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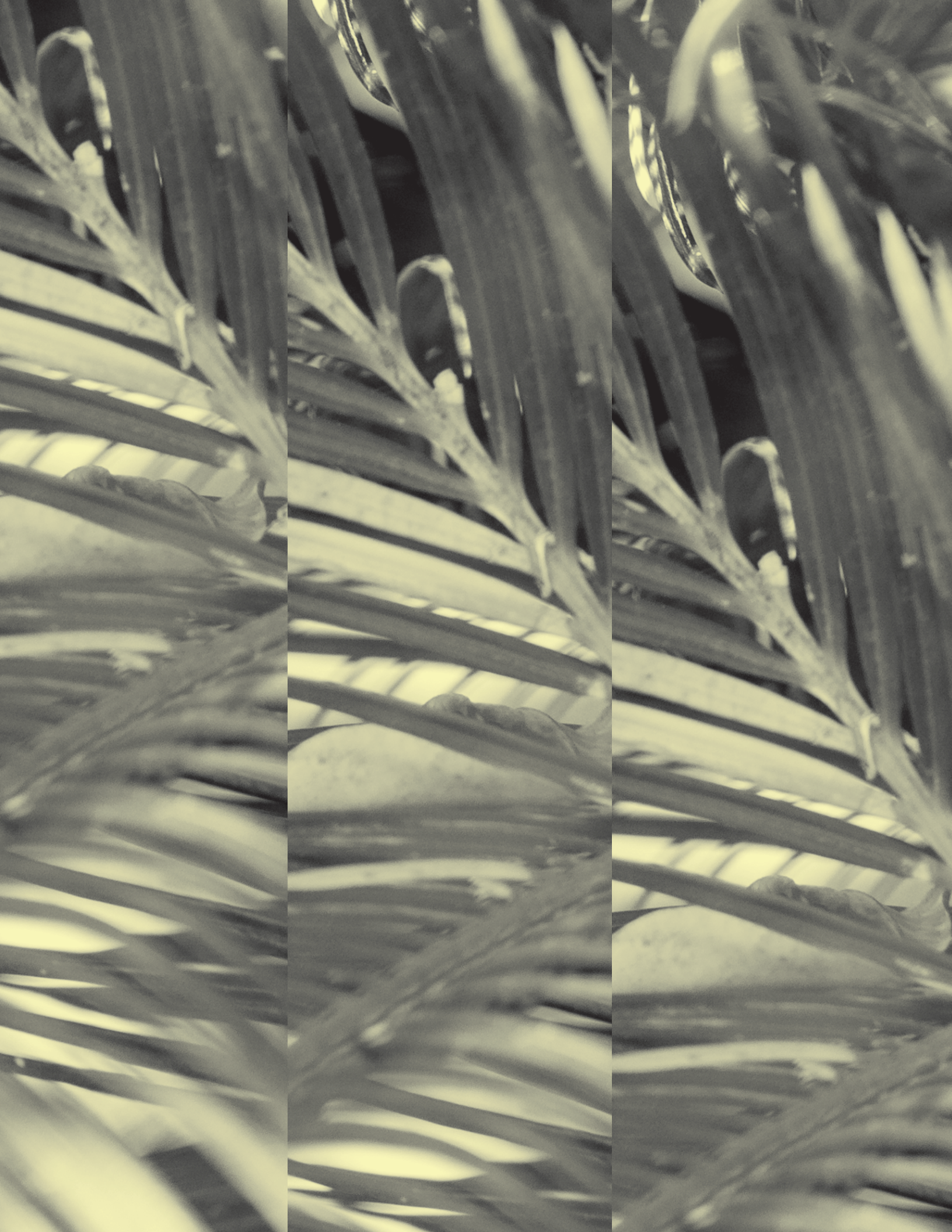
Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF

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Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF

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Foreword

Community-based approaches (CBAs) are a design modality that transfers decision-making power—and often, financial and technical resources—directly to communities or natural resource users. CBAs build on community knowledge, capacity, and interest in preserving their environment. Since the 1980s, development finance institutions and governments have increasingly used CBAs in environmental interventions to better involve local people and communities. Although there is no explicit mandate for Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects to adopt a CBA in their design, language supporting CBAs is reflected in GEF guidance, policy, and programming documents and in the GEF Small Grants Programme.

The GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) is pleased to present the Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF. This evaluation benefited from feedback from the GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat, the Indigenous People’s Advisory Group, the GEF–Civil Society Organization Network, and country stakeholders including operational focal points; national, regional, and local government officials; and many community members.

This evaluation assessed whether CBAs are present in GEF projects and programs, their characteristics, and how these approaches influence the effectiveness and sustainability of GEF interventions. The evaluation found that the approach is relevant for the partnership and that the GEF projects applying the approach are in partial alignment with good practice,

with improvements in recently designed projects. GEF CBA projects were associated with better performance ratings and the sustainability of these projects was frequently associated with behavior change and alternative livelihoods. The evaluation identified several lessons learned that are important for the GEF to consider; in some cases, they may be difficult to apply given the GEF project cycle and processes. Applying a long-term approach is challenging within GEF project timelines and the amount of time and resources allocated for project preparation. Other lessons underscore the importance of prior ex ante analysis and allocating adequate time and resources to processes such as capacity building and facilitation. These activities should be monitored to allow for an understanding of whether the processes inherent to the CBA are being well applied and allow for adaptive management.

The evaluation’s findings were presented to the 66th GEF Council in February 2024. The Council acknowledged the conclusions and endorsed the recommendations, taking into account the GEF management response. Through this report, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office intends to share the lessons from this evaluation with a wider audience.

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control was provided by Geeta Batra, then IEO Chief Evaluation Officer.

The evaluation team would like to thank the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, the GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group, the GEF-Civil Society Organization Network, and the GEF Agencies for their cooperation and assistance in providing relevant information and contacts. Marie-Constance Manuella Koukoui, Senior Executive Assistant, supported the evaluation team; Juan Jose Portillo, Senior Operations Officer, provided operations/administrative oversight. Nita Congress edited the report and designed and laid out the publication.

The GEF IEO is deeply grateful to the hundreds of community members visited during country case studies for their time and input, which were critical to the success of the evaluation. The final responsibility for this report remains firmly with the Office.

Abbreviations

CBA	community-based approach	M&E	monitoring and evaluation
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity	MRPA	Madagascar’s Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas
CSO	civil society organization	MSP	medium-size project
EP3	Support to the Madagascar Foundation for Protected Areas and Biodiversity through Additional Financing to the Third Environment Support Program Project	SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
FPIC	free, prior, and informed consent	SFM	sustainable forest management
FSP	full-size project	SGP	Small Grants Programme
GEF	Global Environment Facility	SPARC	Strategic Planning and Action to Strengthen Climate Resilience of Rural Communities
ICI	Inclusive Conservation Initiative	STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office	UNCCD	United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IPAG	Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
IPLC	indigenous peoples and local communities	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature	UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund	WWF-US	World Wildlife Fund–US

Executive summary

Community-based approaches (CBAs) involve communities and people in projects with both social and environmental objectives. CBAs give voice and decision-making authority to project beneficiaries, making them active participants rather than passive targets. CBAs play an important role in enhancing governance, and the inclusions and empowerment of communities – all of which can contribute to the durability and ownership of investments. They are thus an essential tool for project designers working at the environment-development nexus. While the use of CBAs is not mandated within the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the GEF and its Agencies have used CBAs for decades, notably in the Small Grants Programme (SGP).

This evaluation systematically assesses whether CBAs are present in GEF projects and programs, their characteristics, and how these approaches influence the effectiveness and sustainability of GEF interventions to provide evidenced-based lessons on their best use. In addition to looking at how CBAs affected and influenced the environmental outcomes of GEF projects, the evaluation also examines the impact of CBAs on socioeconomic co-benefits, gender equality, and inclusion in the GEF. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, including a review of completed and ongoing GEF projects that apply a community-based approach; geospatial analysis; five country case studies; and interviews with stakeholders from communities, national, local, and regional governments, civil society, GEF Agencies, the GEF Secretariat, the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group, and the GEF

Civil Society Organization. The evaluation portfolio of 190 projects applying a community-based approach from GEF-4 through GEF-7 amounted to \$1.02 billion in GEF funding, or 4.9 percent of total GEF funding between the start of GEF-4 and May 2022, and cofinancing of \$7.7 billion.

To characterize the variation in the extent to which GEF projects utilize CBAs, the evaluation team adapted a framework used throughout the evaluation, covering six dimensions of CBA good practice. The six dimensions are devolved decision making, devolved financial and technical resources, incorporation of local institutions and customs, legitimacy in the eyes of users, accountability of implementors to users and human rights and equality. The spectrum is used to delineate three levels of CBA utilization and also to assess GEF CBA projects' alignment with good practice.

Conclusions

CBAs are relevant for the GEF as reflected in their presence in the multilateral environmental agreements; GEF projects, programs, and policies; and national priorities. Although the approach is not mandated in the GEF, there is language that reflects key dimensions of CBAs (including active participation in project design and implementation) in the conventions the GEF serves, especially the UNCCD, the CBD, and the UNFCCC. Consistent with convention guidance, GEF focal area strategies—especially those for biodiversity, land degradation, and climate change adaptation—contain references to key CBA

concepts, and in some instances directly reference the application of CBAs. The GEF policies that focus on inclusion also include language supportive of CBAs, although without mandating the approach. GEF projects using CBAs broadly align with country priorities, although the extent to which countries are supportive of decentralizing decision-making to the community level and implementing comprehensive participatory approaches varies. GEF financing has provided opportunities for countries to innovate using CBAs.

GEF CBA projects are in partial alignment with good practice, with some improvements in recently designed projects relative to older projects. Only a minority of the CBA projects identified are considered to be “comprehensive,” with above-average ratings along the six dimensions of good practice. Areas of improvement include going beyond consultations to actively involving communities in decision-making, incorporation of local institutions and customs, ensuring the accountability of implementers to users, and recognition of human rights and equality. The devolution of financial and technical resources to communities—an important aspect of CBAs—has declined in recent projects. Almost 75 percent of recently designed projects did not mention or describe devolving resources as part of the project design. The share of projects that devolved financial and technical resources to communities decreased from 30 percent for completed projects to 23 percent for ongoing projects.

Strong examples of GEF projects or programs that support CBAs are found in the SGP and the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI). The SGP has a long history of supporting CBAs and is a built-in resource and mechanism for identifying bottom-up initiatives with a track record of implementation success and existing capacity. There were few examples from the evaluation portfolio of financial resources flowing to communities for self-management, although there are mechanisms in the GEF that support CBAs such as the SGP and the ICI.

The GEF project cycle presents some challenges for implementing CBA projects, both in terms of involving local stakeholders in design, and in allowing enough time to see results before project close. The amount of time and resources allocated during project preparation can limit the ability to conduct the outreach, engagement, and analysis that would allow projects to reflect the needs of communities as identified by the communities themselves. Furthermore, CBA projects typically involve more upfront activities with communities, such as socialization, group formation or reinforcement, capacity building, and participatory planning processes before other project activities such as small-scale infrastructure and livelihoods activities (selected by the communities) can be provided and supported by facilitators. The three- to five-year project cycle does not always allow enough time for conducting all these activities before project close.

Monitoring of CBA processes in MSPs and FSPs is weak. There is limited evidence of CBA projects tracking indicators that reflect activities central to processes associated with CBAs—such as the ability of groups to govern, the number of resources under the control of communities, the inclusion of vulnerable groups, community scorecards, actions taken to address any complaints, and participation in leadership roles and decision-making. The lack of data and indicators limits the GEF’s ability to adaptively manage CBA projects.

The GEF’s CBA projects have become more inclusive of women, indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), and youth over time, although systemic inequalities have not yet been addressed. Women, youth, and IPLCs are included more frequently in more recently designed projects. However, the extent to which projects explicitly address systemic inequalities that prevent their participation, particularly of women, was unclear.

GEF CBA projects were associated with better performance ratings. Projects that adopt a community-based approach are associated with higher outcome ratings than the overall GEF portfolio. CBA projects are

also associated with more frequent achievement of improved environmental conditions—such as improved land management, land restoration, carbon sequestration, reduction of wildlife poaching and illegal logging, endangered species protection, and water quality improvement—as well as broader adoption and socioeconomic co-benefits related to resilience, livelihoods improvement, poverty reduction, governance, and empowerment.

The sustainability of CBA project outcomes postcompletion was frequently associated with behavior change, and to some extent alternative livelihoods. Livelihoods activities were more likely to continue past project close if the activity was relevant for the local context; linked to local markets; and received continued support from the private sector, civil society, or another project. The processes associated with CBAs are best supported with continued engagement to ensure that targeted environmental and socioeconomic co-benefits are sustained. This conclusion aligns with the IEO’s finding in the 2017 Annual Performance Report that high stakeholder buy-in, financial support for follow-up, and sustained efforts by the executing agency contributed to higher outcomes during post-implementation (GEF IEO 2019b). Furthermore, previous IEO evaluations have identified factors that contribute to sustainability such as income-generating activities that link local community benefits to improved environmental management. Across country cluster evaluations conducted by the IEO, low stakeholder buy-in was a hindering factor for sustainability—this hindering factor could be addressed by well-designed and -implemented CBA projects.

The evaluation identified several lessons learned that are important for the GEF to consider; in some cases, they may be difficult to apply given the GEF project cycle and processes. For example, applying a long-term approach is challenging within GEF project timelines and the amount of time and resources allocated for project preparation. A similar lesson is the importance of setting realistic expectations as to what small investments at the

community level can achieve in a short amount of time. One potential mechanism to mitigate the long time required to for implementing CBA projects and seeing results is through building on the social capital and cohesion of existing groups versus starting new ones.


Other lessons underscore the importance of prior ex ante analysis and involving the right people in CBA projects. After identifying the right stakeholders, adequate time and resources must be allocated to such processes as capacity building and facilitation. These activities should be monitored to allow for an understanding of whether the processes inherent to the CBA are being well applied and allow for adaptive management.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should ensure that co-design of projects with communities is possible under the suite of GEF policies and guidelines, for projects where community partnership is a critical element. The ongoing review of GEF policy and guidelines should be done in anticipation of the proposed “whole of society” approach in GEF-9, which emphasizes stakeholder engagement across different segments of society.

Recommendation 2: Building on earlier guidance, the GEF Secretariat, together with the GEF STAP, should provide more clarity and guidance on when and how CBAs can be used in GEF projects. This would include examples of results indicators observed in projects and appropriate guidance to facilitate the use of CBAs.

Recommendation 3: The GEF Secretariat should develop an approach for tracking of devolved responsibility and/or financial resources to the local level for GEF projects as appropriate. Such tracking could differentiate between resources allocated to national CSOs, IPLCs, women’s groups, etc., as relevant.



1

Introduction

Development finance institutions use community-based approaches (CBAs) to involve communities and people—typically vulnerable or marginalized populations—in projects with social and environmental objectives. CBAs give voice and decision-making authority to project beneficiaries, making them active participants rather than passive targets. They are thus an essential tool for project designers working at the environment-development nexus. While the use of CBAs is not mandated within the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the GEF and its Agencies have used CBAs for decades, notably in the Small Grants Programme (SGP).

CBAs play an important role in enhancing governance, and the inclusion and empowerment of communities—all of which can contribute to the durability and ownership of investments. This is the first evaluation by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) that focuses on the implementation of CBAs beyond the SGP, in full- and medium-size projects (FSPs and MSPs). The evaluation aims to understand the application of CBAs in GEF projects, and the relationship between CBAs and performance; to assess the alignment of GEF CBA use with good practice; and to provide lessons for the GEF partnership.

While earlier evaluations conducted by the IEO and GEF Agencies have explored the role played by communities in influencing environmental outcomes, **this evaluation is the first to systematically assess whether CBAs are present in GEF projects and programs, their characteristics, and how these approaches influence the effectiveness and sustainability of GEF interventions to provide lessons on their best use.** In addition to looking at how CBAs affected and influenced the environmental outcomes of GEF projects, the evaluation also examines the impact of CBAs on socioeconomic co-benefits, gender equality, and inclusion in the GEF.

1.1 Background

Since the 1980s, development finance institutions and governments have increasingly used CBAs in environmental interventions to better involve local people and communities.

In this regard, CBAs emerged as a response to top-down approaches, which were criticized for imposing rules that did not always work on communities, beneficiaries, and resource users. In contrast, CBAs build on community knowledge, capacity, and interest in preserving their environment.

There is a substantial literature on the key elements, uses, and impacts of applying CBAs.

A CBA is “generally described as a bottom-up and strengths-based approach to strengthening community-level adaptive capacity, focused upon vulnerable communities.”¹ Because a well-implemented CBA involves “active, free and meaningful participation,” it holds the potential to strengthen local governance systems—which may serve to reinforce the objectives of the project (Kirkby, Williams, and Huq 2018). Specific measures of a CBA include the devolution of decision-making to communities (Alkire et al. 2001; Armitage 2005; Gruber 2010; IPBES Secretariat 2017), and the devolution of financial and technical resources to communities (Holmlund and Rao 2021). These devolutions of power serve to strengthen a project’s legitimacy in the eyes of users (Biermann and Gupta 2011; Gruber 2010; Kull 2002) and to ensure the accountability of implementers to users (Biermann and Gupta 2011). For example, the CBA practice of indigenous and community conserved areas and territories facilitates environmental protection through traditional practices and governance systems in line with indigenous/local rights, knowledge, and customary practices. In fact, indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) manage at least 17 percent of the global carbon stored in forestlands, despite being allocated

¹Of the many terms used to describe CBAs, the evaluation used this definition from the adaptation literature as best capturing the general concept.

only a small fraction of the donor funding disbursed for climate change (RFN 2021). Unfortunately, they receive only 1 percent of the benefits. CBAs can help address the issue that financial flows often do not reach the communities delivering the benefits.

Evidence from the literature demonstrates how CBAs can support either social (livelihood, poverty alleviation/well-being, governance, empowerment) or environmental (conservation, sustainability) objectives, or both simultaneously. This is in line with current development thinking: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to strengthen the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. CBAs have improved environmental conditions and, at the same time, lessened poverty and enhanced conditions for local stakeholders. Some examples follow.

- Community-based forest management has reduced deforestation and promoted carbon sequestration (Charnley and Poe 2007).
- Community-based adaptation approaches that involve participatory vulnerability assessments and community-based planning have been found to be effective in enhancing community resilience to climate change impacts (Bryan and Behrman 2013).
- Participatory urban wildlife conservation projects that involve preexisting community-based networks have been found to be effective in achieving positive social outcomes (Hobbs and White 2015).
- Community-based renewable energy projects have been found to be effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable development (Sovacool and Dworkin 2015).
- Community-based management for wildlife conservation contributed to higher wildlife density and lower density of unwanted species such as cattle (Lee and Bond 2018).
- A global analysis of the social and environmental outcomes of community forests found that a majority of

the cases reviewed reported positive environmental and income-related outcomes (Hajjar et al. 2021).

Critiques of CBA generally revolve around the issues, costs, and processes for recruiting and retaining participant engagement and addressing power asymmetries effectively. Robust CBA processes require recognizing local people’s identities, cultures, and values and providing meaningful participatory opportunities (Wood et al. 2018). CBAs also require effort and attention to participant recruitment and engagement as well as a focus on addressing power asymmetries to ensure equitable engagement in decision-making (Seymour and Haklay 2017; Tschirhart et al. 2016). The processes and activities associated with CBAs may require additional time and resources relative to other approaches—a potential drawback of CBAs.

1.2 The GEF and CBAs

Although there is no explicit mandate for GEF projects to adopt a CBA in their design, language supporting CBAs is reflected in GEF guidance, policy, and programming documents. The following paragraphs highlight this support, as well as summarize a key GEF CBA-based endeavor, the SGP.

The conventions supported by the GEF include language that either directly reflects CBAs or the key elements that comprise them. For example, the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) emphasizes integrated strategies that focus on improved living conditions at the community level and states in its principles that decisions on project design be taken with the participation of the local communities (UNCCD 1994). Consequently, “CBA” is mentioned in the various GEF programming documents and focal area strategies, most notably in the biodiversity and land degradation focal areas.

CBAs have been mentioned in GEF programming documents and focal area strategies since GEF-4 and with increasing frequency through GEF-8. CBAs are described in several of

the GEF-8 integrated programs. For example, according to the GEF-8 Programming Directions (GEF 2022a), the Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Program provides support for participatory land use planning, community mobilization, and civil society organization (CSO) involvement in all aspects of program implementation from planning to monitoring. Additional examples are found in the Amazon Integrated Program, which includes a focus on indigenous and community conserved areas; the Blue and Green Islands Integrated Program, which mentions community-based fisheries management; and the Wildlife Conservation Integrated Program, which includes community-based management and community-based monitoring and engagement. The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for GEF-8 has identified the “whole-of-society approach” as one of the entry points under the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), with community-led climate adaptation action placed at the center of the approach.

Consistent with CBA concepts, several GEF policies foster inclusion and prevent harm to stakeholders and the environment. The [GEF Stakeholder Engagement Policy](#) (GEF 2017a), the [GEF Gender Equality Policy](#) (GEF 2017b), and the [GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards](#) (GEF 2019) are generally supportive of CBAs, and sometimes require activities necessary for CBAs. While not mandating the approach explicitly, these policies contain provisions or recommendations that speak to the essence of CBAs—for example, the Stakeholder Engagement Policy provides guidance on participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E). However, their requirements (such as stakeholder consultations during design) do not rise to the level of a full-fledged CBA, which is intended to be a community-led process.

Recent guidance from the GEF Scientific and Advisory Panel (STAP) advocates for the use of community-based management. Specifically, the STAP’s [“Local Commons for Global Benefits: Indigenous and Community-Based Management of Wild Species, Forests, and Drylands”](#)

paper stresses the importance of supporting and strengthening communal management of high-value, high-biodiversity ecosystems by IPLCs to address the issues of weak central governance, lack of land tenure, and minimal capacity and resources that result in de facto open access areas (Child and Cooney 2019). The STAP recommends that GEF projects that focus on community-based natural resource management incorporate fundamental design characteristics aimed at the following: secure land and resource tenure; inclusive, equitable, and effective community governance; the enhanced financial and nonfinancial benefits that communities can gain from the sustainable use of natural resources; the inclusion of institutional drivers in problem analysis; and strengthening or establishing community-based management.

The SGP was created in 1992 with the purpose of directly channeling support to community-based organizations to address global environmental problems; it is a highly visible CBA example within the GEF. The SGP, presently administered through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with coordinating staff in each participating country,² provides small community-based grants. As of 2021, 110 countries participated in the global program, and 16 participated in the Upgraded Country Program.³ The most recent joint evaluation of the SGP by the GEF IEO and the UNDP IEO identified the program's additionality as its niche ability to deliver global environmental benefits through CBAs (GEF IEO and UNDP IEO 2021).

²This implementation structure will change with adoption of SGP 2.0, which will include two Implementing Agencies in addition to UNDP.

³The Upgraded Country Program started in GEF-5 and provided the option for countries to use their System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) allocation to design a larger intervention as a GEF FSP to implement the small grants approach across a particular landscape. The concept of upgraded countries will no longer apply with adoption of SGP 2.0, as per a GEF Council decision of November 2022.

CBAs have also been used in GEF projects by GEF Agencies.

GEF Agencies report incorporating CBAs in their portfolios, reflecting a desire to work with, and not above, communities and to involve them in decision-making and implementation of activities. Agencies highlight several benefits associated with the approach including improved local governance; peacebuilding in a postconflict setting; empowerment of communities, which can contribute to the durability and ownership of investments; improved agency for decision-making and community planning; improved self-management; inclusion of vulnerable or marginalized community members; and avoidance of elite capture. These benefits were associated with positive environmental outcomes.

