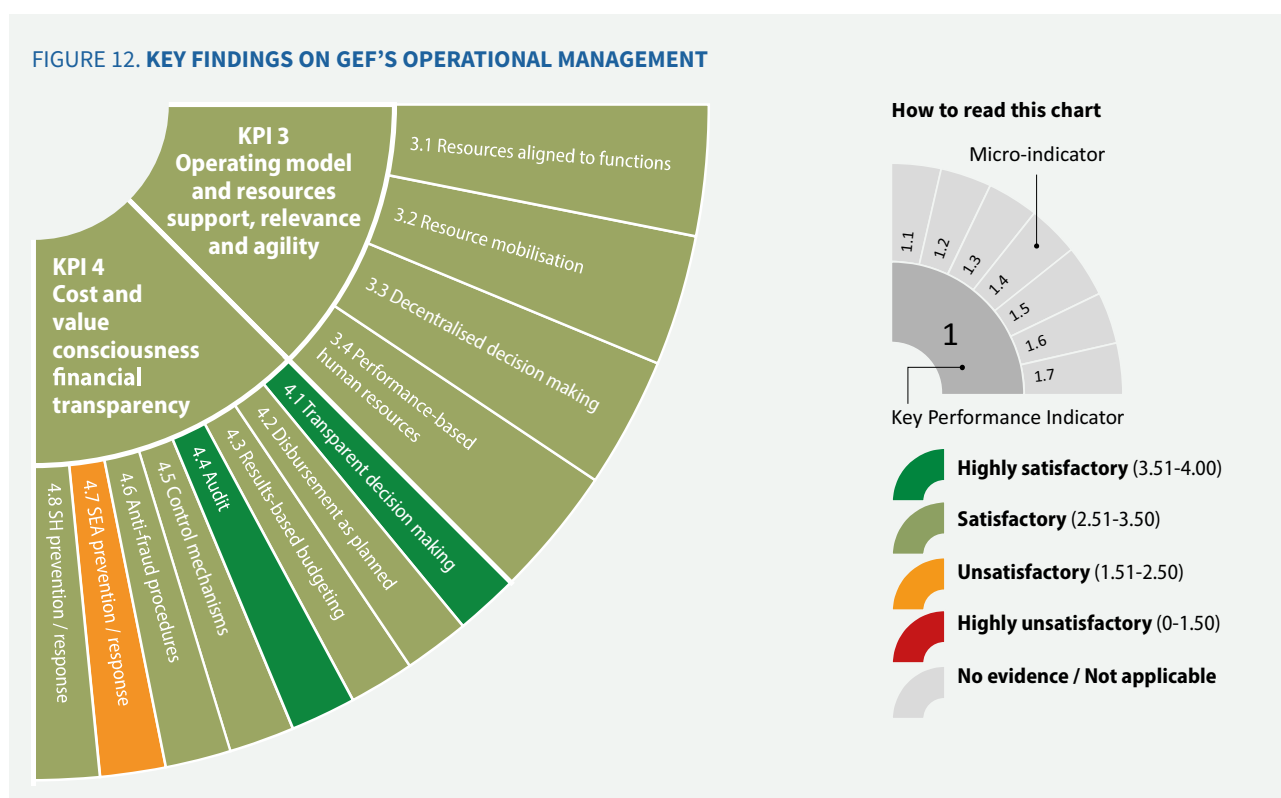
strategic review and management changes which create opportunities for enhanced performance. Looking forward, its progress should be monitored.

Corporate reporting on GEF’s stakeholder engagement should be improved to provide a clearer understanding of GEF’s stakeholder engagement. At an aggregate level, current reporting is limited to process indicators on stakeholder engagement (e.g., percentage of projects having conducted stakeholder consultation during project identification). Whilst this is supplemented at a project level by a narrative analysis at key milestones in the project lifecycle through the Portal, this lack of results-focused monitoring and reporting hampers outcome measurement.

### OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

*Assets and capacities organised behind strategic direction and intended results to ensure relevance, agility and accountability*

FIGURE 12. KEY FINDINGS ON GEF’S OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT



#### KPI 3: Operating model and human and financial resources support the relevance and agility

Satisfactory	3.31
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This KPI focuses on how key operational functions (e.g. human resources, resource generation and programming) are geared to support strategic direction and deliver results.

**The assessment finds that GEF’s policies, processes and practices support the allocation of resources to priorities aligned with its mandate.**

Reform initiatives to date have focused on institutional policy refinements, process streamlining and on strengthening GEF’s use of RBM approaches, addressing areas highlighted for improvement in the previous MOPAN assessment.

The way in which GEF aligns its resource mobilisation efforts with its strategy is substantial and time-tested. It occurs through a comprehensive, multi-step replenishment process co-led by the GEF trustee and the GEF CEO. Integral to the process is a gathering of relevant science-based analyses, GEF results and performance insights from the previous GEF cycle, an examination of focal area needs and priorities, a formulation under each GEF fund of programming directions, a review of GEF policies and operations dimensions, and a solicitation of expressions of donor interests/priorities.

The GEF Trust Fund operates based on four-year donor commitments. Contributions committed at the close of a replenishment process are approved by country parliaments and congresses and are, as such, reliable. Donor contributions to the much smaller LDCF and SCCF are voluntary; the lack of regularity and variability have worked against strategic programming. For example, the SCCF had limited resources in the GEF-7 period, but these increased under GEF-8.

In mobilising finance, GEF has continued to venture beyond the public sector and engage the private sector in all its diversity. Consistent with the GEF's 2020 Strategy and Private Sector Engagement Strategy, the programming directions documents for GEF-7 and GEF-8 identify widening the funding base to include non-grant finance as a priority and show a progression in commitment to do so. Following early successes piloting NGIs in GEF-6 to stimulate private sector participation/ co-financing, GEF has made this a core part of its private sector strategy in GEF-7 along with a concerted effort to engage the private sector more systematically across focal area strategies and at earlier stages in the programme/project cycle.

In implementation since 2020, governments have on average provided the largest share of co-financing across the GEF portfolio (~33%), ahead of agencies (~25%) and the private sector (18%). Across all sources, amounts have been variable and particularly so for those sourced from the private sector. Findings from the GEF-IEO's Evaluation of Cofinancing in the GEF (GEF-IEO, 2024b) indicate that the GEF has stayed above the 7:1 threshold contained in the policy. The GEF-IEO noted that GEF defines co-financing in broad terms and whilst this enables the GEF to demonstrate high fund mobilisation from its partners, not all contributions are equally important or essential. (Other studies have highlighted that the way in which GEF cofinancing is defined is not aligned to other organisations). However, the MOPAN assessment also found significant need and potential to increase co-financing. It argued that achieving this will require the GEF to encourage demand for NGIs among recipient countries and strengthen the efficiency of its project and programme requirements and processes to facilitate participation of MDBs and other actors.

GEF Secretariat has committed to staying within its four-year GEF 8 corporate budget envelope despite unanticipated increased in World Bank administrative support services, and costs associated with support to major new mandates, GBFF and BBNJ.

Since the beginning of GEF-8, the organisation has undergone a substantive restructuring and re-sizing for the first time since the beginning of GEF-6. The headcount has increased to 100 in December 2024, from 65 at the time of the last assessment in 2018. The corporate function continues to account for a relatively small share of the overall budget, and is stable over time. For instance, the approved corporate budget for the replenishment period as a proportion of replenishment envelope is broadly stable (2.38% under GEF-8 compared to 2.52% for GEF-7) though the actual cost year on year varies significantly.

The restructuring exercise is tied into a comprehensive reform initiated under the GEF 2020 Strategy and was carried out over the subsequent two replenishment cycles. The rationale for restructuring the Secretariat is set out in the GEF Business Plan and Corporate Budget for FY24. No growth for two replenishment periods and staff capacity at or beyond current limits, a calculation of the workload increases needed to fulfil the mandate under GEF-8, and the existence of an expanded GEF-8 budget envelope, are the basis for changing the organisational chart and hiring

additional staff. The process is well advanced as this assessment draws to a close. All GEF staff are included in HR management practices of the World Bank.

The programming documents for GEF-7 and GEF-8 are consistent in intent across focal areas, increasingly through integrated programming and with a particular focus on mobilising domestically sourced private sector finance.

GEF policy sets out the delegation of decision-making authorities across the organisational “ecosystem”. The GEF partnership traverses a myriad of lateral (i.e. across countries, and organisational types/ functions) and vertical relationships (i.e. within organisational or programming hierarchy). Independent evaluations and surveys show that policy and institutional arrangements within the GEF support country ownership and upstream country programming.

#### KPI 4: Organisational systems are cost- and value-conscious and enable transparency and accountability

Satisfactory	3.17
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This KPI examines how GEF uses its external and internal control mechanisms to meet the standards it sets on financial management and transparency.

**The assessment finds that GEF has appropriate policies, processes and behaviours in place to ensure that funds are allocated to strategic priorities and appropriately tracked. GEF has a strong control environment, with clearly delineated roles between actors in the partnership and due diligence processes. Efficient and timely distribution of resources is a cause for concern.**

GEF’s STAR resource allocation mechanism which allocates resources for programming under the three Rio Conventions, is a particular strength. The overall policy intent is to support country ownership and provide predictability by pre-allocating resources at the beginning of the GEF cycle. STAR policy defines country eligibility along with the indices and associated index weights for calculating the allocation of funds mobilised through the replenishment (see Chapter 1). On the basis of STAR allocations, country stakeholders and agencies build their programming with reference to country circumstances and the programming directions established through the replenishment process. Meanwhile, under the focal areas outside of the STAR allocation, specifically Chemicals & Waste, and International Waters, replenishment figures and the various programming directions (and strategy) documents serve as guidance to agencies and OFPs for the formulation of programmes and projects.

Overall, GEF’s STAR approach to allocating resources to partners is perceived as transparent, predictable and flexible, allowing countries a considerable latitude for influencing how GEF funds are used. The disposition, relative standing in government, and resourcing of the country OFP are critical variables in determining how the extent to which countries drive how these funds are used. The presence and influence of GEF Agencies relative to OFPs are also key variables.

Country stakeholders are less sure about the means to access non-STAR focal area resources, perceiving a complexity in the interplay of conventions/MEAs, GEF funds, focal areas and set asides.

