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Foreword

This first-ever evaluation of the Global Environment Facility's (GEF's) Country Support Program (CSP) covered the GEF-funded corporate program for providing recipient countries with assistance and capacity building to make better use of the resources available through the GEF, including support for programming. The goals of the CSP are to (1) provide flexible support to countries, particularly their focal points, to build capacity to work with the GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat in order to set priorities and to program GEF resources, and (2) enhance inclusive dialogue and improve coordination between ministries and stakeholders at the national level and to facilitate input from key nongovernmental stakeholders.

The CSP was established in 1999 and underwent a major reform in 2010, when all GEF country support activities previously managed by different GEF Agencies were integrated into a single program under direct GEF management.

This evaluation focused on insights and lessons regarding the CSP and its services, assessing relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency since the program's reform. The evaluation also looked at lessons learned through the CSP and how they have been integrated into GEF policies and procedures.

The analyses for this evaluation contributed to the findings of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office's (IEO's) Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7). The evaluation was presented to the GEF Council in June 2021. The Council took note of its conclusions and endorsed its recommendations. Through this report, the GEF IEO intends to share the lessons from the evaluation with a wider audience.



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This evaluation was a collaborative effort. It was led by Juan Jose Portillo, Senior Operations Officer of the Global Environment Facility's Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO), with oversight and support from the Chief Evaluation Officer, Geeta Batra, and the Director, Juha Uitto. Core evaluation team members included Malac Kabir, IEO Research Assistant; and Alain Lafontaine, Dean Pallen, Giovanna Montagner, and Omagano Shooya of Le Groupe-conseil Baastel Itée.

Administrative support was provided by Evelyn Chihuguyu, Program Assistant, and Marie-Constance Manuella Koukoui, Senior Executive Assistant, under the supervision of Juan Jose Portillo. Nita Congress edited the report and designed the publication.

Critical information was provided during interviews by GEF staff, GEF focal points, and GEF Council members; convention focal points; national and local government staff; GEF Agencies and external funds; and civil society organizations.

The GEF IEO is deeply grateful to all these individuals and institutions for their contributions, which were critical to the success of the evaluation. Final responsibility for this report remains firmly with the Office.

Abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity	NPFE	national portfolio formulation exercise
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	ONP	operational focal point
CIF	Climate Investment Funds	OPS	comprehensive evaluation of the GEF, previously overall performance study
CSO	civil society organization	SES	Stakeholder Empowerment Series
CSP	Country Support Program	SIDS	small island developing states
ECW	expanded constituency workshop	STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
FY	fiscal year	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
GCF	Green Climate Fund		
GEF	Global Environment Facility		
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office		
LDC	least developed country		
M&E	monitoring and evaluation		
MEA	multilateral environmental agreement		
NDA	national designated authority		
NGO	nongovernmental organization		

GEF replenishment periods

Pilot phase: 1991–94	GEF-5: 2010–14
GEF-1: 1995–98	GEF-6: 2014–18
GEF-2: 1999–2002	GEF-7: 2018–22
GEF-3: 2003–06	GEF-8: 2022–26
GEF-4: 2006–10	

Executive summary

The Country Support Program (CSP) is a corporate program funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with the objective of providing recipient countries with assistance and capacity building to make better use of the resources available through the GEF, including support for programming. The primary goals of the CSP are (1) to provide flexible support to countries, particularly their focal points, to build capacity to work with the GEF Agencies and Secretariat in order to set priorities and to program GEF resources; and (2) to enhance inclusive dialogue and improve coordination between ministries and stakeholders at the national level and to facilitate input from key nongovernmental stakeholders. The CSP is funded completely from a special allocation in the GEF Secretariat budget decided by the GEF Council.

The CSP was established in 1999 and underwent a major reform in 2010, when all of the GEF's country support activities—components of which were previously managed by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme—were integrated into one program under direct GEF management. During the past decade, CSP core activities have evolved to include the following: introduction seminars, national dialogues, expanded constituency

workshops (ECWs) and thematic workshops, constituency meetings, and pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members. Two additional components (the Knowledge Facility and direct support to operational focal points) were discontinued in GEF-6, and the national portfolio formulation exercises (NPFEs) were merged with national dialogues in GEF-7.

Since 2011, the CSP has organized 320 events with 15,585 participants and provided support for 75 NPFEs in GEF-5 and GEF-6. In addition, more than half of the national dialogues were requested by small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs); there is also a clear trend of LDCs taking greater part in regional CSP events. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 the decision was made to move all events online and the Stakeholder Empowerment Series (SES) was launched in the fall with seven webinars. The total budget allocated to the CSP for these activities during GEF-5, GEF-6, and GEF-7 amounts to \$70 million.

