GEF/LDCF.SCCF.36/E/Inf.01
May 21, 2024

36th LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting
June 19-20, 2024
Washington, DC

LDCF/SCCF ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT 2024

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS

AER	Annual Evaluation Report
CBA	Community-Based Approaches
CIEWS	Climate Information and Early Warning Systems
EbA	Ecosystem-based Adaptation
EBWM	Ecosystem-based water management
EWS	Early Warning Systems
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF IEO	Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office
GEF TF	Global Environment Facility Trust Fund
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LDC	Least Developed Country
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
MAR	Management Action Record
MTF	multitrust fund
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SLWM	Sustainable Land and Water Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

The nominal GEF replenishment periods are as follows:

Pilot phase: 1991–94	GEF-5: 2010–14
GEF-1: 1995–98	GEF-6: 2014–18
GEF-2: 1999–2002	GEF-7: 2018–22
GEF-3: 2002–06	GEF-8: 2022–26
GEF-4: 2006–10	

QUICK SCAN

1. The Least Developed Countries Fund/Special Climate Change Fund (LDCF/SCCF) Annual Evaluation Report (AER) 2024, prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office (GEF) of the Global Environment Facility (IEO), reports on the Funds through synthesis of evaluative evidence, findings, conclusions, and recommendations from GEF Trust Fund (TF) evaluations conducted during GEF-8. These GEF TF evaluations, which also include LDCF/SCCF projects, cover projects spanning the GEF-3 to GEF-7 replenishment periods.

2. The GEF IEO reviewed and presents a synthesis of LDCF and SCCF relevant evidence from five recent GEF IEO evaluations: (1) Evaluation of the GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security, (2) Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries, (3) Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF, (4) Learning from Challenges in GEF Projects, and (5) Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems. The report also presents their respective Management Responses from the GEF Secretariat.

3. The synthesis of evidence aligns with the themes and levers of transformation as formulated in the GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF for the GEF-8 Period of July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2026. Themes covered are (1) Agriculture, Food Security, and Health, (2) Water, (3) Nature-Based Solutions, and (4) Climate Information and Early Warning Systems. Levers of transformation covered by this AER are (1) Policy Coherence and Mainstreaming of Climate Adaptation, (2) Strengthened Governance for Adaptation, and (3) Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration.

4. The synthesis also touches upon priorities cutting across the LDCF and SCCF, including the strengthening of innovation and private sector engagement. Other cross-cutting considerations and priorities taken into account are (1) Gender Equality, (2) Youth Empowerment, (3) Resilience to Climate and Non-Climate Related Shocks and Stresses, (4) Institutional Capacity Development for Adaptation-Focused Work, and (5) Climate Adaptation Awareness Raising. The synthesis of evidence focuses on LDCF, SCCF, multitrust fund projects (MTF), and GEF TF projects, drawing examples from 22 GEF TF projects and 22 LDCF, SCCF, and MTF projects. Regarding GEF TF projects, the emphasis lies not on their contributions to global environmental benefits, but rather on adaptation co-benefits and extracting valuable insights in alignment with adaptation themes, transformational levers, and cross-cutting considerations and priorities that provide lessons for LDCF and SCCF projects.

5. From GEF-3 to GEF-7, the LDCF and SCCF financially supported a total of 426 projects. This includes 305 LDCF projects, 73 SCCF projects, and 48 MTF projects. These 426 projects represent a collective investment of $2 billion, with 57 percent of the projects completed and the remaining 43 percent currently under implementation. The portfolio covered by the five recent GEF IEO evaluations, reviewed for this report, comprises a total of 759 projects of which 118 projects are funded by the LDCF, 31 by the SCCF, and are 21 MTF projects. Of the MTF

projects, 18 are financed by the LDCF and the GEF TF, and 3 projects are financed by the SCCF and the GEF TF.

6. The LDCF/SCCF AER 2024 addresses four primary themes: Agriculture, Food Security, and Health; Water; Nature-Based Solutions (NbS); and Climate Information and Early Warning Systems (CIEWS). **Agriculture, Food Security, and Health:** The report highlights the disruptive impact of climate change on food security, emphasizing the need for adaptive agricultural practices. Projects funded focus on enhancing agricultural resilience through sustainable practices like climate-smart agriculture, organic farming, and improved water management. These initiatives aim to increase crop yields, improve food security, and support rural livelihoods while promoting environmental sustainability and public health. **Water:** Water security is a critical focus, with projects aiming to improve water access, quality, and management through integrated water resource management strategies. Efforts in water security include infrastructure improvements, conservation measures, and community-based water governance. The projects reviewed address the challenges of water scarcity, flooding, and water quality issues exacerbated by climate change, and highlight the importance of ecosystem-based water management approaches. **NbS** projects promote the sustainable management and restoration of ecosystems to address climate change and other societal challenges. These projects focus on sustainable land and water management practices, such as agroforestry and ecological intensification, which enhance resilience, support biodiversity, and provide socioeconomic benefits, particularly in vulnerable regions like the Sahel. **CIEWS** are essential for climate adaptation, providing critical data for risk assessment and disaster preparedness. The LDCF/SCCF portfolio supports the development of CIEWS infrastructure and institutional capacity, integrating these systems into broader disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies. Effective CIEWS interventions involve community engagement, policy framework strengthening, and addressing the “last mile” challenge to ensure that early warnings reach and are actionable by vulnerable communities.

7. The Levers of Transformation discussed in this AER are Policy Coherence and Mainstreaming of Climate Adaptation, Strengthened Governance for Adaptation, and Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration. **Policy Coherence and Mainstreaming of Climate Adaptation:** Policy coherence involves promoting consistent policy actions across government departments to achieve agreed objectives. It enhances the alignment between economic, social, and environmental policies, thereby achieving ambitious environmental goals more efficiently. Mainstreaming climate adaptation incorporates climate change considerations into decision-making processes across sectors and governance levels. However, challenges such as policy misalignment, unclear responsibilities, and institutional silos hinder effective implementation. **Strengthened governance for adaptation** involves vertical and horizontal integration to foster collaboration among decision-makers. It emphasizes natural resource governance, sustainability, and ownership to manage environmental risks and build resilience to climate change. Successful projects involve community engagement, capacity building, and

synergistic partnerships. Adaptive management is crucial for flexible and responsive approaches to address climate change impacts. **Knowledge exchange and collaboration** drives innovation, technology transfer, and scaling-up of adaptation solutions. It advances collaboration among stakeholders and facilitates South-South cooperation for sharing lessons and research findings. Innovative approaches like people-centered early warning systems, and micro-credit and climate index micro-insurance—leveraging accurate climate data to provide financial services to vulnerable households and farmers—have shown potential. However, delivering actionable climate information to local communities remains challenging, especially in ensuring long-term sustainability due to funding constraints.

8. The AER has identified several cross-cutting priorities and considerations to address climate change adaptation effectively. **Strengthening Innovation:** Innovative approaches in adaptation are crucial, yet underutilized, with—according to the CIEWS evaluation (GEF IEO 2024d)—only 22 percent of projects mentioning them and 5 percent implementing them successfully. Efforts should focus on leveraging novel technologies and collaborations, especially at the water-climate nexus. According to the water security evaluation (GEF IEO 2023), **private sector engagement** in water security projects is limited, with only 18 percent of completed projects having engaged with the private sector. Despite the perception of water as a public good, opportunities exist for the private sector to enhance resilience and participate in water management initiatives. **Gender Equality:** Empowering women in decision-making and project activities is crucial but faces challenges due to cultural norms and gender discrimination. Despite progress, women often encounter barriers to participation and access to benefits. Successful projects have demonstrated positive impacts, such as income generation, job creation, and access to resources through women's involvement in land restoration, and by ensuring women's representation in management and decision-making committees. Ongoing initiatives are increasingly addressing gender disparities, for example, benefiting women with improved water access, food security, and socioeconomic opportunities**. Youth Empowerment:** Youth engagement remains limited, with—according to the water security evaluation—only 11 percent of projects involving youth. However, successful initiatives have improved water security and reduced outmigration pressures, demonstrating the potential benefits of involving youth in adaptation projects. **Resilience to Climate and Non-Climate Related Shocks:** Projects focus on climate-resilient practices, disaster risk management, and income-generating activities to improve food security, market access, and livelihoods. **Institutional Capacity Development:** Building institutional capacity for adaptation is critical for sustainability. Multistakeholder governance platforms show potential but require ongoing support to ensure their effectiveness post-project. **Climate Adaptation Awareness Raising:** Raising awareness of water security issues has successfully reshaped government priorities in several regions. However, there is a need to transition from awareness to action, ensuring communities have the tools and support for effective disaster response and climate adaptation.

9. The report further provides an overview of key takeaways on critical topics including water security and access in agriculture, integrated water management, CIEWS, policy alignment challenges, governance in climate adaptation, private sector engagement, gender inclusion and empowerment, resilience enhancing initiatives, and institutional capacity building.

10. The AER ends with a summary of the Management Action Record (MAR). Following the 2019 Professional Peer Review of the GEF IEO (GEF IEO 2020), the GEF revised its approach to the Management Action Record (MAR). Now, GEF management responds to each IEO evaluation recommendation with an action plan, which the GEF Council comments on and endorses. The GEF IEO tracks the progress of these plans. The GEF Council started endorsing these action plans in June 2021, and the 2024 MAR is the second prepared under this revised approach.

11. The MAR 2024 tracks progress in implementation of management's action plans in response to recommendations from the 2020 LDCF Program Evaluation and the 2021 SCCF Program Evaluation.

12. **LDCF Program Evaluation**

- **Recommendation**: Enhance the sustainability of outcomes by emphasizing project and contextual factors during design and implementation.
- **Response**: The GEF Secretariat agreed and continued actions to improve project design and implementation. Progress included sub-regional adaptation workshops and strategic collaborations with financial institutions.
- **Progress Rating**: Substantial. GEF-8 efforts, including dedicated programs, capacity-building workshops, and increased funding from MDBs, have led to improved sustainability of outcomes.

13. **SCCF Program Evaluation**

- **Recommendation**: Revitalize the SCCF by focusing on windows SCCF-A and SCCF-B, and by enhancing the fund's visibility and communication.
- **Response**: Partially agreed. The GEF Secretariat has aligned SCCF-A and SCCF-B with the recommendations and undertaken steps to enhance the fund's visibility. However, it disagreed with the recommendation to remove windows SCCF-C and SCCF-D without UNFCCC COP decisions.
- **Progress Rating**: High. Significant steps include clearer articulation of SCCF's niche, regional workshops for capacity building, and enhanced donor outreach. The SCCF-A window focused on non-LDC SIDS and SCCF-B on technology transfer and innovation. This recommendation will be graduated.

14. Overall, the GEF Secretariat has made substantial progress in implementing both recommendations, enhancing project sustainability, and revitalizing the SCCF, with strong ongoing efforts to meet climate finance commitments.

BACKGROUND

1. The Least Developed Countries Fund/Special Climate Change Fund (LDCF/SCCF) Annual Evaluation Reports (AERs), prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), during fiscal year (FY) 2024–FY 2027[1] are following the APR's biennial schedule. The AERs will report on the performance of the LDCF and SCCF through assessment of completed projects using information from terminal evaluations in FY 2025 and FY 2027. Aside from the assessment of terminal evaluations of LDCF and SCCF projects, the LDCF and SCCF are also covered to some degree through thematic evaluations conducted by the GEF IEO. Consequently, the FY 2024 and FY 2026 AERs will report on the Funds through the synthesis of evaluative evidence, findings, conclusions, and recommendations from GEF Trust Fund (TF) evaluations conducted during GEF-8 that also cover LDCF/SCCF projects. All AERs will also present the GEF Management Action Record (MAR) to track the implementation of LDCF/SCCF Council-approved action plans.