1.3 Evaluative findings on the GEF's application of CBAs

Earlier evaluations by the GEF IEO and GEF Agencies have highlighted the important role played by communities in influencing environmental and socioeconomic outcomes. Notable CBA-related evaluative work by the IEO has addressed the SGP (GEF IEO and UNDP IEO 2021) and explored the role of local benefits in GEF projects (GEF IEO 2006). The IEO evaluation on mainstreaming biodiversity (GEF IEO 2019a) and the climate change focal area study (GEF IEO 2018a) include findings on the importance of community involvement in achieving environmental outcomes. The IEO evaluation of multiple benefits of the multifocal area portfolio (GEF IEO 2018b) discusses both the environmental and socioeconomic benefits associated with CBAs. Findings from evaluations by the IEO and GEF Agency evaluation offices relevant to CBAs are presented in the following paragraphs.

Local involvement and the provision of tangible local benefits was associated with positive environmental change in GEF projects. The GEF IEO found multiple links between local and global benefits (GEF IEO 2006), concluding

that local benefits play a central role in stimulating changes to human behavior to achieve and sustain global environmental gains. Some GEF projects made considerable achievements in developing local incentives to ensure these gains. Local participation in design and implementation was critical in building ownership, relevance, and the effectiveness of local incentives for environmental management—and vice versa. Project shortcomings often stemmed from an inadequate understanding of the social and economic dynamics of a community; institutions; and resource access, use, and needs. Win-win situations for global and local benefits proved to be unattainable in many cases, partly due to the incomplete development of alternative courses of action with a range of trade-offs among local costs, compensatory measures, and levels of environmental protection (GEF IEO 2006).

Community engagement was found to contribute to the attainment of environmental outcomes in GEF projects. Community groups actively participating in natural resource management have had a positive impact on project outcomes. Forest reserves co-managed with community patrol groups reduced poaching and the burning and collection of firewood (GEF IEO 2018b, 2019a). Robust stakeholder engagement during project preparation was linked to improved climate change outcomes (GEF IEO 2018a). A review of International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) projects found that the application of indigenous land management practices in the Philippines improved the environmental protection of indigenous lands (IFAD IEO 2020).

Positive linkages between CBAs and socioeconomic outcomes in projects were noted across several evaluations. The IEO's multiple benefits evaluation noted several socioeconomic benefits associated with multifocal area projects using participatory approaches. For example, participatory planning processes were linked to a reduction of conflict among resource users and more equitable access to natural resources, leading to increased income and improvements in diet (GEF IEO 2018b).

An evaluation of GEF interventions in least developed countries found that many GEF interventions with positive outcomes include income-generating activities that link local community benefits to improved environmental management (GEF IEO 2022d). An evaluation of World Bank interventions that address natural resource degradation found that when community formal mechanisms are put in place to empower and incentivize communities through co-management agreements, increased income was observed among fishing communities (IEG 2021a).

Evaluations by GEF Agencies and the IEO noted that good project design focused on participatory planning and meaningful integration of communities in resource management was a key factor in outcome sustainability. Bottom-up approaches guided by community priorities are linked to sustainability (GEF IEO 2022a), although the GEF may have missed opportunities to promote devolution of control of forest resources to local groups (GEF IEO 2022d). Several GEF Agency evaluations have highlighted the link between participatory approaches and community involvement and sustainability of results (ADB IED 2010, 2012, 2022; IDB OEO 2016; IFAD IEO 2019; Holmlund and Rao 2021). An evaluation of projects by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) found that poor understanding of existing governance and institutional structures on the one hand and the needs and priorities of the community on the other were found to pose challenges in project scale-up and sustainability (FAO 2023). Insufficient capacity of project participants (including communities) and insufficient funding past project close were also found to constrain the sustainability of project outcomes, as documented by several Agencies (AfDB IDEV 2013; GEF IEO and UNDP IEO 2021; UNDP IEO 2021). Thus, activities that promote capacity development and strengthen institutions were also linked to sustainability (GEF IEO 2022b, 2022c, 2022d).

The joint evaluation of the SGP found that the program's inclusiveness, demand-driven nature, and innovativeness

all contribute to its effectiveness at the local level and that the SGP has been consistent in its delivery of environmental results and in generating economic and social benefits.

The SGP was found to be highly relevant to environmental priorities, both in terms of the types of activities supported and the way in which activities are implemented using CBAs. The combination of environmental, social, and economic benefits was found to contribute to the program's relevance and effectiveness. The evaluation also cited the SGP's innovativeness in the way

it works with local partners by building trust, thereby reducing risk in testing innovations and fostering collaboration and dialogue. However, the program's ability to measure sustainability was found to be insufficiently nuanced and unable to capture the nature of its work (GEF IEO and UNDP IEO 2021).



2

Objectives, scope, and methodology

This evaluation systematically assessed whether CBAs are present in GEF projects and programs, their characteristics, and how these approaches influence the effectiveness and sustainability of GEF interventions to provide lessons on their best application. Understanding that these approaches may not have universal applicability, the evaluation considered the merits and challenges associated with their use. In addition to looking at how CBAs affected and influenced the environmental outcomes of GEF projects, the evaluation examined the impact of CBAs on socioeconomic co-benefits, gender equality, and inclusion in the GEF.

The key evaluation questions were derived from the objectives described above; a complete list of the evaluation questions is in the evaluation approach paper.

- How relevant have GEF projects that use CBAs been to the global environmental conventions, the national priorities of GEF recipient countries, and the GEF Agencies?
- How do GEF projects using CBAs align with the broader literature on community-based approaches?
- How have GEF projects that have used CBAs performed compared with those that have not used such approaches?
- Have CBAs influenced and contributed to better environmental and socioeconomic outcomes?
- What factors have influenced the usefulness and value added of CBAs to for GEF project performance?

The portfolio covered by this evaluation includes FSPs and MSPs from GEF-4 onwards; it excludes enabling activities ([annex A](#)). The SGP was excluded from the portfolio review because it has been evaluated separately (most recently in GEF IEO and UNDP IEO 2021); however, lessons from the previous evaluations of the SGP have been drawn on. The evaluation also conducted an analysis drawing lessons from the SGP and looking for

examples where SGP CBAs had been scaled up to larger interventions.

Based on a preliminary review of the GEF strategy (GEF 2010, 2014a, 2018a, 2022a) and the LDCF/Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) strategy (GEF 2014b, 2018b, 2022b), the evaluation found that references to CBAs or related concepts were most prevalent in the biodiversity, climate change (especially climate change adaptation), and land degradation focal areas. The evaluation portfolio consequently focused solely on projects from these three focal areas, as well as multifocal area projects with components from these focal areas.

2.1 Definitions and key concepts

For the purposes of this evaluation, CBA projects are those that are designed to apply a community-centered approach for natural resource management. A CBA is a modality of project design that transfers decision-making power—and often, financial and technical resources—directly to communities or natural resource users. Common features include (1) creation of local committees to manage processes or project activities, (2) external facilitation to support decision-making, and (3) community contributions (cash or labor).¹ The evaluation adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation to create a framework of key dimensions of CBAs in environmental interventions, as identified in the existing literature, that are relevant for the GEF.² The framework was used to

¹Adapted from Holmlund and Rao (2021).

²The academic literature posits several assumptions regarding the use of CBAs in environmental projects; in particular, (1) that community participation is essential for the success of environmental projects (Arcury, Quandt, and Dearth 2001; Derrien et al. 2020; Gadzama 2017; Serrano and Delorenzo 2008); (2) that community members have valuable knowledge and expertise that can contribute to the development and implementation of environmental projects (Arcury, Quandt, and

assess the alignment of GEF CBA projects with good practice (see [annex B](#)). The dimensions of CBA good practice assessed in this evaluation are as follows:

- Devolution of decision-making to communities (Alkire et al. 2001; Armitage 2005; Gruber 2010; IPBES 2017; Holmlund and Rao 2021)
- Devolution of financial and technical resources (Holmlund and Rao 2021)
- Incorporation of local institutions and customs (Alkire et al. 2001; Armitage 2005; Gruber 2010; IPBES 2017)
- Legitimacy in the eyes of users (Gruber 2010; Kull 2002; Biermann and Gupta 2011)
- Accountability of implementers to users (Biermann and Gupta 2011)
- Rights to land and resources (Alkire et al. 2001; Holmlund and Rao 2021), captured in the framework under the dimension of human rights and equality.

The evaluation team, in consultation with the GEF Agencies and the reference group, settled on a broad definition of community, adapted from the GEF Stakeholder Engagement Policy. For this evaluation, “community” means a group of people who have an interest in the outcome of a GEF-financed activity or are likely to be affected by it—especially resource users and other stakeholders such as local communities; indigenous peoples; and CSOs and community groups comprising women and men, girls and boys; and private sector entities. In this context, it is acknowledged that communities are likely not homogeneous, and that it is not always easy to use a geographical reference to define them.

Dearth 2001; Serrano and Delorenzo 2008); (3) that environmental problems are best addressed through a collaborative effort between community members, researchers, and other stakeholders (Arcury, Quandt, and Dearth 2001; Derrien et al. 2020; Gadzama 2017; Serrano and Delorenzo 2008); and (4) that environmental projects should be tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of the community in which they are implemented (Arcury, Quandt, and Dearth 2001; Gadzama 2017; Serrano and Delorenzo 2008).

2.2 Methodology

Methods

The evaluation followed a participatory, mixed-methods approach integrating a variety of data sources. The approach paper was circulated to reviewers and the reference group in April 2022 and served as a guiding document for this evaluation. The evaluation used the methods delineated in the following paragraphs to collect and triangulate information.

Document review. This review included the following: (1) a review of the multilateral environmental agreements—specifically, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the UNCCD; and the Minamata Convention; (2) a review of GEF strategies and programming directions from GEF-4 onwards; (3) a review of the GEF policies on stakeholder engagement, gender equality, and minimum standards on environmental and social safeguards; (4) GEF Agency strategies and documents; and (5) country policy and strategy documents for the five case study countries.

Portfolio review and assessment. A portfolio identification exercise was carried out to identify GEF projects that integrated CBAs into their design and implementation. As there is no marker or meta-data that identifies CBA projects, the evaluation team conducted a systematic, stepwise screening process to identify the relevant portfolio of GEF projects using CBAs from GEF-4 onwards in the three focal areas (biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation), including multifocal projects. The preliminary portfolio screen reviewed 1,626 projects, of which 276 were either directly identified as using CBAs by the evaluation team or suggested by the reference group, with members invited to submit projects from their respective Agencies for consideration. Of these 276 projects, 88 were completed projects with a terminal evaluation from GEF-4 and GEF-5; these projects became the completed project cohort.

The remaining 188 projects were ongoing; 86 of these, from GEF-4 and GEF-5, were dropped from the analysis to allow for a comparison between older and more recently designed projects. Therefore, the ongoing project cohort comprises 102 projects from GEF-6 and GEF-7. Using a project review template, project documents—Chief Executive Officer (CEO) endorsements, project implementation reports, midterm reviews, terminal evaluations, and/or independent evaluations if available—were reviewed for a sample of 50 percent of completed (44) and ongoing (52) projects that contained some degree of CBAs.³

Meta-analysis. A meta-analysis of 30 evaluations carried out by the GEF IEO or the evaluation offices of GEF Agencies was conducted to systematically review existing evaluative evidence linking CBAs with global environmental or socioeconomic benefits. Reports for thematic or corporate evaluations conducted since 2010 were included. The evaluation reports were assessed; those that referred to environmental themes (e.g., climate change, energy, water, sustainable transport, natural resources) were included in the analysis.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with the following key stakeholders: GEF Secretariat staff, GEF Agency staff, leadership of the GEF-CSO Network, members of the GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG), and representatives from the GEF STAP. Interviews were also carried out with country-level stakeholders, including community members, as part of the country case studies. (See [annex C.](#))

Country case studies. Five country case studies were carried out in Cameroon, Indonesia, Madagascar, Peru, and Timor-Leste, covering 28 projects. Country case study selection was based on prevalence of projects included in the CBA portfolio identified, ratings (outcomes and sustainability, with a mix of positive and negative),

³Simple random sampling was performed for ongoing projects, and cluster sampling (by focal areas) was performed for completed projects.

regional representation, focal area representation, and Agency representation. Country case studies were carried out from November 2022 through March 2023. The country case study methodology note in Part 2 of this report outlines the participatory data collection process including key informant interviews (with national, regional, and local government staff; implementing Agency staff; civil society; and academia), site visits, and community discussions. Geographic information system (GIS) data were analyzed at the site level where available to determine whether there were any observable changes in environmental conditions and whether these were sustained postcompletion. All country case studies were circulated to interviewees, who were given the opportunity to provide feedback on factual errors or inaccuracies before the case studies were finalized. The case study reports are presented in volume 2 of this report.

Triangulation. All members of the evaluation team, including IEO staff and international and local consultants, came together for a systematic triangulation exercise. This exercise allowed for building of consensus around findings, and identification of information gaps or inconsistencies that were then addressed by the evaluation team. The triangulation exercise was conducted horizontally (across data sources and methods) and vertically (across the different findings for each evaluation question).

Stakeholder engagement. At the approach paper phase, the evaluation formed a reference group. Representatives from the GEF Secretariat, the IPAG, the STAP, the GEF Agencies, and the GEF-CSO Network were invited to participate. The reference group provided comments on the initial approach paper; these comments are reflected in the finalized approach paper, and the responses to individual comments were noted in an audit trail posted to the evaluation webpage. This process was repeated for the draft evaluation report, which was submitted for review and comment to both the reference group and internal and external reviewers

before being shared with the GEF Secretariat. Comments received and explanations of how they were addressed are reflected in a second audit trail posted on the evaluation webpage.

Limitations and mitigation measures

There is no marker or meta-data that indicates those GEF projects applying a CBA. All projects are reviewed by the GEF Secretariat for compliance with the stakeholder engagement and other policies, but meeting the minimum requirements of the policy is not consistent with the concept of a CBA, based on the framework of this evaluation. Therefore, projects were manually reviewed and selected for inclusion in the evaluation portfolio based on relevance vis-à-vis their description of CBAs as defined in this evaluation. This preliminary identification exercise was supplemented by consultations with the reference group.

Recently approved projects could potentially reflect improvements in CBA project design, but as these projects do not yet have terminal evaluations, it is not possible to assess their performance and likelihood of sustainability. Data on performance and likelihood of sustainability ratings (found in terminal evaluations) are available only for projects approved during GEF-4 and GEF-5. These data are not available for ongoing projects. To mitigate this challenge, the evaluation drew on data on likelihood of performance and sustainability from additional sources including key informant interviews and country case studies. The evaluation also looked at ongoing projects and conducted a formative assessment of the CBA dimensions present at design to ensure consideration of current project designs.

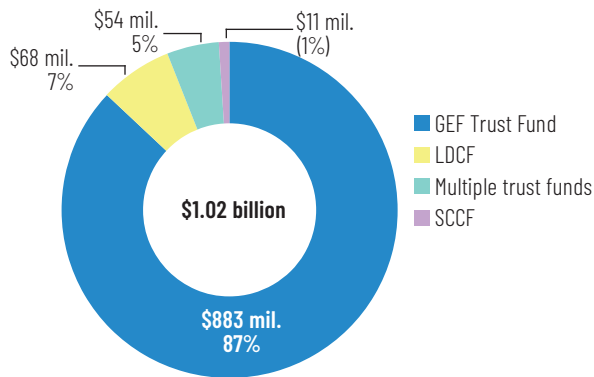
2.3 CBA portfolio

The evaluation portfolio of 190 projects (89 completed and 101 ongoing) accounts for around \$1.02 billion in GEF funding, or 4.9 percent of total GEF funding between the start of GEF-4 and May 2022, and cofinancing of \$7.7 billion.

For these 190 projects, 87 percent of the funding came from the GEF Trust Fund (figure 2.1). Multifocal area projects had the largest share of GEF funding in the portfolio (64 percent), followed by biodiversity (22 percent) (figure 2.2). Both multifocal area and biodiversity projects have a greater share in the evaluation portfolio by value relative to their representation in the overall GEF portfolio for the same period (23 percent and 14 percent, respectively). Land degradation projects represent roughly the same proportion by value of GEF funding in the evaluation portfolio and the overall portfolio. By region, projects in Africa accounted for the largest share of funding (41 percent), followed

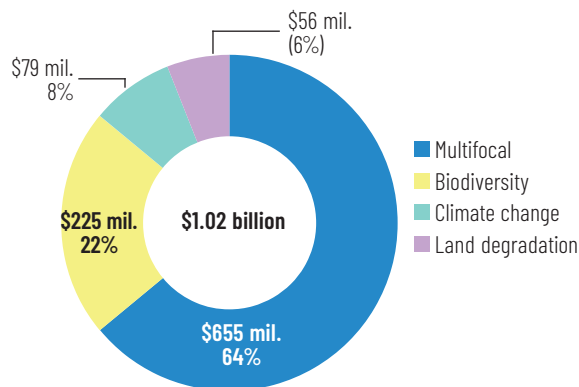
by Asia (30 percent) (figure 2.3). Global projects comprised 10 percent of funding and 6 percent in terms of number of projects. Relative to the overall GEF portfolio for the same time period, the evaluation portfolio has a larger share of projects (Africa comprises 31 percent by number and 32 percent by value in the overall portfolio). The Europe and Central Asia region represents a smaller share by value in the evaluation portfolio relative to the overall portfolio (10 percent). By modality (figure 2.4), 97 percent of GEF funding in the evaluation portfolio was for FSPs; by number of projects, MSPs accounted for 16 percent of the portfolio. By Agency, UNDP accounted for the largest share of projects with

Figure 2.1 Share of evaluation portfolio’s GEF funding by funding source



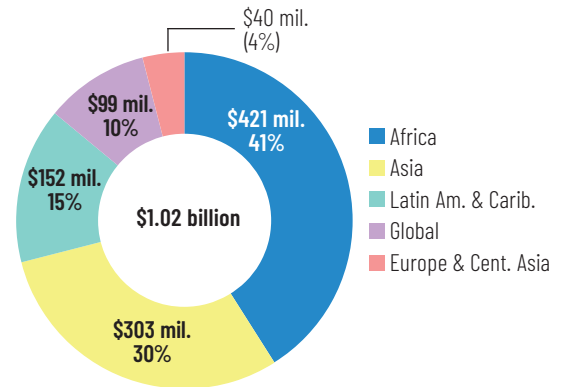
Source: GEF Portal.

Figure 2.2 Share of evaluation portfolio’s GEF funding by focal area



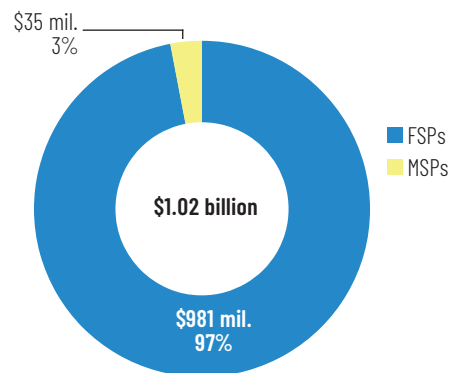
Source: GEF Portal.

Figure 2.3 Share of evaluation portfolio’s GEF funding by geographic region



Source: GEF Portal.

Figure 2.4 Share of evaluation portfolio’s GEF funding by project type



Source: GEF Portal.

42 percent by number of projects and 38 percent of financing. The World Bank follows, with 16 percent by number of projects and 22 percent by financing amount ([table 2.1](#)). The World Bank has a relatively greater share

in the evaluation portfolio relative to the overall GEF portfolio (10 percent by number of projects and 18 percent by value), as does FAO (8 percent by number of projects and 9 percent by value).

Table 2.1 Portfolio distribution by Agency

Lead Agency	Projects		GEF funding	
	No.	%	Million \$	%
United Nations Development Programme	79	42	388	38
World Bank	30	16	228	22
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	26	14	121	12
United Nations Environment Programme	18	9	73	7
International Fund for Agricultural Development	11	6	43	4
Conservation International	7	4	58	6
World Wildlife Fund	4	2	20	2
Asian Development Bank	3	2	28	3
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	3	2	7	1
International Union for Conservation of Nature	3	2	10	1
African Development Bank	2	1	13	1
Inter-American Development Bank	2	1	16	2
Development Bank of Latin America	2	1	11	1
Total	190	100	1,015	100

Source: GEF Portal.

3

Findings

While the use of CBA is not mandated in the GEF and there is no GEF document or strategy that defines CBAs or provides guidance on their application, the approach is present in the GEF portfolio. This chapter begins with an analysis of funding for CBA activities and the level of comprehensiveness of CBAs in the evaluation portfolio. An analysis of the relevance of CBAs for the GEF follows, which covers the multilateral environmental agreements, GEF policy and strategies, the GEF Agencies, and national priorities. An analysis of the extent to which GEF projects align with good practice is next presented; this uses a framework developed by the evaluation ([annex B](#)). The chapter continues with findings on the level of community involvement during the project cycle, followed by a discussion of the inclusion of women, IPLCs, and the private sector in GEF CBA projects. The chapter next covers findings on performance trends for the evaluation portfolio and concludes with findings related to sustainability.

3.1 CBAs in the GEF

Funding for specific activities or components directly linked to CBAs increased from the older to the newer cohort of projects. As a means of gauging how much funding is allocated directly toward community-based activities within projects, the evaluation reviewed component financing (funding for community grants, participatory planning, support for local institutions, etc.) and found the average share of GEF financing for CBA activities relative to total project financing (at design) increased from 57 percent among completed projects (GEF-4 and GEF-5) to 76 percent among ongoing projects (GEF-6 and GEF-7).¹

¹Note that "funding" here refers to the components or activities that supported a CBA within a GEF project and does not reflect the amount of money or resources managed by communities.

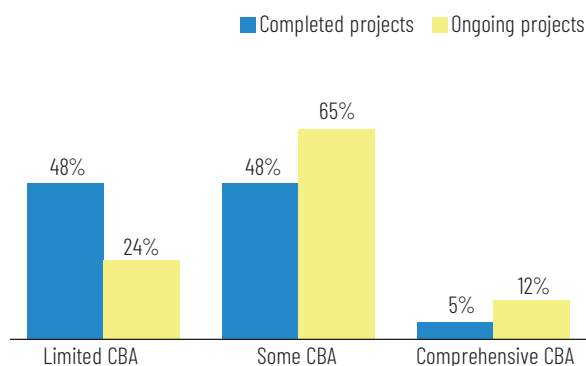
To characterize the variation in the extent to which GEF projects utilize CBAs, the evaluation team adapted the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation.² Annex B presents this framework, which covers the six dimensions of CBA good practice used in the evaluation's analysis of GEF alignment with good practice. The six dimensions are devolved decision-making, devolved financial and technical resources, incorporation of local institutions and customs, legitimacy in the eyes of users, accountability of implementers to users, and human rights and equality. The framework spectrum delineates three levels of CBA utilization: limited, characterized by regular participation of community groups in project design, implementation, and/or evaluation; some, which entails clear community influences over decision-making; and comprehensive, characterized by community control over project decisions and resources (also referred to by some implementers as community-driven approaches; see Alkire et al. 2001; Holmlund and Rao 2021).

To assess their degree of CBA utilization, each project in the evaluation portfolio was assigned to a spectrum category based on its score on the six dimensions. Projects that scored above average on one to two dimensions were considered to have limited CBA utilization, projects that scored above average in three to four dimensions were considered to have some CBA utilization, and projects that scored above average in five to six dimensions were considered to have comprehensive CBA utilization. As shown in figure 3.1, more recently designed projects have improved in terms of their incorporation of the CBA dimensions, but comprehensive CBA projects are still in the minority.