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide insights and lessons regarding the CSP and its services as the GEF moves forward into the eighth replenishment discussions. The evaluation assessed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency

of the CSP by using a mixed-methods approach that included a review of relevant documents and event materials, a survey and semistructured interviews with CSP stakeholders, and observation of online events. The evaluation also looked at the lessons learned through the CSP and at how they were integrated into GEF policies and procedures.

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Integration of previous evaluation recommendations and GEF Council decisions has allowed the CSP to continue to evolve and play a key role in communicating the changing requirements of the GEF and in facilitating dialogue between increasingly diverse stakeholders. The CSP has evolved in accordance with evaluation recommendations and GEF Council decisions. Recommendations from previous evaluations, namely the Terminal Evaluation of the CSP for Focal Points (Navajas 2010) and the Midterm Evaluation of the National Portfolio Formulation Exercises (GEF IEO 2014a), guided the transition from management of the CSP by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme to management by the GEF and the implementation of NPFEs in GEF-6 before they were merged with national dialogues. These recommendations, which centered on maintaining strong capacity-building aspects and increasing inclusion of the CSP even as the portfolio grew, were addressed overall, but some challenges remain with regard to the timeliness and inclusiveness of national dialogues and inclusiveness in planning CSP events. Changes in GEF policies and the evolving GEF strategic directions have been consistently integrated into the overall focus and design of the CSP as a whole, in event design, and in the subject matter of CSP activities so that they remain relevant to its stakeholders. Global environmental concerns and Council priorities have also been consistently taken into consideration.

The CSP indirectly contributes to assisting countries with greater access to GEF resources, but it is only one input into the development of GEF country portfolios. The CSP is a key mechanism to coordinate and align GEF resources with national priorities and to facilitate the development of the GEF country portfolios, as it helps set up enabling conditions and develop basic capacities that allow for the engagement of GEF focal point offices and other GEF stakeholders. As a whole, the information shared and the capacities built through the CSP allow countries to better understand the GEF and its process, to keep abreast of the evolving nature of GEF policies and priorities, and to ensure institutional memory. However, countries with lower institutional capacity look toward the CSP more for assistance with project development and accessing GEF resources; countries with higher institutional capacities see the CSP as a channel to access information on GEF policies and priorities.

The CSP has made some efforts to coordinate and build synergies with other global environment funds. In GEF-7, the CSP made some attempts at coordination and enhanced synergies with the engagement process of other global environment funds, in particular with the Green Climate Fund, to ensure that funding is allocated in a more coordinated manner to support the implementation of environmental conventions. However, the different governance structures of the funds and the scope of their engagement processes posed a significant challenge. This is an opportunity to increase complementarity in capacity development, thus fostering greater coherence in environmental programming.

The CSP does not have a strategy or plan to guide its operations, nor does it have a theory of change or logical framework. Some activities, such as ECWs, are carried out routinely, while others, such as national dialogues or constituency meetings, are implemented at the request of GEF focal points or Council members. Therefore, the CSP is

demand-driven and does not approach capacity development as a continuous process at country level. In the absence of a theory of change, the link between the CSP and its contributions to the overall programming directions of the GEF is unclear.

A limited variety of stakeholders is involved in the planning of CSP activities. The planning process of activities is limited to a few stakeholders and could benefit from higher engagement and involvement of a wider variety of stakeholders, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, and GEF Agencies, as well as, potentially, the GEF programming and communications team. Particularly, CSOs and convention focal points have expressed interest in having more involvement in the planning of events, namely ECWs and national dialogues. Generally, more communication and consultations with convention focal points prior to events could increase their input on subjects specific to the conventions. The process for involving convention focal points has already started; the CSP has been trying to give the conventions a regular slot in CSP events for convention-related capacity building to help fulfill convention-specific requirements.

Inclusiveness and diversity of participants in CSP events has increased over time, but vary greatly between countries, constituencies, and events; however, inclusiveness does not extend beyond CSP events. CSP events have facilitated stakeholder inclusion by creating a safe space where different actors can share their perspectives and experiences. In some cases, this inclusive dialogue has positively influenced the project pipeline and helped strengthen partnerships. The CSP has progressively financed the participation of a greater number of stakeholders, focusing in particular on the inclusion of CSOs. This points to a disconnect between the work done by the CSP and actual inclusiveness in GEF programming and planning. Thus, the CSP still has a role to play in encouraging inclusion beyond events.