METHODOLOGY

2. For the LDCF/SCCF AER 2024, the GEF IEO reviewed and presents a synthesis of LDCF and SCCF–relevant evidence from five recent GEF IEO evaluations and their respective Management Responses from the GEF Secretariat, as presented in table 1. These GEF TF evaluations, which also include LDCF/SCCF projects, cover projects spanning the GEF-3 to GEF-7 replenishment periods.

3. The synthesis of evidence aligns with the themes and levers of transformation (table 2) as formulated in the GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF for the GEF-8 Period of July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2026 (GEF 2022), hereafter referred to as the LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy. The synthesis also touches upon priorities cutting across the LDCF and SCCF—the strengthening of innovation and private sector engagement. Other cross-cutting considerations and priorities from the LDCF and SCCF program evaluations (GEF IEO 2022a and 2022b) and the evaluations in table 1 are (1) Gender Equality, (2) Youth Empowerment, (3) Resilience to Climate and Non-Climate Related Shocks and Stresses, (4) Institutional Capacity Development for Adaptation-Focused Work, and (5) Climate Adaptation Awareness Raising.

4. The synthesis of evidence focuses on LDCF, SCCF, multitrust fund projects (MTF), and GEF TF projects, drawing examples from 21 GEF TF projects and 22 LDCF, SCCF, and MTF projects. Regarding GEF TF projects, the emphasis lies not on their contributions to global environmental benefits, but rather on adaptation co-benefits and extracting valuable insights in alignment with

[1] The GEF fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

adaptation themes, transformational levers, and cross-cutting considerations and priorities that provide valuable lessons for LDCF and SCCF projects.

Table 1: Overview of Evaluations and Management Responses Reviewed

Evaluation	Date	Council Doc. No.
Evaluation of the GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security	June 2023	GEF/E/C.64/01/Rev.02
Management Response to Evaluation of the GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security	June 2023	GEF/C.64/13
Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries	January 2024	GEF/E/C.66/01
Management Response to the IEO Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries	January 2024	GEF/C.66/14
Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF	January 2024	GEF/E/C.66/02
Management Response to Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF	January 2024	GEF/C.66/15
Learning from Challenges in GEF Projects	February 2024	GEF/E/C.66/03/Rev.1
Management Response to Learning from Challenges in GEF Projects	January 2024	GEF/C.66/16
Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems	January 2024	GEF/E/C.66/04
Management Response to Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems	January 2024	GEF/C.66/17

5. The GEF IEO is cognizant that projects reviewed as part of the five evaluations were implemented and often completed before the GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change 2022–2026, however through alignment with the themes and levers of transformation the GEF IEO recognizes the need for evidence in support of areas of high impact, articulated national priorities, and in support of interventions that can catalyze change and enable systemic shifts.

Table 2: Themes and Levers of Transformation

Themes	Levers of Transformation
Theme 1: Agriculture, Food Security, and Health	Lever 1: Policy Coherence and Mainstreaming of Climate Adaptation
Theme 2: Water	Lever 2: Strengthened Governance for Adaptation
Theme 3: Nature-Based Solutions	Lever 3: Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration
Theme 4: Climate Information and Early Warning Systems	

6. The AER 2024 provides a comprehensive overview of the project portfolio examined in the five evaluations outlined in this report (table 1). While the primary focus lies on the LDCF/SCCF project portfolio, the report draws on specific examples from GEF TF-financed projects, highlighting their relevance in adaptation co-benefits. This inclusive approach enriches the depth of insights and lessons, offering valuable guidance for future LDCF and SCCF initiatives.

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATIONS' PROJECT PORTFOLIO

Introduction

7. From GEF-3 to GEF-7, the LDCF and SCCF financially supported 426 projects in total. This includes 305 LDCF projects, 73 SCCF projects, and 48 MTF projects. An overview of distribution of LDCF/SCCF projects and funding by GEF replenishment period is provided in figure 1. These 426 projects represent a collective investment of $2 billion and over $11 billion in cofinancing. Fifty-seven percent of these projects are completed. The remaining 43 percent is currently under implementation (table 3).

8. Multitrust fund projects leveraged most cofinancing, with $8.25 of cofinancing in expected contributions at project approval for every dollar funded by the LDCF, SCCF and GEF TF. It is important to note that the expected cofinancing contributions at project design may not reflect the final, realized cofinancing at project completion. LDCF and SCCF projects on average leveraged $4.45 and $4.94 in expected cofinancing contributions for every dollar invested. At $5.93 million, MTF projects also have the largest average project size.

Figure 1: Distribution of LDCF/SCCF projects and funding by GEF replenishment period

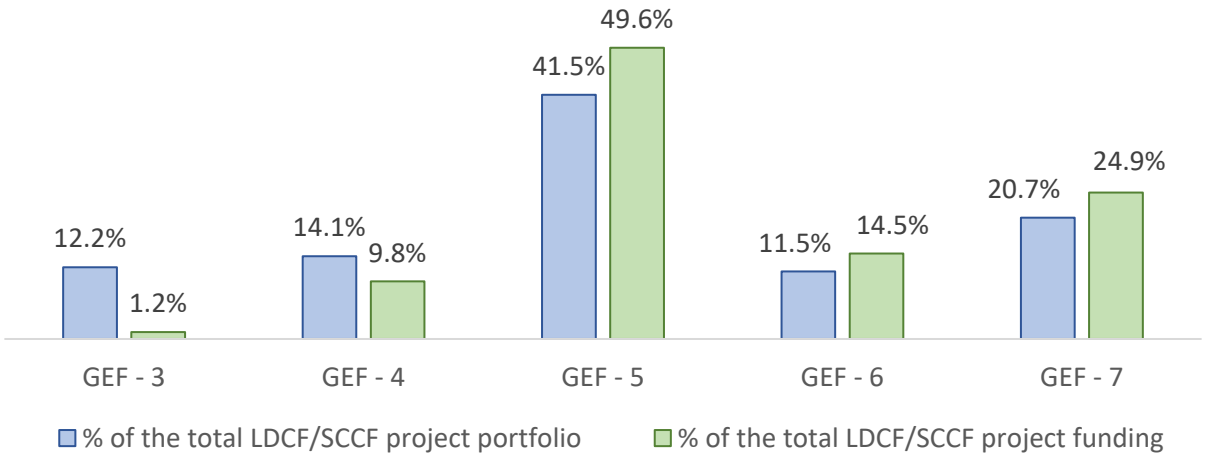


Table 3: Projects supported by LDCF/SCCF from GEF-3 to GEF-7

Funding Source	Number of Projects	Funding (million $)	Cofinancing Leveraged (million $)	Status	
				Completed	Under Implementation
LDCF[a]	305	1,358.6	6,540.1	172	133
SCCF	73	360.9	2,123.7	51	22
MTF[b]	48	284.8	2,349.1	18	30
TOTAL	426	2,004.3	11,012.9	241	185

[a] The number of LDCF projects includes 51 enabling activities, all of which supported the formulation of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs).

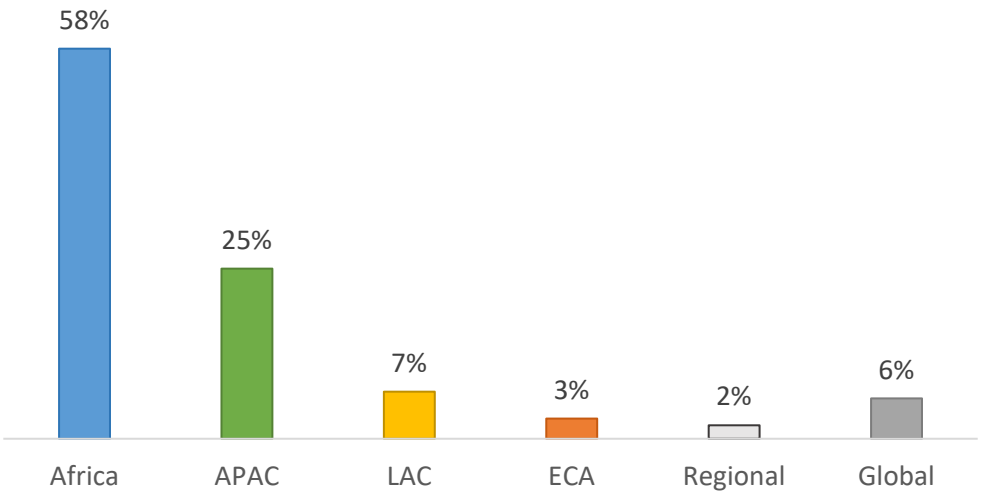
[b] Of the MTF project financing, LDCF = 52 percent, GEF TF = 39 percent, and SCCF = 9 percent.

9. The regional distribution, as shown in figure 2, highlights a concentrated focus on supporting adaptation efforts in Africa and Asia and the Pacific. This reflects the LDCF's focus on least developed countries, which are mainly situated in Africa (33 countries) and Asia and the Pacific (11 countries),[2] and the heightened vulnerabilities and pressing needs in these regions. Furthermore, it's important to note that although the SCCF is mandated to support all GEF-eligible countries, including non-least developed countries (LDCs) and non-small island

[2] Source: UN list of least developed countries: https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/list-ldcs, accessed May 2024.

developing states (SIDS), this mandate has been largely unfulfilled due to the fund's chronic underfunding. The SCCF has faced significant resource constraints, limiting its ability to provide comprehensive support across its intended global scope.

Figure 2: Regional Distribution of LDCF/SCCF Projects from GEF-3 to GEF-7



Note: APAC = Asia and the Pacific, LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean, ECA = Europe and Central Asia.

Evaluations' Project Portfolio

10. The portfolio covered by the five recent GEF IEO evaluations, reviewed for this report, comprises a total of 759 projects of which 118 projects are funded by the LDCF, 31 by the SCCF, and are 21 MTF projects. Of the MTF projects, 18 are financed by the LDCF and the GEF TF, and 3 projects are financed by the SCCF and the GEF TF (table 4).

11. Also in the evaluations' project portfolio, MTF projects leveraged most cofinancing, with $7.50 of cofinancing in expected contributions at project approval for every dollar funded by the LDCF, SCCF and GEF TF. LDCF and SCCF projects on average leveraged $4.55 and $5.57 in expected cofinancing contributions for every dollar invested. At $5.92 million, LDCF projects have the largest average project size in the evaluations' project portfolio.