GEF’s monitoring of its operational effectiveness is transparent compared to other funds. GEF strengthened its analysis and reporting of fund disbursement data mid-way through GEF-7 under a corporate initiative to measure operational effectiveness at a portfolio level. GEF’s Monitoring Report includes 15 indicators of operational performance with agencies’ disbursement data used to measure the speed of GEF operations and the strength of portfolio management. However, going forward, it is important that GEF makes use of external benchmarking against similar funds to identify opportunities to strengthen the efficiency of its processes and set appropriate targets.



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**Goat-rearing,  
organic harvesting  
to help the forest**

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In Namibia, the GEF is funding participatory training in forest and rangeland management, including goat-rearing, organic harvesting, and water conservation measures including boreholes. This seeks to improve land health and decrease deforestation.

Photo: © GEF

The speed of GEF processes and disbursement is a cause of concern to many stakeholders, particularly those connected with the private sector. The G20 Independent Expert Group similarly identifies “speeding up and simplifying business processes” as critical to fostering government and private sector investments in transformative development. External benchmarking against other funds’ performance offers one way to ensure that the GEF sets appropriate thresholds for key stages in the project cycle. There is some evidence that the GEF partnership is making progress on its commitment to accelerate disbursements as part of its streamlining efforts, but the full impact of these measures will only be clear at the end of GEF-8 and throughout GEF-9.

Under GEF’s operating model, efficient and timely disbursement and implementation are a shared responsibility. The GEF Secretariat is responsible for clear policies and efficient processes, while Agencies and executing entities are responsible for developing and implementing projects and disbursing funds in a timely manner. Addressing this issue will therefore require a concerted effort from different stakeholders and follow-up to the report by the Working Group on Streamlining.

GEF’s Updated Policy on Minimum Fiduciary Standards sets clear standards that GEF agencies are required to comply with to ensure transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of GEF financing for projects and programs. Robust policies are in place to ensure adherence to these standards. Agencies are required to submit progress reports on compliance with GEF minimum standards and reporting annually on the progress with implementation of GEF policy commitments more broadly. Additionally, there are third party reviews of agencies’ compliance with GEF minimum standards every replenishment period.

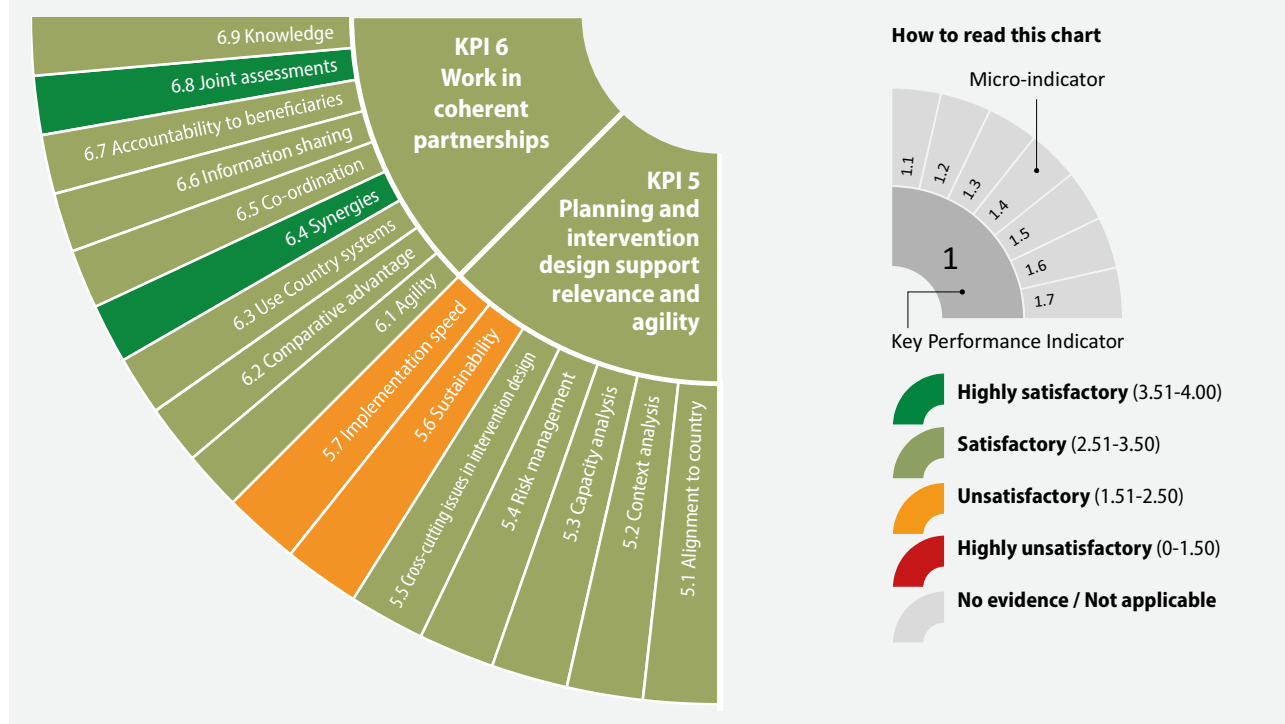
Notable efforts have been made to update the policy framework to consider sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) through its Updated its Minimum Fiduciary Standards and its Environmental and Social Safeguards’ Policy. These provide clear standards for preventing and responding to SEA. GEF relies on partner agencies’ own SEA policies and procedures. Compliance assessments and progress reports on GEF’s Policies indicate that all GEF agencies meet requirements, though the extent of SEA policies and systems has varied considerably across agencies; for example, with one GEF Agency having adopted a targeted requirement on child SEA in addition to general SEA requirements.

GEF Secretariat recently committed to enhancing its role as a knowledge hub by facilitating the exchange of lessons learned in environmental and social safeguards, including SEA which will support this levelling-up and meets a need identified by stakeholders interviewed for the assessment. At the same time, there is scope to further improve GEF guidance and tools to support the harmonisation of SEA policies and procedures across agencies.

## RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

*Engaging in inclusive partnerships to support relevance, leverage effective solutions and maximise results.*

FIGURE 13. KEY FINDINGS ON GEF’S RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT



### KPI 5: Operational planning and intervention design tools support relevance and agility in partnerships

Satisfactory	2.74
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This KPI focuses on the scope and robustness of GEF’s processes and practice to support timely, flexible and responsive planning and intervention design for partnerships.

**GEF’s operational policies, processes and country support are found to be driving relevant and effective interventions, albeit with scope for refinement to support sustainable impact. However, additional progress is required in some areas including risk management (at the corporate level), strengthening attention to sustainability in project design, and ensuring that GEF procedures and processes support the speed of implementation.**

GEF is successfully balancing calls for an ambitious, integrated response to global environmental goods reflecting the interconnected nature of the world’s environmental challenges, with support for delivery of country priorities to help meet MEA commitments. In GEF-8, the GEF reframed its Country Engagement Strategy (CES) from providing ‘support’ to one that ‘strategically engages’ with countries to support country-wide ownership. It seeks to do this by focusing on three components: i) upstream technical and strategic support to stakeholders and recipient countries to establish a common understanding of GEF-8 priorities (technical and national dialogues; workshops etc), ii) the Country Support Programme to provide support and build capacity for OFPs and other stakeholders and enhance inclusive dialogue, and iii) knowledge and learning to build the quality, impact and sustainability of GEF interventions.

This seeks to broaden engagement with country stakeholders beyond the ministry of environment to help ensure a coherent approach to environmental sustainability and climate change across sectors. At this point, it is too early to assess the extent to which the GEF is delivering on its more activist strategy set out in the CES, but there are some positive signs. The assessment identified examples of several countries successfully applying this approach including the creation in some countries of national steering committees which are serving as conduits to relevant, larger strategic initiatives (GEF funded and other), enabling the OFP to forge lateral linkages across the country portfolio, and offering a potential solution to many of the constraints under the “traditional” OFP structure. Whilst greater use of national steering committees and similar coordination structures could enhance country engagement with the GEF, they will need to be tailored to each country’s individual circumstances and take account of similar structures that may already be in place.

GEF’s approach to designing and approving projects is generally robust, with appropriate consideration for the capacities of country partners, analysis of key risks, and attention to cross-cutting priorities in project identification and approval processes. Whilst GEF is attentive to promoting the sustainability of its interventions by making good use of national systems for project execution, it could be more attentive to this priority in project design, including through more systematic consideration of key elements to ensure an enabling policy and legal environment.

GEF processes include reflection points to allow partners respond to changes in context. Agencies have the flexibility to perform “minor amendments” which are generally handled through internal processes, allowing for quicker adaptation. Major changes often require formal reviews and Council approval. However, Key Informant Interviews indicate that additional flexibility would be beneficial. Agencies tend to wait for MTRs to address significant programmatic changes, while indicating a desire for flexibility on more substantial adjustments, for example, the possibility to merge project implementation and execution functions in certain contexts (e.g. fragile and conflict-affected situations).

The establishment of a Risk Appetite statement and framework is another important development that offers opportunities for GEF to use its resources with even greater effectiveness. The statement defines key project/portfolio risks and articulates the level of risk and measures the GEF is prepared to take in its ambition to achieve GEBs. Risk dimensions have been integrated into GEF-8 Project Identification Form and CEO endorsement project and programme templates and is reported on in the Monitoring Report. Successful implementation of the Risk Appetite will require GEF to continue to integrate the framework into its approach, policies and guidance for the next replenishment. International standards and the practices of other organisations offer the GEF a body of enterprise risk management approaches from which to draw.

#### **KPI 6: Working in coherent partnerships directed at leveraging and catalysing the use of resources**

Satisfactory

3.16

This KPI looks at a range of dimensions to consider how GEF engages in partnerships to maximise the effect of deploying its investment resources and its wider engagement.

**Overall, the assessment finds GEF’s performance in this area satisfactory. There is evidence that GEF is operating through an ecosystem of partners that, together, offer coherent and holistic approaches to addressing complex and multi-faceted environmental problems. However, ongoing attention is required to fully mobilise partner expertise and comparative advantages, in particular, through greater participation of the MDBs and the private sector.**

Stakeholders broadly agree that GEF has clearly demonstrated its value added among partners in the environmental landscape, acknowledge its comparative advantage in serving the conventions/MEAs, and recognise its collaborative advantage in IPs.

At a global level, GEF has helped lead greater coordination and collaboration with other multilateral actors bilaterally (e.g. through the Long-Term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence, and Collaboration between the GCF and the GEF), and collectively (e.g. through the Multilateral Climate Funds Action Plan). By promoting coordinated action based on comparative advantages, these initiatives are supporting a more effective system-wide response to environmental challenges.

The partnership allows the GEF to leverage expertise from various agencies across its focal areas. However, at a country level, the selection of GEF agencies to lead projects and programmes is not based systematically on comparative advantage/expertise and often hinges on additional factors such as country presence.