The types of participatory approaches applied by GEF CBA projects were similar across focal areas, and no major differences were noted between ongoing and completed

²This framework was adapted with permission from the authors. ©International Association for Public Participation: www.iap2.org.

Figure 3.1 Level of CBA in the evaluation portfolio, by project status



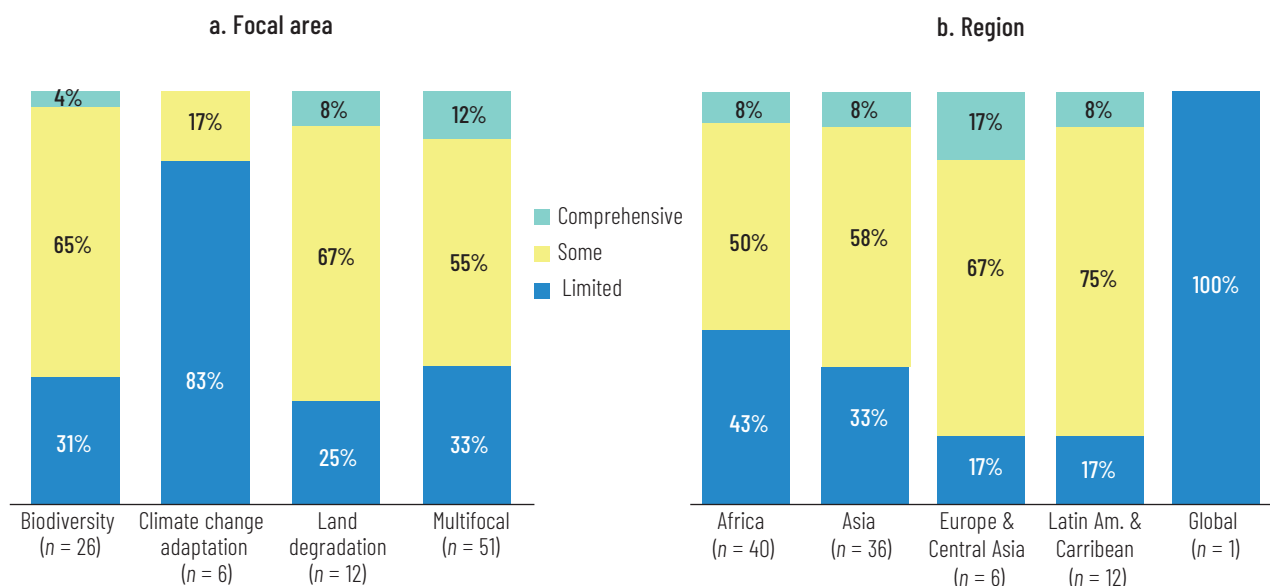
Note: $n = 95$.

projects. The types of activities noted included the following: participatory mapping, participatory planning processes, group formation and capacity building (including technical and financial skills), support for ongoing meetings and trainings, and community management arrangements.

Comprehensive CBA projects were concentrated in the multifocal area. The multifocal area had the largest share of comprehensive CBA projects, followed by the land degradation focal area, which has a larger share of projects with some CBA. None of the climate change adaptation projects were designated as comprehensive CBA projects (figure 3.2a). The largest share of comprehensive CBA projects was in the Europe and Central Asia region, which only accounted for six projects (figure 3.2b).

3.2 Relevance of CBAs for and in the GEF

While the application of CBAs is not mandated in the GEF and there is no GEF document or strategy that defines CBAs or provides guidance for their application, elements supportive of CBAs are evident in GEF policies and strategies. This section assesses the relevance of CBAs vis-à-vis the multilateral environmental agreements, the GEF focal

Figure 3.2 Level of CBA in the evaluation portfolio by focal area and region

Note: n = 95.

area strategies and programs, GEF policies, the GEF Agencies, and national strategies.

Multilateral environmental agreements

The global conventions supported by the GEF include language linked to and supportive of CBAs that emphasize the needs of local resource users and promote participatory approaches.

The UNCCD recognizes that to achieve its objectives, it must focus on long-term integrated strategies that focus, among other priorities, on “sustainable management of land and water resources, leading to improved living conditions, in particular at the community level” (Article 2). It also states that decisions on the design and implementation of programs be “taken with the participation of population and local communities” (Article 3).

Under the obligation of affected country parties in Article 5, the UNCCD states that country parties should “address the underlying causes of desertification and pay special attention to the socio-economic factors contributing to desertification processes...

and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, with the support of non-governmental organizations, in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.” Article 10 on principles promotes policies and frameworks to “develop cooperation and coordination, in a spirit of partnership, between the donor community, governments at all levels, local populations and community groups, and facilitate access by local populations to appropriate information and technology.” Article 13 states that measures to support action programs should include “increased flexibility in project design, funding and implementation in keeping with the experimental, iterative approach indicated for participatory action at the local community level.” Article 19 promotes capacity building through “full participation at all levels of local people, particularly at the local level, especially women and youth, with the cooperation of non-governmental and local organizations” and “training field agents and members of rural organizations in participatory approaches.” Article 21 on financial mechanisms directs the parties to “consider approaches and

policies that facilitate the establishment...of mechanisms...including those involving participation of non-governmental organizations, to channel financial resources rapidly and efficiently to the local level in affected developing country Parties.”

The CBD promotes an approach that addresses the needs of the environment and communities. It states that parties should “promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas with a view to further protection of these areas” (Article 8). In its preamble, the CBD recognizes the vital role that women play and affirms the “need for full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation.”

Article 6 of the UNFCCC states that the parties “shall (promote) public participation in addressing climate change and its effects and developing adequate responses.” The relevance of CBAs for climate change adaptation is clear in the UNFCCC’s introduction to adaptation and resilience: “Adaptation is a critical component of the long-term global response to climate change to protect people, livelihoods and ecosystems. Parties acknowledge that adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, considering vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems.”

Consistent with convention guidance, GEF focal area strategies and programming directions from GEF-4 through GEF-8 show increasing references to CBAs and the key elements associated with them. This is especially the case for the biodiversity and land degradation focal areas, but also for the international waters focal area. Integrating the human-environment nexus is increasingly mentioned in GEF programming documents beginning in GEF-4, with a general reference to supporting local communities. This trend culminates in the most recent GEF-8 strategy, which features the Healthy Planet, Healthy People framework as formal recognition of the interdependency between human well-being and a healthy environment.

GEF strategies and programs

The following paragraphs describe how CBAs and associated concepts are embedded in GEF focal area strategies, in the GEF’s shift to multifocal area interventions and programs, and in the SGP.

Biodiversity

The GEF-4 Programming Directions discusses full recognition of support to protected area conservation and management by communities living in and near protected areas (GEF 2007). The GEF-5 Programming Directions (GEF 2010) emphasizes capacity building of IPLCs and women in its biodiversity focal area strategy. The focal area objective of improving sustainability of protected areas describes financing for and representation of local communities. The strategy refers to innovations to support the capacity of community and smallholder organizers to participate in the identification, development, and implementation of solutions. The strategy indicates it will provide support for the development of community-level rights-based management areas at the boundaries of marine protected areas. In addition to being viewed as partners in the implementation of interventions, IPLCs are also seen as potential partners for co-management of protected areas. There is limited mention of CBAs or related terms in the GEF-6 Programming Directions biodiversity focal area strategy (GEF 2014a).

Within the biodiversity focal area strategy laid out in the GEF-7 Programming Directions (GEF 2018a), the Global Wildlife Program emphasizes enhanced representation of women and other marginalized groups in decision-making and management systems, and indicates it will support the development of policy frameworks and capacity building for community-based natural resource management. Programming targeted to IPLCs is presented through the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI). The ICI recognizes indigenous peoples as stewards of the global environment and highlights the historical engagement of IPLCs

in GEF projects (MSPs, FSPs, and the SGP). Per the strategy, the success of these projects—particularly SGP initiatives—shows the potential impact of larger investments and provides a dedicated window to respond to funding requests from IPLCs; see [box 3.1](#) for more information on the ICI. Efforts to continue the participation of IPLCs and women in the design, implementation, and management of protected areas is highlighted, as is co-management.

The biodiversity focal area strategy presented in the GEF-8 Programming Directions (GEF 2022a) highlights efforts to continue to promote empowerment, participation, and capacity building of IPLCs—especially women—in the design, implementation, and management of protected area projects including indigenous and community conserved areas. The strategy also mentions protected area co-management with a focus on recognition and realization of rights. GEF-8 includes another round of funding for the ICI introduced in GEF-7, which will provide support directly to IPLCs in the form of grants proposed, managed, and implemented by IPLCs.

Land degradation

In GEF-4, the land degradation focal area strategy includes systematic large-scale application and dissemination of sustainable, community-based farming and forest management systems. Under the sustainable forest management (SFM) portfolio, the strategy indicates that financing associated with harvesting forest products will be used for small, pilot, local community-based demonstration projects. The GEF-6 Programming Directions (GEF 2014a) mention both participatory decision-making and incorporation of local knowledge. Smallholder farmers' involvement in community-based agricultural management and participatory decision-making is promoted, and there are references to efforts to empower local communities.

In the GEF-7 Programming Directions (GEF 2018a), the land degradation focal area continues to highlight

participatory land use planning. The Food Systems, Land Use, and Restoration Impact Program (GEF ID 10201) highlights multistakeholder dialogues to ensure involvement of local communities, local governments, indigenous peoples, and women. The SFM Impact Program strategy indicates it will pay particular attention to working with forest-dependent communities in the management of their own forest resources. The Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (GEF ID 10208) discusses inclusive governance.

In the GEF-8 Programming Directions (GEF 2022a), the land degradation focal area strategy mentions strengthening community-based natural resource management; it highlights that restoration and SFM interventions will be mainly implemented through CBAs. This focal area strategy also promotes good, effective, and participatory land and water governance.

International waters

In the GEF-6 Programming Directions (GEF 2014a), local communities are identified as essential elements for natural resource management. Empowerment of local communities in relation to alternative livelihoods activities is referenced. A strategy to scale up successful local initiatives that were driven by communities is a key element of the large marine ecosystem initiatives.

Multifocal area and integrated/impact programs

The SFM Program as described in the GEF-6 Programming Directions (GEF 2014a) highlights the importance of local communities and indigenous groups, and the involvement of women. The program emphasizes local participation in decision-making and governance, and community-focused restoration. Several impact programs covered under the GEF-8 Programming Directions (GEF 2022a) mention CBAs, as the following examples illustrate:

- **Ecosystem Restoration Impact Program:** Support is provided for participatory land use planning; community

Box 3.1 Devolved financial and technical resources in the GEF

There were limited examples of projects in countries with devolved funding and technical resources. Examples were found in Timor-Leste's Strengthening Community Resilience to Climate-induced Disasters in the Dili to Ainaro Road Development Corridor (GEF ID 5056); and Indonesia's Citarum project (GEF ID 3279), Strategic Planning and Action to Strengthen Climate Resilience of Rural Communities in Nusa Tenggara Timur Province (SPARC) (GEF ID 4340), and Strengthening of Social Forestry in Indonesia (GEF ID 9600). In these projects, communities were given grants that they managed directly through community groups either formed or supported by the GEF projects.

Within the GEF partnership, there are additional mechanisms for devolved financial and technical resources. The first is through the SGP, which allocates small amounts of financing directly to communities. The SGP has also been used in delivering community-based components for FSPs. The 2016 IEO Evaluation of Support to Protected Areas mentions multiple examples of SGP projects operating alongside or embedded in FSPs, but also points out varying levels of coordination between SGP country programs and other GEF projects (GEF IEO 2016). The Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS6) highlighted that "good integration of well-established SGP national programs with the respective overall GEF country portfolio—possibly through a formal mandate to deliver the community-level components of GEF projects with the active participation of local communities—can increase the likelihood of sustainability and generate cost savings to the GEF as a whole" (GEF IEO 2017).

In the evaluation portfolio, there were few examples of projects that scaled up SGP activities. CREW+: An Integrated Approach to Water and Wastewater Management Using Innovative Solutions and Promoting Financing in the Wider Caribbean Region (GEF ID 9601) includes a component linking the project activities to the SGP through the development of community-based livelihood initiatives related to wastewater management and integrated water management. Another example is from the Strategic Investment Program for SLM (Sustainable Land Management) in Sub-Saharan Africa (GEF ID 3403) which included a target of identifying and promoting three SGP projects for scale-up. Aside from these, the portfolio review did not uncover a strong track record of SGP integration into GEF MSPs and FSPs. Agency and GEF stakeholders indicated that a possible explanation is that project documents are not explicit about basing their activities from SGP grants even if they are based on previous SGP work; therefore, this was not captured by the IEO analysis, which looked for explicit references to the SGP. SGP program staff report that, on average, 14 percent

of SGP projects have been scaled up or replicated, with the most recent SGP annual report noting that 159 SGP projects were replicated or scaled up (UNDP 2022). SGP staff indicated that it is likely that there is considerable underreporting of SGP project scale-up because of the longer time spans required for projects to show results.

The ICI is another GEF initiative that provides devolved financial and technical resources. It is aimed at promoting sustainable development and biodiversity conservation by addressing the needs and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. Through the ICI, financial and technical support is provided to subprojects developed and executed by Indigenous Peoples Organizations. The ICI is directed by Indigenous peoples and the subprojects were selected by Indigenous peoples. This includes promoting community-based conservation approaches, strengthening governance and rights frameworks, and enhancing the capacity of these communities to participate in sustainable development activities.

The ICI is unique within the GEF, as it was designed and is led by indigenous peoples, through the support and leadership of the GEF's IPAG. The GEF-7 allocation for the ICI was \$25 million, of which 80 percent is allocated to support IPLC-led initiatives in priority areas that achieve global environmental benefits through improved large-scale management of IPLC lands, territories, and resources. Other activities include capacity building, leadership in international environmental policy, and knowledge sharing. The initial call for proposals received over 400 applications, of which 9 were selected for financing. A global steering committee comprised of IPLC representatives from the subprojects leads the governance of the project. An interim steering committee of senior IPLC representatives guided the design of the project and selected the subprojects. Funding is channeled through the lead Agencies (IUCN and Conservation International) directly to IPLC executing agencies. It is estimated that each of the nine proposals selected during the initial round will receive \$1 million. Startup of the initiative after approval in GEF-7 was delayed because of the pandemic, but many of the projects are in the first year of on-the-ground implementation.

The GEF provides devolved funding and technical resources to communities through support to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, a fund that provides financial and technical resources to CSOs to conserve biodiversity and support communities. The GEF provides similar support through funding to conservation trust funds.

mobilization, and CSO involvement in all aspects of program implementation from planning to monitoring; and implementing activities and solutions on the ground with active involvement of local stakeholders, in particular local actors, through gender-responsive CBAs.

- **Amazon Impact Program:** Key activities listed include improving land tenure rights and policies; indigenous and community conserved areas are mentioned.
- **Blue and Green Islands Impact Program:** The programming directions mention improving community-based fisheries management.
- **Wildlife Conservation Impact Program:** Potential activities include community-based management, notably efforts to increase the security of local resource access, rights, and land tenure; community-based monitoring and engagement; and increasing and clarifying community and IPLC rights to manage and use resources.

Small Grants Programme

There is limited mention of the SGP in the GEF-4 strategy, but from GEF-5 onwards it is consistently described as a mechanism for civil society and local communities to directly access GEF resources. In the GEF-6 strategy, it is discussed as a means to empower poor and vulnerable communities so they become direct and active participants actors in environmental and sustainable development work, stressing the importance of their active participation. In GEF-7, the SGP is framed as financing community-led initiatives to address global environmental issues. In the GEF-8 strategy, the SGP is presented in terms of the critical role of local action in delivering global environmental commitments, framing the SGP as a bottom-up approach for the GEF.

LDCF/SCCF

The GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF (GEF 2014b) notes that the GEF Adaptation Program will continue to pursue approaches

and adhere to principles that have proven successful, such as community-based adaptation. Community-based adaptation is listed as a cross-sectoral priority under the LDCF strategy. The strategy contains a box presenting definitions and examples of best practice associated with community-based adaptation, including South-South knowledge sharing. The strategy states that “Looking ahead, the GEF will continue to view CBA as an important component of its support towards comprehensive, country- and stakeholder-owned adaptation.” The strategy also mentions that, in addition to community-based adaptation projects, the LDCF and SCCF portfolios will promote community empowerment through training, advocacy, and improved local-level planning, recognizing that capacity building and improved community-level decision-making are important steps toward vulnerability reduction.

There is no mention of community-based adaptation in the 2018 adaptation strategy (GEF 2018b). Instead, much of the discussion around work in communities is on promoting alternative livelihoods or on making existing livelihoods more resilient to climate change. According to the GEF Secretariat, this omission is voluntary to avoid confusion and duplication with LDCF and SCCF strategies. The omission should be seen in association with the focus on resilience in the context of land, landscapes, and value chains. The 2022 strategy (GEF 2022b) describes a whole-of-society approach with a focus on inclusion and locally led action, with full engagement of communities, civil society, and indigenous peoples. This strategy proposes subindicators, one of which is the number of local community organizations benefiting from and/or engaged in institution strengthening, partnerships, or financing. The whole-of-society approach emphasizes local stakeholders as participants in decision-making processes, rather than solely as beneficiaries or recipients of support. The strategy reflects the engagement of local communities in project design and implementation as an emerging priority for the GEF, and it includes an indicator for LDCF and SCCF projects.

GEF policies

The GEF policies that focus on inclusion (those covering stakeholder engagement, gender equality, and environmental and social safeguards) include language supportive of CBAs. These policies mandate stakeholder engagement and the incorporation of gender considerations and ensure that there is mitigation against harm to communities affected by projects—for example, through free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)—but they do not require that GEF projects apply a design that centers communities in project activities. The policies do require that all GEF-financed activities, at a minimum, inform or consult with communities regarding their activities; the level of community engagement required is not considered a CBA as defined in this evaluation.

Stakeholder Engagement Policy. This policy promotes the inclusive and meaningful participation of stakeholders in the GEF's governance and operations. The policy stipulates that Agencies must provide a description of consultations that occurred during project development and plans (and associated resources) for engagement throughout the project cycle. Guidelines on policy implementation (GEF 2018c) detail what is meant by meaningful consultation and participation, stressing that it is a two-way process that should begin early in project identification and planning and continue throughout the project cycle, should consider and respond to feedback, and should support active and inclusive engagement with project-affected parties. The policy generally reflects one of the key elements of CBAs as defined by this evaluation—accountability—but it does so in general terms and at a high level. Grievance mechanisms support accountability of implementers to users (in this case of project implementers to project stakeholders).

Policy on Gender Equality. This policy sets out guiding principles and mandatory requirements for mainstreaming gender across GEF operations. It aims to ensure equal opportunities for women and men to participate in,

contribute to, and benefit from GEF-financed activities. Guiding principles related to and supportive of CBAs include analysis conducted in an inclusive and gender-responsive manner; activities conducted, designed, and implemented in an inclusive manner so women's participation and voice are reflected in decision-making; and support at all scales for consultations with women's organizations, including indigenous women and local women's groups. As with the Stakeholder Engagement Policy, the Policy on Gender Equality is supportive of CBAs, but does not mandate them. One of the gender gaps the policy aims to address is unbalanced participation and decision-making in environmental planning and governance; attention to this gap reflects the devolution of decision-making dimension of CBA.

Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards. This policy sets out the GEF's approach to anticipating, and then avoiding, preventing, minimizing, mitigating, managing, offsetting, or compensating any adverse impacts that GEF-financed projects and programs may have on people or the environment throughout the project cycle. Throughout the policy's nine minimum standards, there are multiple references to "meaningful consultations," in line with the definition used in the Stakeholder Engagement Policy. This policy also lays out the GEF's definition for FPIC,³ describing it as "the collective support of an affected Indigenous People for project or program activities, reached through a process of Meaningful Consultation in a culturally appropriate manner, and properly documented describing the mutually accepted process to carry out good faith negotiations, and the outcome of such negotiations, including dissenting views" (GEF 2019, 6).

³The policy notes that there is no universally agreed-upon definition of FPIC.

GEF Agencies

Many of the GEF Agencies embrace CBAs, at least conceptually, and note that, in keeping with CBA objectives, the GEF should emphasize both inclusion and access to funding for communities. Agency stakeholders across the partnership reported a growing interest in and support for CBAs, reflecting a desire to work with, not above, communities; and to involve them in decision-making and the implementation of activities. A few Agency stakeholders felt that CBAs were more prevalent in theory than in practice in the GEF. They cited short timelines and limited financing during the project identification and preparation phases as constraints to CBAs.

Agency stakeholders also noted some limitations with CBAs, pointing to the effort required to tailor them for IPLCs. CBAs require additional time and effort relative to top-down approaches. Carrying out needed socialization and capacity building in an inclusive manner requires adequate time and resources, and these activities are seen by some stakeholders as difficult to scale up. Agencies reported that CBAs work best in contexts where there is government buy-in and support for decentralization of decision-making to the local level. This means CBAs may have specific limitations for IPLCs. Advocates for IPLCs noted that projects using a CBA needed to design the approach so as to acknowledge and reflect the unique context of the IPLC, or they risked ignoring their differential needs, which include land rights and tenure. This challenge is not unique to the GEF, as implementers and policy makers in the broader development and advocacy community struggle to make good on promises of IPLC participation and engagement in environmental initiatives (Colella et al. 2023). Another CBA drawback identified is that it favors settled types of communities (e.g., farmers over pastoralists) because of the challenges associated with facilitating governance and decision-making processes for non-sedentary communities.

A desk review found that many GEF Agencies apply CBA practices in a wide range of settings, as the following paragraphs highlight.

The **UNDP** Local Action program is characterized by its emphasis on community participation and engagement in addressing localized environmental concerns. It adheres to a bottom-up approach that fosters community ownership of development initiatives. UNDP is working on a taxonomy related to locally led development initiatives. Key components of this approach include capacity building, participatory decision-making, and participatory M&E.

FAO adopts CBAs for social forestry, agriculture, and natural resource management projects. FAO emphasizes the viewpoint that IPLCs play a central role in addressing climate change through using time-tested ecosystem management processes and through promoting effective governance systems (FAO 2023). The FAO's Farmer Field Schools approach serves as a platform for promoting sustainable agricultural practices, improving farmers' livelihoods, and enhancing environmental conservation. This approach revolves around a participatory learning and extension methodology that actively engages farmers.

Some of **IFAD's** largest investments in some countries are in community-based agriculture (IFAD 2016). IFAD has used CBA to help close last-mile gaps in service delivery and infrastructure provision in some of the most remote and insecure parts of the world. A distinguishing IFAD feature has been the provision of support to the most excluded and marginalized, including poor smallholder farmers, indigenous peoples, women, and youth; much of this support has taken the form of CBAs and localized interventions.⁴

The **United Nations Environment Programme** (UNEP) integrates CBAs into its projects and programs to foster

⁴Source: IFAD IOE [Community-driven development: what next?](#) webpage.

community participation and ownership. It emphasizes the involvement of local communities in decision-making processes, capacity building, and the implementation of environmental initiatives. This ensures that interventions are tailored to the community's specific needs and circumstances, thereby enhancing the chances of success and sustainability.