12. In terms of regional distribution, the majority, 105 of the 170 LDCF/SCCF/MTF projects, were implemented in the Africa region. Forty-three were implemented in the Asia and the Pacific region, 9 in the Latin American and Caribbean region, and 3 in the Europe and Central Asia region (figure 3). Nine of the remaining 10 projects were implemented regionally and one project was implemented globally. This distribution is similar to the regional distribution of the entire GEF-3 to GEF-7 LDCF/SCCF portfolio (figure 2). The regional concentration of projects can be primarily attributed to the substantial influence of the LDCF within the overall portfolio. The

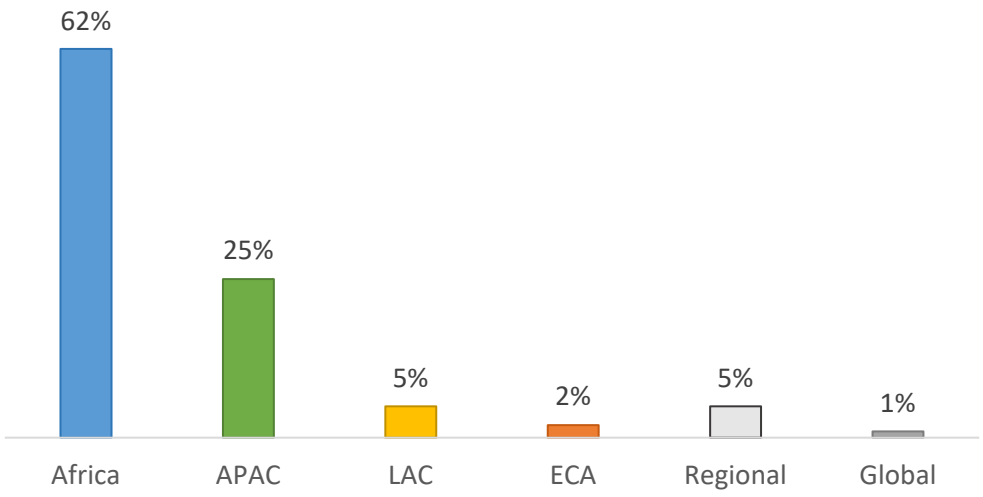
SCCF's limited financial resources have constrained its ability to support countries effectively, resulting in geographical distribution patterns for the LDCF/SCCF project portfolio where the LDCF country focus predominates due to its larger share in resources.

Table 4: Overview of the Evaluations' Project Portfolio by Funding Source

Funding Source	Number of Projects	Funding (million $)	Cofinancing Leveraged (million $)	Status	
				Completed	Under Implementation
LDCF[a]	118	698.1	3,178.6	71	47
SCCF	31	124.2	691.4	20	11
MTF[b]	21	91.1	683.2	7	14
SUBTOTAL	170	913.4	4,533.2	98	72
GEF TF	589	2,089.8	14,372.3	382	207
TOTAL	759	3,003.2	18,905.5	480	279

[a] Of the MTF project financing, LDCF = 48 percent, GTF = 41.5 percent, and SCCF = 6 percent.

Figure 3: Regional Distribution of LDCF/SCCF Projects in Evaluations' Project Portfolio



Note: APAC =- Asia and the Pacific, LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean, ECA = Europe and Central Asia.

THEMES

13. Themes covered in this AER are (1) Agriculture, Food Security, and Health, (2) Water, (3) Nature-Based Solutions, and (4) Climate Information and Early Warning Systems. The Water theme is covered most strongly, and mostly in the Evaluation of the GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security, and the Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation (SCCE) of GEF Support to Drylands Countries. The theme of Agriculture, Food Security, and Health receives the second strongest emphasis, followed by the theme of Climate Information and Early Warning Systems, which is mostly covered in the Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems.

Theme 1: Agriculture, Food Security, and Health

14. According to the *Special Report on Climate Change and Land* (2019) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the ongoing impact of climate change is already disrupting food security. Rising temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, and more frequent extreme weather events are key contributors. These alterations in climate conditions can significantly impact crop yields, food availability, and even the nutritional quality of produce. Such consequences pose serious threats to human health, especially among vulnerable populations. The latest LDCF program evaluation (GEF IEO 2022a) reports that 58 percent of LDCF implementation projects contribute to the GEF land degradation focal area, and "contributions are in line with the primary priority areas for LDCF support—agriculture, climate information systems, water resource management, disaster risk management, and natural resource management" (p. 15). Agriculture and food security is the sector receiving the highest level of support from LDCF financing (GEF 2022). Agricultural adaptation is a focal area of the SCCF-A financing window, and 36 percent of completed SCCF projects delivered climate-smart agriculture benefits (GEF IEO 2022b).

15. **Water security and access in agriculture are crucial for ensuring food security, economic stability, and environmental sustainability.** Various projects worldwide focus on improving water access and management in agricultural contexts. For instance, the Sudan LDCF project Implementing NAPA (National Adaptation Programme of Action) Priority Interventions to Build Resilience in the Agriculture and Water Sectors to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change (Sudan NAPA Implementation project; GEF ID 3430) implemented solar water pumps, enhancing water availability for irrigation during dry months and consequently increasing agricultural production and food security. Similarly, the Bolivia GEF TF project Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and Land in Andean Vertical Ecosystems (Bolivia EVA project; GEF ID 3831) installed small-scale irrigation and water harvesting infrastructure, resulting in increased agricultural yields during drought periods. These projects demonstrate the significance of targeted interventions in enhancing water security and access, ultimately contributing to sustainable agricultural practices and livelihoods.

16. **Sustainable agricultural practices play a pivotal role in ensuring food security and environmental sustainability**. For instance, the Community-based Land Management GEF TF project in Guinea (GEF ID 1877) emphasizes sustainable land use practices, including agroecology and agroforestry, to restore degraded lands and enhance agricultural productivity. By promoting the use of organic fertilizers, crop diversification, and integrated pest management, this project fosters soil health, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience in rural communities. Similarly, the SIP: Private Public Sector Partnership on Capacity Building for SLM in the Shire River Basin GEF TF project (Malawi SLM project; GEF ID 3376) and the GEF TF/LDCF Shire Natural Ecosystems Management Project (Malawi SLM project; GEF ID 4625) focus on promoting conservation agriculture techniques such as minimum tillage, crop rotation, and cover cropping. By minimizing soil disturbance and enhancing soil organic matter, these practices improve soil fertility, water retention, and crop resilience to climate variability. Furthermore, the project integrates agroforestry systems, such as planting trees on farmlands, to enhance biodiversity, provide ecosystem services, and diversify farmers' income sources.

17. **Projects worldwide demonstrate how investments in agricultural initiatives yield positive outcomes beyond food production alone**, including income generation, employment creation, poverty reduction, and enhanced food security for communities in need. For example, the SCCF-financed project Scaling up Adaptation in Zimbabwe, with a Focus on Rural Livelihoods, by Strengthening Integrated Planning Systems (Scaling up Adaptation; GEF ID 4960) sought to reduce the vulnerability of rural communities to climate variability in three districts through two main lines of action. It (1) diversified and strengthened livelihoods and sources of income for vulnerable smallholder farmers, and (2) increased knowledge and understanding of climate-related risks through the development of community-based early warning systems. At completion, households with high vulnerability had decreased from an 88 percent baseline to around 27 percent across all three districts. The communities that were consulted during the terminal evaluation considered themselves to be less vulnerable to climate change due to improvements in water security, better-protected ecosystems, the introduction of climate-smart agricultural practices, and access to financial support services they previously lacked. Similarly, the GEF TF Niger project SIP: Oasis Micro-Basin Sand Invasion Control in the Goure and Maine Regions (PLECO; GEF ID 3381) generated short-term employment and income through activities like cash and food-for-work programs aimed at stabilizing dunes and implementing natural resource management techniques. Additionally, income from seedling sales, especially by women, improved food security and reduced poverty in the region.

18. **The health impacts of agriculture extend beyond food production, influencing various aspects of public health.** Projects worldwide showcase how agricultural initiatives can have both positive and negative health outcomes. For instance, while agriculture contributes to providing nutritious food, it also exposes farmers and communities to risks such as pesticide exposure, water contamination, and zoonotic diseases. The integration of sustainable agricultural practices, like organic farming and integrated pest management, can mitigate these

risks and promote healthier environments for farmers and consumers alike. As an example, the aforementioned Malawi SLM projects (GEF IDs 3376 and 4625) emphasize the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices to reduce pesticide use and soil contamination. By promoting organic farming methods and improving water management, these projects aim to safeguard public health while enhancing agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability. Similarly, the Community-based Land Management GEF TF project in Guinea (GEF ID 1877) prioritizes community health by promoting agroecology and reducing chemical inputs in agriculture. By implementing organic farming techniques and integrating natural pest control methods, this project contributes to healthier environments and safer food production systems.

19. **Numerous projects worldwide demonstrate how agricultural initiatives can adapt to changing climate conditions and safeguard food security.** For example, the GEF TF Ethiopia SIP: Country Program for Sustainable Land Management (ECPSLM) (Ethiopia SLM program; GEF ID 2794) and the GEF TF and LDCF Sustainable Land Management Project 2 (Ethiopia SLM program; GEF ID 5220) enabled income and dietary diversification by allowing households to grow high-value fruits and vegetables year-round. This led to further income and employment and reduced outmigration pressures, especially for youth. The introduction of drought-resistant crop varieties and water-efficient irrigation systems in the Kenya GEF TF child project Food-IAP: Establishment of the Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund (UTNWF; GEF ID 9139) also illustrates proactive adaptation measures. By enhancing crop resilience to drought and optimizing water use efficiency, the intervention mitigates the adverse effects of climate change on agricultural productivity and food security. Similarly, the promotion of climate-smart agricultural practices, such as agroforestry and conservation agriculture, in the Malawi SLM projects (GEF IDs 3376 and 4625) mentioned earlier exemplify effective adaptation strategies. By enhancing soil health, water retention, and crop diversity, these practices strengthen the resilience of farming systems to climate variability and contribute to sustainable food production.

Theme 2: Water

20. Water emerges as a key theme in the LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy (GEF 2022), underscoring its significance in the GEF's adaptation efforts through integrated water resources management interventions. These encompass improving freshwater quality and quantity, including interventions for water storage, conservation, and accessibility. Water is the sector receiving the second highest level of support from LDCF financing (GEF 2022). Adaptation in water resources management is one of the focal areas of the SCCF-A financing window and 30 percent of completed SCCF projects provided support on access to water sources (GEF IEO 2022b). The GEF IEO's water security evaluation (2023) also reports that an estimated 60 percent of adaptation activities are related to water—such as irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and soil moisture conservation.

21. **Integrated strategies for sustainable water management at the community level are crucial for addressing the multifaceted challenges of water security effectively.** By integrating various aspects of water management, such as supply, sanitation, and conservation, communities can ensure the long-term availability and quality of water resources while promoting socioeconomic development and environmental sustainability. These integrated strategies involve coordinating efforts across sectors, engaging stakeholders, and considering local socioeconomic and environmental contexts. They often include measures such as watershed management, water harvesting, efficient irrigation techniques, wastewater treatment, and community-based water governance. For example, the Gambia GEF TF project SIP: Participatory Integrated Watershed Management Project (PIWAMP; GEF ID 3368) successfully improved local livelihoods by promoting community-based approaches to watershed management. By involving local communities in decision-making processes and leveraging existing institutions, the project effectively enhanced water availability and quality while supporting sustainable land-use practices. Overall, integrated strategies for sustainable water management at the community level play a vital role in enhancing resilience, improving livelihoods, and safeguarding ecosystems.

22. **The linkages between climate change adaptation and water management are fundamental, as climate change significantly impacts water resources, exacerbating water scarcity, flooding, and water quality issues.** Effective water management is crucial for adapting to these changes and enhancing resilience in communities and ecosystems. Projects that integrate climate change adaptation and water management often focus on enhancing water infrastructure, implementing water conservation measures, and promoting sustainable water-use practices. For instance, the GEF TF and SCCF El Salvador project Climate Change Adaptation to Reduce Land Degradation in Fragile Micro-Watersheds Located in the Municipalities of Texistepeque and Candelaria de la Frontera (GEF ID 4616) combines climate change adaptation efforts with land degradation reduction measures to enhance water resilience in vulnerable micro-watersheds, featuring participatory processes and community engagement. Similarly, the Malawi GEF TF child project Food-IAP: Enhancing the Resilience of Agro-Ecological Systems (ERASP; GEF ID 9138) works to build capacity for catchment management interventions, integrating climate change adaptation with sustainable water management practices. Furthermore, the Landscape Restoration for Increased Resilience in Urban and Peri-Urban Areas of Bujumbura LDCF project (GEF ID 10099) in Burundi demonstrates the importance of integrating climate change adaptation into water management strategies at the local level. By focusing on landscape restoration and resilience-enhancing activities, this project aims to improve water management practices and enhance the adaptive capacity of urban and peri-urban communities. Overall, integrating climate change adaptation and water management is crucial for enhancing resilience to climate impacts and ensuring sustainable water resources for communities and ecosystems.