The GEF Secretariat has provided support to OFPs to address this issue and help ensure that GEF resources are used as strategically as possible to achieve country objectives. This has led to some progress, as evidenced by a lower proportion of programming led by the largest agencies and an increase in the number of recipient countries using seven or more agencies. However, challenges remain to fully capitalise on GEF agencies' collaborative advantages.

There is a particular need to increase the resource allocation to MDBs which have the capacity to leverage co-financing through country loans. In some instances (notably with MSPs) transaction costs are currently perceived as prohibitively high considering the scale of GEF funding, acting as a disincentive to engage. Continued efforts are required to streamline and harmonise processes; proposals by the Working Group on Streamlining and follow-up discussions are an important step forward in this regard. In addition, achieving this goal will also require the GEF to work with recipient countries to strengthen their demand for NGIs.

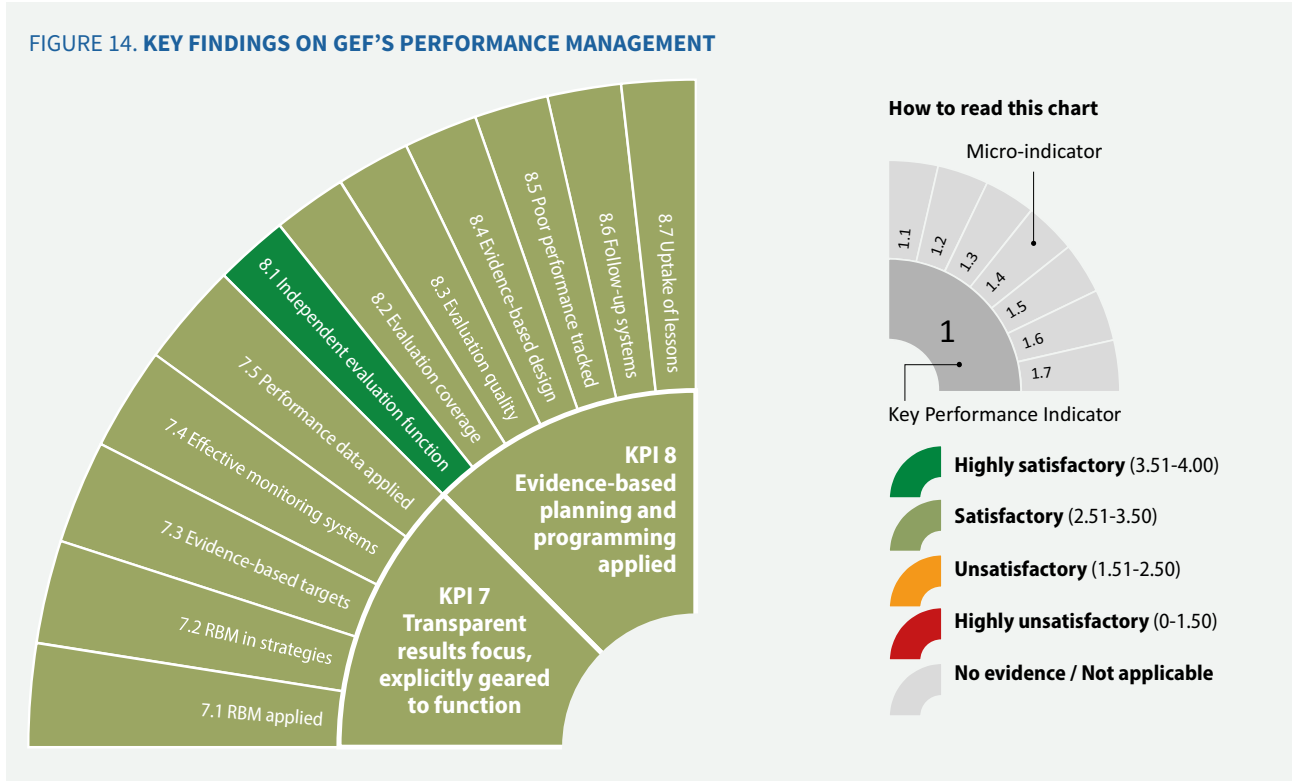
The assessment found GEF to be strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships to overcome sectoral silos and supporting integrated action at various scales. Projects and programmes consider opportunities for synergies with development partners, including opportunities to encourage leveraging resources. GEF's approach to the private sector has increased significantly since earlier programming periods. While there is ample evidence of projects successfully engaging the private sector, challenges remain motivating a broader, more impactful private sector engagement at scale. Among key informant interviewed, it is widely believed that private sector companies do not adequately understand the benefits of GEF-supported projects and quickly lose interest when no clear business cases are made. The MOPAN survey results underline GEF's ongoing private sector engagement challenge as less than half (44%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that these approaches allow the GEF to promote engagement with global private sector actors and even fewer (41%) agreed or strongly agreed that they enable the GEF to support engagement with national and local private sector entities.

New approaches and increased emphasis on IPs in GEF-8 have led to more knowledge and learning opportunities with opportunities for further exchange and learning among agencies, projects and implementing partners. GEF's new Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning and the creation of a new integration and knowledge management division responds to this opportunity. Whilst there is evidence of increased use of GEF knowledge (in projects and to inform policy dialogue), the MOPAN survey also highlighted concerns about information flow across all partnership actors. This was attributed in part to the institutional architecture that places several "layers" between the GEF and country-level partners/actors, with the implementing agencies becoming the main point of contact, as well as to staffing issues. GEF's visibility was also reported as limited, with a noted need for effective, proactive communication to increase understanding and familiarity with GEF mechanisms, financing, etc., including following changes in policies and procedures.

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

*Systems geared to managing and accounting for development and humanitarian results and the use of performance*

**FIGURE 14. KEY FINDINGS ON GEF’S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**



**KPI 7: Strong and transparent results focus, explicitly geared to function**

<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>2.87</b>
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This KPI examines the extent to which GEF demonstrates an enabling environment for results-based management (RBM) including a strong policy and strategic commitment, implementation of a clear results architecture organisation-wide, and the creation of an enabling environment.

**Overall, GEF’s monitoring systems are highly effective at capturing output-level data. However, mechanisms to capture and analyse outcome level data require ongoing improvement, including to strengthen data consistency across agencies.**

A commitment to RBM is evident in GEF’s strategic planning documents and in its replenishment process that sets corporate results targets. Over 90% of stakeholder respondents in the assessment survey recognised GEF’s commitment in this area.

In GEF-8, the organisation introduced a streamlined Results Measurement Framework servicing GEF’s accountability relationship and supporting decision-making. Results are reported to Council through Corporate Scorecards that track progress towards GEF-8 targets, and annual Monitoring Reports that structure reporting around project/programme results (tier 1) as well as operational effectiveness (tier 2). The Monitoring Reports are particularly comprehensive, presenting granular information including on GEF’s performance in different contexts, and the relative performance of different agencies to inform an understanding of GEF’s performance. A further best practice is the “Proactivity Index which tracks success in improving performance in projects previously rated unsatisfactory through adaptive management and proactivity.

The GEF results architecture has focused on a set of GEBs and associated core indicators distributed across the focal areas and formulated to be compatible with convention targets (e.g. GEF Core Indicator 4 - Area of landscapes under improved practices [hectare; excluding protected areas] is directly related to Aichi Biodiversity Target #7 of the Convention on Biodiversity). GEF's results targets have a sound evidence base and logic. GEF indicators are aggregated from project to corporate level, making that link clear.

Efforts are underway to develop and further improve GEF tools and methods for measuring and managing results. A significant development is GEF's ability to report on actual rather than anticipated results, now demonstrated in its reporting to Council. Key tools for measuring and managing results include the GEF Portal, which has contributed to capturing more and better data. However, the consistency of data quality can vary due to different agency practices, pointing to the need for enhanced training and more rigorous data quality controls. GEF also launched a Geospatial platform allowing users to view project information and landscape changes over time and to overlay different datasets.

Looking ahead, there are opportunities to further strengthen the results framework. For example, whilst the streamlining of core and non-core indicators helps tell a coherent results story, there are concerns that the indicators do not (yet) adequately address drivers of environmental degradation, system-level change, and policy impact. As well, time lags in the production and dissemination of information on actual results limit the extent to which core indicators support the management of the portfolio for results. This is a common challenge for environment organisations invested in activities with long pay-back periods. The introduction of indicators for short, medium and long-term project impact could be helpful in this regard.

#### KPI 8: Evidence-based planning and programming applied

Satisfactory

3.32

This KPI focuses on the GEF-IEO evaluation function, its positioning within GEF's structures, and attention to quality, accountability and putting learning into practice.

**GEF's evaluation system reflects good practice. There are, however, opportunities to better integrate lessons from past interventions into new interventions and continue to foster a culture of learning from challenges.**

GEF demonstrates a strong commitment to evidence-based planning and programming through the independence of the GEF-IEO. A peer review of the IEO noted that it is fully independent from the GEF Secretariat in terms of mandate, reporting lines, work programme development, internal work organisation and HR and budget management and that the GEF Council provides the necessary enabling environment to safeguard this independence.

The GEF-IEO develops its own work plan independently. The discretion to decide on the evaluation programme enables it to focus on areas critical for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of GEF initiatives and to adapt its focus in response to emerging challenges and opportunities, maintaining relevance in its evaluative activities. This level of independence helps ensure that evaluations can provide meaningful insights and recommendations that support continuous improvement in GEF operations and policies.

The IEO is highly regarded for its role in servicing accountability relationships, informing decision-making and fostering learning across the funds that GEF manages. It makes an important contribution to each replenishment through a series of evaluations that feed its comprehensive evaluations. Its annual performance reports complement other forms of corporate monitoring and results reporting, providing a comprehensive overview of the results and implementation of both GEF's cumulative portfolio as well as a cohort of completed projects during the intervening period, as well as the Management Action Record. As such, these reports are in line with best practice set by MDB evaluation functions.

Rigorous quality assurance systems, including client surveys and peer reviews, ensure that international best practices are adhered to and verify that evaluations are robust and credible.

At the project level, the quality of agency-led evaluations is generally high, with new guidance in place to support the consistency and completeness of funding reporting. The GEF-IEO ensures that the evaluation policy is not only implemented globally but also adapted and integrated within country-level operations of GEF agencies. Agency stakeholders have noted that the GEF-IEO validates their evaluations to ensure they respect GEF guidelines; they are done every June and December within a six-month period – a timeframe shorter than many comparable organisations.