The **World Bank** recognizes the importance of community engagement and participation in its projects related to environmental conservation and sustainable development. One CBA it applies is community-driven development, which involves communities in decision-making, planning, and implementation processes to help ensure that projects align with local priorities, leverage community knowledge and resources, and foster a sense of ownership among community members. "Experience has shown that when given clear and transparent rules, access to information, and appropriate technical and financial support, communities can effectively organize to identify community priorities and address local development challenges by working in partnership with local governments and other institutions to build small-scale infrastructure, deliver basic services and enhance livelihoods."⁵

The **United Nations Industrial Development Organization** (UNIDO) recognizes the value of CBAs in promoting sustainable industrial development. It works closely with communities to develop and implement projects that address environmental challenges while promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization. UNIDO's approach emphasizes community participation, knowledge sharing, and capacity building to enhance local ownership and empower communities to manage their natural resources and adopt sustainable industrial practices.

⁵World Bank, [Community and Local Development](#) webpage.

The **International Union for Conservation of Nature** (IUCN) actively promotes CBAs in its conservation efforts. It recognizes the essential role of local communities in safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity. The Agency works with communities to develop and implement conservation projects, incorporating traditional knowledge, sustainable livelihoods, and community-driven resource management practices. It aims to enhance community resilience, empower local stakeholders, and foster a sense of stewardship toward natural resources. IUCN practices community-based conservation in terrestrial and marine contexts, calling for a move from human-free environmental conservation to solutions that engage communities (Berkes 2021).

Conservation International implements a rights-based approach, enlisting all parts of society in conservation efforts to make them more inclusive. The Agency supports the full and effective participation of IPLCs and works in partnership with local organizations to support conservation through community-led development principles. It focuses on supporting IPLCs to gain direct access to financial resources and to have the capacity to administer these resources themselves.

3.3 Relevance to national priorities

More than three-quarters of the projects in the evaluation portfolio are in alignment with national priorities that support CBAs. At project design, 75 percent of completed projects and 85 percent of ongoing projects described CBAs as being in alignment with a national strategy, policy, or plan. For example, the Sustainable Land Management for Increased Productivity in Armenia project (GEF ID 8005) includes community-led land degradation prevention through landscape restoration interventions as a project component. The project activities align with the Forest Code in Armenia which gives special attention to communal ownership of forests. Communal forests are supervised by local

self-governing authorities, and special incentives stimulate the sustainable management of forests by the local population. Similarly, the LDCF-financed Building Community Based Integrated and Climate Resilient Natural Resources Management and Enhancing Sustainable Livelihood in the South-Eastern Escarpments and Adjacent Coastal Areas of Eritrea project (GEF ID 10789) includes participatory planning processes linked to the National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), which identifies priority adaptation activities for building climate-resilient livelihoods among vulnerable communities. The project responds to key adaptation needs identified in the NAPA, for instance, by introducing community-based pilot rangeland improvement and management in selected agro-ecological areas.

In the five case study countries, the CBAs applied by the GEF projects were generally aligned with government strategy or policy—albeit at different levels and with differing applications. For example, in Indonesia, CBAs for local development planning have been implemented since the 1980s. Indonesia has developed a governance system that emphasizes village governments which have substantial control over interventions and access to annual village funds. GEF funding is used to further existing government initiatives and experiment with new modalities for CBAs. Stakeholders in Indonesia pointed out that the value added of CBAs is that they provide an opportunity for tailoring projects to heterogeneous local contexts and climates. In Madagascar, formal regulations at the national level support decentralized decision-making for natural resource management by communities with official management contracts. There are also informal collective agreements that reflect customs and traditions that are critically important for projects that apply CBAs. In spite of the regulations and customs in Madagascar, there were no examples of GEF projects with devolved technical resources, funds, or decision-making. In Peru, although legal and regulatory frameworks support CBA implementation, there is limited evidence of their institutional adoption. These examples demonstrate that

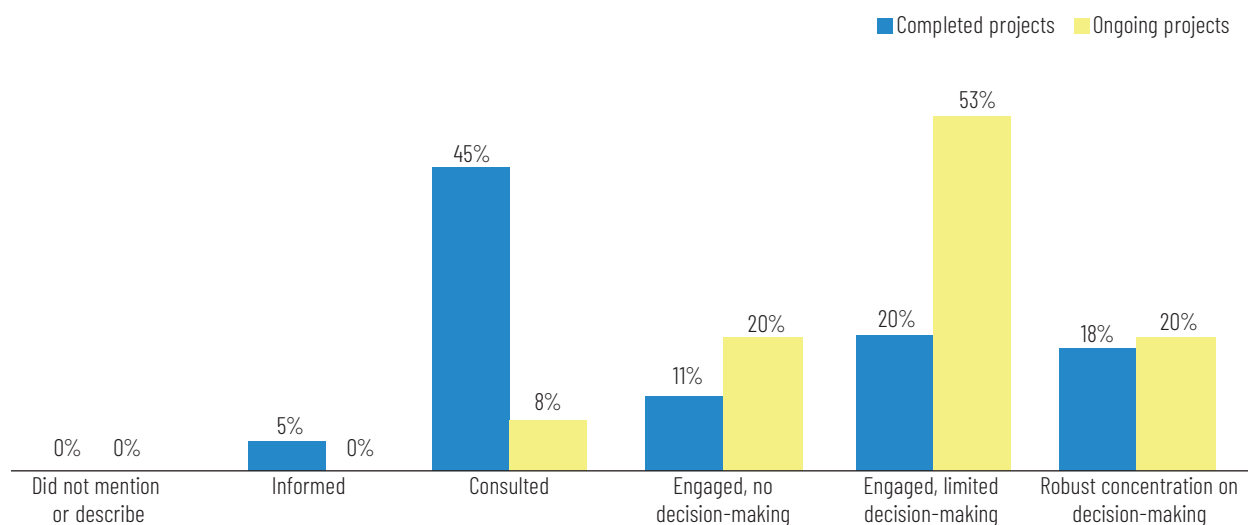
the actual level of engagement reflected in projects is linked to each country's policies and priorities. Thus, the comprehensiveness of the CBAs was heterogeneous across countries.

3.4 Alignment with CBA good practice dimensions

GEF projects using CBAs have become more aligned with good practice over time, although gaps remain. The evaluation adapted a spectrum of CBAs along key dimensions as defined by the literature and compared a sample of the evaluation portfolio to these dimensions, rating them based on level of alignment. The more recently designed projects show improvement in alignment with good practice for most dimensions, with the exception of direct control of financial and/or technical resources. Despite recent improvements, there are still gaps between GEF projects and good practice on most dimensions. Alignment with each dimension is presented below, along with a good practice example from the evaluation portfolio.

Devolved decision-making

There has been improvement over time on the dimension of devolved decision-making; however, only 20 percent of newer projects are fully in line with good practice. This dimension relates to the level of community involvement throughout project design, implementation, and M&E. A lower rating was given where projects describe engagement throughout different phases but do not provide specific information as to how feedback is incorporated into decision-making. The highest rating was given to projects that described robust concentration of decision-making authority to the communities, with clear accountability of implementers to the communities. The design of the newer cohort of projects relative to the older cohort shows improvement, as illustrated in [figure 3.3](#).

Figure 3.3 Portfolio alignment with good practice: Devolved decision-making

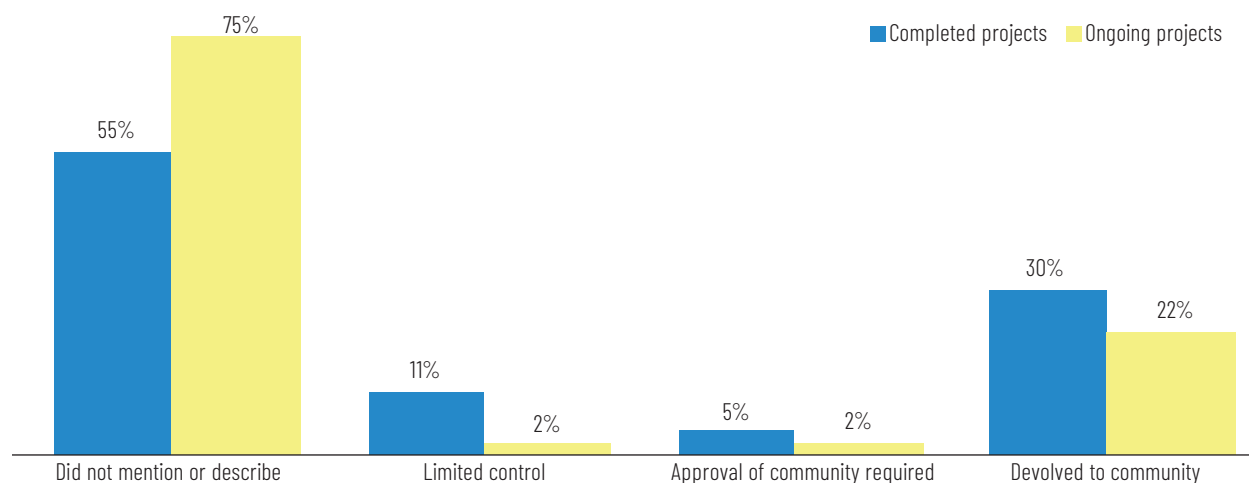
Note: $n = 95$.

An example of good practice on this dimension was found in the Climate Change Adaptation to Reduce Land Degradation in Fragile Micro-Watersheds Located in the Municipalities of Texistepeque and Candelaria de la Frontera, El Salvador (GEF ID 4616). This project focused on climate change adaptation to reduce land degradation in fragile micro-watersheds of two municipalities in El Salvador. A feature of this project's design was its use of participatory processes beginning in the design phase and continuing through the rest of the project cycle with institutional stakeholders and communities, thereby creating space for needs and priorities to be identified and addressed. The terminal evaluation confirmed with the communities that they had been duly informed, consulted with, and involved in the different stages of decision-making and in the coordination of activities. The respondents explained that this type of involvement made them feel more committed to the project, as they identified themselves as the owners of the outcomes the project aimed to achieve.

Devolved financial and technical resources

GEF alignment with good practice on the dimension of devolved financial and technical resources has worsened, with less than 25 percent of the newer cohort of projects devolving technical and financial resources to communities. This dimension relates to the extent to which communities have control over project resources. A lower rating was given if the project indicated that communities have limited control over resources; the highest rating was given if financial and technical resources were reported to be devolved to the community or community groups. As [figure 3.4](#) shows, an increasing percentage of the cohort of newer projects—75 percent—do not report on control of financial and technical resources; for those that do, the trend has been downward, with the percentage of projects that explicitly describe devolution of control directly to communities dropping from 30 percent in the older cohort to 22 percent in the newer cohort.

A good practice example for this dimension was found in the Restoration Challenge Grant

Figure 3.4 Portfolio alignment with good practice: Devolved financial and technical resources

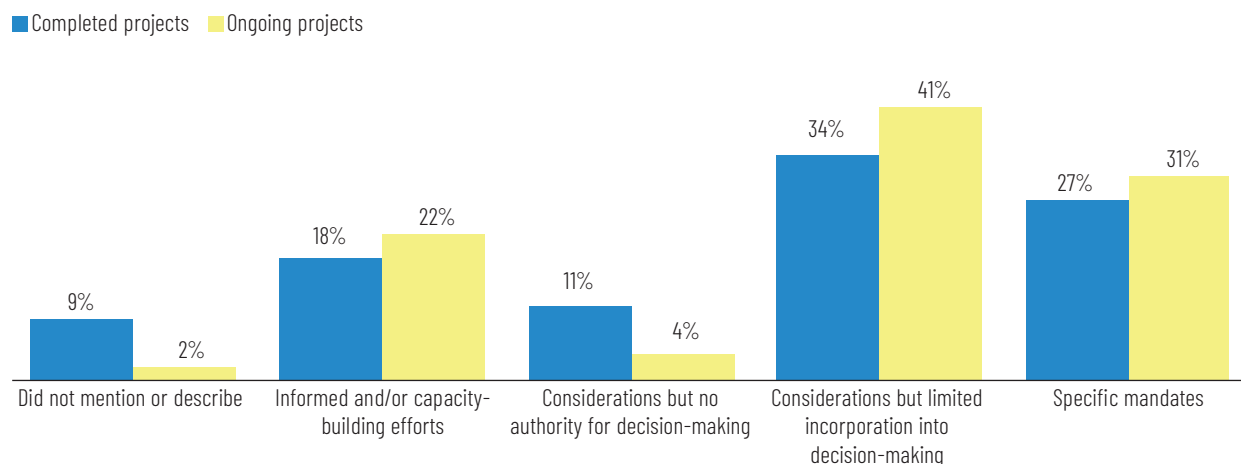
Note: $n = 95$.

Platform for Smallholders and Communities, with Blockchain-Enabled Crowdfunding project in Cameroon and Kenya (GEF ID 10637). This project facilitates and supports enhanced smallholder and rural community member engagement and investment in restoration, utilizing mobile cellular technology to provide small grants/payments matched by co-investment. Depending upon local needs and circumstance, and to facilitate piloting of different approaches for engaging, organizing, supporting, and incentivizing smallholder- and community-led restoration, phones are provided either to community entrepreneurs or directly to registered restoration partners. These entrepreneurs and partners are responsible for taking and uploading restoration photos; and facilitating payments to participating community members either by distributing authorized M-Pesa (or via another low-cost funds transfer service in Cameroon) payments directly, or by requesting and recording payments for verified work.

Incorporation of local institutions and customs

Alignment with this dimension has improved slightly over time, with about one-third of all projects fully in line with good practice. This dimension relates to the level of integration of local institutions in decision-making processes. A lower rating was given where projects included considerations for improvement or strengthening of recognition of local institutions, but with limited provisions for direct incorporation of these institutions into decision-making. The highest rating was given where there were specific actions to improve, strengthen, or recognize local institutions or customs and integrate them into design, implementation, and/or M&E of project activities. As shown in [figure 3.5](#), there is slight improvement in the design of the newer cohort of projects relative to the older cohort.

An example of good practice on this dimension is found in the Participatory Integrated Watershed Management Project in The Gambia (GEF ID 3368). This project focused on improving local livelihoods through the promotion of community-based watershed/landscape

Figure 3.5 Portfolio alignment with good practice: Incorporation of local institutions

Note: $n = 95$.

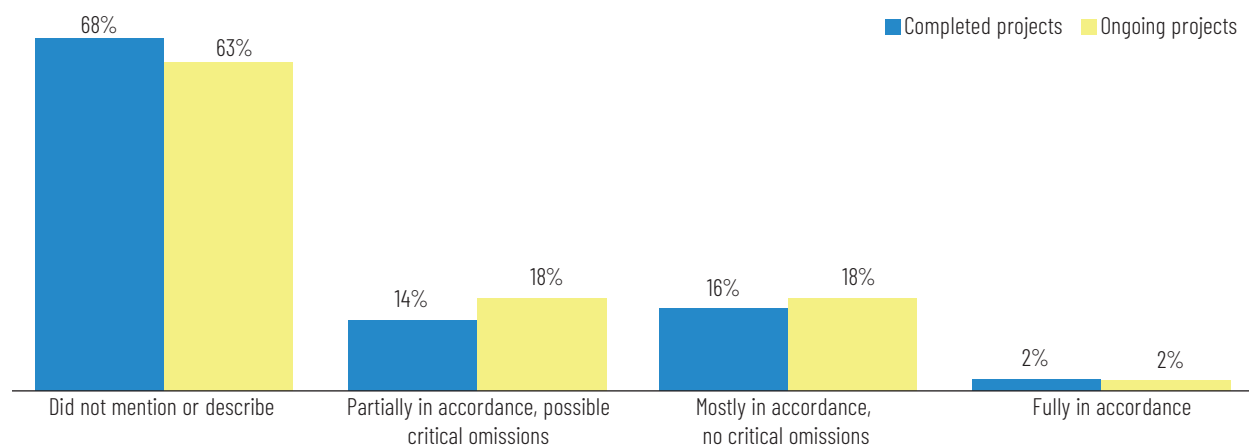
management approaches to enable resource-poor communities to reverse declining land productivity. Beneficiary participation at the community level was facilitated by village development committees; these existing institutions were successfully used as an entry point for community development projects. Within each committee, a total of 36 subcommittees were created, with equal representation of women and men. These subcommittees in turn facilitated the participation of community members in project-related work, such as repair of access roads, culverts, and bunds; reforestation activities; and replanting of mangroves. With support from the village development committees, the project also mobilized resources to realize development objectives within the respective communities. In Kumbija, for example, the community members made quarterly monetary contributions as levies for work to be done.

Legitimacy in the eyes of users

The GEF's alignment with the dimension of legitimacy in the eyes of users has seen slight improvement, but most projects do not mention its incorporation. This dimension involves the project design's consideration of how the project

will align with the norms and customs of those affected by it. A lower rating was given for projects that make an effort to describe how the project is partially in accordance with community norms and customs, but with some omissions. The highest score was given for projects where the community considered the project and its implementation to be fully in accordance with community norms and customs. As shown in [figure 3.6](#), the design of the newer cohort of projects is a slight improvement over that of the older cohort, but most projects do not explicitly mention focusing on this dimension.

Good practice in the legitimacy dimension was shown in the Integrated Community-Based Conservation of Peatlands Ecosystems and Promotion of Ecotourism in Lac Tele Landscape of Republic of Congo project (GEF ID 10298). This project supports the creation of agreements for sustainable forest and wildlife management to be developed between local communities and protected areas and relevant government agencies based on the customary rights of local people to forests and wildlife. The project plans to establish indigenous peoples land committees prior to the development of management plans to uphold the role and importance

Figure 3.6 Portfolio alignment with good practice: Legitimacy in the eyes of users

Note: $n = 95$.

of indigenous peoples as active rights holders. A set of local rules and regulations will be integrated in the management plans using local traditional knowledge on sustainable use of wildlife and other biological resources.

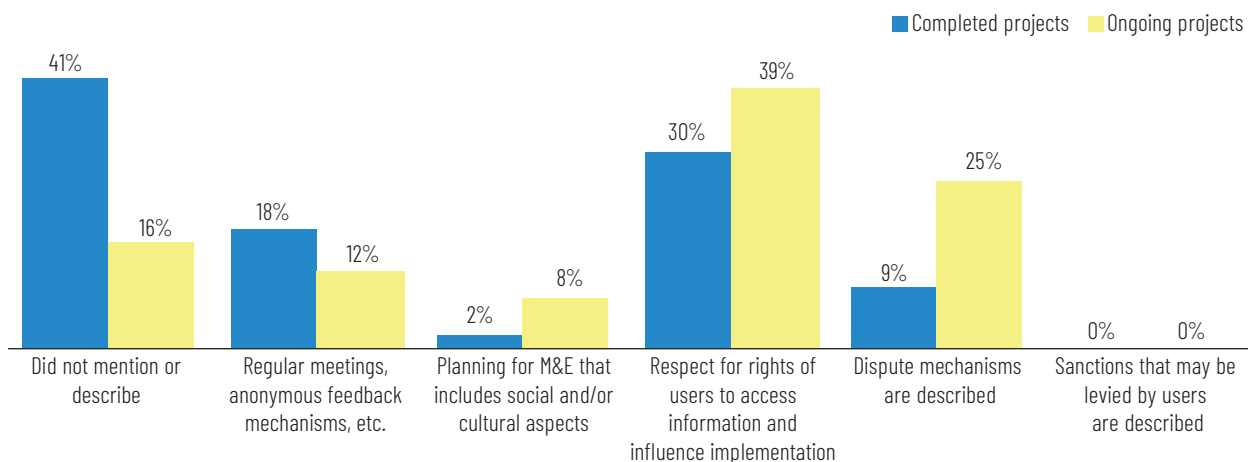
Accountability of implementers to users

Despite some improvement over time in the GEF's alignment with the dimension of accountability of implementers to users, no projects are aligned with the highest level of good practice. This dimension relates to processes for ensuring downward accountability from project implementers to communities. A lower rating was given to projects where processes are simply defined in documents; higher ratings were given to projects that describe ways in which implementers respect the rights of users to access information and influence implementation. The highest rating was given to projects with documents that describe sanctions that may be levied by users on implementers in case of malfeasance or failure to comply with agreed-upon actions or policies. As shown in [figure 3.7](#), there has been a slight improvement in the design of the newer cohort of projects relative to the older cohort, with a quarter of the former projects

describing dispute mechanisms, as reflected in the following good practice example.

Good practice in this dimension was shown in the Strengthening Management of Protected and Productive Landscapes in the Surinamese Amazon, Suriname (GEF ID 10252). This project aims at securing equitable management of Suriname's protected and productive landscapes through integrated approaches that deliver mutually supportive conservation and sustainable livelihood benefits. The project will consistently use FPIC principles and procedures in line with the UNDP Social and Environment Standards, even though FPIC is not included in Suriname's national legislation. Spaces will be created by which agreements can be reached on specifically consulted aspects (e.g., landscape planning, community management plans, and human-jaguar conflict management). Consultation and decision-making will follow traditional processes laid down by the indigenous and Maroon peoples, and all decisions taken during meetings will be implemented and monitored. During the design phase of the project, representatives of the indigenous and Maroon peoples explicitly requested a complaint mechanism. This has been included in the Indigenous and Maroon Peoples

Figure 3.7 Portfolio alignment with good practice: Accountability of implementers to users



Note: $n = 95$.

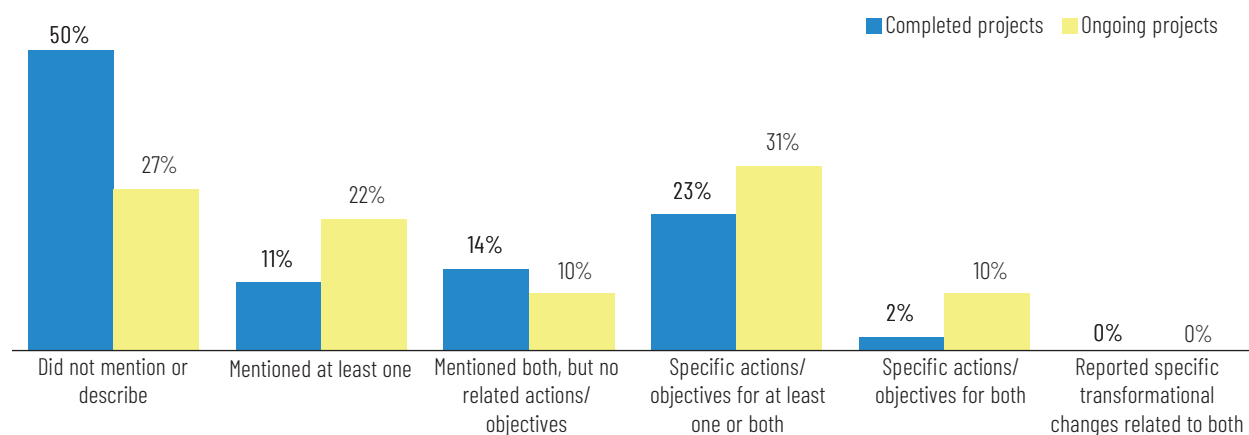
Process and Planning Framework and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. This grievance redress mechanism will ensure that any potential conflict is addressed together with the indigenous and Maroon peoples concerned. The indigenous and Maroon peoples will be represented on the project board and technical working group.

Human rights and equality

GEF alignment with good practice on the human rights and equality dimension has been improving, with at least half of the newer cohort of projects mentioning this dimension and 40 percent including specific actions or objectives. The dimension relates to the extent to which a project takes specific actions to address human rights and equality. A low rating was given to projects that simply mentioned the concept; the highest rating was given for projects that mention specific actions or objectives for both human rights and equality. [Figure 3.8](#) shows that there has been a slight improvement in the design of the newer cohort of projects relative to the older cohort. GEF Secretariat staff reflected on constraints related to reporting on this dimension, noting that in their experience many projects are working on human rights and

equality, but project staff are not asked to include this exact terminology in project documents.