23. **Ecosystem-based water management (EBWM) focuses on utilizing natural ecosystems and their services to enhance water resource management and build resilience of both people and nature to environmental changes.** By recognizing the importance of healthy ecosystems for water regulation, purification, and availability, EBWM approaches promote sustainable water-management practices that benefit both people and nature. Projects integrating EBWM often involve restoring and conserving ecosystems such as wetlands, forests, and riparian zones to enhance water quality, regulate water flow, and reduce the impacts of floods and droughts. These projects also emphasize community involvement and stakeholder engagement to ensure the sustainable use and management of water resources. For example, the Ecuador GEF TF project Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity, Forests, Soil and Water to Achieve the Good Living (Buen Vivir/Sumac Kasay) in the Napo Province (GEF ID 4774) integrates ecosystem-based approaches to improve water quality and availability in the Napo Province. By conserving forests and restoring degraded ecosystems, the project aims to enhance water regulation and resilience to climate change impacts.

Theme 3: Nature-Based Solutions

24. Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits" (GEF STAP 2020, p. 2). The LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy (GEF 2022) states that NbS “has been a cornerstone of the GEF’s adaptation portfolio since inception. With high potential to deliver adaptation as well as a range of additional benefits contributing to resilience of people and ecosystems, as well as for biodiversity and climate change mitigation, NbS merits additional emphasis in the GEF-8 period as a means of effecting adaptation” (p. 15). Projects implemented prior to GEF-5 tend to incorporate NbS implicitly. For the adaptation portfolio, that was often done through ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation services, integrated resource management, integrated land management, and sustainable land management (SLM).

25. **Sustainable land and water management (SLWM) and agroforestry approaches offer cost-effective solutions to widely distribute significant benefits to smallholder farmers across the Sahel, including in fragile and conflict states**. Ecological intensification and climate-smart agriculture based on SLWM and agroforestry are sustainable alternative to more classic agricultural development. The significance of these practices lies in their ability to promote resilience in the face of climate-related risks while simultaneously fostering socioeconomic development. For instance, the Sahel and West Africa Program in Support of the Great Green Wall Initiative (SAWAP; GEF ID 4511) was a programmatic approach developed by the World Bank using GEF TF, LDCF, and SCCF funding. The SAWAP projects surpassed their initial cumulative targets, establishing 1.6 million hectares of SLWM practices across the 12 countries.

26. The Supporting Sustainable Land Management in Steppe and Semi-arid Zones through Integrated Territorial Planning and Agro-Environmental Incentives GEF TF project (GEF ID 5699) was designed to transform land use practices in critical, productive, steppe, arid, and semiarid landscapes of Kazakhstan. The results achieved through implementation of SLM practices reduce the climate vulnerability of agro-ecosystems in the pilot areas. Increased vegetation cover helps to regulate diurnal and seasonal fluctuations in temperature, as well as increasing soil moisture levels, which helped to strengthen root systems and increase humus levels, thus creating more resilient and productive ecosystems. The introduction of SLM and diversified farming systems improved food security, and reduced the vulnerabilities connected with mono-cropping. The improved early warning systems, including the forecasting tools developed by the project, enabled farmers to make adjustments in the field. Adoption of SLM practices across the agro-ecosystems in the project pilot areas also generated biodiversity cobenefits. Rehabilitation of drainage courses and more efficient use of irrigation water resources contributed towards improving habitat integrity and resilience. **The project's multifaceted approach underscores the critical importance of SLM in mitigating climate risks, enhancing ecosystem health, and fostering socioeconomic resilience in vulnerable landscapes.**

27. **The Learning from Challenges Evaluation** (GEF IEO 2024c) **pointed out the need to adequately address the risk posed by politically supported economic interests that conflict with the environmental objectives of a project.** The Timor Leste LDCF project Building Shoreline Resilience of Timor Leste to Protect Local Communities and their Livelihoods (GEF ID 5671) was designed to strengthen resilience of coastal communities by the introduction of nature-based approaches to coastal protection, including: (1) creating a policy framework and institutional capacity for climate resilient coastal management; (2) establishing mangrove-supportive livelihoods to incentivize mangrove rehabilitation and protection; and (3) adopting integrated approaches to coastal adaptation to contribute to protecting coastal populations and productive lands. One of its designated mangrove restoration sites was in Tibar Bay, home to the only remaining climax community of large, mature “apple mangrove” (*Sonneratia alba*) forests in Timor-Leste. The project was intended to work cooperatively with the Tibar Bay Port project, under construction at that point, and the Tasi Mane South Coast Gas Infrastructure project—the two most significant coastal infrastructure projects in Timor-Leste—on mangrove protection, management, and restoration. Unfortunately, the project did not form effective partnerships or cooperative arrangements with either the Tibar Bay Port or the Tasi Mane project. Both during design and implementation phases, the project discussed potential partnerships and environmental offsets, but unsuccessfully. More extensive efforts, with a consideration of a wider set of options for negotiations, should have been made during the design phase, to ensure success.

Theme 4: Climate Information and Early Warning Systems

28. As referenced in the CIEWS evaluation (GEF IEO 2024d), from 2010 onward the GEF Secretariat has developed four-year programming strategies for the LDCF and the SCCF specifically focused on adaptation to climate change, coinciding with the GEF replenishment periods. Climate information and early warning systems (CIEWS) are noted in all the adaptation strategies and have been elevated to one of the four priority themes in the LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy (GEF 2022). CIEWS play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of NAPAs and NAPs (National Adaptation Plans) in countries supported by the LDCF and SCCF.[3] NAPAs often prioritize vulnerable sectors and communities, aiming to enhance resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate-related risks. CIEWS are integral to NAPAs and NAPs, providing the necessary data and forecasts to identify priority areas for adaptation actions, assess risks, and design effective adaptation strategies. Seventy-eight percent of projects part of the CIEWS evaluation portfolio were LDCF funded.

29. **The development of CIEWS infrastructure and enhancement of institutional capacity are pivotal in ensuring the effectiveness of CIEWS interventions for mitigating climate-related hazards.** This entails establishing robust monitoring networks, deploying advanced technologies, and providing training to personnel. As an example, the Scaling up Adaptation in Zimbabwe SCCF project (GEF ID 4960) focused on strengthening institutional capacity and community-based early warning systems (EWS) to reduce vulnerability to climate variability. Similarly, the pilot projects of the regional GEF TF project Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Managing the Water-Food-Energy and Ecosystems NEXUS (MedProgramme; GEF ID 9685) aim to demonstrate technology for water monitoring, enhance prediction capabilities, and disseminate relevant information to stakeholders. Similarly, interventions through the SCCF-financed project Strengthening Capacities of Rural Aqueduct Associations' (ASADAS) to Address Climate Change Risks in Water Stressed Communities of Northern Costa Rica Costa Rica (GEF ID 6945) were critical following Hurricane Otto in 2017 for the country's recovery and to strengthen the institutional capacity of local water associations to be prepared for new climate-related disasters.

30. **Strengthening the policy framework is a crucial upstream intervention for the success of CIEWS interventions.** Although the GEF Secretariat provided a broader strategic direction highlighting the importance of CIEWS, countries had the flexibility to tailor activities to align with their national priorities. For instance, the SCCF-supported Pacific Resilience Program in

[3] NAPAs are primarily developed by LDCs, whereas NAPs are produced by both developing and developed countries, although they tend to be more prevalent in developing countries, especially those vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. NAPs provide a more comprehensive and long-term framework for adaptation planning and implementation, and in LDCs NAPs tend to build upon NAPAs.

Tonga (GEF ID 5814) adjusted disaster-related legislation while simultaneously providing post-cyclone support for water and sanitation needs after Cyclone Gita in 2018.

31. **Addressing the "last mile" challenge and fostering community engagement while ensuring equity and inclusivity are also vital components to ensure that warnings are effectively communicated to all communities, especially those in remote or marginalized areas, and that they are empowered to take appropriate actions.** For instance, 11 projects in African LDCs, approved through the LDCF in 2014, successfully established essential infrastructure, including the establishment of hydrological and meteorological stations, effectively improved the capabilities of national agencies, and successfully integrated new equipment into national systems. However, despite efforts to develop "last mile" services to meet needs identified through knowledge management products and the introduction of potential partners, the evidence shows a significant gap between the availability of early warning information and its effective delivery to those who need it most. Another example is the Scaling up Adaptation in Zimbabwe project (GEF ID 4960) that exemplified this approach by prioritizing community involvement in the development of community-based EWS and resilience-enhancing activities.

32. **Sustainability, resilience, and the integration of CIEWS into broader disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate adaptation strategies are crucial for enhancing long-term resilience to climate-related hazards.** Sustainability entails ensuring the continuity of CIEWS operations and maintenance over time, involving strategies to maintain infrastructure, secure funding, and adapt to changing climate conditions. Resilience focuses on enhancing the ability of communities to withstand and recover from adverse events. Integrating CIEWS into broader DRR and climate adaptation strategies involves aligning early warning efforts with wider development goals and priorities, such as poverty reduction, food security, and sustainable livelihoods, and aligning with existing risk reduction and adaptation initiatives to create more holistic and effective approaches to enhancing resilience. In the latter case this includes incorporating CIEWS data and information into risk assessments, land-use planning, infrastructure development, and emergency response protocols. For instance, the LDCF project Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Sao Tome and Principe for Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change (GEF ID 5004) focused heavily on improving warning mechanisms, such as the development of meteorological and community alert systems. However, the project falls short of providing tangible support for early actions during disasters. While it successfully strengthens the capacity to issue timely warnings, the implementation lacks crucial elements like community drills, pre-positioning of emergency supplies, or establishing safe evacuation routes. As a result, despite the improved warning

systems, the affected communities face challenges in effectively responding to disasters due to a lack of practical support for early actions.[4]

LEVERS OF TRANSFORMATION

33. Levers of transformation covered by this AER are (1) Policy Coherence and Mainstreaming of Climate Adaptation, (2) Strengthened Governance for Adaptation, and (3) Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration (GEF 2022). Lever 2 is covered most strongly, and mostly in the Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation (SCCE) of GEF Support to Drylands Countries. The lever on Policy Coherence and Mainstreaming of Climate Adaptation is the second most extensively covered, and also mostly in the Drylands SCCE. The third lever is covered mostly and similarly in the Evaluation of the GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security and the Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF.