Whilst the evaluation function is generally strong, GEF needs to better apply lessons learned to new interventions, potentially through encouraging a programmatic approach and incentivising multi-country projects. Currently Terminal Evaluations and PIFs are often not well-suited for sharing lessons learned, and Mid-Term Reviews are not conducted systematically. A lessons learned database exists, but difficulties in researching and identifying relevant lessons hinders its effectiveness. There is considerable variation in intra-agency learning mechanisms and a need for enhanced cross-agency learning opportunities. Efforts have been underway in recent years to address these limitations and advance opportunities. Key informant interviews also indicated that GEF could do more to strengthen a culture of learning from challenges, pointing to a need to facilitate the application of even challenging lessons to improve future interventions.



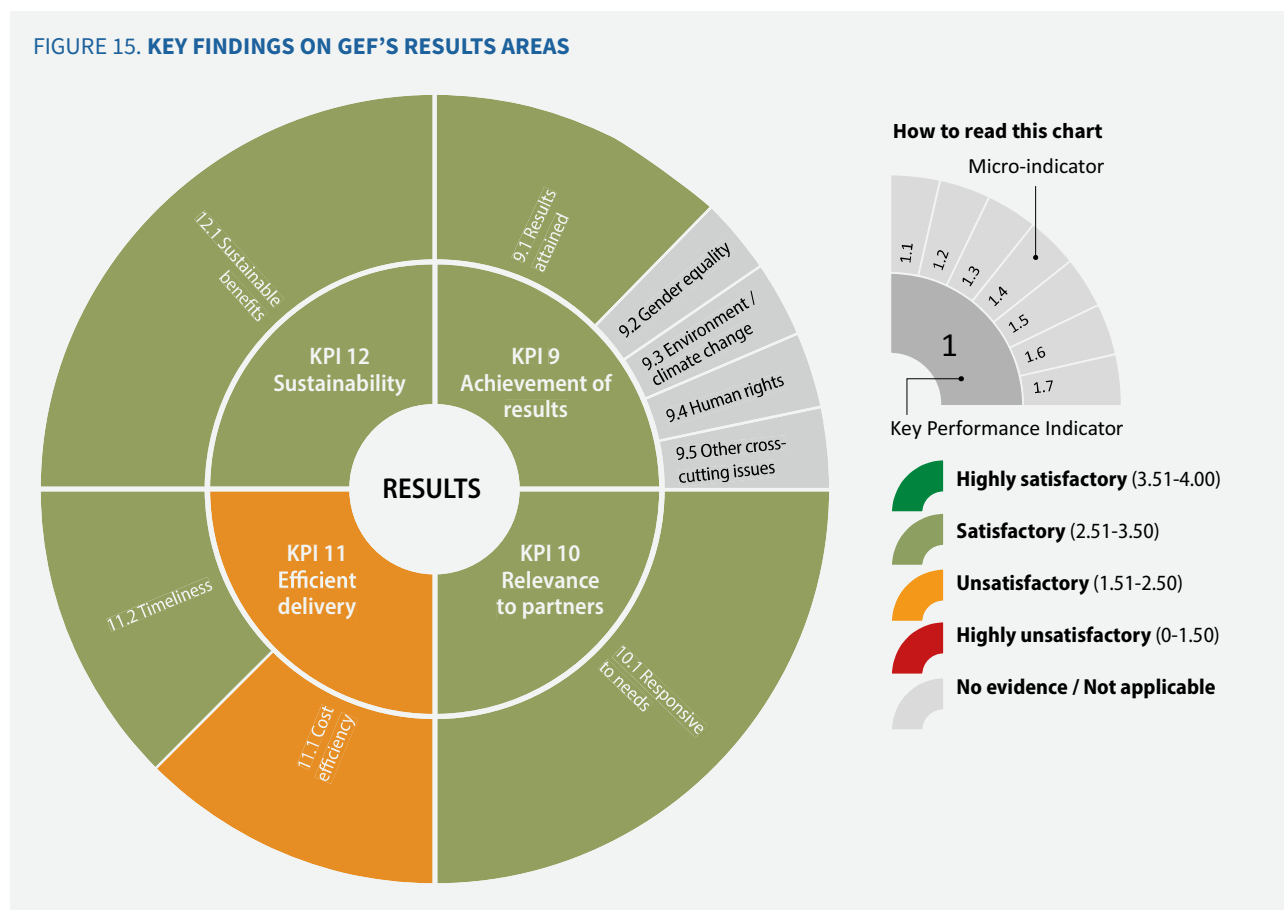
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**Seed banks help local farmers and disaster resilience**

In Nepal, GEF funding for community seed banks has supported the planting of hundreds of varieties of rice, millet, barley, and amaranth, and training on locally adapted seeds and seed maintenance. Photo: © GEF

## RESULTS

Achievement of relevant, inclusive and sustainable contributions to humanitarian and development results in an efficient manner.



### KPI 9: Development and humanitarian objectives are achieved, and results contribute to normative and cross-cutting goals

Satisfactory	3.00
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This KPI examines the nature and scale of the results GEF is achieving against the targets it sets, and its expectations of making a difference. It was assessed based on a review of relevant corporate reporting documents, the GEF-IEO Annual Performance Reports, evaluations and a deep-dive into project information for several IAPs, including the Resilience Food System, Good Growth Partnership and Sustainable Cities.

**Overall, this KPI has been rated as satisfactory, given that most activities appear to contribute to expected results. However, because of information gaps in GEF’s evaluations and corporate reporting, it was not possible to assess the extent to which GEF interventions are achieving cross-cutting priorities. Steps have been taken which will help strengthen future reporting.**

GEF has largely achieved sought outcomes.

At the corporate level, the achievement of objectives is tracked through a range of core indicators such as greenhouse gas emissions mitigated, and terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management. Targets are set



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**Fiji – Wailea settlement**

Visit to potential project site for Piloting Climate Change Adaptation to Protect Human Health (PCCAPHH) project. Wailea settlement is home to 1,500 people with extremely low sanitary conditions. Photo: © GEF

during the replenishment discussions, and the expected contributions of activities financed by GEF is tracked in the Corporate Scorecard. GEF also tracks actual performance in the Monitoring Reports, drawing on Mid Term Reviews and Terminal Evaluations (validated by IEO) for information on results achievement. To set performance into context, it benchmarks actual results against its results over a previous comparable period. GEF is reporting therefore on results in a manner aligned with peer organisations.

Whilst still too early to assess achievement of targets for GEF-6, GEF-7 and GEF-8 at this stage, corporate reporting indicates that the majority of core indicators is expected to be achieved or surpassed. For GEF-5, the OPS-7 comprehensive evaluation found that the GEF was on track to meet 7 of its 13 corporate environmental results indicators targets.

In terms of the performance of activities financed by GEF, the GEF-IEO Annual Performance Reports and evaluations indicate that around 80% of activities in the cumulative closed portfolio either meet or exceed targets, with outcomes being relevant and coherent, effective and efficient.

There are also signs of progress in meeting targets across GEF's integrated programming approach albeit with variations across programmes, and for projects supported by the LDCF and SCCF.

There is evidence of GEF building and strengthening institutional capacities at a country level as well as strengthening enabling environments, particularly through legal and policy frameworks. At the same time, limitations are observed regarding policy coherence, synergy among institutions and capacity building beyond environmental institutions.

Assessing GEF's success in promoting cross-cutting priorities is more difficult because of limitations in its monitoring and reporting systems. GEF has placed a greater emphasis on GEEW in GEF-6 and GEF-7, resulting in stronger integration of gender dimensions in the design of GEF interventions. But, as noted under KPI 6, important data gaps remain that limit GEF's ability to link gender interventions with their impacts, to identify what the GEF is doing well, and what warrants a course correction or further focused investment. Gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data are not systematically collected or tracked across the portfolio and project reporting on gender is reliant on narrative content, wherein GEF agencies are free to report on areas of interest in an open-ended format.

Information gaps also make it difficult to conclude on the extent to which GEF-supported interventions have helped improve human rights including those at risk of being "left behind". Across the GEF ecosystem, there is broad acknowledgement that strong stakeholder engagement is positively associated with achievement of outcomes,

greater sustainability, scaling potential and innovation. However, while GEF interventions are found to conduct extensive stakeholder consultation as part of project design activities, and particularly with CSOs, these consultations typically lack adequate engagement with indigenous peoples and local communities. A downward trend is noted in this engagement thus far in GEF-8. A review of projects also found overwhelmingly that project design and planned activities in GEF-supported projects do not include specific criteria to promote or ensure human rights or reaching those most at risk of being left behind. Nor are projects consistently framed by a rights-based approach or typically rooted in human rights language – with exceptions involving land tenure rights – limiting the ability to provide evidence of how GEF project results have helped promote or ensure human rights.

**KPI 10: Interventions are relevant to the needs and priorities of partner countries and beneficiaries, as the organisation works towards results in areas within its mandate**

Satisfactory

3.00

This KPI centres on the relevance of GEF’s engagement in light of the needs and priorities of its partner countries and its results focus.

**The assessment finds evidence that GEF’s programming approach and financing are relevant to the needs and priorities of partner countries across contexts and regions, including those of LDCs and SIDS.**

Evaluations reflect that GEF is supporting interventions which are significantly relevant to the needs and priorities of target partner countries and beneficiaries. Key Informant Interviews and responses to the MOPAN partner survey, though actors closer to implementation (agencies and executing entities are slightly less likely to perceive GEF support as aligning with the needs of beneficiaries compared to recipient government representatives and other stakeholders).

GEF’s modalities and funding windows are complementary and make it possible to tailor interventions to different contexts and objectives appropriately. For example, regional projects allow common themes to be addressed, support cooperation between countries whilst retaining alignments to national environmental priorities and country drivers of environmental degradation. Similarly, modalities like MSPs and FSPs are largely seen as well-tailored to national contexts, particularly in piloting innovative approaches and supporting countries during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. MSPs are found to be useful in piloting new approaches for scaling, enhancing knowledge-sharing and catalysing new partnerships, as well as for riskier projects less attractive to other donors/financiers. And the SGP is found to be important for supporting community-led initiatives aligned with country priorities. In what are often highly complex country policy and programme settings, premium importance is placed on GEF continuing to provide scope for adaptive management to ensure continued relevance in changing contexts.

**KPI 11: Results are delivered efficiently**

Unsatisfactory

2.50

This KPI looks at the extent to which GEF is meeting its own aims and standards on delivering results in a cost-efficient and timely manner.