Good practice on this dimension was illustrated by the Enhancing Sustainability and Climate Resilience of Forest and Agricultural Landscape and Community Livelihoods in Bhutan project (GEF ID 9199). The project aims at operationalizing an integrated landscape approach through the strengthening of biological corridors and sustainable forest and agricultural systems, and building the climate resilience of community livelihoods. The project design seeks to uphold the centrality of human rights to sustainable development and poverty alleviation, and ensure fair distribution of development opportunities and benefits. Its implementation of a human rights-based approach in its delivery of goods and services includes maintaining and respecting the legal and traditional rights of local communities to land and natural resources within these project areas.

Figure 3.8 Portfolio alignment with good practice: Human rights and equality

Note: $n = 95$.

3.5 Community involvement across the project cycle

Given the importance of community participation in CBAs, the evaluation sought to determine whether there were any trends in participation across the project cycle for CBA projects. All project documents for CBA projects in the case study countries were analyzed, supplemented by field visits and interviews during the case study missions. Data from the portfolio review supplement findings from the case studies, presented in the following paragraphs.

GEF projects in Cameroon, Indonesia, Madagascar, Peru, and Timor-Leste showed limited local-level stakeholder involvement during project design. Very few of the local stakeholders interviewed for the case studies reported having meaningful input into the design of the projects.⁶ As shown in [table 3.1](#), only 18 percent

of projects in case study countries reported substantial local community involvement in project design. In the majority of cases, consultations involved sharing a finalized project document with stakeholders; by that point, there was limited ability to make significant changes. One community-based organization involved in implementing the Inclusive Conservation of Sea Turtles and Seagrass Habitats in the North and North-West of Madagascar project (GEF ID 10696) described being shown a finalized project design and asked to sign off on it without any opportunity to share feedback or suggestions for improvement. In Cameroon, there was a general perception that while many projects adopt participatory approaches in their implementation, decision-making occurs at a central, rather than local, level. This was noted particularly for Securing Tenure Rights for Forest Landscape Dependent Communities: Linking Science with Policy to Advance Tenure Security, Sustainable Forest Management and People's Livelihoods (GEF ID 5796). As noted by GEF Secretariat interviewees, tenure projects are a specific example of work being done centrally in support of community self-determination. These types of projects highlight the ability of the GEF to work with and through governments to support changes that might not be possible

⁶ A similar finding emerged from the IEO's Evaluation of the GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security, which found that international waters projects were less likely to involve local stakeholders in their design phase —meaning that local stakeholders had limited knowledge of the regional projects before implementation (GEF IEO 2023b).

Table 3.1 Community involvement at each project stage from five case study countries

GEF ID	Project	Design			Implementation			M&E		
		ND	Limited	Sub-stantial	ND	Limited	Sub-stantial	ND	Limited	Sub-stantial
Cameroon										
5796	A Bottom Up Approach to ABS: Community Level Capacity Development for Successful Engagement in ABS Value Chains in Cameroon (Echinops giganteus)									
3821	CBSP Sustainable Community Based Management and Conservation of Mangrove Ecosystems in Cameroon									
4084	CBSP Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Ngoyla Mintom Forest									
4739	Participative Integrated Ecosystem Services Management Plans for Bakassi Post Conflict Ecosystems (PINESMAP-BPCE)									
5210	Sustainable Farming and Critical Habitat Conservation to Achieve Biodiversity Mainstreaming and Protected Areas Management Effectiveness in Western Cameroon SUFACHAC									
5796	A Bottom Up Approach to ABS: Community Level Capacity Development for Successful Engagement in ABS Value Chains in Cameroon (Echinops giganteus)									
9604	Removing Barriers to Biodiversity Conservation, Land Restoration and Sustainable Forest Management through Community-based Landscape Management - COBALAM									
10287	Integrated management of Cameroon's forest landscapes in the Congo Basin									
Indonesia										
3279	Citarum Watershed Management and Biodiversity Conservation Project									
3443	SFM Strengthening Community Based Forest and Watershed Management (SCBFWM)									
4340	Strategic Planning and Action to Strengthen Climate Resilience of Rural Communities in Nusa Tenggara Timor Province (SPARC)									
9600	Strengthening of Social Forestry in Indonesia									
10236	Catalyzing Optimum Management of Nature Heritage for Sustainability of Ecosystem, Resources and Viability of Endangered Wildlife Species (CONSERVE)									
10757	Maintaining and Enhancing Water Yield through Land and Forest Rehabilitation (MEWLAFOR)									
Madagascar										
3687	Madagascar's Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas									
3773	Support to the Madagascar Foundation for Protected Areas and Biodiversity (through Additional Financing to the Third Environment Support Program Project)									

(continued)

Table 3.1 Community involvement at each project stage from five case study countries (continued)

GEF ID	Project	Design			Implementation			M&E		
		ND	Limited	Substantial	ND	Limited	Substantial	ND	Limited	Substantial
5352	Conservation of Key Threatened Endemic and Economically Valuable Species in Madagascar									
5354	Participatory Sustainable Land Management in the Grassland Plateaus of Western Madagascar									
5486	A Landscape Approach to Conserving and Managing Threatened Biodiversity in Madagascar with a Focus on the Atsimo-Andrefana Spiny and Dry Forest Landscape									
9606	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Northwestern Landscape (Boeny region)									
10233	Sustainable Management of Conservation Areas and Improved Livelihoods to Combat Wildlife Trafficking in Madagascar									
10696	Inclusive conservation of sea turtles and seagrass habitats in the north and north-west of Madagascar									
Peru										
3276	Promoting Sustainable Land Management in Las Bambas									
3933	SFM Sustainable Management of Protected Areas and Forests of the Northern									
4773	Conservation and Sustainable Use of High-Andean Ecosystems through Compensation of Environmental Services for Rural Poverty Alleviation and Social Inclusion									
Timor-Leste										
4696	Strengthening the Resilience of Small Scale Rural Infrastructure and Local Government Systems to Climatic Variability and Risk									
5056	Strengthening Community Resilience to Climate-induced Disasters in the Dili to Ainaro Road Development Corridor, Timor-Leste									
9434	Securing the Long-term Conservation of Timor-Leste Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services through the Establishment of a Functioning National Protected Area Network and the Improvement of Natural Resource Management in Priority Catchment Corridors									
Total		9	13	5	0	4	23	7	6	14
Percent		33	48	19	0	15	85	26	22	52

Note: ND = not described. Project documents for all country case study CBA projects that had passed the Chief Executive Officer endorsement stage were reviewed and assessed on community involvement. This document review was supplemented with data gathered during field visits. Projects were given the lowest rating if community involvement in a specified phase was either not mentioned or was described as insufficient. Examples of activities that were considered substantial involvement in each phase were (1) *design*: community feedback reflected in project site selection or activities; (2) *implementation*: grants managed by communities, participatory land planning; (3) *M&E*: participatory monitoring (either of ecological status or project activities).

for CSOs. Similarly, although the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Ngoyla Mintom Forest in Cameroon project (GEF ID 4084) formed a key stakeholder group that included indigenous peoples and local communities, the local stakeholders reported they were invited to workshops to listen to presentations of project design and objectives rather than being asked to provide feedback to be incorporated into the project design.

Stakeholders across the partnership, especially at the local levels (field staff, local CSOs), perceived that the GEF project design process is rather top down. True bottom-up development is seen as challenging within the time scales and resources associated with GEF projects, leading some to share the sentiment that within the GEF “community based is not community led.”

In countries where case studies were done, communities were more involved during project implementation than in other phases. Indonesia’s Citarum project had limited community involvement during the design phase, but extensive community involvement during implementation. Decision-making on components involving capacity building around environmental and livelihoods issues was devolved to communities, and they managed small grants to implement these activities. Components of the Strategic Planning and Action to Strengthen Climate Resilience of Rural Communities in Nusa Tenggara Timor Province (SPARC) project (GEF ID 4340) in Indonesia similarly sought to devolve decision-making to community members, but it failed to develop sufficient roots and build sufficient capacity in the community to ensure continuation of the activities. Further, while communities were involved in thematic decisions and received small grants directly, they were not supported with access to markets.

In the countries visited by the evaluation team, half of the projects included a substantial role for communities in M&E. Most of the participatory M&E was related to ecological status monitoring. The sustainability of the ecological monitoring activities visited by postcompletion missions was high, continuing after project

close—in some cases, without financial support. In the Citarum project in Indonesia and in the Support to the Madagascar Foundation for Protected Areas and Biodiversity through Additional Financing to the Third Environment Support Program Project (EP3) (GEF ID 3773) and Madagascar’s Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas (MRPA) (GEF ID 3687) projects in Madagascar, communities were involved in forest patrols and species monitoring. In Peru, project implementers emphasize the need to be able to monitor qualitative aspects such as empowerment and the well-being of women and men in the communities, as they are key aspects for sustainability and are generally not monitored or evaluated.

In the evaluation portfolio, the prevalence of participatory M&E of project processes, activities, or outcomes was moderate,⁷ but the monitoring of processes associated with CBAs was weak. Among completed projects in the evaluation portfolio, 7 percent included participatory M&E related to ecological data gathering; this number increased to 29 percent in the sample of ongoing projects. Sixteen percent of completed projects mentioned participatory M&E but in a general sense, referring to project-level process, activities, or outcome monitoring; the share increased to 46 percent of ongoing projects. [Box 3.2](#) provides a good practice example of monitoring CBA processes.

The evaluation also looked at indicators measuring three good practice dimensions—devolved financial and technical resources, devolved decision-making and accountability, and incorporation of local institutions and customs—which collectively were tracked by less than a quarter of the evaluation portfolio’s projects. Indicators measuring devolved financial and technical resources were found in 23 percent of completed projects and 13 percent of ongoing projects; devolved decision-making and accountability was

⁷Participatory M&E entails stakeholders at various levels engaging in monitoring or evaluating a particular project and sharing control over the content, process, and results of the M&E activity.

Box 3.2 GEF project example of monitoring CBA processes

PRC-GEF Partnership: Sustainable Development in Poor Rural Areas in China (GEF ID 3608) provides an example of indicators to measure CBA processes and environmental outcomes. The project measured achievement of the development objectives through two indicators (1): the government's acknowledgment of the importance of community-driven development (CDD) and participatory approaches and progress toward the achievement of the development objective was to be monitored through the following two indicators: (1) the acknowledgment by government of the importance of CDD and participatory approaches for future poverty alleviation and rural development work, (2) the satisfaction rate among beneficiaries regarding the (1) project impact on income levels and well-being, and (2) CDD approach. For the CDD component, the intermediate outcomes had the following indicators: funds transferred to project villages and to the poorest villages, women's participation rate in village project management groups, share of infrastructure works with satisfactory quality and specific arrangements for maintenance and management, and number of villages with completed community annual project plans. For the project's community development fund component, the intermediate outcomes were to be monitored on the basis of the share of poorest households benefiting from community development funds. For the GEF-financed component, outcome indicators included share of pilot villages that successfully complete village assessments and resource mapping and identified adaptation needs and implement innovative adaptation measures; number of adaptation innovations introduced into the CDD menu; number of indicators formulated covering land management, climate change vulnerability, adaptation, and coping range; and carbon stock increases across all pilot villages.

tracked by 16 percent of completed and 13 percent of ongoing projects; and the incorporation of local institutions and customs was captured by 14 percent of completed projects and 19 percent of ongoing projects. As an example, the Slovak Republic Sustainable Mobility in the City of Bratislava project (GEF ID 3433) included an indicator that tracked the participation of landless community members and youth in project activities including decision-making. [Box 3.3](#) provides examples of indicators measuring inclusion in CBA projects.

3.6 Inclusion in CBA projects

GEF projects applying a CBA have become more inclusive of women, IPLCs, and youth over time. For example, there is a difference between closed and ongoing projects in describing project stakeholders. In projects designed during GEF-6 and GEF-7, 62 percent described women as stakeholders, compared to 43 percent of the cohort for GEF-4 and GEF-5. Similarly, 46 percent of projects in the newer cohort described IPLCs as stakeholders, compared to 14 percent; and 33 percent described youth as stakeholders, compared to 11 percent.

The evaluation portfolio shows improvements in incorporating gender dimensions from the older to the newer cohort, but a small gap remains and falls short of full compliance with gender policy requirements. Of the older cohort of completed projects, 20 percent included a gender analysis and/or a gender action plan at project design.⁸ Thirty-six percent of the project results frameworks from this cohort included sex-disaggregated targets and/or gender-sensitive indicators; only 5 percent had some indicator measuring women's participation in decision-making. There was marked improvement among the cohort of ongoing projects (from GEF-6 and

⁸ These projects were initiated before implementation of the GEF Policy on Gender Equality, which mandates a gender analysis and a gender action plan in every project's design.

Box 3.3 Examples of indicators for inclusion from the evaluation portfolio

Sustainable Land Management for Increased Productivity in Armenia (SLMIP) (GEF ID 8005): At least 30 percent of women-headed households have increased yields by 50 percent from diversified high-value vegetable crops; annual gross revenue of targeted women groups has increased by 50 percent; 50 percent of women and youth unemployed cooperatives supported by the project become autonomous.

Enhancing Sustainability and Climate Resilience of Forest and Agricultural Landscape and Community Livelihoods, Bhutan (GEF ID 9199) (MTF–GEF/LDCF): Number of people adopting climate-resilient livelihood activities associated with conservation management and processing of renewable natural resources (gender disaggregated) as quantified by the impact assessment; number of community SFM groups, with gender-disaggregated membership data; improved gender equity in land and natural resource decision-making and benefits between men and women; increased women's participation and executive role in decision-making in commodity user groups and project committees.

Integrated Community-Based Conservation of Peatlands Ecosystems and Promotion of Ecotourism in Lac Télé Landscape of Republic of Congo (GEF ID 10298): Percentage of district councils plans with clear attention to gender

and representation of indigenous populations; number of transboundary community-based structures to manage peatlands with women in decision-making positions.

Landscape Restoration and Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Food Systems, Ghana (GEF ID 10348): Number of women participating in decision-making processes through membership in district management and planning committees; number of nationals trained in extractive industries skills, including percentage of females; percentage of committees established with project support that have at least one woman; percentage of executive committees established with project support that have at least four women.

Strengthening the Integral and Sustainable Management of Biodiversity and Forests by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Fragile Ecosystems of the Dry Forests of the Bolivia Chaco (GEF ID 10393): At least 320 local actors (from autonomous indigenous peoples and local organizations, and other actors; (30 percent women and at least 10 percent youth under the age of 28) in integrated land use planning and local participatory governance; at least 15,000 beneficiaries (7,500 women and 7,500 men) have boosted their governance skills, implementing SFM, sustainable land management, and land use planning skills.

GEF-7). Of these, 81 percent included a gender analysis and 75 percent included a gender action plan. These percentages exceed the 57 percent share of projects with a gender analysis and 55 percent with a gender action plan reported in the IEO evaluation of institutional policies and engagement (GEF IEO 2022f), which covered 336 projects from GEF-6 and GEF-7. Regarding areas of expected contribution in the evaluation portfolio, 71 percent of all projects aimed at improving women's participation and decision-making, 73 percent aimed for socioeconomic benefits, and 21 percent at closing gender gaps in access to resources. Eighty-three percent of all project results

frameworks included gender-sensitive indicators, and 25 percent had some indicator measuring women's participation in decision-making.

Projects made specific efforts to include women in project activities, but the extent to which any systemic inequalities were addressed that might prevent their full participation and benefit sharing is less certain. There were few examples in the case studies of women playing a leadership or decision-making role in the community groups; Strengthening of Social Forestry in Indonesia was the single exception. In Madagascar, stakeholders reported challenges in integrating gender perspectives into

project activities, but there is widespread agreement on the importance of continued efforts to intentionally integrate women into CBA project activities. Quotas for participation in groups or leadership roles for women were seen as good tools for encouraging women's involvement in the context of CBAs. One project was successful in promoting women's participation in remote project areas through social marketing campaigns broadcast over the radio. Project implementers in Madagascar reported selecting meeting times to accommodate schedules and engaging informally as necessary to encourage women's participation. Stakeholders from civil society and IPLCs interviewed for the Peru case study emphasized the importance of incorporating feedback from women, with a focus on internal dynamics, prior to designing a CBA project to ensure adequate attention to gender issues.

With few exceptions, most of the closed projects in the evaluation's portfolio did not explicitly target IPLCs. Country case study examples and portfolio data show limited attention was paid in the closed cohort of projects to IPLCs, despite the role they play in managing natural resources in GEF countries. The GEF's country-driven model means projects are implemented through governments; thus, the involvement of IPLCs is highly dependent on government priorities. Few of the closed GEF CBA projects reviewed set out a clear and specific objective or strategy to include indigenous people and institutions. The Strengthening of Social Forestry in Indonesia project is an exception here as well, as it includes customary forests as one of the five schemes to be financed by project activities. The project offers land tenure or formal land rights alongside capacity-building and alternative livelihoods activities. As of the time of the IEO mission, none of the customary forest schemes had been implemented, but the project team spoke of plans to move forward to customary forests. However, indigenous advocacy groups reported that they had not been consulted with in the design of this project.

In Cameroon, analysis of the constraints related to achievement of project results showed that IPLCs had generally not been involved in project design. Project stakeholders associated with the Ngoyla Mintom Forest project maintained that this led to a lack of activities adapted to their context and insufficient funding to support co-management initiatives. IPLCs interviewed stated that the short lifespan of the project did not allow for sufficient time for them to become familiar with its vision, strategy, and implementation activities.

Peru's Promoting Sustainable Land Management in Las Bambas project (GEF ID 3276) used an inclusive approach whereby people were selected in a communal assembly with inclusive criteria. Programs were created to target different groups, including youth, women, adults, leaders, and nonleaders. The project was reported to apply an appropriate cultural approach, given the context of working with indigenous communities. Priority was given to hiring local Quechua-speaking inhabitants of Cusco and Apurimac to carry out extension services as *yachachiqs*—leaders selected by their communities and recognized for their knowledge. These participants received training and capacity building and then supported local families to promote uptake of project activities. Other non-GEF projects have capitalized on the *yachachiq* approach to strengthen community groups in the Apurimac region.

Stakeholders from indigenous groups highlighted the necessity for CBA projects working with IPLCs to include special considerations. They cited the importance of taking into account the unique needs of IPLCs, noting that CBA projects for IPLCs may need to consider territoriality land claims.⁹ CBA projects also should reflect the right of IPLCs to use their own governance systems. There was general consensus that if a CBA aimed for use with IPLCs did not take such considerations into account, the

⁹Territoriality refers here to the acknowledgment that IPLCs' relationship with land is not about power but is instead tied to their identity, culture, and spiritual beliefs.

approach's effect and effectiveness would be watered down. The ICI, which allocates funds to IPLCs, has the potential of yielding important lessons for CBA projects targeting IPLCs in the GEF.

The country case studies provided some useful lessons from GEF CBA projects on promoting inclusion. Some issues with exclusion were highlighted in the case studies, and there were examples of elite capture. To counteract this, some projects have introduced indicators to measure the participation of landless farmers, groups led by women/youth, and targeting of women/youth to receive project assets before others. [Box 3.4](#) provides examples of some of the indicators that target the participation of these groups. In Madagascar, project stakeholders reported that project assets were first allocated to women and members of vulnerable groups within communities; this was seen as a way to mitigate elite capture.

Though not a main stakeholder in most of the projects reviewed, there are examples of private sector support contributing to the sustainability of CBA projects in case study countries. In Indonesia's Citarum project, the evaluation team visited a waste management facility in Sugih Mukti that was started with GEF seed money granted to a community group and scaled up by a private sector entity (PT BIODIV Energi) that supported the group as part of its corporate social responsibility efforts. Further support for the facility was then provided by the national government. The SFM Strengthening Community Based Forest and Watershed Management project (GEF ID 3443) in Indonesia created a payment for ecosystem services scheme that linked a hydropower company to communities, which received compensation for planting to improve sediments. These activities reportedly yielded measurable reductions in sediments at project close. In the MRPA project in Madagascar, livelihoods activities continue past project close; this is linked to support from a nongovernmental organization which facilitates linkages to international and domestic markets for the products produced by the communities

([box 3.5](#)). These communities also continue to sell their produce and fish to a local resort under an arrangement established by the initial project.

Country-level stakeholders reported that when the private sector is absent, or linkages between markets and livelihoods activities are difficult to establish, there is a negative impact on project performance and sustainability. For example, in the SPARC project in Indonesia, the absence of linkages to markets was a major constraint. In the villages visited by the IEO field mission, community respondents reported that they were not provided with any market-related training or capacity building, and that they lacked the ability to translate improved production to higher incomes in a significant and sustainable way. One community member said, "We have lots of tomatoes, but we can't even eat them all and have nowhere to sell them." Similar sentiments were expressed by other community members who waited for buyers to come to the farm gate and expressed a lack of knowledge over whether prices offered were fair. Project staff reflected on the difficulty of creating links to markets when the private sector did not have much of a presence in the area. These challenges, according to respondents, curtailed the value addition potential that the project might have otherwise had.

3.7 Performance of GEF projects applying a CBA

This section presents findings on performance for the evaluation portfolio, and looks at environmental status change, broader adoption, and the achievement of socioeconomic co-benefits.

GEF CBA projects had a large share of projects rated in the satisfactory range. Eighty-five percent of projects using a CBA had positive outcome ratings. The difference becomes more pronounced when viewed by GEF replenishment period. [Table 3.2](#) shows that 92 percent of GEF-5 CBA projects were in the positive range,

Box 3.4 Examples of CBA projects reporting positive socioeconomic outcomes

Empowerment. The LDCF-financed Effective Governance for Small Scale Rural Infrastructure and Disaster Preparedness in a Changing Climate project in Lao PDR (GEF ID 4554) aimed at improving the administrative systems affecting the provision and maintenance of small-scale rural infrastructure in the provinces of Sekong and Saravane through participatory decision-making. Activities were implemented to raise community awareness of local environmental challenges and to ensure that communities were organized through water use and village committees to enhance infrastructure sustainability (i.e., ownership of operation and maintenance). Interviews conducted for the terminal evaluation found a greater sense of community among beneficiaries, mainly because the project facilitated the (re-)activation of community groups, community dialogue, and cohesion by promoting participation in common decision-making processes; this included the selection of infrastructure sites and in-kind contribution (mainly labor) for infrastructure.

Governance. The Côte d'Ivoire Protected Area Project (Projet d'Appui à la Relance de la Conservation des Parcs et Reserves, PARC-CI) (GEF ID 3533) focused on improving sustainable management of the fauna and habitat of Comoé National Park. At completion, it was reported that the effective implementation of the community engagement strategy had resulted in the establishment of 23 village conservation groups as well as a participatory and well-functioning local park management committee with community, local authority, and government representatives. Overall, these measures contributed to a reduced level of poaching, herding, and agriculture encroachment in the park and a better relationship with the agency in charge of parks and reserves.

Poverty reduction. The SFM Sustainable Management of Protected Areas and Forests of the Northern Highlands of Peru project (GEF ID 3933) aimed at ensuring the sustainable and participatory management of protected areas and communal forested lands in Peru's northern highlands. To this end, the project supported local communities with environmentally friendly economic activities in order to

alleviate the pressure of deforestation, as well as contribute to the reduction of poverty. In this context, the project supported local communities in developing community plans to manage their lands, including forests, with a sustainable approach and create community enterprises that ensure the beneficial use of managed products. At completion, district indicators showed a reduction of around 4 percent and 2 percent in poverty and extreme poverty, respectively, in the districts of Kañarís and Inkahuasi. In addition, child malnutrition decreased by 3.6 percent in Kañarís and 9.6 percent in Inkahuasi.