Lever 1: Policy Coherence and Mainstreaming of Climate Adaptation

34. Policy coherence is defined by the GEF (2023b) as "the systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies, creating synergies towards achieving the agreed objectives" (p. 1). Coherent, integrated, and noncontradictory policies are recognized as key factors in the implementation of the suite of Sustainable Development Goals. Better-integrated approaches, with increased alignment between economic, social, and environmental policies, can enhance the achievement of ambitious global environmental benefits more efficiently and cost-effectively. Mainstreaming of climate adaptation refers to integrating considerations for climate change impacts and adaptation measures into the decision-making processes, policies, and practices across various sectors and levels of governance. It recognizes that climate change affects multiple aspects of society and requires a holistic and integrated approach to address its impacts effectively. As example of a policy-coherent approach, the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (GEF STAP) provides an example in which "policy changes should better assess, account and value the natural capital, and shift financial flows away from perverse subsidies and nature-degrading investments toward nature positive investments" (GEF STAP 2023, p. 18). The LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy (GEF 2022) also focuses on a whole-of-society approach, which entails engaging with diverse actors and multisectoral stakeholders and facilitating their participation in the decision-

[4] In paragraph 5 of the "GEF Management Response to the Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems" (GEF/C.66/17), it is highlighted that the GEF's support does not extend to direct involvement in disaster risk management activities, such as evacuation and reconstruction. These activities fall outside the scope of support provided by the GEF, LDCF, and SCCF. Nevertheless, there has been an observable trend within LDCF and SCCF projects toward integrating elements like climate-related disaster planning. These additions aim to enhance community preparedness in dealing with natural hazards.

making process to take appropriate measures together and mainstream climate considerations across different governance levels.

35. **The challenge of policy alignment and coherence presents a significant hurdle in the implementation of projects.** As examples, in two Uzbekistan GEF TF projects—the Reducing Pressures on Natural Resources from Competing Land Use in Non-irrigated Arid Mountain, Semi-Desert and Desert Landscapes project (GEF ID 4600) and Sustainable Forest and Rangelands Management in the Dryland Ecosystems of Uzbekistan project (GEF ID 10367)—policy misalignment, including unclear institutional responsibilities and misaligned incentives, has been identified as a key barrier to sustainable land management (SLM). Despite attempts to introduce changes in the policy landscape and break down institutional silos, success has often been limited due to the complexity of coordinating policies across different administrative levels. While multiple stakeholder engagements have been established across sectors under the leadership of district chief administrators, achieving policy coherence at lower levels of governance remained elusive in the Ethiopian SLM projects (GEF IDs 2794 and 5220). The decentralization of decision-making processes adds another layer of complexity, making it difficult to ensure alignment and coordination across different levels of government.

36. **The implementation of policy coherence activities faces challenges, primarily due to the discrepancy between policy timelines and project timelines.** For instance, the Sustainable Land and Forest Management in the Greater Caucasus Landscape GEF TF project in Azerbaijan (GEF ID 4332) aimed to address policy misalignments regarding land and pasture management. However, the efforts to introduce changes in the policy landscape encountered obstacles due to the complexities of coordinating policies across various administrative levels and institutional silos. Similarly, the Malawi SLM projects (GEF IDs 3376 and 4625) analyzed policy context at the design stage, yet the translation of these efforts into coherent policy frameworks remained challenging. The mismatch between shorter project implementation periods and the longer time frames required for meaningful policy change exacerbates this issue.

37. The drylands evaluation (GEF IEO 2024a) states that **more recent projects in drylands have showcased evolving approaches aimed at targeting policy coherence, recognizing its pivotal role in achieving sustainable development objectives**. One notable example is the adoption of Land Degradation Neutrality methods, which emphasize the integration of various policy sectors to promote sustainable land management. Additionally, programmatic and phased approaches have been employed to foster policy coherence. These strategies involve implementing projects in stages, allowing for iterative adjustments and the incorporation of lessons learned into subsequent phases. By demonstrating tangible benefits at local or jurisdictional levels, these approaches influence national policy making.

<u>Lever 2: Strengthened Governance for Adaptation</u>

38. Engagement and collaboration among decision makers constitute an important part of strengthened governance which can be fostered through vertical integration (across governance levels) and horizontal integration (across sectors). There is growing recognition of more diverse entry points and scope for adaptation action, beyond national-level priority action. A whole-of-society approach, as discussed earlier, would benefit from a whole-of-government approach spanning different government levels and departments. More specifically, it will support institutional coordination; integration of climate change across national, subnational, and local policies; creation of mechanisms for greater engagement of private, nonprofit, and community institutions; and development of tools and frameworks that can enable such engagements and coherence.

39. **Natural resource governance is integral to strengthened governance for adaptation.** Strengthening governance in this area is crucial for effectively managing environmental risks, promoting sustainable development, and enhancing resilience to climate change. Accordingly, GEF projects in drylands regions prioritize improving governance to address environmental degradation and enhance resilience. The Ethiopian SLM projects (GEF IDs 2794 and 5220) facilitated stakeholder engagement and partnerships at the district level, under the leadership of local administrators, promoting coherent and successful natural resource governance within regular rural development systems.

40. **Sustainability and ownership are crucial aspects of strengthened governance for adaptation, ensuring that initiatives effectively address climate change impacts and endure beyond project completion.** In the LDCF-financed project Enhancing Resilience of Liberia Montserrado County Vulnerable Coastal Areas to Climate Change Risks in Liberia (Coastal Resilience; GEF ID 8015), sustainability was achieved through proactive community engagement. By involving local communities in decision making, addressing their concerns, and providing training in construction and maintenance, the project fostered ownership and empowerment. This engagement ensured that the coastal protection structures were not only effective in reducing vulnerability to climate change impacts but also sustainable in the long run. As noted earlier, the Ethiopian SLM projects (GEF IDs 2794 and 5220) facilitated partnerships across sectors at the district level, under the leadership of local administrators. This engagement with diverse stakeholders enabled the scaling-up of successful governance interventions, promoting sustainability and resilience across larger geographic areas.

41. **Capacity building and synergistic partnerships**—the latter already exemplified by the Ethiopian SLM projects—**are essential elements of strengthened governance for adaptation, enabling effective decision making, resource management, and resilience-enhancing efforts.** For example, the GEF TF project SIP: Community Driven SLM for Environmental and Food Security (Community Driven SLM; GEF ID 3382) in Niger focused on strengthening the capacity of local communities to manage natural resources sustainably. By providing training in governance principles, technical skills, and participatory planning processes, the project

empowered communities to take ownership of adaptation initiatives and enhanced their resilience to climate change impacts. The importance of synergistic partnerships for effective governance is also demonstrated in the Coastal Resilience project in Liberia (GEF ID 8015). The project established partnerships across sectors, involving government agencies, local communities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders. By coordinating action and leveraging diverse expertise and resources, these partnerships promote coherent and successful adaptation efforts, ultimately enhancing the resilience of coastal communities to climate change impacts.

42. **Adaptive management and community engagement are critical components of effective governance for adaptation, facilitating flexible and responsive approaches to address climate change impacts while ensuring the active participation and ownership of local communities.** The Coastal Resilience project in Liberia (GEF ID 8015) exemplifies adaptive management practices. The project faced challenges such as delays, disagreements, and concerns from local communities regarding infrastructure designs. However, through adaptive management, the project restructured and implemented strategies to address these challenges. By actively responding to community needs and adjusting project designs, the project demonstrated resilience and effectiveness in achieving adaptation objectives.

Lever 3: Knowledge Exchange and Collaboration

43. According to the LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy (GEF 2022), knowledge exchange will serve as a key vehicle for innovation and technology transfer, sharing of good practices, and scaling-up of adaptation solutions, and pioneering approaches and experience. The strategy will advance collaboration among different stakeholders, particularly by facilitating South-South cooperation for sharing of lessons, research-community findings on context-appropriate solutions, and locally led processes that are catalyzing positive change.

44. **Efforts to bridge information gaps for vulnerable groups, such as through radio and mobile technology, have shown promise but face ongoing challenges.** Innovative approaches, though underutilized, have demonstrated potential, as seen in projects like the Community-based Climate Risks Management in Chad LDCF project (GEF ID 8001). The project developed a people-centered early warning system that actively engaged communities. As part of its innovative approach, the project used the generated climate information to design a financial instrument providing micro-credit and climate index micro-insurance to 500 vulnerable households and farmers. By combining agricultural micro-insurance with micro-credit, enabled by accurate climate data, the approach proved mutually beneficial for insurance companies in reducing administration costs to serve remote areas and for the communities gaining access to these financial services.

45. Despite notable progress, challenges persist in delivering actionable climate information to local communities, particularly in the “last mile” of service delivery. While GEF projects have

demonstrated efficiency, long-term sustainability of outcomes remains uncertain due to funding and resource constraints.

LDCF/SCCF Cross-Cutting Priorities and Considerations

Strengthening Innovation

46. Innovation for adaptation involves leveraging novel approaches, technologies, and collaborations to address challenges at the intersection of water, climate, and sustainability. At the UN 2023 Water Conference, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) emphasized collaboration and innovation in addressing the water-climate nexus. The CIEWS evaluation (GEF IEO 2024d), found that the use of innovative approaches in the project portfolio reviewed was limited, with only 22 percent mentioning such approaches during design and a mere 5 percent successfully implementing them by project completion.

47. The SCCF project Strengthening Capacities of Rural Aqueduct Associations' (ASADAS) to Address Climate Change Risks in Water Stressed Communities of Northern Costa Rica (GEF ID 6945) provides a notable example of an innovative approach, where the project implemented an alarm system using low-maintenance sensors to monitor the water level of the Zapote River. To improve communication efficiency, the project featured user-friendly and readily accessible communication tools, including social networks and cost-free instant messaging platforms. By harnessing these tools, the project successfully disseminated crucial information to the broader population, ensuring that they were well informed and capable of taking appropriate actions in response to the water-level monitoring data.

Private Sector Engagement

48. **Within the evaluation portfolio of the water security evaluation** (GEF IEO 2023)**, only a small percentage of completed projects (18 percent) involved the private sector in implementing water security activities**, while an even lower share (14 percent) engaged the private sector during the design phase. Limited engagement was attributed to the perception of water as a public good, which offers restricted opportunities for private sector involvement in development projects aimed at enhancing water security. However, recognizing the significant role of the private sector as a major water user, opportunities exist for its involvement in improving water security by enhancing resilience against water risks, providing water services, and participating in multistakeholder water management initiatives. A more involved approach was to include companies that created water infrastructure as suppliers; the Implementing Integrated Water Resource and Wastewater Management in Atlantic and Indian Ocean SIDS project (GEF ID 2706) GEF TF project engaged companies to import and construct water efficiency equipment such as sensor tap systems and dual-flush valves for rainwater harvesting systems. The Sudan NAPA project also engaged a company to provide solar water pumps to communities. Projects dealing with wastewater treatment often involved private sector waste

operators too, such as in the Shanghai Agricultural and Non-Point Pollution Reduction GEF TF project (GEF ID 3223).

49. **In CIEWS projects, private sector involvement remains limited due to various factors such as reliance on public funding, lack of defined participation frameworks and incentives, and competition between governments and the private sector as service providers.** Positive examples include the LDCF-financed project Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia to Support Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change (GEF ID 5318), which developed a feasibility study and engagement strategy, partnering with companies allocating corporate social responsibility funds to climate adaptation initiatives. Equally, the LDCF-financed project SMARTFARM—A Data and Digital Technology Driven and Farm Management Solution for Climate Resilience in Ethiopia/Rwanda (GEF ID 10965) —supported through the Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation—devised strategies to involve private stakeholders like agro-processors, input suppliers, financial institutions, and telecommunications companies to strengthen agricultural value chains, mitigate risks, and attract investments. It explores a user subscription model providing value-added digital services to create a self-sustaining ecosystem benefiting farmers and the value chain.

50. **While private sector engagement in GEF drylands projects historically has been limited, recent trends show an upward trajectory, with newer projects demonstrating increased consideration of private sector involvement in project designs.** However, engaging the private sector sustainably in drylands can be more challenging than in more productive regions, due to issues related to connectivity to broader markets, the absence of incentives for investment in drylands, and the consequent capital outflow from common enterprises such as mining.