**Whilst the assessment finds GEF giving attention to efficiency in operational documents and frameworks as well as monitoring and evaluation, the Unsatisfactory rating reflects the fact that cost-efficiency is noted as challenging for certain modalities and programmes, particularly those providing smaller amounts of resources such as (formerly) two-step MSPs, Enabling Activities and SGPs.**

As noted under KPI 4, GEF now has the means to track operational efficiency (through Tier 2 indicators) with multiple variables at an aggregate level and with scope for analysis by agency, by modality, and by country/region. Project efficiency is also considered in monitoring and evaluations as one of the criteria of “outcome” (relevance and coherence, and effectiveness). For the most part, the data show that GEF is meeting its own expectations while identifying ways to improve.

GEF operational documents and frameworks show some consideration for resource and cost-efficiency and efforts in planning, implementation and reporting, but cost-efficiency and the timeliness challenges are noted across GEF funding modalities. This is particularly true for those providing smaller levels of resources such as MSPs, enabling activities and SGPs, which are seen as requiring relatively high transaction costs when considering the level of resources provided. For example, MSPs in their current form inhibit broader participation by MDBs. While important efforts have been made to address these issues, including by increasing financing thresholds for certain modalities (e.g., MSPs) and reviewing processes with a view to simplifying and streamlining (including through the work of the working group of streamlining), at the time of the assessment, some concerns remain.

At the corporate level, there are signs that the secretariat operates efficiently and the administrative budget as a share of the replenishment envelope has been stable over GEF-7 and GEF-8. Despite unanticipated increases in World Bank administrative support services and costs associated to support new mandates such as the GBFF and BBNJ, GEF is committed to operating within the approved administrative budget for GEF-8.

Implementation progress is generally considered to be satisfactory, and this despite widespread delays and challenges resulting from COVID-19 for a majority of projects. As noted, the GEF has developed processes to enable adaptive management but they do not always enable rapid and swift pivots to adjust to changing contexts.

#### KPI 12: Results are sustainable

Satisfactory	3.00
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This KPI looks at the degree to which GEF delivers results that are sustainable in the longer term.

**Whilst there are significant constraints to assessing the actual sustainability of GEF interventions, the assessment finds that there is a moderate-high likelihood of interventions continuing to deliver benefits for an extended period after completion. This is reflected in the Satisfactory rating.**

Assessing the actual sustainability of GEF interventions is inherently challenging given the long term, return on investment inherent in environmental projects. For example, outcomes from GEF-5 activities are only now starting to be seen; their sustainability will only be concretely evident in future years.

Nonetheless, there is some evidence of actual sustainability of outcomes. The GEF-IEO analysed a sample of 62 completed projects undertaken for the OPS-7 comprehensive evaluation. They found that for at least two years after implementation completion, a vast majority of projects had sustained their results and progressed further in achieving their long-term impacts. Assessment interviews and evaluation data further indicate that current mechanisms are likely to underestimate the sustainability of outcomes, with evidence of stronger sustainability of outcomes at post-completion than at implementation closure.

Instead of a systematic assessment of actual sustainability of interventions, GEF conducts assessments of the likelihood of sustainability. This takes into consideration the risks to ongoing net project benefits considering including the achievement of long-term impacts, considering the probability and magnitude of the relevant risks.

This approach in line with that of evaluation functions in similar multilateral entities

In this regard, GEF activities are considered moderately likely to produce sustained results, with some variation across country contexts/regions and modalities. For example, the OPS-7 comprehensive evaluation reports that 63% of OPS-6 cohort projects were rated as likely to be sustained compared to 65% of OPS-7 cohort projects.

MOPAN survey results also indicated moderate to high likelihood of sustainability, reporting that 80% of respondents agreed to some degree that GEF grants are implemented such that their results can be sustained over time. Levels are slightly lower in stakeholders closest to the ground, including women's organisations (around 65%), indigenous peoples organisations (around 70%), and CSOs (around 75%, and around 25% disagreeing to some degree).

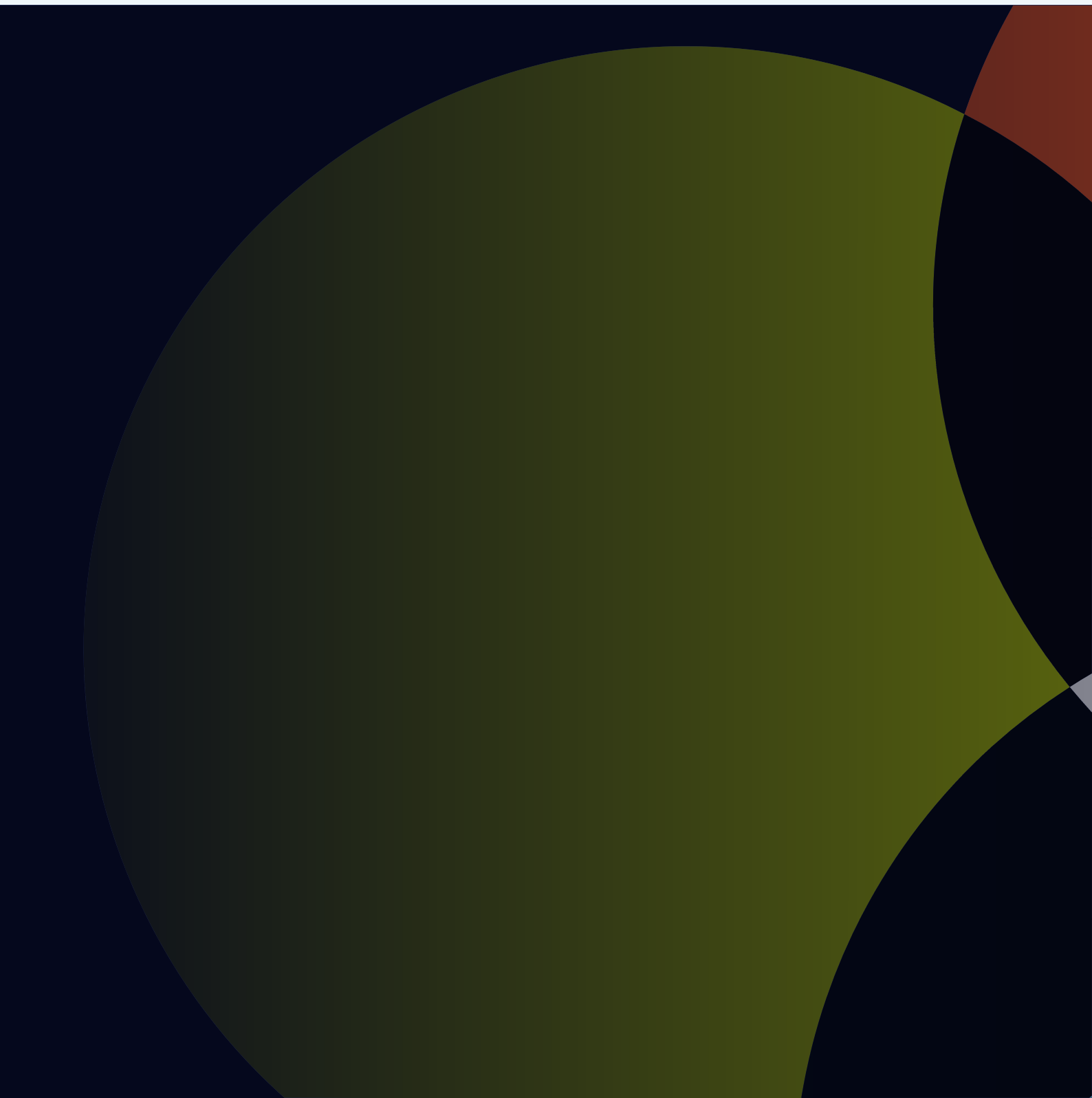
Sustainability is particularly challenging for projects in Africa, LDCs and FCV contexts (particularly where there is active conflict). Some variation is also noted in the likelihood of sustainability across modality, with challenges and risks particularly noted in the LDCF and SGP and relatively strong potential noted for projects under the SCCF.

Through interviews and country case-studies, the assessment found examples that GEF is contributing to factors underlying sustainability. These include building and strengthening institutional capacities and enabling environments particularly through legal and policy frameworks (albeit with some limitations related to policy coherence, synergies and capacity building beyond environmental institutions). Furthermore, strategies of stakeholder engagement and fostering ownership have also been adopted to ensure sustainability. In this regard, a deep dive into a diversity of countries noted this taking place in two ways: first, through environmental governance mechanisms at the community level established through a bottom-up approach entailing both the establishment of key structures to ensure sustainability and securing agreements for their financial sustainability, and second through awareness-raising at the community level, notably on the importance of adopting responsible environmental practices.



#### **Gold ore processing without mercury**

Through planet GOLD, GEF funding is helping small-scale gold miners in countries worldwide including the Philippines access mercury-free processing equipment to prevent toxic exposure and emissions.  
Photo: © GEF



# ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT





**Philippines – waste picker in General Santos**

*Project: Global Programme to Demonstrate the Viability and Removal of Barriers that Impede Adoption and Successful Implementation of Available, Non-Combustion Technologies for Destroying Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)*

Photo: © GEF

## THE ASSESSMENT APPROACH

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The approach to MOPAN assessments has evolved over time to adjust to the needs of the multilateral system. Starting in 2020, all assessments use the MOPAN 3.1 methodology<sup>1</sup>, endorsed by MOPAN members in early 2020, which draws on the international standards and reference points. This assessment used the MOPAN 3.1 methodology, as described in the MOPAN Methodology Manual, MOPAN 3.1 differs from the 3.0 approach (used in assessments between 2015 and 2020) in the following ways:

- Integration of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda into the framework.
- Two new MIs for the prevention and response to SEA/SH.
- The incorporation of elements measuring key dimensions of the UNDS Reform.
- A reshaped relationship management performance area, with updated and clearer key performance indicators (KPIs) 5 and 6, which better reflect coherence, and which focus on how partnerships operate on the ground in support of partner countries (KPI 5), and how global partnerships are managed to leverage the organisation’s resources (KPI 6).
- A refocused and streamlined results component.
- A change to the application of ratings (and their corresponding colours), based on scores defined for indicators. Compared to cycles conducted under MOPAN 3.0, the rating threshold has been raised to reflect the increasing demands for organisational performance in the multilateral system. The underlying scores and approach to scoring are unaffected.
- The extent to which risk management frameworks contributed to an MO’s preparedness to respond to the crisis, and
- How COVID-19 has been reflected in the organisation’s strategies, operations, and results targets.