Women have represented about one-third of all participants in events on average during the three GEF replenishment periods, but their participation is below average in some constituencies, which might be a reflection of national or regional differences in the participation of women in the workforce. Although the average participation of line ministries other than GEF focal points has remained stable since GEF-5 at about 25 percent, their participation in GEF projects both as executing partners and in cofinancing has decreased over time; therefore, participation in CSP events has not translated to a greater involvement of line ministries in GEF programming. This points to an opportunity for the CSP to fully harness the potential of national dialogues to foster policy coherence and the mainstreaming of the environment across sectors.

Data indicate more limited participation of GEF Agencies, convention focal points, and the private sector, while other groups, such as indigenous peoples and local governments, were included when relevant. Participation in CSP activities does not translate into further dialogue between CSOs and GEF focal points, nor to the inclusion of CSOs in activities on the ground after CSP events. Interviews indicate that once CSP events are over, CSOs often return to their duties without experiencing any follow-up from national focal points to coordinate. This reflects disconnection in the work that the CSP does to increase inclusiveness in GEF programming and planning.

The CSP effectively shares knowledge on the GEF with stakeholders. The CSP is the primary tool used to provide updates to country stakeholders on new GEF policies, priorities, and strategies. In particular, ECWs have been key in this CSP role as a knowledge facilitator. ECWs have evolved throughout the past decade to include more comprehensive information and to present it in a more interactive manner. The information and resources provided by

the CSP through its different events are reported as satisfactory or highly satisfactory by participants.

Retention of information reach within countries, and South-South exchange, remain suboptimal.

Retention of information on GEF policies and procedures appears to be low among participants beyond operational focal points. A number of barriers to applying CSP-acquired knowledge and skills in the development of country pipelines are still present, notably the need for a broader reach of GEF information and capacity building within governments and to other country stakeholders such as CSOs and local actors. The need to share more experiences and good practices across countries and to facilitate discussion on global issues and their links to national strategy formulation was also highlighted.

The CSP has contributed to increasing the countries to apply for GEF funding in a strategic and coordinated manner.

National dialogues and NPFES have helped countries to be more systematic in their planning on GEF resources and advanced country policy planning. NPFES also helped establish national steering committees in several countries, which remain active in the overall planning of GEF resources. In some countries, CSP events have played a direct role in preparation of projects approved for GEF funding. Overall, it was found that high-capacity countries value the CSP for better linking predefined national priorities to GEF priorities. Less developed countries, on the other hand, confirm that CSP events have helped bring people together to shape national priorities.

The CSP has positively contributed to country ownership of the GEF process, but ownership remains a challenge in some LDCs, SIDS, and lower-middle-income countries.

The CSP has helped increase country ownership and empowerment vis-à-vis GEF Agencies by helping country governments play a more active role in GEF programming and by fostering greater inclusiveness in

events at the national level. GEF operational focal points have, overall, become more involved in project execution and more able to engage with GEF Agencies on an equal footing, while also increasing the interest and knowledge of national stakeholders regarding the GEF. Yet, some LDCs, SIDS, and lower-middle-income countries with lower institutional capacity continue to depend heavily on GEF Agencies, while some higher-income countries that have been empowered through the CSP now experience tensions in their relationship with GEF Agencies regarding their respective roles.

The CSP has the opportunity to play a greater role in fostering cofinancing and leveraging of resources.

Although it is not the role of the CSP to help countries securing cofinancing, and CSP events are generally not considered a space where this happens systematically, participation of a wider variety of stakeholders in national dialogues can sometimes lead to the identification of synergies between ongoing and potential future activities, leading to potential cofinancing.

The quality of CSP support is satisfactory and day-to-day communications are timely.

Recipient countries express a high level of gratitude for the services and the support that the CSP provides, particularly in relation to the CSP's open-door policy, which offers focal point offices (and, to some extent, other stakeholders) a day-to-day line of communication with CSP staff and GEF staff when needed. The CSP staff are prompt to reply to requests for clarification on GEF policies and strategies. Furthermore, activities are seen as being well organized, and event material is clear and concise and generally considered valuable by participants who make use of the information provided. In particular, several focal point offices report that the material is a useful resource to inform incoming staff about the GEF.

The timing of the national dialogue is not optimal in many countries.