Gender Equality

51. **Inclusion and empowerment are central themes in the project portfolio reviewed, particularly concerning the involvement of women in decision-making processes and project activities. Despite progress, challenges persist, as evidenced by instances where deeply entrenched gender discrimination hinders women's participation and limits their access to project benefits.** For instance, in some drylands projects, women face barriers due to cultural norms and lack of alternative options for childcare, limiting their involvement in cash-for-work programs. However, there are success stories showcasing the positive impact of GEF projects on women's empowerment. Projects like the Niger GEF TF project SIP: Agricultural and Rural Rehabilitation and Development Initiative (ARRDI; GEF ID 3383) and the Niger PLECO project (GEF ID 3381) have enabled women to actively engage in land restoration activities, manage nurseries, and generate additional income for their families. Additionally, the GEF TF-financed PSG-Sustainable and Inclusive Agribusiness Development Project in Senegal (GEF ID 5449)

ensured women's representation in management and technical committees related to land use and allocation, and increased women's access to developed land.

52. **Gender considerations and contextual adaptations are essential aspects of effective water management strategies, ensuring inclusivity, equity, and sustainability.** Projects that prioritize gender considerations in water management often involve empowering women, promoting their participation in decision making, and addressing gender disparities in access to water resources and sanitation facilities. These projects recognize the significant contributions of women to water-related activities, such as water fetching, agriculture, and household water management, and aim to enhance their capacity to participate in and benefit from water initiatives, recognizing the roles, needs, and priorities of both women and men in water-related decision-making processes and resource management activities. The water security evaluation (GEF IEO 2023) found that gender considerations were not commonly addressed in completed projects that focused on water security, but they are much more prominent in ongoing projects. The Sudan NAPA Implementation project (GEF ID 3430) was found to be very beneficial to women; women interviewed reported benefitting from improved water access through improved diet and more consistent food supply.

53. **Gender equality is not only a moral imperative but also a pathway to significant socioeconomic benefits.** According to the drylands evaluation (GEF IEO 2024a), socioeconomic benefits frequently included income generation and/or diversification at the household level, as well as civil society engagement and development, access to communal services, job creation, and food security. The Mainstreaming Sustainable Land and Water Management Practices GEF TF project in Jordan (GEF ID 2631) created and supported six women's savings and credit groups (SCGs). These SCGs were trained on sustainable land management activities and provided with equipment and products required for their activities. The ARRDI and PLECO projects (GEF IDs 3383 and 3381, respectively) showcase how women's active involvement in land restoration activities and management of nurseries not only contribute to environmental conservation but also generates additional income for them and their families.

Youth Empowerment

54. **Youth engagement and empowerment remains limited; within the project portfolio analyzed for the water security evaluation** (GEF IEO 2023)**, only 11 percent of completed projects involved youth or youth groups. However, some projects have shown promising outcomes**. For instance, in the Ethiopia SLM projects (GEF IDs 2794 and 5220), initiatives such as water harvesting and small-scale irrigation not only improved water security but also enabled income and dietary diversification for households, reducing outmigration pressures, particularly among youth. Additionally, the program successfully treated over 860,000 hectares of degraded landscapes, benefiting smallholder farmers and landless youth through initiatives such as issuing landholding certificates in exchange for managing communal lands.

Resilience to Climate and Non-Climate Related Shocks and Stresses

55. **By implementing climate-resilient agricultural practices, introducing drought-tolerant crops, and promoting conservation agriculture strategies, projects aim to improve food availability, market access, and livelihoods while reducing dependence on external food aid.** For instance, the GEF TF project SIP: Mainstreaming Sustainable Land Management in Agropastoral Production Systems of Kenya (GEF ID 3370) successfully enhanced agricultural productivity by introducing conservation agriculture strategies and drought-tolerant crops. This led to increased food availability in pilot areas and households reported at least a 50 percent increase in agricultural production, accompanied by a significant decrease in reliance on food handouts. Similarly, the Ethiopia SLM projects (GEF IDs 2794 and 5220) delivered positive outcomes, ranging from diversified and high-value agricultural production to better market access and alternative livelihood options. Also, the SCCF project Supporting Climate Resilient Livelihoods in Agricultural Communities in Drought-prone Areas (GEF ID 6960) implemented successfully water-saving technologies, such as drip irrigation, siphons, irrigation hoses, and the development and implementation of on-farm water use plans, have been introduced to optimize water resource management. Moreover, activities aimed at creating alternative sources of income, such as the construction of greenhouses, opening of a sewing club, honey production, and involving women in adaptation measures at all stages, have been undertaken to diversify livelihoods and empower communities, thereby fostering resilience and promoting holistic development. These interventions have resulted in income gains, improved food and nutrition security, and enhanced resilience among communities in dryland areas.

56. **Projects adopt integrated approaches that combine climate-resilient practices, disaster risk-management measures, and income-generating activities.** By addressing underlying causes of vulnerability to climate and other shocks, and promoting adaptive practices, these interventions improve multiple dimensions of resilience, including food security, reduced exposure to climate shocks, and improved livelihoods. For instance, the LDCF project Building resilience in the face of climate change within traditional rain fed agricultural and pastoral systems in Sudan (GEF ID 10159) is being implemented and has introduced sustainable practices in agricultural production at the community level. This involves the introduction of greater irrigation efficiency in the management of water resources through the introduction of integrated women's farms, home gardens, and demonstration plots in dryland zones across nine states (West Darfur, Central Darfur, East Darfur, Western Kordofan, South Kordofan, Kassala, Red Sea, Northern and Khartoum state). These initiatives include environmental awareness programs, income diversification efforts, and the support for drought-resistant crops.

57. **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of resilience is essential for assessing the effectiveness of interventions and understanding their impact on vulnerable communities facing climate change.** Projects implementing M&E frameworks focused on resilience aim to measure changes associated with resilience, identify strengths and weaknesses, and guide

adaptive management strategies. For example, projects like those supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), including the Drylands Solutions Impact Program (DSL IP) and Resilient Food Systems Impact Program (RFS IAP), use tools such as the Self-Evaluation and Holistic Assessment of Climate Resilience of Farmers and Pastoralists (SHARP) tool.[5] This tool, linked to the Land Degradation Neutrality conceptual framework, helps measure changes associated with resilience of farmers and pastoralists to climate change. Furthermore, MTF projects, such as the GEFT TF and LDCF-financed Resilient, Productive and Sustainable Landscapes in Mali's Kayes Region project (GEF ID 10362) as well as the Ethiopia SLM program (GEF ID 5220), combine resources from different funds to deliver climate change adaptation and resilience benefits. These projects also integrate M&E frameworks to assess the effectiveness of interventions in enhancing resilience and enhancing adaptive capacity.

Institutional Capacity Development for Adaptation-Focused Work

58. **Institutional capacity development for adaptation is crucial for enhancing resilience to environmental challenges, with a focus on sustainability.** For instance, in Malawi and Ethiopia, where there is a tradition of decentralized and institutionalized environmental governance, multistakeholder platforms for environmental management have shown greater sustainability.

59. In the GEF TF project Towards a Land Degradation-Neutral Azerbaijan (GEF ID 10708), cooperative resource governance structures for pasture and forest management at district and community levels were piloted. However, post project, the sustainability of district-level multistakeholder committees was not achieved, indicating the need for ongoing support and evaluation of such initiatives. Similarly, the Community Driven SLM project in Niger (GEF ID 3382) invested in institutional strengthening for local government planning. While there was progress in adopting local-government planning tools, further institutional support is necessary for the optimal functioning of local-community management committees covering natural resource management and land tenure. Despite being assessed as mediocre at project completion, these committees played a valuable role in managing conflicts arising from local land-use and tenure issues, highlighting the importance of continued support for such initiatives.

60. **Sustaining multistakeholder governance platforms post project closure remains a challenge.** Therefore, there is a need to establish governance frameworks that ensure equitable participation of local actors and the delivery of local benefits, particularly in dryland areas (Stafford-Smith and Metternicht 2021).

Climate Adaptation Awareness Raising

[5] Source: FAO SHARP tool; https://www.fao.org/in-action/sharp/en/, accessed May 2024.

61. **Projects play an important role in raising awareness of emerging water security issues and reshaping government priorities.** Case studies reveal that these projects have effectively elevated the awareness of stakeholders, particularly in regions like Sudan and Burundi, where water security concerns were not previously given high priority. For instance, the Mainstreaming Groundwater Considerations into the Integrated Management of the Nile River Basin GEF TF project (GEF ID 3321) introduced stakeholders to the critical importance of monitoring groundwater resources and their impact on surface water availability.

62. **The CIEWS evaluation** (GEF IEO 2024d) **points towards the need to move from awareness raising to action.** Clear and user-friendly climate information enables communities and authorities to take timely precautionary measures and implement evacuation plans, thereby reducing the impacts of disasters and enhancing socioeconomic benefits. For example, the LDCF project Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Sao Tome and Principe for Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change (GEF ID 5004) focused heavily on improving warning mechanisms, such as the development of meteorological and community alert systems. However, the project falls short of providing tangible support for early actions during disasters. As a result, despite the improved warning systems, the affected communities face challenges in effectively responding to disasters due to a lack of practical support for early actions. On the other hand, the LDCF project CCA Growth: Implementing Climate Resilient and Green Economy Plans in Highland Areas in Ethiopia (GEF ID 6967), provided 500 rain gauges and trained farmers to adapt cropping patterns based on accurate weather monitoring amid changing climate conditions when traditional crops became nonviable. Ensuring usable climate data and training farmers empowered communities to make informed decisions.

MAIN TAKE-AWAYS

63. **Water security and access in agriculture are essential for food security, economic stability, and environmental sustainability.** Projects globally focus on improving water access and management in agriculture, such as solar water pumps and small-scale irrigation systems. Sustainable agricultural practices like agroecology and agroforestry enhance productivity, soil health, and biodiversity conservation. Investments in agricultural initiatives yield outcomes beyond food production, including income generation, poverty reduction, and enhanced food security. Agricultural initiatives impact public health positively through nutritious food provision but also pose risks like pesticide exposure; sustainable practices mitigate these risks. Agricultural projects adapt to climate change through water harvesting, drought-resistant crops, and climate-smart practices to safeguard food security and enhance resilience. These efforts collectively underscore the importance of holistic approaches to agricultural development that consider water management, sustainability, economic viability, and public health outcomes.

64. **The findings underscore the critical need for integrated and ecosystem-based approaches to sustainable water management, especially in light of climate change impacts.** It

emphasizes the importance of coordinating various aspects of water management, integrating climate change adaptation measures, and utilizing natural ecosystems to enhance water resilience. Examples from projects worldwide demonstrate the effectiveness of community involvement and stakeholder engagement in achieving sustainable water management goals.

65. **Climate Information and Early Warning Systems (CIEWS) are pivotal for mitigating climate-related hazards.** This involves establishing robust monitoring networks, deploying advanced technologies, and providing training to personnel. Additionally, addressing the "last mile" challenge by ensuring effective communication to all communities, especially in remote areas, is essential. Integrating CIEWS into broader disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate adaptation strategies is crucial for sustainability and resilience, aligning early warning efforts with wider development goals and priorities such as poverty reduction, food security, and sustainable livelihoods.

66. **The challenge of policy alignment and coherence presents significant hurdles in project implementation.** Issues like unclear institutional responsibilities and misaligned incentives hinder efforts in sustainable land management. Coordinating policies across administrative levels and decentralizing decision-making processes add complexity. Moreover, discrepancies between policy and project timelines impede policy coherence activities. However, evolving approaches, such as adopting integrated methods and employing phased strategies, aim to target policy coherence more effectively, demonstrating tangible benefits at local levels and influencing national policy making.