Livelihoods improvement. The Strengthening Sustainable Forest Management and Bio-Energy Markets to Promote Environmental Sustainability and to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Cambodia project (GEF ID 3635) reduced carbon dioxide emissions and improved livelihoods through fuelwood-efficient interventions that created employment opportunities. Monthly income generated by cookstove producers has increased from a baseline of \$40 to \$87, exceeding the target of \$60.

Resilience. The SCCF-financed Scaling up Adaptation in Zimbabwe, with a Focus on Rural Livelihoods, by Strengthening Integrated Planning Systems project (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 variability and change risks through the development of community-based early warning systems. The project aimed at a reduction of household perceptions of vulnerability to 35 percent, from an average baseline of 88 percent. At completion and across all three districts, households with high vulnerability had decreased to around 27 percent. 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 that they had previously lacked.

Table 3.2 Effectiveness ratings in the positive range for CBA projects by modality and focal area

GEF period	Modality		Focal area				Total
	MSP (n = 17)	FSP (n = 72)	Biodiversity (n = 34)	Land degradation (n = 13)	Climate change adaptation (n = 12)	Multifocal (n = 30)	
GEF-4 (n = 63)	91	81	76	89	100	85	83
GEF-5 (n = 26)	100	90	100	100	86	90	92
Total	94	83	79	92	92	87	85

Source: GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set 2021.

Note: Data do not include projects with no rating available in the data set. Ratings in the positive range are moderately satisfactory and above.

compared with 83 percent of GEF-4 projects.¹⁰ MSPs had a higher share of projects in the satisfactory range (94 percent) relative to FSPs (83 percent) in the evaluation portfolio. Land degradation and climate change adaptation projects also had higher shares of projects in the satisfactory range (92 percent) compared to the other focal areas. CBA projects in most focal areas—with the exception of biodiversity—had a higher average effectiveness rating than non-CBA projects from the same time period.

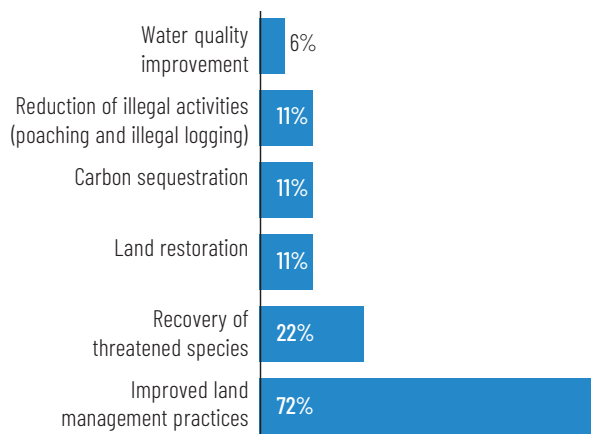
Nearly half of projects using a CBA reported environmental status change and two-thirds reported broader adoption.

Forty-one percent of the evaluation portfolio reported positive environmental status change.¹¹ These projects

¹⁰ For comparison, 92 percent of SGP projects had outcome ratings in the satisfactory range, according to the most recent SGP evaluation, with the high share of positive effectiveness ratings linked to the level of engagement of local stakeholders and ownership of the program by local communities (GEF IEO and UNDP IEO 2021).

¹¹ The review instrument asked whether a project reported any of the following: stress reduction of environmental status improving at a large scale (i.e., across the targeted ecosystem or market), significant stress reduction occurring or environmental status improving at low scales (i.e., in specific or disconnected areas), stress reduction or environmental status improving at low scales (i.e., in specific or disconnected areas) but extent of impact not significant compared

Figure 3.9 Share of CBA projects reporting positive environmental status change, by outcome



Note: Some projects reported more than one environmental outcome.

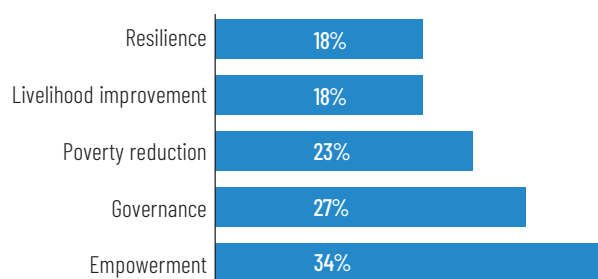
were associated with improved land management, rehabilitation of endangered species, land restoration, carbon sequestration, reduction of wildlife poaching and illegal logging; recovery of threatened species; and surface water improvement (figure 3.9). Two-thirds of

to dedicated resources. For comparison, in the performance cohort of the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7), which consisted of 608 completed projects for which terminal evaluations had been received since OPS6, 37 percent of projects reported environmental status change (GEF IEO 2022e).

GEF projects applying a CBA reported broader adoption: 34 percent through sustaining, 41 percent through mainstreaming, 18 percent through replication, 9 percent through scaling-up, and 7 percent through market change.¹²

The majority of GEF projects applying a CBA reported achievement of socioeconomic co-benefits at project close. CBAs often integrate a design modality that includes socioeconomic co-benefits responding to needs at the local level; this incentivizes or contributes to behavior change and the achievement of environmental goals. In the evaluation portfolio, 75 percent of closed projects using a CBA reported socioeconomic co-benefits associated with the projects. This finding reflects stakeholder feedback that, where well implemented, CBAs can support both environmental and socioeconomic benefits. Empowerment and improved governance were the top reported socioeconomic outcomes in projects in the evaluation portfolio (figure 3.10). Box 3.4 shows examples from projects that reported on the different types of socioeconomic outcomes reported in the evaluation portfolio.

Figure 3.10 Categorization of socioeconomic outcomes



Note: Some projects report more than one socioeconomic outcome.

¹² In comparison, 24 percent of the OPS7 performance cohort projects reported broader adoption. The GEF IEO defines broader adoption as taking place when non-GEF actors adopt, expand, and build on GEF-funded projects (GEF IEO 2022e).

3.8 Sustainability of outcomes in projects using CBAs

This section presents findings on the postcompletion sustainability of environmental outcomes drawn from the country case studies. It also discusses factors that contribute to the sustainability of environmental and socioeconomic outcomes of CBA projects.

Evidence shows that where CBAs were well designed and implemented, environmental and socioeconomic outcomes were sustained. In Indonesia, communities associated with the Citarum project reported environmental conditions had improved in buffer zones near protected areas created by the project and managed by communities.

The communities reported that they continue to conduct forest patrols to ensure the integrity of these areas. The CBA applied by this project paired the environmental restoration activities with grants for alternative livelihoods activities that were linked to local markets; many alternative livelihoods activities were still operational after project close. Communities attribute the continued success of the livelihoods activities to their ability to link to local markets to sell handicrafts and palm sugar. Continuation of the forest patrols and protection of the buffer zone were linked to socialization activities that occurred as part of the project which led to a change in mindset and behavior.

For the MRPA project, improvement in mangrove forest cover was reported by communities during field visits. Geospatial analysis validated that the change occurred during the project time frame and has been sustained after completion (box 3.5). The environmental status change was attributed to the CBA project design, which included participatory planning activities and an alternative livelihoods component that allowed communities to sell crabs and fish harvested from protected areas. These activities were carried out with the support of a local organization that linked fishers to markets. In

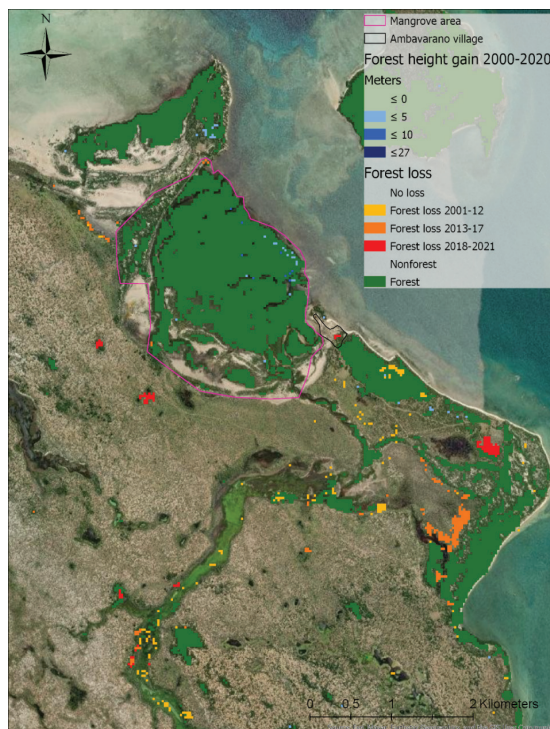
Box 3.5 Sustainability of results after project completion in Madagascar

The MRPA project strengthened community groups and gave them a role in decision-making around project activities. It also fostered legitimacy in the eyes of users through involving community groups in planning processes including the creation of boundaries, zoning and rules for land use, as well as recognition of community land tenure. The project was designed in a way to ensure buy-in from both local communities and authorities through activities supporting improved livelihoods tied to revenues linked to sustainable resource use from the new protected areas.

A geospatial analysis of the project activities in a site near a mangrove forest in the Ambavarano village supported assertions by the community that the project had contributed to decreased rates of mangrove deforestation and expansion of the forested mangrove area. As a starting point, the IEO analyzed forest loss and gain data between 2000 and 2021 in the project area (figure B3.5.1) Given the long time span and lack of geographical precision in the forest cover data (data sets are global and may lack precision at the local level), further analysis was undertaken using high-resolution images available from Google Earth. During the time periods preceding, during, and after the project, the areas to the southeast and due south from the village experienced forest loss; in the mangrove forest protected by the project, forest cover increased.

High-resolution images (figure B3.5.2a-c) further validate the increase in mangrove area reported by the women supporting the forest. Figure B3.5.2a is from before project implementation, figure B3.5.2b is from during implementation, and figure B3.5.2c—showing noticeable mangrove growth—is from five years after the project closed. This shows—at least on a small scale—the environmental status change associated with project activities that applied CBAs, and sustainability after project close.

Figure B3.5.1 Forest cover change in mangrove forest near Ambavarano village

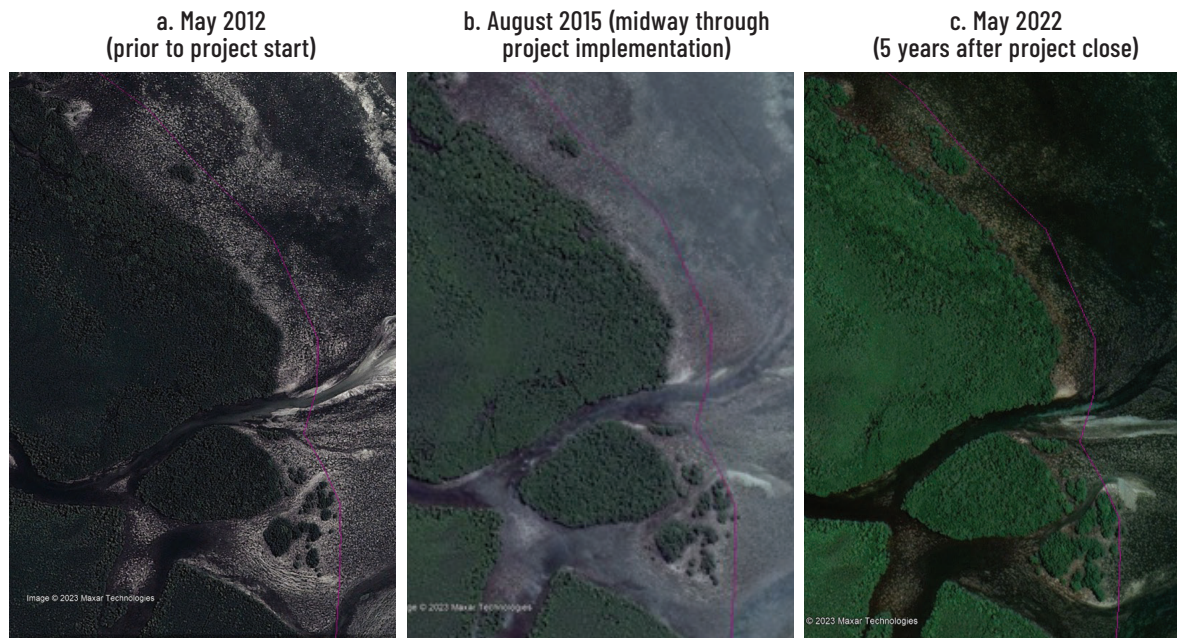


Sources: Hansen et al. 2013 (forest loss); Potapov et al. 2022 (forest gain).

Note: The area circled in pink is the mangrove areas that the communities describe supporting through the project. The village of Ambavarano is located southwest of the mangrove forest.

The community selected livelihoods activities supported by the project in collaboration with a nongovernmental organization that connects local producers to national and international markets. The collaboration with continued as of November 2022. The ability of communities to access domestic and international markets has contributed dramatically to the sustainability of the livelihoods activities.

(continued)

Box 3.5 Sustainability of results after project completion in Madagascar *(continued)***Figure B3.5.2** Google Earth high-resolution image of mangrove forest

comparison, another forest habitat project in Madagascar did not meet its objectives. The EP3 project, although it increased the number of hectares of forest habitat in protected areas and created community forest patrols that lasted past project close, did not result in the envisioned reduction of deforestation rates (IEG 2021b). Stakeholders interviewed for the case study explained that the CBA applied by the project supported one-time safeguard payments to offset communities' inability to use forest resources for livelihoods. Project staff reported that the livelihoods activities (livestock) were selected by the project team, not by communities themselves and did not reflect local needs, capacity, or customs around animal keeping. This is not an example of a well-designed CBA that incorporates good practice dimensions such as devolved decision-making and resources to communities.

Project activities related to capacity building for ecological monitoring and behavior change were sustained after project close in almost all sites visited. For example, community-led forest patrols established through two Madagascar projects, EP3 and A Landscape Approach to Conserving and Managing Threatened Biodiversity in Madagascar with a Focus on the Atsimo-Andrefana Spiny and Dry Forest Landscape (GEF ID 5486) continued beyond project close. In both cases, the activities started by the project became embedded in community practice; they continued—sometimes on a voluntary basis—because community members saw value in supporting protected areas near their villages. Community members attributed their desire to continue these activities to learning that occurred through the project. This was also the case for communities visited that were associated with Indonesia's Citarum project, which continued forest patrol activities after project close.

Several factors were identified that contribute to the likelihood of sustainability of livelihoods activities in CBA projects.

GEF Secretariat staff point to the need for local and national governments to own the approach, specifically through decentralization policies or formalizing the transfer of local resources. Additional factors from case study countries include linkages to market opportunities beyond local communities, selection of relevant livelihoods activities (either with community input or by knowledgeable local actors), capacity and training provided to group members, and continued support from facilitators (either on a voluntary basis or associated with a new project).

However, there are also examples of livelihoods activities that were not sustained after project close. In

Indonesia's SPARC project, the cessation of livelihoods activities was attributed by community members to a lack of training and capacity building on marketing their products, and a lack of private sector connections. EP3 in Madagascar is another example of a project where livelihoods activities did not continue past project close. Here, the limited impact of alternative livelihoods activities was attributed to an inappropriate selection of livestock. Central project teams made decisions on which livestock to purchase, and community members and project staff reported that they were not appropriate for the local context, nor did community members receive adequate training and capacity building.



4

Lessons

4.1 Factors influencing the success of CBAs in GEF projects and programs

This section looks at factors linked to improving the likelihood of success of CBAs, based on interviews conducted across the partnership. Many of the factors identified as being associated with successful CBAs align with lessons and experiences from the SGP, as outlined in the SGP Annual Monitoring Report from 2017. These include the acknowledgment that community work needs to be nurtured to achieve sustainable results; that achieving and sustaining results requires time; and that partnerships increase the impact of the project and are key to scale-up (UNDP 2017).

The importance of taking a long-term approach. There was a consensus across all stakeholder groups—including the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Agencies, national and local governments, and project facilitators working directly with communities—that bottom-up approaches take longer than do top-down approaches. GEF project timelines, which tend to be around three to five years, present challenges to carrying out the necessary socialization and capacity-building activities that are an important aspect of CBAs. Addressing the heterogeneous challenges associated with the human-environment nexus in communities takes longer than a few years. Furthermore, the amount of time and resources required for in-depth community involvement in project design is limited, given the time and resource envelope provided in project preparation grants. Stakeholders emphasized that more attention is needed to the systems that could support communities in making results more sustainable—such as linkages to markets, creating or strengthening the governance of user groups, and building lasting relationships with stakeholders that plan to remain engaged with the initiative in a supporting or facilitating role—after projects close. Some stakeholders suggested that CBAs would be most successful through a model that emphasizes commitment to an ongoing relationship with continued engagement and financing. Additionally, staff in the GEF Secretariat highlighted the need to consider a long-term

approach during project preparation (not just implementation). This approach should take sustainability beyond project close into account, outlining or planning for a long-term view of the impact of the project for communities.

Setting realistic expectations. Country- and corporate-level stakeholders cautioned against unrealistic expectations for interventions targeted at the local community level. It can be challenging to work with communities, especially if the capacity levels of project staff (facilitation and outreach skills) and/or communities (group formation and governance, financial management, project reporting, technical capacity for new livelihoods activities, community monitoring, participatory planning) need to be supported with additional effort. It is important to be realistic about what a project can achieve in three to five years—particularly if, based on feedback from project implementers, in some cases activities on the ground do not start until year two of implementation. Moreover, working directly with communities to build capacity and create buy-in for the project can be labor intensive. Stakeholders also noted that the burden of achievement of global environmental benefits should not be placed solely on communities.

Building on what currently exists. A lesson from country stakeholders who work directly with communities is that building on social capital and cohesion in existing groups (even if such groups are dormant) can be easier and less time-consuming than creating new groups. One area where stakeholders saw potential synergies with existing GEF activities is through creating links to high capacity in communities that participate in the GEF SGP. In Cameroon, the country case study found that projects based on local initiatives and implementation approaches, as well as strategies involving IPLCs and other local stakeholders, were quite successful. Consideration of capacity-building activities, establishment of multistakeholder consultative platforms and other co-management instruments, programmatic synergies between projects funded by the GEF and other

development partners, and baseline reference data are equally important to the success of CBA-modeled projects. In this regard, in Cameroon, programmatic synergies were created with other development partners such as the World Wildlife Fund-US (WWF-US), the National Participatory Development Program, the Rainforest Trust, and the International Tropical Timber Organization to support various initiatives with similar conservation and sustainable development objectives.

Involving the right stakeholder groups. Government, Agency, and executing agency staff concur that proper ex ante analysis is a success factor both in terms of articulating the role of CBAs in project documents and in understanding the heterogeneous situation of communities. Engagement with local actors and empowerment of local (provincial and regional) authorities were also seen as contributing to better results. Additionally, engaging with private sector stakeholders to create linkages between alternative livelihoods activities and markets is an important success factor for CBA projects. The importance of finding partners with deep local knowledge and a history of engagement with local communities will help expedite points of departure for projects and ensure better design. An example of a GEF project that involved the relevant stakeholders is Indonesia's Citarum project. Here the government used GEF funding to innovate a new way to deliver a CBA, hiring a consortium of technical experts either from the communities or from organizations that work with the communities, including representatives from academia, civil society, and government to provide guidance on all aspects of project design and implementation and facilitate working with communities. This approach was seen as both an innovation and a factor for success.

Providing adequate capacity-building activities, facilitation, and support for social capital. Country stakeholders discussed the importance of allocating adequate time and resources for socialization, capacity building, and project facilitation at the community level. Project teams

implementing the Strengthening of Social Forestry in Indonesia project cited as one of their greatest challenges the time and resources required to conduct socialization and capacity-building activities before community grants could be rolled out. Late in year two of implementation, grants were just starting to be rolled out to the highest-capacity groups. Both time and high-quality facilitation are considered important success factors. There was strong community facilitation in Indonesia's Citarum project—so much so that the community facilitators were still in touch with and involved in the communities on a voluntary basis three years after the project closed. Though the facilitator in the site visit conducted by the IEO was not from the village, she lived there for the duration of the project and her continuous presence and in-depth knowledge of the village was considered an asset to the project by community members. In contrast, one of the challenges associated with some of the villages that participated in the Conservation and Sustainable Use of High-Andean Ecosystems through Compensation of Environmental Services for Rural Poverty Alleviation and Social Inclusion project (GEF ID 4773) in the Jequetepeque basin in Peru was the remoteness of the location: community members had to travel up to eight hours one way to attend meetings. Community members perceived that the quality and quantity of facilitation they received through the project was less than villages that were less remote, and they contributed their lack of involvement in project design and implementation at least partially to the remoteness of their community and lack of facilitation.

Good monitoring of CBA processes. There is limited evidence of GEF CBA projects tracking indicators that reflect activities central to processes associated with CBAs—for example, the ability of groups to govern, the number of resources under the control of communities, the inclusion of vulnerable groups, community scorecards, actions taken to address complaints, and participation in leadership roles and decision-making. Without data and indicators to track the processes that

are important in ensuring that a CBA is functioning as designed, it can be difficult to manage adaptively and to correct course if needed. Some stakeholders suggested that it would be helpful for the GEF to come up with standards for measuring some of the activities that support achievement of global environmental benefits such as CBA processes or socioeconomic indicators. An example of a GEF project that monitored CBA processes well is presented in [box 3.2](#).

4.2 Value addition and limitations of CBAs in the GEF

This section outlines perspectives from across the GEF partnership on the value addition of CBAs relative to other approaches. It also describes some of the limitations associated with CBAs as reported by interviewees.

GEF stakeholders across the partnership had positive feedback on the value added of CBAs. At the country level, stakeholders maintained that CBAs are a potential mechanism to address equity issues within communities. This observation is supported by the literature, which states that CBAs—while not a panacea to ensure equity—can be used as an instrument to work with communities to address internal inequity (Mahanty et al. 2006). Country stakeholders also mentioned that they associated the approach with an increased likelihood of sustainability through increased involvement, community stakeholders valuing their own direct contributions into project design and implementation, and increased agency at the community level. Country stakeholders also perceived that CBAs can contribute to a change in mindset and lead to behavioral changes toward the environment, fostering more interest in collective benefits by providing concrete, tangible benefits for communities. This point aligns with one made in a recent IEO evaluation, which found that behavior change is crucial for generating environmental benefits—underscoring that

successful projects employ participatory approaches (GEF IEO 2023a).

GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency representatives mentioned additional benefits associated with CBAs. These include governance benefits; peacebuilding in postconflict areas; empowerment of communities, which can contribute to the durability and ownership of investments; improved agency for decision-making and community planning; improved self-management; the inclusion of vulnerable or marginalized community members; and the avoidance of elite capture. These benefits were further linked with achieving environmental outcomes. Initiatives by the GEF and other development partners involving the Terai Arc Landscape in Nepal were cited in this context ([box 4.1](#)), with ongoing application of a CBA credited with producing benefits extending beyond individual projects. In the remote, conflict-affected region, WWF-US reports that resource governance through local communities, as supported by the GEF and other donors, is perhaps the only model of functional governance in the area.¹

CBAs are seen as potential mechanisms to address trade-offs between short-term economic gain and long-term environmental conservation. According to Agency stakeholders, CBAs allow for the generation of short-term socioeconomic benefits that directly meet the needs of communities—empowerment, governance, inclusion, and ownership. Agency staff noted that although these benefits may not be directly linked to immediate environmental benefits, providing them can incentivize communities to participate in long-term conservation activities that contribute to the achievement of environmental goals. Some Agency stakeholders viewed the approach as exemplifying a win-win trade-off. To be sure, some project funds are spent on activities that are not directly related to environmental objectives (such as building roads, schools, and health centers); but those investments, when selected in a participatory

¹Source: WWF website, “[Terai Arc Landscape \(TAL\), Nepal](#).”