## APPLYING MOPAN 3.1 TO THE GEF

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### Interpretations and adaptations to the methodology

This assessment used the MOPAN 3.1 methodology, but interprets the KPIs so that they are meaningful for the GEF’s specific mandate. Table 1 sets out the adaptations made to MIs and Elements. The left-hand column identifies the MIs as set out in the MOPAN 3.1, while the right-hand column provides notes on how the MI was interpreted for use in this assessment. Proposed additions or adjustments to the Elements are also mentioned in this column.

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1. MOPAN 3.1 Methodology Manual, 2020 Assessment Cycle, [http://www.mopanonline.org/ourwork/themopanapproach/MOPAN\\_3.1\\_Methodology.pdf](http://www.mopanonline.org/ourwork/themopanapproach/MOPAN_3.1_Methodology.pdf)

TABLE 1. INTERPRETATION/ADAPTATION OF MIS AND RELATED ELEMENTS

Micro-Indicator	Interpretation/Adaptation
1.1. Strategic plan and intended results based on a clear long- term vision and analysis of comparative advantage in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda	A strategy document is produced to inform each four-year replenishment cycle. The GEF-8 Strategic Positioning Framework (29 March 2022) is the most current. The GEF Strategy 2020 (2014) stands as the most recent strategic document with a longer-term planning perspective. Written toward the close of GEF-5, the report serves as a valuable historical reference on operating context, and on strategic analysis and trajectory.
1.2. Organisational architecture congruent with a clear long-term vision and associated operating model	<p>The architecture is under particular scrutiny in this assessment period.</p> <p>All Elements are relevant for the assessment. Two additional Elements are proposed: a) to explore the division of responsibilities between the World Bank and the GEF (a multi-faceted relationship wherein the World Bank is a founding partner and simultaneously serves as the GEF Trustee, an Implementing Partner, and the host institution for the GEF); b) to examine questions within the GEF and in the wider multilateral arena regarding the inclusiveness of governing bodies. Proposed additional elements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A shared understanding of roles and accountabilities underpins the relationship between the organisation and its parent entity.</li> <li>● Governance arrangements for the organisation are inclusive, responsive and aligned to long-term vision.</li> </ul>
2.1. 2.3., 2.4. Corporate/sectoral and country strategies respond to and/or reflect the intended results of normative frameworks for cross-cutting issues notably gender equality and women’s empowerment, and human rights including the protection of vulnerable people (those at risk of being “left behind”) among other cross cutting issues. [2.1 focus on Gender Equality; 2.3 focus on rights/risk-based protection vis vulnerable groups including indigenous peoples and local communities; 2.4 focus on inclusion/ stakeholder engagement vis GEF governance and operations and on the development of a corporate-wide risk appetite framework to support innovation.]	<p>The GEF does not have specific “country strategies”. GEF requires that the GEF partner agency demonstrate compliance with GEF policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Policy on Gender Equality (SD/PL/02)</li> <li>● Updated Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF/C.55/07/Rev.01)</li> <li>● Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (SD/PL/01)</li> </ul> <p>At the time of writing the GEF is scanning global best practices on social inclusion to identify topic areas that may not be adequately covered under the above- mentioned policies. Topic areas presently under scrutiny are: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identify (SOGI), Disability Inclusion, Child Protection, and Youth as Effective Change-Makers. An important GEF reference in this regard is the June 2023, Gap Analysis of GEF Policies and Key Social Inclusion Issues GEF/C.64/Inf.12</p> <p><i>Note: 2.2. on strategies related to environmental sustainability and climate change have been removed from the framework for this assessment on account of the centrality of this strategy to the GEF mandate.</i></p> <p>Elements: no change</p>
3.1 Organisational structures and staffing ensure that human and financial resources are constantly aligned and adjusted to key functions	<p>A substantial restructuring has been contemplated and is underway as GEF-8 enters its second year. In understanding the organisational changes at the GEF Secretariat and its antecedents, the assessment will be sensitive to the multi-faceted relationship the GEF has with the World Bank.</p> <p>Elements: no change</p>
3.2. Resource mobilisation efforts consistent with the core mandate and strategic priorities	<p>References to “country plans” in relation to co-financing will be removed from the Element. Since inception, GEF grants have leveraged co-financing from Implementing Agencies and Countries. GEF’s Updated Co-financing Policy (GEF/C.54/10/Rev.01) sets out a “level of ambition” for the portfolio with differentiation by category of country.</p>
3.3. Resource reallocation/ programming decisions responsive to need can be made at a decentralised level	<p>Recipient countries have flexibility to programme their STAR allocations (Biodiversity, Climate Change, Land Degradation focal areas). Country driven approaches are also used across the other GEF focal areas.</p> <p>Elements: no change</p>

TABLE 1. INTERPRETATION/ADAPTATION OF MIS AND RELATED ELEMENTS *continued*

Micro-Indicator	Interpretation/Adaptation
3.4. Human Resource systems and policies performance-based and geared to the achievement of results	<p>World Bank Human Resource policies apply to the GEF. The World Bank uses a Results Based Management approach as summarised in the World Bank Global Expert Team (GET) Note Results Based Management Systems - 63747, March 2011.</p> <p>Elements: no change</p>
4.3. Principles of results-based budgeting applied	<p>Results Based Budgeting is not applied at the program/project level in the GEF model, as responsibility for financial management is delegated to the Partner agency. The STAR allocation model as updated for GEF-8 features the Country Performance Index (CPI) as a means by which to consider, “actual performance of GEF projects, commitment to put in place environmental policy and institutional frameworks, and governance and financial management.” (GEF/C62/04). This index informs a country score for the replenishment period which is then used to determine a country share (allocation). The CPI is calculated on the basis of the World Bank’s Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) and from information gleaned from the GEF portfolio data bases.</p> <p>The Elements will be retained. The assessment will take note of the incompatibility of this MOPAN expectation with the delegated authority arrangement employed in the GEF business model and will attempt to show the extent to which ‘value for money’ assurances are factored into the budgeting process.</p>
4.4. External audit or other external reviews certifies the meeting of international standards at all levels, including with respect to internal audit	<p>The GEF Instrument (Annex B.) sets out Trustee’s fiduciary responsibilities which include coordinating external audits of the GEF Trust Fund.</p> <p>The Policy on Minimum Fiduciary Standards (GA/PL/02), December 19, 2019 sets out minimum fiduciary standards for all GEF Partner Agencies. The policy provides for the monitoring of GEF partner agency compliance. Provisions exist for addressing non-compliance.</p> <p>Elements: no change.</p>
4.7. and 4.8. Prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEA and SH)	<p>See discussion on the coverage of SEA and SH in the section following this table.</p> <p>Elements: no change.</p>
5.1. Interventions/strategies aligned with needs of beneficiaries and regional/country priorities and intended national/regional results	<p>The GEF does not develop specific “country or regional strategies” per se. Rather it supports countries to develop their own program/project portfolios. It does develop focal area strategies and programming directions and it engages country stakeholders in dialogues and other support activities. An RFP process is used with NGIs.</p> <p>The Elements will be adjusted to focus on the country programming that is supported by GEF. The GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy Implementation Arrangements (GEF/C.62/Inf.11) sets out GEF’s current offering.</p>
5.2.-5.7. Operational planning and intervention design tools support relevance and agility within partnerships	<p>The GEF Secretariat does not design interventions, but provides funding on a request basis to support country-driven interventions (see above). Country governments nominate a GEF agency that engages in design activities through the Project Identification Form (PIF) and CEO endorsement stage. Submissions are subject to screening/ review, which includes attention to technical aspects, to GEF policy requirements, and budgetary considerations before they are presented to Council for approval. This iterative process and associated guidance/support form the basis for the assessment. The development of a GEF risk appetite framework promises to add an additional means by which to inform intervention design.</p> <p>Elements: no change.</p>

TABLE 1. INTERPRETATION/ADAPTATION OF MIS AND RELATED ELEMENTS *continued*

Micro-Indicator	Interpretation/Adaptation
6.2. Partnerships are based on an explicit statement of comparative or collaborative advantage e.g., technical knowledge, convening power/partnerships, policy dialogue/advocacy	Comparative advantages, originally assessed as part of partner agency accreditation, is again made explicit in relation to specific programs/ projects at the PIF stage. Distinguishing factors include: institutional mandate in relation to global environmental concerns, actual capacity for managing GEF projects, and the extent of field presence and contact networks.  Elements: no change.
6.3. Demonstrated commitment to furthering development partnerships for countries (e.g., support for South-South collaboration, triangular arrangements, and use of country systems)	This is embodied and GEF Country Support Programme the newly minted Country Engagement Strategy.  Elements: no change.
6.4. Strategies or designs identify synergies with development partners, to encourage leverage/catalytic use of resources and avoid fragmentation in relation to 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda implementation	Considerable referencing to this document, “Towards a Long-Term Vision on Complementarity GEF and GCF Collaboration: A joint paper between the secretariats of GEF and GCF”, 3 May 2021  Less structured interactions underway with other climate fund entities (i.e., the AF and CIFs), though this appears to be changing as evidenced by joint announcements made at COP 26 and COP 28 signalling concrete movement toward complementarity and coherence.  Elements: no change.
6.6. Key information (analysis, budgeting, management, results etc.) shared with strategic/implementation partners on an ongoing basis	GEF has been active in the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) since 2013. Information is both aggregated and disaggregated and there are many different avenues through which information is shared with partners. Level of aggregation/disaggregation varies according to the needs.  Elements: no change.
6.7. Clear standards and procedures for accountability to beneficiaries implemented	As a funding mechanism linked to accredited delivery partners, the GEF has limited direct engagement with beneficiaries. However, the conflict resolution process is set out in the GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards which, by extension, GEF Agencies are required to emulate. The assessment will examine standards and procedures as implemented by the GEF and its Partner Agencies.  Elements: no change.
6.9. Use of knowledge base to support policy dialogue and/or advocacy	Body of GEF supported knowledge products/processes and, most recently, development of the newly minted Knowledge Management Strategy, approved by Council in October 2023  Elements: no change.
7.1. Leadership ensures application of an organisation-wide RBM approach	Foundational document: GEF Policy on Monitoring (GEF/C.56/03/Rev.1), June 12, 2019.  Elements: no change.
7.2. Corporate strategies, including country strategies, based on a sound RBM focus and logic	The GEF does not develop specific “country strategies” per se. Rather it supports countries to develop their own country programming. It does develop focal area strategies and programming directions and it has created a corporate results framework and scorecard system build around core indicators.  Elements: no change.
8.1.-8.7. A corporate independent evaluation function exists	In the GEF, this function is provided by the GEF-IEO under the GEF Evaluation Policy (GEF/ME/C.56/02/Rev.01).  Elements: no change.
8.4., 9.1.-9.5., and 10.1. on intervention design	In the GEF partnership model, results evidence of GEF (co-financed) interventions are obtained by GEF Partner Agencies as the implementors and are reported upwards to the GEF through Partner Agency reports (individual program/project reporting also occurs).  Elements: no change.