67. **Governance plays a critical role in adapting to climate change and managing environmental risks, particularly concerning natural resource management.** Strengthening governance in these areas is vital for promoting sustainable development and resilience. Examples include prioritizing governance improvements in drylands regions and facilitating stakeholder engagement led by local administrators to enhance resilience within regular rural development systems. Sustainability and ownership are essential aspects of strengthened governance, ensuring initiatives effectively address climate change impacts and endure beyond project completion. Engaging communities proactively fosters ownership by involving them in decision-making and skill-building activities. Synergistic partnerships and capacity building strengthen governance for adaptation, empowering communities to take ownership of initiatives and boost resilience. Both adaptive management and community engagement are essential elements of effective governance for adaptation, allowing for flexible responses to climate change impacts while ensuring active community participation and ownership.

68. **Private sector engagement in water security is limited due to the perception of water as a public good.** However, opportunities exist for involvement in resilience enhancement and multistakeholder initiatives. A more involved approach includes engaging companies that create water infrastructure as suppliers. For instance, one initiative engaged companies to import and construct water efficiency equipment such as sensor tap systems and dual-flush valves for

rainwater harvesting systems. Another initiative involved a company providing solar water pumps to communities. Wastewater treatment often involves private sector waste operators. Challenges in CIEWS include reliance on public funding and competition between governments and the private sector as service providers. Engagement in drylands projects is increasing, yet challenges remain due to market connectivity issues and lack of investment incentives (GEF IEO 2024a).

69. In the reviewed project portfolio, there is a strong focus on inclusion and empowerment, especially for women. **Despite cultural challenges, women are increasingly involved in decision-making processes and project activities.** In water management strategies, prioritizing gender considerations is essential for inclusivity and sustainability, acknowledging women's significant contributions. While gender considerations were less common in completed water security projects, ongoing projects prioritize them more. Overall, promoting gender equality in environmental projects not only addresses disparities but also yields socioeconomic benefits, emphasizing the importance of empowering women.

70. **Efforts in Africa aim to enhance food security and resilience to climate change by implementing climate-resilient agricultural practices and promoting conservation agriculture.** These initiatives seek to increase food availability, reduce dependence on external food aid, and improve livelihoods. Integrated approaches combine climate-resilient practices with disaster risk management and income-generating activities to build resilience to climate shocks. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks, such as FAO's Self-evaluation and Holistic Assessment of Climate Resilience of Farmers and Pastoralists (SHARP) tool, help assess the effectiveness of interventions in enhancing resilience across various projects and funds.

71. **Building institutional capacity for adaptation is vital for resilience against environmental challenges, emphasizing sustainability**. Decentralized governance models in Malawi and Ethiopia demonstrate effectiveness through multistakeholder platforms for environmental management. However, sustaining these platforms beyond project closure remains a challenge, highlighting the need for ongoing support and equitable participation of local actors.

MANAGEMENT ACTION RECORD

72. The Management Action Record (MAR) has been presented annually to the GEF Council since June 2006. It is the main accountability mechanism to monitor and report on the progress in implementation of recommendations of evaluations prepared by the GEF IEO. Prior to 2021, the Council endorsed the recommendations, and the GEF IEO tracked implementation of the recommendations. The GEF Secretariat provided a management response to the IEO evaluations and recommendations, but the specific actions included in the management response were not endorsed by the Council.

73. As a follow-up to the Professional Peer Review of the Independent Evaluation Function of the GEF (GEF IEO 2020), the GEF approach to the MAR was revised. As part of this revision, GEF management responds to each GEF IEO evaluation recommendation with an action plan, and the Council comments on and endorses this action plan. The GEF IEO then tracks progress in implementation of the GEF management's action plan. In the wake of the revised MAR process, the GEF Council began to endorse management's action plans in June 2021. The 2024 MAR is the second MAR prepared using the revised approach.

74. The management response to a GEF IEO recommendation indicates whether it agrees with the recommendation. Where the management agrees with a recommendation—including instances where it partially agrees—it is expected to identify specific actions, along with a time frame, where appropriate, to address it. In instances where management disagrees with a recommendation, it is not expected to provide an action plan to address the recommendation.

Rating Approach

75. For each of the recommendations for which implementation of the management's action plan is tracked, GEF Management was invited to provide self-ratings on the progress in implementation along with commentary as necessary. Ratings and commentary on tracked recommendations are also provided by the GEF IEO for validation.

76. The scale for assessing the level of implementation of the management action plan is analogous to that used in earlier MARs. However, the description of the ratings has been updated to reflect the revised MAR process. The implementation progress ratings are as follows:

(a) **High**. The management action plan for the relevant recommendation has been fully implemented.

(b) **Substantial**. The management action plan for the relevant recommendation has largely been implemented or most actions have been implemented, but some aspects/actions have not been fully implemented.

(c) **Medium**. Some of the actions listed in the management's action plan have been implemented but not to a significant degree. While some of the specified actions have been implemented, there is only limited progress in implementation of the key specified actions.

(d) **Negligible**. Specified actions have not yet been implemented or the progress made so far is negligible.

(e) **Not rated**. Sufficient information on implementation is not available to allow an assessment of progress.

(f) **N/A**. Not applicable may be used when subsequent decisions taken by the GEF Council supersede management's action plan.

77. The evaluation recommendations and the related management action plans may be graduated or retired from the MAR for one or more of the following reasons:

(a) **Graduated** due to high or, where appropriate, substantial level of implementation of the management's action plan; and

(b) **Retired** because the evaluation recommendation and related action plan are not relevant anymore, or further progress on implementation of the action plan is unlikely. An automatic reason for retirement would be if a recommendation and the related action plan have been reported on in the MAR for five years.

LDCF/SCCF MAR 2024

78. MAR 2024 for the LDCF/SCCF tracks progress in implementation of management's action plan for two GEF IEO recommendations: one for the 2020 LDCF Program Evaluation (GEF IEO 2022a) from December 2020, and one for 2021 SCCF Program Evaluation (GEF IEO 2022b) from December 2021.

LDCF Program Evaluation

79. **GEF IEO Recommendation:** Continue to enhance the likelihood of the sustainability of outcomes. The GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies should continue to carry out relevant actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the GEF Council document "Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments."[6] This should entail giving more emphasis to the project and context factors identified by this evaluation as affecting the sustainability of outcomes during project design and implementation.

80. **Level of GEF Management's Agreement and its response including specified actions: agreed**. The Secretariat acknowledges the GEF IEO's recommendation to continue to enhance the likelihood of sustainability of outcomes. In this regard, the Secretariat will continue to carry out relevant actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the Council document "Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments," as recommended by the IEO, and will continue to urge Agencies to emphasize contextual factors affecting sustainability outcomes. No timeframe was indicated.

[6] This Council document (GEF/C.57/08) was prepared by the GEF Secretariat and submitted to Council at its December 2019 session.

81. **GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in the implementation of its action plan, rating: substantial**. In this period, the LDCF continued to implement the priorities of the GEF-8 strategy which duly integrated the IEO's recommendation. It focused on the proposed dedicated programs, collaboration with financial institutions and whole-of-society approach, which serve as key levers for durability of adaptation outcomes. In this FY, the GEF Secretariat delivered five sub-regional adaptation workshops under the dedicated programs covering all the LDCs and SIDS. These workshops led to improved capacity of countries in designing effective and durable adaptation projects in collaboration with agencies, technical experts, STAP, and UNFCCC. These sessions have also led to strong ownership and engagement of countries in the projects, which is expected to translate into durable outcomes.

82. The GEF also strengthened its focus on leveraging large-scale funding from multilateral development banks (MDBs) and other financial intermediaries to complement LDCF investments for long-term outcomes. These include strategic collaboration with the World Bank International Development Association (IDA) for scaling up NBS in LDCs and partnership with the GCF and IFAD on a regional adaptation project in Great Green Wall region countries. Overall, the share of MDBs and Development Finance Institutions in LDCF programming has increased in GEF-8.

83. The whole-of-society approach was also integrated in several LDCF projects which were approved by the Council in the reporting period. These projects have included approaches to engage stakeholders across governance levels, inclusive community-based governance structures, establishment of multi-sectoral dialogues, collaboration with the private sector, and engagement of communities and civil society in decision making and implementation of adaptation activities. Such a wider societal engagement in projects would likely pave the path for greater ownership, improved monitoring, and a process of learning for durable outcomes.

84. **The GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress, rating: substantial** Ongoing GEF-8 efforts including dedicated programs, sub-regional workshops, leveraging funding, and the whole society approach are acknowledged. The IEO encourages the Secretariat to continue enhancing the likelihood of the sustainability of outcomes through actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the Council document Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments and continue to urge Agencies to emphasize contextual factors affecting sustainability outcomes.

SCCF Program Evaluation

85. **GEF IEO Recommendation:** The GEF Secretariat should acknowledge the semidormant state of the SCCF and—together with the key and emerging donors and stakeholders—develop a proactive action plan to revitalize the fund. Removing windows SCCF-C and SCCF-D, which are evidently unattractive to donors, targeting support under window SCCF-A towards non-LDCs—particularly SIDS—and refocusing the fund toward technology transfer and innovation in

adaptation in non-LDCs in window SCCF-B is the only way forward. In doing so, the Secretariat should actively articulate and communicate the SCCF's niche and brand its focused and distinctive roles in the climate finance architecture. In the short term, and despite the preference of traditional donors to focus on few, larger funds, the existence of funds such as the SCCF could remain a proven and practical alternative for donors to diversify their funding, or an opportunity for new and emerging or smaller donor countries in climate finance.

86. **Level of GEF Management's Agreement and its response including specified actions: partially agreed**. The GEF Secretariat agrees with the report's recommendation that "the Secretariat should actively articulate and communicate the SCCF's niche and brand its focused and distinctive roles in the climate finance architecture" and would like to point out it has been actively doing so. In consultation with donors to the LDCF and SCCF, the GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF and Operational Improvements July 2018 to June 2022 outlined a clear role for the SCCF, including the two aspects subsequently captured in this recommendation. The Secretariat will continue to further sharpen the focus for SCCF-A and SCCF-B, along the lines recommended in the Evaluation and currently detailed in the LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy (GEF 2022).

87. The GEF Secretariat does not join the report's recommendation that "Removing windows SCCF-C and SCCF-D… is the only way forward." Such an action by the Secretariat is not possible in absence of a decision by the UNFCCC COP. Further, while SCCF-C and SCCF-D have not been resourced, the GEF Secretariat has not received indication that the mere existence of these windows affects the willingness of donors to fund the SCCF-A and SCCF-B windows, nor did their existence preclude donors from contributing to windows A and B prior to 2015.

88. **GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in the implementation of its action plan, rating: high**. The GEF has been making strong progress in following up on the IEO recommendations, including a clear articulation of the niche and value add of the SCCF in the climate finance landscape, laid out in the LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy for the 2022–2026 period. The GEF has focused support under window SCCF-A on support for non-LDC SIDS. In conjunction, the GEF has been supporting regional workshops to build capacity of non-LDC SIDS to program SCCF-A resources effectively. These measures have resulted in robust adaptation concepts from these countries, with a total of $26 million approved for adaptation concepts presented under the SCCF-A window at the 34th and 35th LDCF/SCCF Council Meetings. The SCCF-B window is focused on technology transfer, innovation, and private sector engagement, as recommended by the IEO, and a 3rd Call for the Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation was issued on April 5, 2024.