Box 4.1 GEF application of CBAs in Nepal’s Terai Arc Landscape

The Integrated Landscape Management to Secure Nepal’s Protected Areas and Critical Corridors project (GEF ID 9437) joins a long history of GEF support to the Terai Arc Landscape in Nepal, and exemplifies a CBA. The project employs an integrated approach for natural resource management by combining community-based biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest and land management with national- to regional-level planning and coordination among multiple sectors that affect the landscape. It was designed to adopt a new approach to intersectoral, multistakeholder landscape-level planning, with coordination and capacity-building activities for key ministries of government and regional natural resource management and planning bodies. Integrating a CBA in the initiative is in line with Nepal’s National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which supports the meaningful participation of local communities in the management of natural resources and landscape approaches. It is also aligned with Nepal’s Forest Policy (2015), which identifies community, collaborative, leasehold, protection, buffer zone, religious, and private forests as critical to the provision of social, economic, and ecosystem services.

A small grant scheme was designed to stimulate the engagement of diverse stakeholders across the Terai Arc Landscape, open to community-based organizations, CSOs, and local nongovernmental organizations. Subgrants were awarded for community SFM as well. Local stakeholder consultations were needed to determine the feasibility of appropriate models and development of a strategic framework for community-based natural resource management. One of the outcomes is improved participatory planning for sustainable management of the Banke-Bardia complex. An activity under this is participatory assessment is to identify priority community and forest sites on which to focus. Other efforts designed by the project include community-based human-wildlife conflict prevention and management and community-based anti-poaching units.

manner, can contribute to community buy-in and support for environmental objectives. CBAs can thus nudge behavior change—for example, through providing infrastructure or economic activities that meet community needs and are linked to conservation activities, and through conducting socialization and education campaigns that build awareness about the importance of natural resources. Beyond the benefits associated with providing community infrastructure, the participatory processes involved were also seen to increase legitimacy. This finding aligns with the literature, which states that a CBA is often an effective instrument for gaining legitimacy for environmental initiatives among local stakeholders (Brown and Lassoie 2010; Kull 2002; Sripun, Yongvanit, and Pratt 2017).

In Madagascar, stakeholders agreed about the potential for CBAs to address these trade-offs and believed it was important to invest in high-quality and ongoing communication and education to help local communities understand the dynamics between the environmental and economic dimensions of development. In Peru, stakeholders felt it was essential that the populations involved in projects see positive changes in the short term in order to create buy-in for the project.

While there may be contextual differences among communities, it is necessary to consider basic living conditions (food, health, housing) when designing interventions. Understanding basic living conditions as a starting point can contribute to the promotion of sustainable management practices when considering the whole picture of communities that rely on the natural resources the project aims to protect. An example of well-integrated environmental and socioeconomic trade-offs is the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity, Forests, Soil and Water to Achieve the Good Living in the Napo Province, Ecuador project (GEF ID 4774). Project participants reported that the CBA applied in this project did a good job in helping them understand the community's incentive for participating in the intervention because they

linked the project to increased pasture and improved water quality.

CBAs are not a one-size-fits-all solution. According to stakeholders interviewed across the partnership, CBAs are most relevant for the GEF when the identified drivers of environmental degradation are at the community or local level and where interventions will work directly at the interface of human activity and the environment. CBAs are seen as less relevant for projects that address policy or central governance (although stakeholder feedback on these types of projects should be incorporated, as mandated by the GEF Stakeholder Engagement Policy). CBAs are also seen by some stakeholders as less relevant for projects where the main activity revolves around large procurements such as major roads or large-scale infrastructure. In cases where GEF interventions work at the human-environment nexus and the focus is at the community level, a CBA may be considered. Across the literature, there are repeated examples of the importance of context in implementing a CBA and cautions against taking rigid universal approaches (see, e.g., Lüthi, McConville, and Kvarnström 2009 and Parlee et al. 2021).

Stakeholders across the partnership pointed to the challenges associated with scaling CBA projects. They noted the need to ensure a commensurate number of staff and financial resources to avoid diluting the model in attempting scale-up. Project implementers warned against increasing geographical scope or covering a larger number of communities without a parallel increase in staffing. CBAs are more labor intensive than other approaches. Agency and country-level stakeholders pointed to the SGP for lessons on scaling CBAs.



5

Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Relevance

CBAs are relevant for the GEF as reflected in their presence in the multilateral environmental agreements; GEF projects, programs, and policies; and national priorities. Although the approach is not mandated in the GEF, there is language that reflects key dimensions of CBAs (including active participation in project design and implementation) in the conventions the GEF serves, especially the UNCCD, the CBD, and the UNFCCC. Consistent with convention guidance, GEF focal area strategies—especially those for biodiversity, land degradation, and climate change adaptation—contain references to key CBA concepts, and in some instances directly reference the application of CBAs. The GEF policies that focus on inclusion also include language supportive of CBAs, although without mandating the approach. GEF projects using CBAs broadly align with country priorities, although the extent to which countries are supportive of decentralizing decision-making to the community level and implementing comprehensive participatory approaches varies. GEF financing has provided opportunities for countries to innovate using CBAs.

Alignment with good practice

GEF CBA projects are in partial alignment with good practice, with some improvements in recently designed projects relative to older projects. Only a minority of the CBA projects identified are considered to be “comprehensive,” with above-average ratings along the six dimensions of good practice. Areas of improvement include going beyond consultations to actively involving communities in decision-making, incorporation of local institutions and customs, ensuring the accountability of implementers to users, and recognition of human rights and equality.

The devolution of financial and technical resources to communities—an important aspect of CBAs—has declined in recent projects. Almost 75 percent of recently designed projects did not mention or describe devolving resources as part of the project design. The share of projects that devolved financial and technical resources to communities decreased from 30 percent for completed projects to 23 percent for ongoing projects.

Strong examples of GEF projects or programs the support CBAs are found in the SGP and the ICI. The SGP has a long history of supporting CBAs and is a built-in resource and mechanism for identifying bottom-up initiatives with a track record of implementation success and existing capacity. There were few examples from the evaluation portfolio of financial resources flowing to communities for self-management, although there are mechanisms in the GEF that support CBAs such as the SGP and the ICI.

Community engagement in design, implementation, and monitoring

There was limited evidence of community involvement in project design beyond consultations; community involvement was more apparent during implementation and M&E. It was most common for local nongovernmental organizations, civil society partners, and community members to be introduced to a finalized project design instead of providing the opportunity to incorporate their feedback in project design. There is more evidence of community involvement in project implementation (i.e., through grants given directly to groups, and participatory planning) and some evidence of participatory M&E in terms of monitoring project processes and environmental conditions.

The GEF project cycle presents challenges for implementing CBA projects, both in terms of involving local stakeholders in design, and in allowing enough time to see results before project close. The amount of time and resources allocated during project preparation is insufficient to conduct the outreach, engagement, and analysis that would allow projects to reflect the needs of communities as

identified by the communities themselves. Furthermore, CBA projects typically involve more upfront activities with communities, such as socialization, group formation or reinforcement, capacity building, and participatory planning processes before other project activities such as small-scale infrastructure and livelihoods activities (selected by the communities) can be provided and supported by facilitators. The three- to five-year project cycle does not always allow enough time for conducting all these activities before project close.

Monitoring of CBA processes in MSPs and FSPs is weak. There is limited evidence of CBA projects tracking indicators that reflect activities central to processes associated with CBAs—such as the ability of groups to govern, the number of resources under the control of communities, the inclusion of vulnerable groups, community scorecards, actions taken to address any complaints, and participation in leadership roles and decision-making. The lack of data and indicators limits the GEF's ability to adaptively manage CBA projects.

Inclusion

The GEF's CBA projects have become more inclusive of women, IPLCs, and youth over time, although systemic inequalities have not yet been addressed. Women, youth, and IPLCs are included more frequently in more recently designed projects. However, the extent to which projects explicitly address systemic inequalities that prevent their participation, particularly of women, was unclear.

Results and performance

GEF CBA projects were associated with better performance ratings. Projects that adopt a CBA beyond the minimum requirements of basic consultation are associated with higher outcome ratings than in the overall GEF portfolio. CBA projects are also associated with more frequent achievement of improved environmental conditions—such as improved land management, land restoration,

carbon sequestration, reduction of wildlife poaching and illegal logging, endangered species protection, and water quality improvement—as well as broader adoption and socioeconomic co-benefits related to resilience, livelihoods improvement, poverty reduction, governance, and empowerment.

The sustainability of CBA project outcomes postcompletion was frequently associated with behavior change, and to some extent alternative livelihoods. Livelihoods activities were more likely to continue past project close if the activity was relevant for the local context; linked to local markets; and received continued support from the private sector, civil society, or another project. The processes associated with CBAs are best supported with continued engagement to ensure that targeted environmental and socioeconomic co-benefits are sustained. This conclusion aligns with the IEO’s finding in the 2017 Annual Performance Report that high stakeholder buy-in, financial support for follow-up, and sustained efforts by the executing agency contributed to higher outcomes during post-implementation (GEF IEO 2019b). Furthermore, previous IEO evaluations have identified factors that contribute to sustainability such as income-generating activities that link local community benefits to improved environmental management. Across country cluster evaluations conducted by the IEO, low stakeholder buy-in was a hindering factor for sustainability—this hindering factor could be addressed by well-designed and -implemented CBA projects.

Lessons

The evaluation identified several lessons learned that are important for the GEF to consider; in some cases, they may be difficult to apply given the GEF project cycle and processes. For example, applying a long-term approach is challenging within GEF project timelines and the amount of time and resources allocated for project preparation. A similar lesson is the importance of setting realistic expectations as to what small investments at the community level can achieve in a short amount of time. One

potential mechanism to mitigate the long time required to for implementing CBA projects and seeing results is through building on the social capital and cohesion of existing groups versus starting new ones.

Other lessons underscore the importance of prior ex ante analysis and involving the right people in CBA projects.

After identifying the right stakeholders, adequate time and resources must be allocated to such processes as capacity building and facilitation. These activities should be monitored to allow for an understanding of whether the processes inherent to the CBA are being well applied and allow for adaptive management.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should ensure that co-design of projects with communities is possible under the suite of GEF policies and guidelines, for projects where community partnership is a critical element. The ongoing review of GEF policy and guidelines should be done in anticipation of the proposed “whole of society” approach in GEF-9, which emphasizes stakeholder engagement across different segments of society.

Recommendation 2: Building on earlier guidance, the GEF Secretariat, together with the GEF STAP, should provide more clarity and guidance on when and how CBAs can be used in GEF projects. This would include examples of results indicators observed in projects and appropriate guidance to facilitate the use of CBAs.

Recommendation 3: The GEF Secretariat should develop an approach for tracking of devolved responsibility and/or financial resources to the local level for GEF projects as appropriate. Such tracking could differentiate between resources allocated to national CSOs, IPLCs, women’s groups, etc., as relevant.

Evaluation portfolio

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
1837	Extending Wetland protected Areas through Community Based Conservation Initiatives	GEF-4	Uganda	UNDP	0.80	GET	C
2184	SIP: Stimulating Community Initiatives in Sustainable Land Management (SCI-SLM)	GEF-4	Regional	UNEP	0.91	GET	C
2369	PRC-GEF Partnership: An IEM Approach to the Conservation of Biodiversity in Dryland Ecosystems - under the PRC-GEF Partnership on Land Degradation in Dryland Ecosystem Program	GEF-4	China	IFAD	4.55	GET	C
2632	MENARID: Participatory Control of Desertification and Poverty Reduction in the Arid and Semi Arid High Plateau Ecosystems of Eastern Morocco	GEF-4	Morocco	IFAD	6.00	GET	C
2732	MENARID: Institutional Strengthening and Coherence for Integrated Natural Resources Management	GEF-4	Iran	UNDP	4.32	GET	C
2907	Re-engineering the National Protected Area System in Order to Achieve Financial Sustainability	GEF-4	Dominican Republic	UNDP	3.20	GET	C
2975	Mindanao Rural Development Program Phase II - Natural Resource Management Project	GEF-4	Philippines	WB	6.35	GET	C
3276	Promoting Sustainable Land Management in Las Bambas	GEF-4	Peru	UNDP	4.00	GET	C
3279	Citarum Watershed Management and Biodiversity Conservation Project	GEF-4	Indonesia	ADB	3.75	GET	C
3299	Strengthening the Capacity of Vulnerable Coastal Communities to Address the Risk of Climate Change and Extreme Weather Events	GEF-4	Thailand	UNDP	0.87	SCCF	C
3367	SIP: Community-Based Integrated Natural Resources Management in Lake Tana Watershed	GEF-4	Ethiopia	IFAD	4.40	GET	C
3368	SIP: Participatory Integrated Watershed Management Project (PIWAMP)	GEF-4	Gambia, The	AfDB	4.40	GET	C
3379	SIP: Participatory Environmental Protection and Poverty Reduction in the Oases of Mauritania	GEF-4	Mauritania	IFAD	4.19	GET	C

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
3382	SIP: Community Driven SLM for Environmental and Food Security	GEF-4	Niger	WB	4.67	GET	C
3396	SIP: Improving Policy and Practice Interaction through Civil Society Capacity Building	GEF-4	Regional	UNDP	1.74	GET	C
3398	SIP: Eastern Nile Transboundary Watershed Management in Support of ENSAP Implementation	GEF-4	Regional	WB	8.70	GET	C
3403	SIP: Kalahari-Namib Project: Enhancing Decision-making through Interactive Environmental Learning and Action in Molopo-Nossob River Basin in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa	GEF-4	Regional	UNEP	2.18	GET	C
3443	SFM Strengthening Community Based Forest and Watershed Management (SCBFWM)	GEF-4	Indonesia	UNDP	7.00	GET	C
3445	SFM: Integrated Community-based Forest and Catchment Management through an Ecosystem Service Approach (CBFCM)	GEF-4	Thailand	UNDP	1.76	GET	C
3470	SLEM/CPP: Sustainable Rural Livelihood Security through Innovations in Land and Ecosystem Management	GEF-4	India	WB	7.34	GET	C
3471	SLEM/CPP: Sustainable Land Water and Biodiversity Conservation and Management for Improved Livelihoods in Uttarakhand Watershed Sector	GEF-4	India	WB	7.49	GET	C
3472	SLEM/CPP: Integrated Land Use Management to Combat Land Degradation in Madja Pradesh	GEF-4	India	UNDP	5.76	GET	C
3529	SIP: Harmonizing support: a national program integrating water harvesting schemes and sustainable land management	GEF-4	Djibouti	UNDP	0.96	GET	C
3533	Protected Area Project (Projet d'Appui a la Relance de la Conservation des Parcs et Reserves, PARC-CI)	GEF-4	Côte d'Ivoire	WB	2.54	GET	C
3589	CTI Coastal and Marine Resources Management in the Coral Triangle: Southeast Asia under Coral Triangle Initiative	GEF-4	Regional	ADB	11.22	GET	C
3591	PAS: Strengthening Coastal and Marine Resources Management in the Coral Triangle of the Pacific - under the Pacific Alliance for Sustainability Program	GEF-4	Regional	ADB	13.12	GET	C
3608	PRC-GEF Partnership: Sustainable Development in Poor Rural Areas	GEF-4	China	WB	4.27	GET	C
3609	Strengthening the Financial Sustainability and Operational Effectiveness of the Venezuelan National Parks System	GEF-4	Venezuela, RB	UNDP	7.18	GET	C
3627	SFM: Promotion of Sustainable Forest and Land Management in the Vietnam Uplands	GEF-4	Vietnam	IFAD	0.65	GET	C

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
3635	SFM Strengthening Sustainable Forest Management and the Development of Bio-energy Markets to Promote Environmental Sustainability and to Reduce Green House Gas Emissions in Cambodia	GEF-4	Cambodia	UNDP	2.36	GET	C
3637	SFM Transforming Management of Biodiversity-rich Community Production Forests through Building National Capacities for Market-based Instruments - under the Sustainable Forest Management Program	GEF-4	Mexico	UNDP	6.90	GET	C
3669	MENARID: Second Natural Resources Management Project	GEF-4	Tunisia	WB	9.73	GET	C
3687	Madagascar's Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas	GEF-4	Madagascar	UNDP	6.00	GET	C
3692	Effective Management of Nkhhotakota Wildlife Reserve (PDMNWR)	GEF-4	Malawi	WB	0.85	GET	C
3693	Strengthening the Protected Area Network within the Eastern Montane Forest Hotspot of Kenya	GEF-4	Kenya	UNDP	4.50	GET	C
3717	SFM Sustainable Management of Biodiversity and Water Resources in the Ibarra-San Lorenzo Corridor	GEF-4	Ecuador	IFAD	2.70	GET	C
3750	CBSP Catalyzing Sustainable Forest Management in the Lake Tele-Lake Tumba (LTLT) Transboundary Wetland Landscape	GEF-4	Regional	UNDP	2.17	GET	C
3752	SPWA-BD: Consolidation of Cape Verde's Protected Areas System	GEF-4	Cabo Verde	UNDP	3.10	GET	C
3753	Sustainable Financing of the Protected Area System in Mozambique	GEF-4	Mozambique	UNDP	4.85	GET	C
3767	SFM Strengthening National Policy and Knowledge Frameworks in Support of Sustainable Management of Brazil's Forest Resources	GEF-4	Brazil	FAO	8.85	GET	C
3770	SPWA-BD: Incorporation of Sacred Forests into the Protected Areas System of Benin	GEF-4	Benin	UNDP	0.95	GET	C
3772	CBSP Forest and Nature Conservation Project	GEF-4	Congo, Dem. Rep.	WB	6.00	GET	C
3773	Support to the Madagascar Foundation for Protected Areas and Biodiversity (through Additional Financing to the Third Environment Support Program Project (EP3))	GEF-4	Madagascar	WB	10.00	GET	C
3777	CBSP Sustainable Management of the Wildlife and Bushmeat Sector in Central Africa	GEF-4	Regional	FAO	4.25	GET	C
3821	CBSP Sustainable Community Based Management and Conservation of Mangrove Ecosystems in Cameroon	GEF-4	Cameroon	FAO	1.73	GET	C

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
3822	CBSP - A Regional Focus on Sustainable Timber Management in the Congo Basin	GEF-4	Regional	UNEP	3.08	GET	C
3825	Mountains and Markets: Biodiversity and Business in Northern Pakistan	GEF-4	Pakistan	UNDP	1.79	GET	C
3829	Sustainable Financing of Ecuador's National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) and Associated Private and Community-managed PA Subsystems	GEF-4	Ecuador	UNDP	6.40	GET	C
3853	Building Capacity for Regionally Harmonized National Processes for Implementing CBD Provisions on Access to Genetic Resources and Sharing of Benefits	GEF-4	Regional	UNEP	0.75	GET	C
3867	Improving Effectiveness of Protected Areas to Conserve Biodiversity in Burundi	GEF-4	Burundi	UNDP	0.86	GET	C
3873	Developing and Demonstrating Replicable Protected Area Management Models at Nam Et - Phou Louey National Protected Area	GEF-4	Lao PDR	WB	0.88	GET	C
3933	SFM Sustainable Management of Protected Areas and Forests of the Northern Highlands of Peru	GEF-4	Peru	IFAD	1.72	GET	C
3940	Sustainable Management of Biodiversity in Thailand's Production Landscape	GEF-4	Thailand	UNDP	1.94	GET	C
3941	IND-BD Mainstreaming Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Conservation into Production Sectors in the Malvan Coast, Maharashtra State	GEF-4	India	UNDP	3.44	GET	C
3971	SFM Biodiversity Conservation through Sustainable Forest Management by Local Communities	GEF-4	Bolivia	UNDP	5.50	GET	C
3992	CBPF: Strengthening the Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Qinghai Province	GEF-4	China	UNDP	5.35	GET	C
4034	Improving the Resilience of the Agriculture Sector in Lao PDR to Climate Change Impacts	GEF-4	Lao PDR	UNDP	4.45	LDCF	C
4035	MENARID: Ecotourism and Conservation of Desert Biodiversity	GEF-4	Tunisia	WB	4.27	GET	C
4080	SPWA-BD: Participatory Biodiversity Conservation and Low Carbon Development in Pilot Ecovillages in Senegal	GEF-4	Senegal	UNDP	2.88	GET	C
4084	CBSP Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Ngoyla Mintom Forest	GEF-4	Cameroon	WB	3.50	GET	C
4216	Integration of Climate Change Risk and Resilience into Forestry Management (ICCRIFS)	GEF-4	Samoa	UNDP	2.40	LDCF	C
4221	SPWA-BD: Protected Area Buffer Zone Management in Burkina Faso	GEF-4	Burkina Faso	UNDP	0.86	GET	C

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
4222	Promoting Autonomous Adaptation at the community level in Ethiopia	GEF-4	Ethiopia	UNDP	5.31	LDCF	C
4340	Strategic Planning and Action to Strengthen Climate Resilience of Rural Communities in Nusa Tenggara Timor Province (SPARC)	GEF-5	Indonesia	UNDP	5.00	SCCF	C
4470	Building a Multiple-Use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape	GEF-5	Iran	UNDP	1.90	GET	C
4551	Community Based Flood and Glacial Lake Outburst Risk Reduction	GEF-5	Nepal	UNDP	6.30	LDCF	C
4554	Effective Governance for Small Scale Rural Infrastructure and Disaster Preparedness in a Changing Climate	GEF-5	Lao PDR	UNDP	4.70	LDCF	C
4584	Improving Sustainability of PA System in Desert Ecosystems through Promotion of Biodiversity-compatible Livelihoods in and around PAs	GEF-5	Kazakhstan	UNDP	4.36	GET	C
4616	Climate Change Adaptation to Reduce Land Degradation in Fragile Micro-Watersheds Located in the Municipalities of Texistepeque and Candelaria de la Frontera	GEF-5	El Salvador	FAO	1.52	SCCF, GET, MTF	C
4625	Shire Natural Ecosystems Management Project	GEF-5	Malawi	WB	6.58	LDCF, GET, MTF	C
4653	CBPF-MSL: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area Landscape in Altai Mountains and Wetlands	GEF-5	China	UNDP	3.54	GET	C
4659	LME-EA: Coastal Resources for Sustainable Development: Mainstreaming the Application of Marine Spatial Planning Strategies, Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use	GEF-5	Vietnam	WB	6.50	GET	C
4696	Strengthening the Resilience of Small Scale Rural Infrastructure and Local Government Systems to Climatic Variability and Risk	GEF-5	Timor-Leste	UNDP	4.60	LDCF	C
4744	Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation, SFM and Carbon Sink Enhancement Into Mongolia's Productive Forest Landscapes	GEF-5	Mongolia	FAO	3.59	GET	C
4751	Mainstreaming SLM in Rangeland Areas of Ngamiland District Productive Landscapes for Improved livelihoods	GEF-5	Botswana	UNDP	3.08	GET	C
4792	Conservation of Coastal Watersheds to Achieve Multiple Global Environmental Benefits in the Context of Changing Environments	GEF-5	Mexico	WB	39.52	GET	C