## Lines of Evidence

The assessment team collected and reviewed a significant body of evidence as a basis for the assessment: a document review, stakeholder interviews, an online survey, and case studies.

**Document review:** This comprised publicly available documents as well as guidelines and policies that are “current and in force” limited to those in final form (no draft versions), recognised by management, and available in English. Over 300 documents identified through a scan of the GEF website and a review of the document list in the 2019 MOPAN assessment of GEF were reviewed. These included 13 evaluations and evaluation syntheses. Documents were also identified through discussions at the GEF Secretariat during the inception mission, including key policies, strategies, and associated guidelines (as included in Table 2), financial and budget information, progress reports, evaluations, management responses to evaluations, council meeting reports and summaries, and other organisation-, governance-, and business process-related documents.

TABLE 2. POLICIES AND GUIDELINES REVIEWED

Policies	Guidelines
Policy on Public Involvement in GEF Projects (1996, updated 2012):	
The World Bank Group Policy on Eradicating Harassment Guidelines for Implementation (1997)	
The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2010 (2010)	
Policy on Gender Mainstreaming (2011)	
GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards (2011)	
GEF Practices on Disclosure of Information (2011)	
Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (2017)	Guidelines on the Implementation of the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (2018)
Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Council Members, Alternates, and Advisers (2017)	
Policy on Gender Equality (2017)	Guidelines on Gender Equality (2018)
Project Cancellation (2018)	
Policy on Access to Information (2018)	
Project and Programme Cycle Policy (2018)	Guidelines on the Project and Programme Cycle Policy (2020 Update)
Policy on Co-Financing (2018)	
Policy & Guidelines on System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) (2018)	Policy & Guidelines on System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) (2018)
Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (2018, updated 2019)	Guidelines on GEF’s Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (2019)
Policy on Monitoring (2019)	
Policy on Minimum Fiduciary Standards (2019)	
Updated Policy on Minimum Fiduciary Standards (2019)	
The GEF Evaluation Policy (2019)	
	Guidelines on the Implementation of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework (2022)



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## China

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Demonstration of alternatives to Chlordane and Mirex in termite control.

Termite traps are used to contain the insects and, if they are detected, only then will chemicals be used to eradicate them.

Photo: © GEF

**Stakeholder interviews** were conducted during the inception and data collection periods of the assessment. Interviews were scheduled in person or virtually and were either in an individual or group format. In total, 98 stakeholders were consulted directly for this assessment. Stakeholders included members of the CSO Network, GEF agencies, the GEF Secretariat, GEF trustees, financing partners, GEF-IEO, government agencies, the indigenous peoples advisory group, project executing entities, and recipient government representatives.

**An online survey:** An online survey was administered to GEF partners from February-May 2024 to which a total of 173 partners responded. The survey targeted GEF Council members, GEF financing partners, GEF Secretariat staff, GEF agencies; executing entities; country governments' focal points, CSO Network members and civil society non-members; women's organisations, indigenous peoples organisations (IPAG members, broader indigenous peoples' organisations engaging with the GEF); private sector organisations, and the GEF STAP.

**Case studies:** Three case studies were completed for this assessment:

- Major GEF funding recipients: this case study examined the GEF's work in Indonesia and Brazil, two major recipients of GEF funding that are home to biodiversity hotspots.
- Five countries were selected for this case study – Cameroon, Panama, Senegal, Solomon Islands, and Uzbekistan – representing different regions and country classifications and with projects that draw on a diverse set of trust funds and engage a mix of GEF partner agencies.
- Two IPs were selected in this case study for their longevity, the diversity of countries involved, and the size of the programme investment: Sustainable Cities and Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR). The case studies draw out evaluative perspectives on the GEF as it addresses its convention-related mandates across diverse country landscapes through the distinct trust funds under its management. Data for the case studies was collected during in-person field missions as well as virtually.

Discussions were also held with the institutional leads of the GEF assessment as part of the analytical process. These served to gather insights on current priorities for the organisation from the perspective of MOPAN member countries. For general information about the sequence and details related to these evidence lines, the overall analysis, and scoring and rating process as applied to the GEF see the MOPAN 3.1 methodology.

## METHODOLOGY FOR SCORING AND RATING

The approach to scoring and rating under MOPAN 3.1 is described in the 2020 Methodology Manual<sup>2</sup>, which can be found MOPAN’s website. Each of the 12 KPIs contains several micro-indicators (MIs), which vary in number. The KPI rating is calculated by taking the average of the ratings of its constituent MIs, which are themselves based on Element analysis.

### Scoring of KPIs 1-8









The scoring of KPIs 1-8 is based on an aggregated scoring the MIs. Each MI contains a variable number of elements, that represent international good practice. Taking the average of the constituent scores per element, a score is then calculated per MI. The same logic is pursued at aggregation to the KPI level to ensure a consistent approach.

### Scoring of KPIs 9-12

The scoring of KPIs 9-12 is based upon a meta-analysis of evaluations and performance information, rated at the MI level and aggregated to the KPI level. For KPI 9, results against the mandate and contribution to cross-cutting results are given equal weight. KPIs 9-12 assess results achieved as assessed in evaluations and annual performance reporting from the organisations.

### Rating scales

Whenever scores are aggregated, rating scales are used to translate scores into ratings that summarise the assessment across KPIs and MIs. The rating scale used under MOPAN 3.1 is shown below.

 <b>Highly satisfactory</b> (3.51-4.00)	 <b>High evidence confidence</b>
 <b>Satisfactory</b> (2.51-3.50)	 <b>Medium evidence confidence</b>
 <b>Unsatisfactory</b> (1.51-2.50)	 <b>Low evidence confidence</b>
 <b>Highly unsatisfactory</b> (0.00-1.50)	
 <b>No evidence / Not applicable</b>	

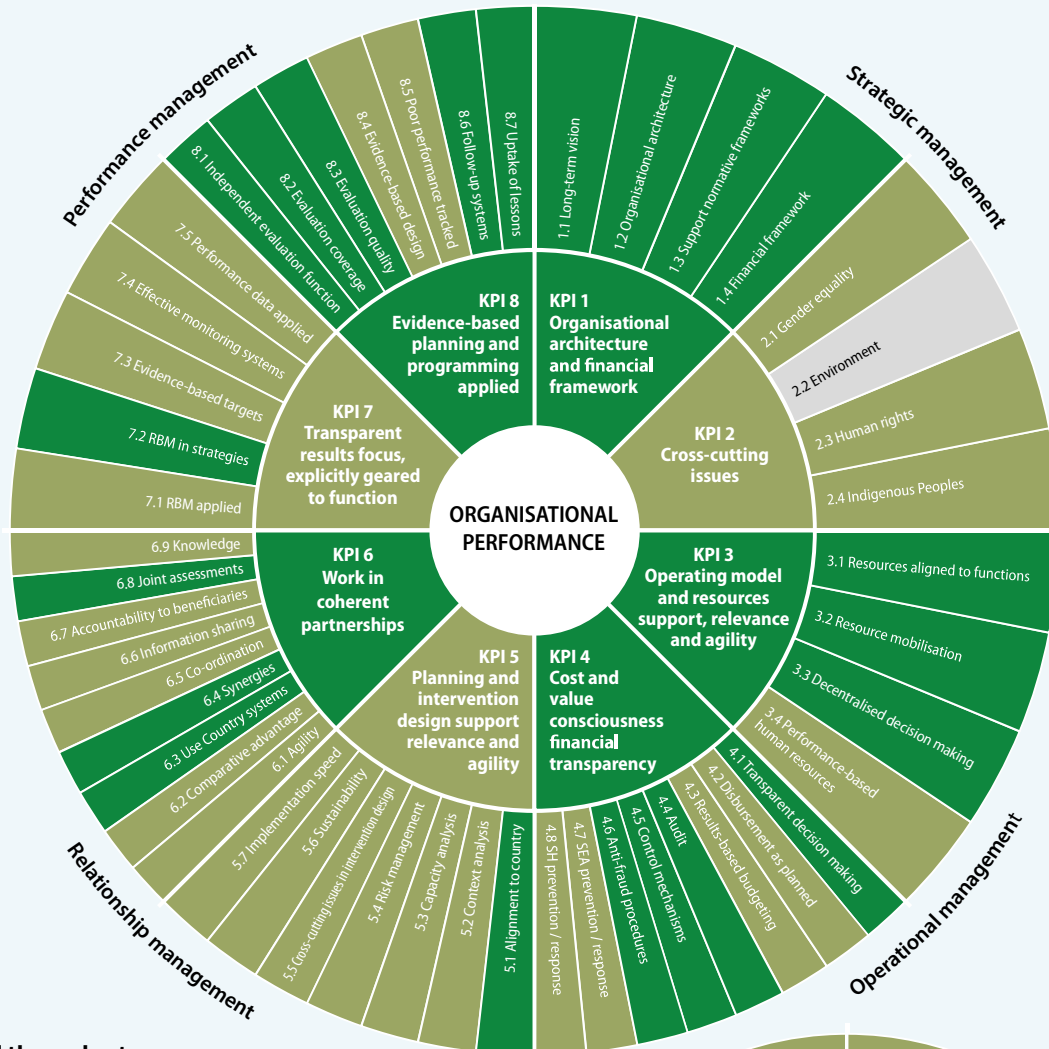
A score of “N/E” means “no evidence” and indicates that the assessment team could not find any evidence but was not confident of whether or not there was evidence to be found. The team assumes that “no evidence” does not necessarily mean that the element is not present (which would result in a zero score). Elements rated N/E are excluded from any calculation of the average. A significant number of N/E scores in a report indicates an Assessment limitation (see the Limitations section at the beginning of the report). A note indicating “N/A” means that an element is considered to be “not applicable”. This usually owes to the organisation’s specific nature.

### Changes to MOPAN’s rating system

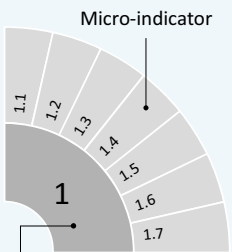
Compared to the pre-2019 rating scale, rating thresholds were raised to reflect the increasing demands of organisational performance in the multilateral system.