89. A senior level specialist has been hired to further visibility and outreach of the LDCF and SCCF, under the dedicated program on Communications and Visibility Enhancement included in the LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy for the 2022–2026 period. Functions will include outreach to donors, visibility events and written products. The GEF has held pledging events for

the LDCF and SCCF at UNFCCC COP 27 and COP 28, resulting in donor pledges for the SCCF, including from new donors. The programming strategy for the LDCF and SCCF for the 2022–2026 period, which included financing scenarios for the SCCF, has been endorsed by the GEF Council and is under implementation.

90. **The GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress, rating: high.** The IEO acknowledges that the Secretariat has sharpened the focus of the SCCF-A and SCCF-B windows in the LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy, employed a senior specialist dedicated to the visibility and outreach of the LDCF/SCCF, liaised with donors that resulted in increased pledges to the SCCF, and the LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy with financing scenarios has been endorsed by the Council and is being implemented. This recommendation will be graduated.

91. Overall, the GEF Secretariat has made substantial progress in implementing both recommendations, enhancing project sustainability, and revitalizing the SCCF, with strong ongoing efforts to meet climate finance commitments.

References

GEF (Global Environment Facility). 2022. “GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF for the GEF-8 Period of 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026 and Operational Improvements.” GEF/LDCF.SCCF.32/04/Rev.01. GEF, Washington, DC.

_____. 2023a. “Management Response to Evaluation of the GEF’s Approach and Interventions in Water Security.” GEF/C.64/13. GEF, Washington, DC.

_____. 2023b. “Enhancing Policy Coherence through GEF Operations.” GEF/C.64/09. GEF, Washington, DC.

_____GEF. 2024a. “Management Response to the IEO Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries.” GEF/C.66/14. GEF, Washington, DC.

_____. 2024b. “Management Response to: Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF.” GEF/C.66/15. GEF, Washington, DC.

_____. 2024c. “Management Response to: Learning from Challenges in GEF Projects.” GEF/C.66/16. GEF, Washington, DC.

_____. 2024d. “Management Response to Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems.” GEF/C.66/17. GEF, Washington, DC.

GEF IEO (Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office). 2020. “Third Professional Peer Review of the Independent Evaluation Function of The Global Environment Facility and IEO Action Plan.” GEF/E/C.58/Inf.04. GEF IEO, Washington, DC.

_____. 2022a. *Least Developed Countries Fund: 2020 Program Evaluation*. Evaluation Report No. 147. Washington, DC: GEF IEO.

_____. 2022b. *Special Climate Change Fund: 2021 Program Evaluation*. Evaluation Report No. 148. Washington, DC: GEF IEO.

_____. 2023. “Evaluation of The GEF’s Approach and Interventions in Water Security.” GEF/E/C.64/01/Rev.02. GEF IEO, Washington, DC.

_____. 2024a. “Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries.” GEF/E/C.66/01. GEF IEO, Washington, DC.

_____. 2024b. “Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF.” GEF/E/C.66/02. GEF IEO, Washington, DC.

_____. 2024c. “Learning from Challenges in GEF Projects.” GEF/E/C.66/03/Rev.1. GEF IEO, Washington, DC.

_____. 2024d. “Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems.” GEF/E/C.66/04. GEF IEO, Washington, DC.

GEF STAP (Global Environment Facility Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel). 2020. “Nature-based Solutions and the GEF – A STAP Advisory Document.” GEF/STAP/C.59/Inf.06/Rev.01. GEF STAP, Washington, DC.

_____. 2023. “Policy Coherence in the GEF – A STAP Advisory Document.” GEF STAP, Washington, DC.

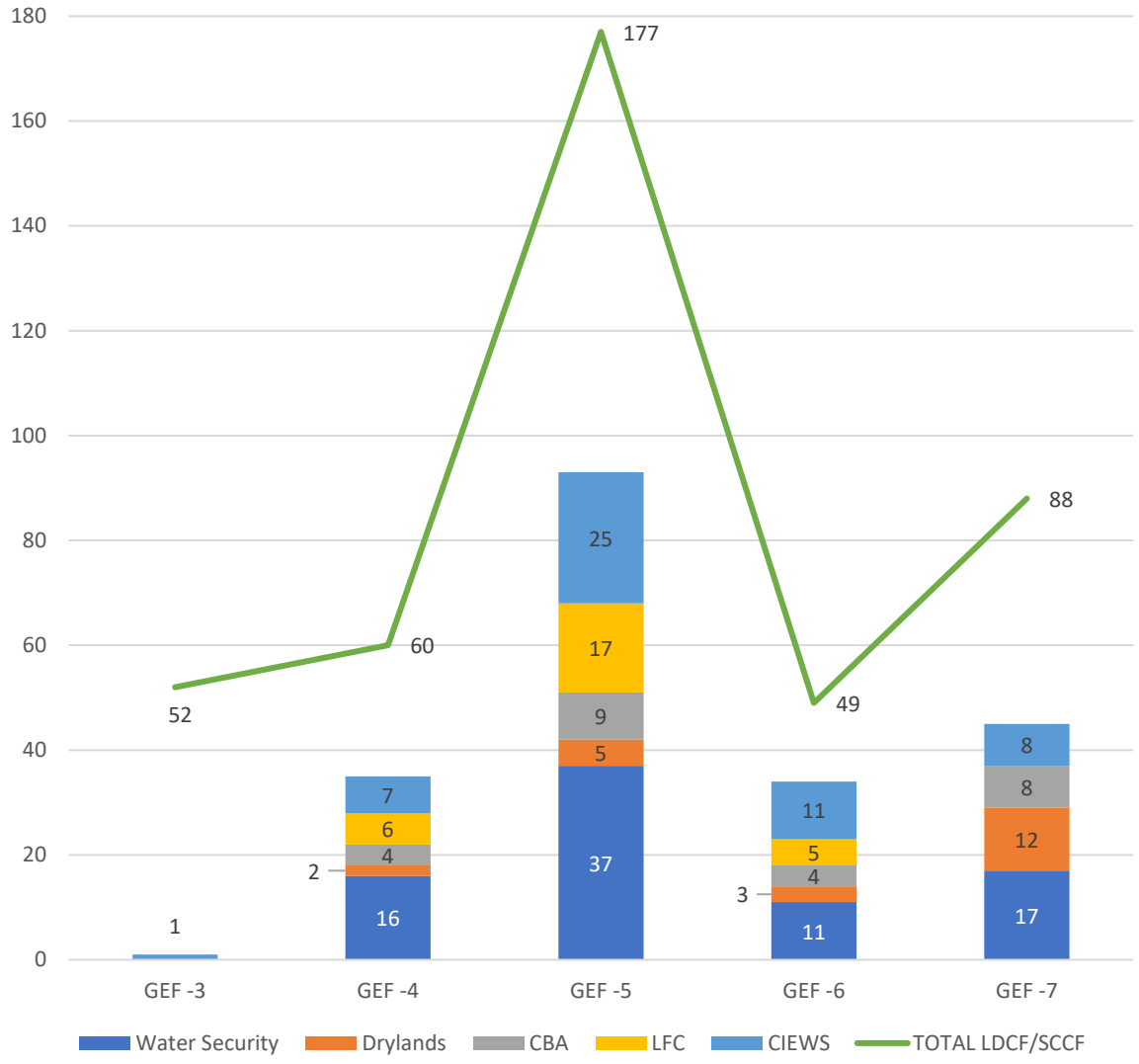
IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). 2019. *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land [SR1.5]*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Stafford-Smith, M., and G. I. Metternicht. 2021. “Governing drylands as global environmental commons.” *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 48:115–124.

ANNEX 1. AER 2024 PORTFOLIO COMPOSITION AND BREAKDOWN

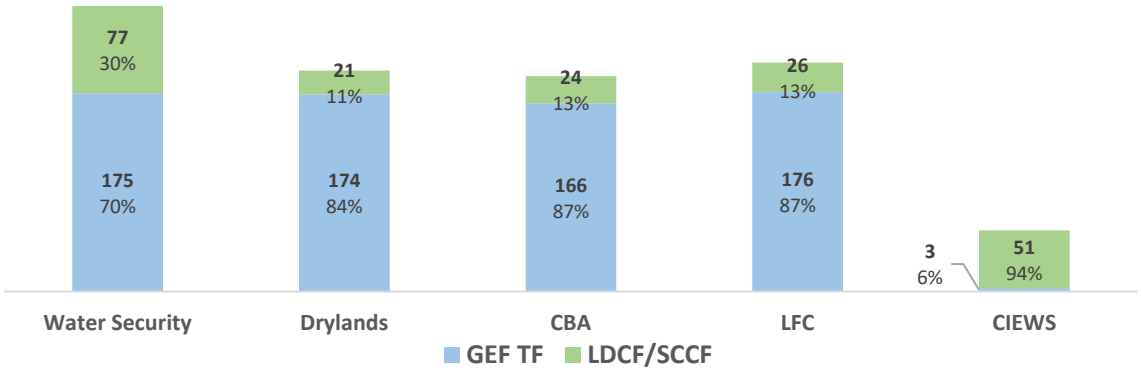
Looking only at the projects funded by the LDCF and the SCCF (including MTF projects), the number of approved projects in the portfolio has fluctuated across the various GEF replenishment periods (figure A1.1). The largest number of projects, 78, was approved during GEF-5. During GEF-4 and GEF-7, there was a moderate level of approvals with 30 and 37 projects respectively. Projects approved in GEF-6 had a slightly lower number at 24 projects, while only a single project was approved in GEF-3. This fluctuation is mainly attributed to the maturity of the projects and the methodology of the evaluations, which resulted in projects being included mostly from GEF-5. This trend is particularly evident in the Evaluation of the GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security and the Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems.

Figure A1.1: Distribution of LDCF/SCCF Projects by GEF Replenishment Period



The representation of LDCF and SCCF-supported projects varies across the five evaluations due to the nature and focus of each evaluation (figure A1.2). In three of the five evaluations, the LDCF/SCCF portfolio constitutes between 11 percent and 13 percent of the total number of projects reviewed. The remaining two evaluations, however, have a larger proportion of LDCF/SCCF projects. In the case of the water security evaluation (GEF IEO 2023), the higher representation of LDCF/SCCF projects is explained by the context in which these projects were implemented, as well as their approach, which often had an adaptation focus related to water projects. For the CIEWS evaluation (GEF IEO 2024d) 78 percent of projects were funded by the LDCF. CIEWS are integral to NAPAs and NAPs, providing the necessary data and forecasts to identify priority areas for adaptation actions, assess risks, and design effective adaptation strategies.

Figure A1.2: Number of Projects by Funding Source per Evaluation Reviewed



Half of the LDCF/SCCF/MTF projects, 85 of 170, were implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP; table A1.1). Twenty were implemented by the World Bank, and 15 were implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Table A1.1: Project Distribution by Lead Agency

Lead agency	Number of projects	% of projects
UNDP	85	50
WB	20	11.8
FAO	15	8.8
AfDB	14	8.2
UNEP	13	7.6
IFAD	10	5.9
ADB	4	2.4
UNIDO	3	1.8
CAF	2	1.2
EBRD	2	1.2
CI	1	0.6
IADB	1	0.6
Total	**170**	**100**

Note: ADB = Asian Development Bank; AfDB African Development Bank; CAF = Development Bank of Latin America (Corporación Andina de Fomento); CI = Conservation International; EBRD = European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; IADB = Inter-American Development Bank; UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme; UNIDO = United Nations Industrial Development Organization; WB = World Bank.