National dialogues play a

key role for many recipient countries in commencing the planning process for GEF resources in a new GEF replenishment period. However, because national dialogues are not hosted until the new GEF period commences, this often results in competition for CSP support between recipient countries. Some CSP stakeholders have raised a desire to hold national dialogues as soon as there is some indication of GEF priorities for the new period. There are also some notable concerns about GEF introduction seminars; because these are only held once a year and early in the year, staff and stakeholders who commence a position immediately afterward have to wait almost a year to access this training. However, to provide some access to GEF information in the interim periods, the GEF Secretariat has launched the GEF e-course, which—though not as detailed—in itself is an introduction to all the basics of the GEF. The GEF e-course can be accessed at any time.

The CSP has pilot-tested activities in the COVID-19 context that have allowed it to continue to respond to some program stakeholder needs; however, these have significant limits when it comes to GEF partnership building and networking. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the CSP with a new set of unknowns and challenges, which caused some delays during GEF-7. In this context, the CSP has pilot-tested some events in the virtual environment, using reliable tools—though not necessarily innovative ones—and gradually improving technical execution. With these virtual events, coupled with the direct communication between the focal point offices and the country relations team, the pandemic has not halted the transfer of knowledge and capacity building of the CSP. Nevertheless, online events have showed significant limits when it comes to GEF partnership building and networking, which require face-to-face interaction. There is also a concern that the increase in virtual events during the COVID-19 pandemic may, in the longer

term, negatively affect the level of engagement and the quality of exchanges between stakeholders.

The limited financial data provided to the CSP evaluation team to carry out an efficiency analysis indicate that the CSP’s monitoring and reporting effort has gaps. It is not possible for the evaluation team to reach a conclusion on the overall efficiency of the CSP because information on budgetary reporting for the complete period under evaluation is missing (fixed- and variable-cost data were provided for GEF-7, but not for GEF-6 and GEF-5).

The resource envelope for the CSP is clearly underutilized. The CSP is more than adequately funded each replenishment period but could operate more efficiently in relation to staff capacity and access to localized support. The CSP team would benefit from information technology, financial management, monitoring and reporting expertise, and a more dedicated team of professionals to manage the program, as most staff have other responsibilities within the GEF Secretariat.

CSP events are important platforms for gathering feedback on GEF policies. CSP events, in particular ECWs, Council meetings, and pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members, have emerged as important platforms for gathering feedback from the stakeholders. However, only a few policies can be noted as having been affected by feedback provided at CSP events. Examples of where lessons learned were integrated into GEF policies; strategies include the revision of the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement and the Cancellation Policy as a result of feedback provided by CSP participants, among other sources.

CSP events provide an important platform for engagement and knowledge sharing between stakeholders. The ECWs in particular are considered a big laboratory for the exchange of ideas because of innovations such as the Knowledge and Learning Days that have been incorporated into

the activities of the ECWs. Other CSP events such as the constituency meetings and national dialogues were also identified as important platforms for the exchange of lessons learned and engagement between stakeholders. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift to virtual events has demonstrated that online platforms can complement in-person events in terms of allowing stakeholders the opportunity to provide direct feedback to the GEF Secretariat on important matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Build on current efforts to collaborate with other global environmental funds.** To help countries respond better to the commitments of countries vis-à-vis the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements that the GEF is supporting along with other global funds, CSP management should build further on past efforts to collaborate on readiness activities with other funds. Overall, the management of the CSP should continue to monitor developments to identify where substantive opportunities for collaboration can be established beyond the current efforts.
- **Develop a clear CSP strategy and an implementation plan with an appropriate budget and resource envelope.** The CSP would benefit from developing a comprehensive program strategy for every replenishment period, with appropriate activities designed based on country grouping needs, and with proper implementation plans to guide its actions. Such a strategic planning approach should develop a validated theory of change for the program, with clear expected results, milestones, and targets in its main spheres of influence. The CSP has a significant scope and reach and can more proactively strengthen the crucial role it plays moving forward as a key entry point in the GEF dialogue, knowledge sharing, and capacity-building process with GEF partners at the global, regional, and country level.
- **Strengthen technical expertise in the CSP team and monitoring and reporting systems.** CSP management should improve the program's dedicated technical capabilities and its ability to provide more localized support, to meet the high demands placed on the CSP team across countries and regions. In light of the insufficient program data management and reporting, CSP management should also put in place results-based data management, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems to track the use of resources, as well as activities, outcomes, and impacts. These systems should provide the basis for more systematic and comprehensive reporting at each GEF replenishment period to both GEF management and the GEF Council.
- **Revisit the reach and timing of national dialogues to align them better with country needs for support.** The CSP should explore ways to improve the timing of the national dialogue or develop other up-front strategic dialogue mechanisms on the future use of GEF resources. These should be planned as early as possible and should pursue deeper multistakeholder engagement in the process. Finally, the CSP should examine with GEF programming staff how national dialogues and ECWs could more directly contribute to programming objectives.
- **Enhance inclusiveness, so that inclusiveness at events turns into improved collaboration on the ground.** Though the CSP cannot be held responsible and accountable for how country focal points manage their GEF programs, it is in a unique position to offer best practices that ensure successful GEF programming in practice. In this context, the CSP could play an important role in ensuring that the inclusiveness they have promoted in their events continues past the CSP activity and results in active and fruitful collaboration. The CSP can be a gateway

toward better integration of CSOs and other groups into GEF programming after CSP events.