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
4839	Establishing Integrated Models for Protected Areas and their Co-management	GEF-5	Afghanistan	UNDP	6.44	GET	C
4954	Community Agricultural Resource Management and Competitiveness (CARMAC)	GEF-5	Armenia	WB	0.90	GET	C
4960	Scaling up Adaptation in Zimbabwe, with a Focus on Rural Livelihoods, by Strengthening Integrated Planning Systems	GEF-5	Zimbabwe	UNDP	3.98	SCCF	C
4967	Scaling up Risk Transfer Mechanisms for Climate Vulnerable Agriculture-based Communities in Mindanao	GEF-5	Philippines	UNDP	1.05	SCCF	C
5026	MENA: Badia Ecosystem and Livelihoods Project (BELP)	GEF-5	Jordan	WB	3.33	GET	C
5056	Strengthening Community Resilience to Climate-induced Disasters in the Dili to Ainaro Road Development Corridor, Timor-Leste	GEF-5	Timor-Leste	UNDP	5.25	LDCF	C
5187	GGW: Community based Rural Development Project 3rd Phase with Sustainable Land and Forestry Management	GEF-5	Burkina Faso	WB	7.41	GET	C
5266	Oases Ecosystems and Livelihoods Project	GEF-5	Tunisia	WB	5.76	GET	C
5481	Conservation of Biodiversity and Mitigation of Land Degradation Through Adaptive Management of Agricultural Heritage Systems	GEF-5	Morocco	FAO	0.77	GET	C
5596	Sustainable Land Management in the Churia Range	GEF-5	Nepal	WWF-US	0.92	GET	C
5656	Parks, People, Planet: Protected Areas as Solutions to Global Challenges	GEF-5	Global	UNDP	1.83	GET	C
5789	Using SLM to Improve the Integrity of the Makgadikgadi Ecosystem and to Secure the Livelihoods of Rangeland Dependent Communities	GEF-5	Botswana	UNDP	0.79	GET	C
5826	Strengthening National Systems to Improve Governance and Management of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Conserved Areas and Territories	GEF-5	Philippines	UNDP	1.75	GET	C
6914	Adapting Afghan Communities to Climate-Induced Disaster Risks	GEF-6	Afghanistan	UNDP	5.60	LDCF	0
6949	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pamir Alay and Tian Shan Ecosystems for Snow Leopard Protection and Sustainable Community Livelihoods	GEF-6	Tajikistan	UNDP	4.18	GET	0
8001	Community-based Climate Risks Management in Chad	GEF-6	Chad	UNDP	5.25	LDCF	0
8005	Sustainable Land Management for Increased Productivity in Armenia (SLMIP)	GEF-6	Armenia	IFAD	3.94	GET	0

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
8031	Sustainable Natural Resource Use and Forest Management in Key Mountainous Areas Important for Globally Significant Biodiversity	GEF-6	Uzbekistan	UNDP	6.21	GET	0
9141	GEF-IAP:Participatory Natural Resource Management and Rural Development Project in the North, Centre-North and East Regions (Neer Tamba project)	GEF-6	Burkina Faso	IFAD	7.27	GET	0
9147	Sustainable-City Development in Malaysia	GEF-6	Malaysia	UNIDO	2.75	GET	0
9148	Securing Livelihoods, Conservation, Sustainable Use and Restoration of High Range Himalayan Ecosystems (SECURE)Himalayas	GEF-6	India	UNDP	11.54	GET	0
9158	Strengthening the Conservation of Globally Threatened Species in Mozambique through Improving Biodiversity Enforcement and Expanding Community Conservancies around Protected Areas	GEF-6	Mozambique	UNDP	15.75	GET	0
9180	Reducing Deforestation from Commodity Production	GEF-6	Global	UNDP	14.58	GET	0
9194	Strengthening Adaptive Capacities to Climate Change through Capacity Building for Small Scale Enterprises and Communities Dependent on Coastal Fisheries in The Gambia	GEF-6	Gambia, The	UNIDO	2.20	LDCF	0
9199	Enhancing Sustainability and Climate Resilience of Forest and Agricultural Landscape and Community Livelihoods	GEF-6	Bhutan	UNDP	13.97	LDCF, GET, MTF	0
9212	Wildlife and Human-Elephant Conflicts Management	GEF-6	Gabon	WB	9.06	GET	0
9213	Zambia Integrated Forest Land Project (ZIFLP)	GEF-6	Zambia	WB	8.05	GET	0
9262	Agroforestry Landscapes and Sustainable Forest Management that Generate Environmental and Economic Benefits Globally and Locally	GEF-6	Honduras	UNDP	13.29	GET	0
9266	Restoring Degraded Forest Landscapes and Promoting Community-based, Sustainable and Integrated Natural Resource Management in the Rora Habab Plateau, Nakfa Sub-zoba, Northern Red Sea Region of Eritrea	GEF-6	Eritrea	UNDP	8.26	GET	0
9285	Community-based Sustainable Land and Forest Management in Afghanistan	GEF-6	Afghanistan	FAO	10.50	GET	0
9294	Integrated ecosystem management project for the sustainable human development in Mauritania	GEF-6	Mauritania	FAO	8.22	GET	0
9370	(NGI) The Meloy Fund: A Fund for Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in Southeast Asia	GEF-6	Regional	CI	6.00	GET	0

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
9372	Managing Together: Integrating Community-centered, Ecosystem-based Approaches into Forestry, Agriculture and Tourism Sectors	GEF-6	Sri Lanka	UNDP	3.35	GET	0
9385	Forest Landscape Restoration in the Mayaga Region	GEF-6	Rwanda	UNDP	6.21	GET	0
9389	Ensuring Sustainability and Resilience (ENSURE) of Green Landscapes in Mongolia	GEF-6	Mongolia	UNDP	7.96	GET	0
9434	Securing the Long-term Conservation of Timor-Leste Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services through the Establishment of a Functioning National Protected Area Network and the Improvement of Natural Resource Management in Priority Catchment Corridors	GEF-6	Timor-Leste	CI	3.34	GET	0
9437	Integrated Landscape Management to Secure Nepal's Protected Areas and Critical Corridors	GEF-6	Nepal	WWF-US	6.70	GET	0
9449	Sustainable, Accessible and Innovative Use of Biodiversity Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge in Promising Phytotherapeutic Value Chains in Brazil	GEF-6	Brazil	UNDP	5.72	GET	0
9464	Strengthening the PA System in the Qilian Mountains-Qinghai Lake landscape	GEF-6	China	UNDP	2.65	GET	0
9515	The Restoration Initiative, DRC child project: Improved Management and Restoration of Agro-sylvo-pastoral Resources in the Pilot Province of South-Kivu	GEF-6	Congo, Dem. Rep.	FAO	3.60	GET	0
9516	Reversing Deforestation and Degradation in High Conservation Value Chilgoza Pine Forests in Pakistan	GEF-6	Pakistan	FAO	3.98	GET	0
9531	Conservation of Snow Leopards and their Critical Ecosystem in Afghanistan	GEF-6	Afghanistan	UNDP	2.70	GET	0
9551	Capacity Development in Reducing Illegal Wildlife Trade and Improving Protected Area Management Effectiveness in South Sudan	GEF-6	South Sudan	UNEP	5.33	GET	0
9556	Restoration of Arid and Semi-arid lands (ASAL) of Kenya through Bio-enterprise Development and other Incentives under The Restoration Initiative	GEF-6	Kenya	FAO	4.16	GET	0
9573	Conservation and Sustainable use of Liberia's Coastal Natural Capital	GEF-6	Liberia	CI	3.94	GET	0
9575	Sudan Sustainable Natural Resources Management Project- Additional Financing	GEF-6	Sudan	WB	5.50	GET	0
9584	Integrated Approach in the Management of Major Biodiversity Corridors (IA-Biological Corridors)	GEF-6	Philippines	UNDP	12.26	GET	0
9600	Strengthening of Social Forestry in Indonesia	GEF-6	Indonesia	WB	14.32	GET	0

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
9601	CRew+: An Integrated Approach to Water and Wastewater Management Using Innovative Solutions and Promoting Financing Mechanisms in the Wider Caribbean Region	GEF-6	Regional	IDB	14.94	GET	0
9604	Removing Barriers to Biodiversity Conservation, Land Restoration and Sustainable Forest Management through Community-based Landscape Management – COBALAM	GEF-6	Cameroon	UNEP	3.11	GET	0
9606	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity in the Northwestern Landscape (Boeny region)	GEF-6	Madagascar	CI	6.82	GET	0
9659	Kenya- Combating Poaching and Illegal Wildlife Trafficking in Kenya through an Integrated Approach	GEF-6	Kenya	UNDP	3.83	GET	0
9661	Mali- Community-based Natural Resource Management that Resolves Conflict, Improves Livelihoods and Restores Ecosystems throughout the Elephant Range	GEF-6	Mali	UNDP	4.12	GET	0
9671	Effective Management of Wadi El-Rayan and Qarun Protected Areas	GEF-6	Egypt, Arab Rep.	UNEP	1.32	GET	0
9700	Strengthening the Management of Wildlife and Improving Livelihoods in Northern Republic of Congo	GEF-6	Congo, Rep.	WB	6.51	GET	0
9730	Generating Economic and Environmental Benefits from Sustainable Land Management for Vulnerable Rural Communities of Georgia	GEF-6	Georgia	UNEP	1.45	GET	0
9735	Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade and Human Wildlife Conflict	GEF-6	Angola	UNDP	4.10	GET	0
9745	Sustainable Land Management for Improved Livelihoods in Degraded Areas of Iraq	GEF-6	Iraq	FAO	3.55	GET	0
9783	Integrated management of natural resources in the Bafing Faleme landscape	GEF-6	Guinea	UNDP	7.06	GET	0
9798	Sustainable Land Management in Target Landscapes in Angola's Southwestern Region	GEF-6	Angola	FAO	2.64	GET	0
9802	Promoting the Effective Management of Salonga National Park through Creation of Community Forests and Improving the Well-being of Local Communities	GEF-6	Congo, Dem. Rep.	UNEP	5.69	GET	0
9847	Expanding Conservation Areas Reach and Effectiveness (ECARE) in Vanuatu	GEF-6	Vanuatu	IUCN	2.45	GET	0
9875	Participatory in situ Conservation and Sustainable Use of Agrobiodiversity in Hainan	GEF-6	China	UNDP	1.51	GET	0

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
9880	Community-based Integrated Natural Resource Management Project	GEF-6	Fiji	FAO	2.12	GET	0
9889	Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation through Low-Impact Ecotourism in SINAP II (ECOTUR-AP II)	GEF-6	Panama	IDB	0.75	GET	0
9927	Building Resilience of Cambodian Communities Using Natural Infrastructure and Promoting Diversified Livelihood	GEF-6	Cambodia	UNEP	0.52	GET	0
9978	Strengthening Resilience of Agricultural Lands and Forests in Dominica in the Aftermath of Hurricane Maria	GEF-6	Dominica	UNEP	1.58	GET	0
10046	Ecosystem Restoration and Sustainable Land Management in Tongoa Island	GEF-6	Vanuatu	FAO	0.87	GET	0
10083	Sustainable Natural Resources Management Project -AF	GEF-7	Sudan	WB	5.94	LDCF, GET, MTF	0
10096	Ecosystems/Landscape approach to climate proof the Rural Settlement Program of Rwanda	GEF-7	Rwanda	UNDP	8.36	LDCF	0
10159	Resilience of Pastoral and Farming Communities to Climate Change in North Darfur	GEF-7	Sudan	FAO	2.43	LDCF	0
10162	Landscape Approach to Riverine Forest Restoration, Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Improvement	GEF-7	Sudan	FAO	2.59	GET	0
10169	Combating land degradation and biodiversity loss by promoting sustainable rangeland management and biodiversity conservation in Afghanistan	GEF-7	Afghanistan	FAO	5.91	GET	0
10192	Ecosystem conservation and community livelihood enhancement in North Western Zambia	GEF-7	Zambia	UNEP	5.34	GET	0
10199	Improving Water Availability in The Gambia's Rural and Peri-Urban Communities for Domestic and Agricultural Use	GEF-7	Gambia, The	AfDB	8.95	LDCF	0
10233	Sustainable Management of Conservation Areas and Improved Livelihoods to Combat Wildlife Trafficking in Madagascar	GEF-7	Madagascar	UNEP	5.76	GET	0
10235	Strengthening Conservation and Resilience of Globally-significant Wild Cat Landscapes through a Focus on Small Cat and Leopard Conservation	GEF-7	India	UNDP	4.50	GET	0
10236	Catalyzing Optimum Management of Nature Heritage for Sustainability of Ecosystem, Resources and Viability of Endangered Wildlife Species (CONSERVE)	GEF-7	Indonesia	UNDP	6.27	GET	0

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
10243	Preventing forest loss, promoting restoration and integrating sustainability into Ethiopia's coffee supply chains and food systems	GEF-7	Ethiopia	UNDP	20.34	GET	0
10249	Promoting Dryland Sustainable Landscapes and Biodiversity Conservation in the Eastern Steppe of Mongolia	GEF-7	Mongolia	FAO	5.35	GET	0
10252	Strengthening management of protected and productive landscapes in the Surinamese Amazon	GEF-7	Suriname	UNDP	5.17	GET	0
10268	Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand	GEF-7	Thailand	UNEP	5.54	GET	0
10287	Integrated management of Cameroon's forest landscapes in the Congo Basin	GEF-7	Cameroon	WWF-US	9.61	GET	0
10293	Transforming and scaling up results and lessons learned in the Monte Alen and Rio Campo Landscapes through an inclusive Landscape-scale approach, effective land use planning and promotion of local governance	GEF-7	Equatorial Guinea	IUCN	5.35	GET	0
10295	Amazon sustainable landscape approach in the Plurinational System of Protected Areas and Strategic Ecosystems of Bolivia	GEF-7	Bolivia	CAF	10.06	GET	0
10298	Integrated Community-Based Conservation of Peatlands Ecosystems and Promotion of Ecotourism in Lac Télé Landscape of Republic of Congo - ICOBACPE/PELATEL	GEF-7	Congo, Rep.	UNEP	6.11	GET	0
10299	Kazakhstan Resilient Agroforestry and Rangeland Management Project	GEF-7	Kazakhstan	WB	6.28	GET	0
10314	Community-based forested landscape management in the Grand Kivu and Lake Tele-Tumba	GEF-7	Congo, Dem. Rep.	UNEP	13.76	GET	0
10341	Catalyzing Financing and Capacity for the Biodiversity Economy around Protected Areas	GEF-7	South Africa	WB	13.43	GET	0
10348	Landscape Restoration and Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Food Systems	GEF-7	Ghana	WB	12.76	GET	0
10350	Sustainable Natural Resource and Livelihood Adaptive Programme (SNRLAP)	GEF-7	Sudan	IFAD	2.00	LDCF	0
10351	Biodiversity protection through the Effective Management of the National Network of Protected Areas	GEF-7	Comoros	UNDP	4.02	GET	0
10381	Enhancing capacity for sustainable management of forests, land and biodiversity in the Eastern Hills (ECSM FoLaBi EH)	GEF-7	Nepal	FAO	4.19	GET	0

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
10393	Strengthening the integral and sustainable management of biodiversity and forests by indigenous peoples and local communities in fragile ecosystems of the dry forests of the Bolivia Chaco	GEF-7	Bolivia	FAO	3.50	GET	0
10404	Inclusive Conservation Initiative	GEF-7	Global	CI	22.54	GET	0
10412	Sustainable Luangwa: Securing Luangwa's water resources for shared socioeconomic and environmental benefits through integrated catchment management	GEF-7	Zambia	WWF-US	2.89	GET	0
10438	UAVs/drones for Equitable Climate Change Adaptation: Participatory Risk Management through Landslide and Debris Flow Monitoring in Mocoa, Colombia	GEF-7	Colombia	CAF	0.50	SCCF	0
10481	Promoting Integrated Landscape Management and Sustainable Food Systems in the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria	GEF-7	Nigeria	FAO	5.35	GET	0
10500	Livelihoods Carbon Fund 3 (LCF3)	GEF-7	Global	CI	13.46	GET	0
10529	Strengthening Community-managed Protected Areas for Conserving Biodiversity and Improving Local Livelihoods in Pakistan	GEF-7	Pakistan	UNDP	2.34	GET	0
10533	Restoration of Degraded Natural Forests and Soil Erosion Management Improvement in Erosion-Prone Regions of China	GEF-7	China	UNDP	2.99	GET	0
10541	Sustainable management and restoration of the Dry Forest of the Northern Coast of Peru	GEF-7	Peru	FAO	7.67	GET	0
10601	Food System, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program in Uzbekistan	GEF-7	Uzbekistan	FAO	5.99	GET	0
10627	Programme to sustainably manage and restore land and biodiversity in the Guadalquivir Basin	GEF-7	Bolivia	FAO	1.56	GET	0
10633	Green Finance for Sustainable Landscapes Joint Initiative of the CPF (GF4SL)	GEF-7	Global	UNEP	0.91	GET	0
10637	Restoration Challenge Grant Platform for Smallholders and Communities, with Blockchain-Enabled Crowdfunding	GEF-7	Regional	IUCN	2.00	GET	0
10692	Integrated Community-based Management of High Value Mountain Ecosystems in Southern Kyrgyzstan for Multiple Benefits	GEF-7	Kyrgyz Republic	UNDP	2.64	GET	0
10702	Community-based Management of Tanguar Haor Wetland in Bangladesh	GEF-7	Bangladesh	UNDP	4.05	GET	0
10713	Adapting to climate change and enabling sustainable land management through productive rural communities in Timor-Leste	GEF-7	Timor-Leste	UNEP	9.85	LDCF, GET, MTF	0

GEF ID	Title	GEF period	Country	GEF Agency	Total financing (mil. \$)	Funding source	Status
10731	Strengthened Systems for Community-based Conservation of Forests and Peatland Landscapes in Indonesia (CoPLI)	GEF-7	Indonesia	IFAD	5.33	GET	0
10738	Strengthening and Sustaining the Coastal Resource and Fisheries Management in the Leyte Gulf	GEF-7	Philippines	CI	1.80	GET	0
10757	Maintaining and Enhancing Water Yield through Land and Forest Rehabilitation (MEWLAFOR)	GEF-7	Indonesia	UNIDO	1.78	GET	0
10780	Enhancing biodiversity considerations and effective protected area management to safeguard the Cook Islands integrated ecosystems and species	GEF-7	Cook Islands	UNDP	3.50	GET	0
10789	Building Community Based Integrated and Climate Resilient Natural Resources Management and Enhancing Sustainable Livelihood in the South-Eastern Escarpments and Adjacent Coastal Areas of Eritrea	GEF-7	Eritrea	FAO	15.68	LDCF, GET, MTF	0

Note: GEF Agency: ADB = Asian Development Bank; AfDB = African Development Bank, CAF = Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, CI = Conservation International, FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, IDB = Inter-American Development Bank, IFAD = International Fund for Agricultural Development, IUCN = International Union for Conservation of Nature, UNDP = United Nations Development Programme, UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme, UNIDO = United Nations Industrial Development Organization, WB = World Bank, WWF-US = World Wildlife Fund-US; *funding source:* GET = GEF Trust Fund, LDCF = Least Developed Countries Fund, MTF = multiple trust funds, SCCF = Special Climate Change Fund; *status:* C = completed, O = ongoing.

Detailed spectrum of CBAs and dimensions used for analysis

	Inform	Consult	Involve (limited CBA)	Collaborate (some CBA)	Empower (comprehensive CBA)
	<i>Minimum; per GEF Stakeholder Engagement Policy</i>		<i>CBAs, intentional design choice, community centered</i>		
Goal	Provide information about project activities to communities in a timely manner	Obtain feedback on project design and project activities including analysis, issues, and alternatives from communities	To work with communities to ensure their concerns and desires related to the GEF project are considered and understood	To partner with communities in aspects of decision-making (i.e., design, implementation, evaluation) for GEF projects	To place decision-making (managerial and financial) for a GEF project in the hands of communities
Promise	"We will keep you informed"	"We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns"	"We will ensure your concerns and desires are reflected in the project"	"We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decisions as much as possible"	"We will help you to implement what you decide"
Dimension: Devolved decision-making	None	None	Community engagement through design, implementation, or evaluation, including IPs, women and vulnerable groups, who provide feedback but not clear how feedback is incorporated into decision-making . Some mention of accountability of implementer to local intuitions without defined sanctions and/or recourse for misalignment with agreements or plans.	Regular community engagement through design, implementation or evaluation, including IPs, women and vulnerable groups, who advise but do not make decisions. Possible accountability of implementer to local intuitions with some acknowledgment of sanctions and/or recourse for misalignment with agreements or plans.	Robust concentration of decision-making authority by communities, including IPLCs, women, and vulnerable groups, through design, implementation and evaluation. Clear accountability of implementer to local intuitions with defined sanctions and/or recourse for misalignment with agreements or plans.

	Inform	Consult	Involve (limited CBA)	Collaborate (some CBA)	Empower (comprehensive CBA)
Dimension: Devolved financial and technical resources	None	None	Community has limited control over financial and technical resources	Financial and technical resources require the approval of community or community groups	Financial and technical resources are devolved to community or community groups
Dimension: Incorporation of local institutions and customs	Local institutions are informed, and/or there are capacity-building efforts in place	Local institutions are consulted, and/or there are capacity-building efforts in place	Considerations in design and implementation for the improvement, strengthening, or recognition of local institutions, rules, and rights as defined by the representatives of local institutions themselves, but limited direct incorporation into decision-making	Considerations in design and identifiable actions in implementation for the integration, improvement, strengthening, or recognition of local institutions, rules, and rights as defined by the representatives of local institutions themselves, but not authority to make decisions	Specific mandates and activities that address the improvement, strengthening, or recognition of local institutions, rules, and rights as defined by the representatives of local institutions themselves, and integration of customs and institutions into design, implementation, and evaluation
Dimension: Legitimacy in the eyes of users	None	None	Project documents describe how community, including IPLCs, women, and vulnerable groups, consider the project and its implementers to be partially in accordance with the norms and customs of those affected by the project	Describe how community, including IPLCs, women, and vulnerable groups, consider the project and its implementers to be mostly in accordance with the norms and customs of those affected by the project with no critical omissions	Describe how community, including IPs, women, and vulnerable groups, consider the project and its implementers to be fully in accordance with the norms and customs of those affected by the project
Dimension: Accountability of implementers to users	Accountability processes are defined in the project documents, which could include regular meetings among implementers and users, anonymous feedback mechanisms, etc.	Project documents include planning for monitoring and evaluation of accountability processes defined in the project documents with results of any actions taken reported back to users	Project documents describe ways in which implementers respect the rights of users to access information and influence implementation	Dispute mechanisms are described in project documents that show how claims may be made by users against implementers, including a mechanism for external mediation/ judgment	Project documents describe sanctions that may be levied by users on the implementers in case of malfeasance or failure to comply with agreed-upon actions or policies

	Inform	Consult	Involve (limited CBA)	Collaborate (some CBA)	Empower (comprehensive CBA)
Dimension: Human rights and equality	No mention of human rights or equality	Project documents mention human rights or equality without specific actions or objectives	Project documents mention specific actions, objectives for at least one of human rights or equality	Project documents mention specific actions, objectives for human rights and equality	Project documents report specific transformational changes related to human rights or equality
Examples	Project proponents inform prior to, and possibly during, project implementation the purpose and general plans for the project. Some discussion may take place in terms of questions and answers but no significant change to implementation results from feedback.	Project proponents talk with local community members and leaders about the general or specific logic, plans, and progress of the project, with explicit invitation for feedback, which is systematically reviewed by the project proponent	Project proponents involve a representative group of community members to regularly discuss project logic, plans, and progress, seeking recommendations for change and correcting activities and objectives as the project is implemented, and report back regularly to the community	Project proponents collaborate with a representative group of community members to regularly discuss project logic, plans, and progress, seeking recommendations for change and correcting activities and objectives as the project is implemented, and report back regularly to the community. As part of the project management structure, financial and technical decisions require community sign-off.	Project proponents facilitate a representative group of community members to manage the project, with decision-making authority, financial and technical resources are controlled by the community, and the project implementers report to the community group

Source: Adapted from © International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org.

Note: IP = indigenous people; IPLC = indigenous peoples and local communities.

Interviewees

Global/central stakeholders

Orissa Samaroo, Vice President, GEF Policy and Portfolio Management, Conservation International

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Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF

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