2. MOPAN 3.1 Methodology Manual, 2020 Assessment Cycle, <https://www.mopan.org/content/dam/mopan/en/publications/our-work/methods/mopan-3-1-methodology.pdf>

FIGURE 16: GEF’S PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY FOR 2025 ASSESSMENT WITH APPLICATION OF MOPAN 3.0 RATING SCALE

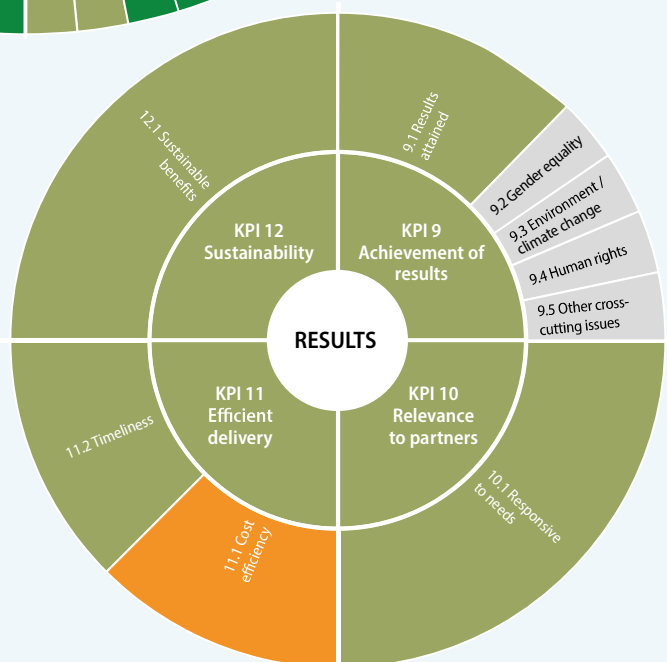


**How to read these charts**



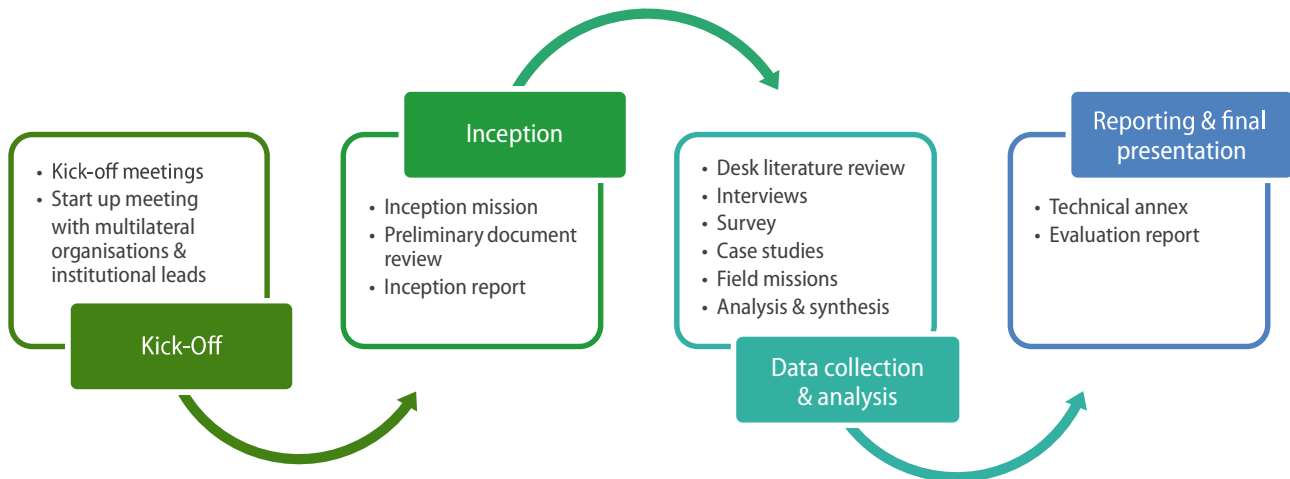
Key Performance Indicator

- **Highly satisfactory** (3.01-4.00)
- **Satisfactory** (2.01-3.00)
- **Unsatisfactory** (1.01-2.00)
- **Highly unsatisfactory** (0-1.00)
- **No evidence / Not applicable**



## ASSESSMENT PROCESS

FIGURE 17: GEF'S ASSESSMENT PROCESS



## LIMITATIONS

Length of assessment period: Planning and the inception mission took place in autumn 2023, with the inception finalised in February 2024. Data collection was promptly initiated that informed analysis, Annex A preparation and report writing mostly undertaken in 2024, with fact-check and finalisation by March 2025. Since the launch of the GEF MOPAN Assessment, the global environment has been changing, in some ways quite significantly. Over time, the relevance of this analysis with specific reference to the changing global context must be considered when reading the report and engaging with its findings and future directions.



**Mexico – The journey of the GEF banner**

PCB project team with the GEF banner

Project:  
*Environmentally Sound Management and Destruction of PCBs*

Photo: © GEF

**Assessment scope and methodological limitations:** The MOPAN assessment approach is not meant to compare organisations. It is structured around a predefined framework with a set of common indicators and micro-indicators that are used to assess organisations individually. Data collection methods were not designed to conduct a comparative analysis, which would have likely required a benchmarking analysis. However, on certain indicators (e.g. risk management, etc.) the assessment draws on practices in other vertical funds to identify opportunities to support learning.

**Innovation and standard MOPAN Methodology:** In a limited number of cases, assessment framework indicators were interpreted more broadly to include certain lines of inquiry identified during the inception phase. Assessment framework adaptations and interpretation are set out the inception report.

**Challenge of accessing and consulting with national stakeholders:** Evidence collection included country case studies, including two field studies. In coordination with the GEF Secretariat, the MOPAN assessment team had originally selected a sample of six countries for virtual consultation (Senegal, Cameroon, Antigua and Barbuda, Ecuador, Kazakhstan, and Brazil) but three countries were unresponsive (Antigua and Barbuda, Ecuador, and Kazakhstan). The assessment team identified alternatives so as to maintain geographic and thematic coverage, which led to the inclusion of Panama and Uzbekistan in the sample countries. However, the potential replacements were also non-responsive, which resulted in virtual consultations covering five rather than six countries.

**Generalisability:** Programmatic insights on integrated programming are substantively informed by a deep dive into the Food Systems and Sustainable Cities IPs. This may limit the generalisability of some of the statements to other IPs not directly included in this deep dive to the same extent.

**Changes underway in real time:** Over the MOPAN Assessment period, several planned changes were underway in the GEF Secretariat. Notable shifts related to planned increases in staffing, as well as the creation of a division on integration and knowledge management. The influence of these changes on topics covered through the various elements, MIs, and KPIs, could therefore not be assessed.

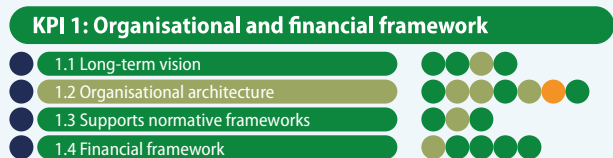


#### Safe disposal of PCBs for better health

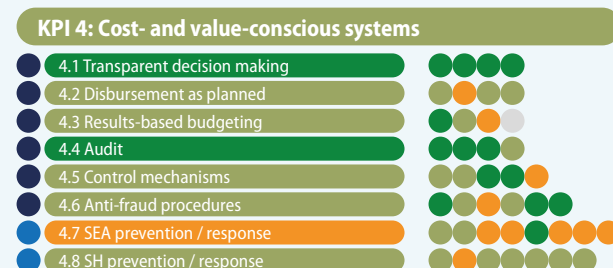
Countries and waste management companies are working with GEF support to safely dispose of toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) through the decontamination of electrical transformers; dichlorination of oils; and treatment of complex waste.  
Photo: © GEF

ANNEX – FIGURE 18: GEF PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW CURRENT RATING

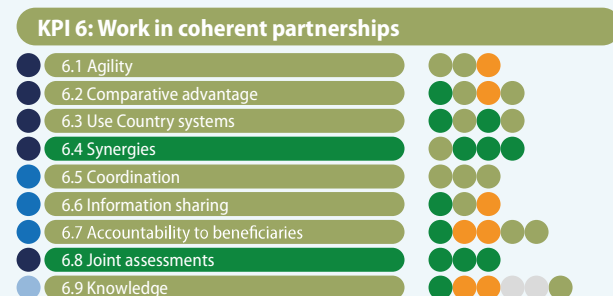
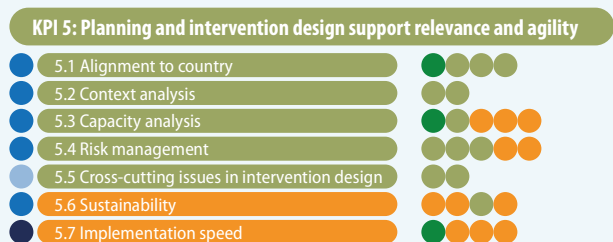
Strategic management



Operational management



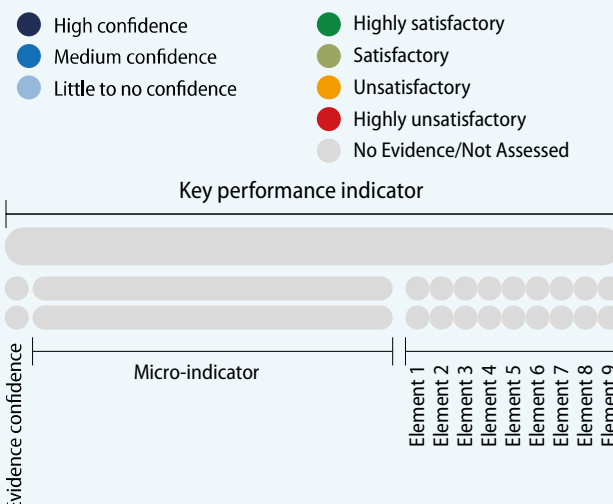
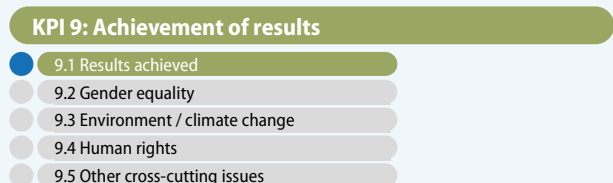
Relationship management



Performance management



Results







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