- **Apply a customized approach to capacity building.** Because a one-size-fits-all approach to capacity building limits the number of participants that can be reached, the CSP should develop more customized approaches to capacity building, with consideration for more flexibility as to the number of participants from each stakeholder group and their level of capacity. The CSP should also continue to empower operational focal points by better informing

them on their roles in GEF portfolio management beyond portfolio development. At the same time, the CSP should place emphasis on operational focal points' crucial facilitation role in keeping an ongoing dialogue with, and bringing on board, other actors such as line ministries, the private sector, local communities, and CSOs to ensure the mainstreaming and leveraging effect of GEF resources to support national commitments to multilateral environmental agreements.

Introduction

The Country Support Program (CSP) was developed with the objective of providing all recipient countries with assistance and capacity building to make better use of the resources available through the Global Environment Facility (GEF), including support for programming. It was based on activities carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since GEF-2. In GEF-5 the GEF Council decided that the GEF Secretariat would manage the program (see [approach paper](#); [annex A](#)).

The primary goals of the CSP are (1) to provide flexible support to countries, particularly their focal points, to build capacity to work with the GEF Agencies and Secretariat in order to set priorities and to program GEF resources, and (2) to enhance inclusive dialogue¹ and improve coordination between ministries and stakeholders at the national level and to facilitate input from key nongovernmental stakeholders. The CSP is funded completely from a special allocation in the GEF Secretariat budget decided by the GEF Council. Since 2011, the CSP team has prepared a series of annual activities to

communicate with and support GEF stakeholders and countries in different operational areas ([table 1.1](#)).

1.1 Portfolio overview

Since 2011, the CSP has organized 320 events with 15,585 participants and has provided support for 75 national portfolio formulation exercises (NPFs) during GEF-5 and GEF-6.

Ninety expanded constituency workshops (ECWs) have been held with a total of 7,817 participants.

On average, 13 ECWs have taken place every year since 2011 ([figure 1.1](#)), excluding 2014 and 2018, when the transition from one replenishment to another occurred and the GEF Assembly took place. For ECWs, the overall average participation rate per ECW since 2011 has been 87 participants. However, this ranges from about 75 on average from 2011–14 to about 90 participants in 2016 and 2017 and 109 on average in 2019 ([table 1.2](#)).

Fifty-six national dialogues have been held since 2011. The total number of participants is 4,583, making them the second most widely attended CSP events after ECWs; most of the national dialogues (35 events) were held during 2018 and 2019. During

¹Inclusiveness here refers to the consideration of gender equity and inclusion of civil society and indigenous peoples as well as other vulnerable groups.

Table 1.1 CSP events and activities since 2011

Event/activity	Objective	Frequency
Expanded constituency workshops (ECWs)	Provides updates on GEF strategies, policies, and procedures, while simultaneously offering a space to exchange knowledge and experiences, and foster collaboration and coordination between a wide variety of stakeholders within each constituency.	13 ECWs are organized every year on average, except in replenishment years
National dialogues	Supports countries in the planning process to identify national priorities for GEF support, develop ideas for new projects, integrate global environmental concepts into national strategy and policy formulation, and take decisions on participation in the GEF's impact programs on food systems, land use and restoration, sustainable forest management, and sustainable cities.	Held in each GEF period at the request of OFPs
Constituency meetings	Engages Council members and their constituencies to prepare for decision making at the GEF Council; they also provide an opportunity to further explain GEF strategies, policies, and procedures.	Each constituency may request two meetings per calendar year, to be held prior to Council meetings
Introduction seminars	Offered in Washington, D.C., by the GEF to provide a comprehensive overview of the GEF and its history. It is offered to new GEF Agency staff, country focal points, convention secretariat staff, and selected stakeholders from line ministries, the media, other organizations that are part of the current financial environmental architecture, and the private sector.	Held annually, usually in January, except during replenishment years
National portfolio formulation exercises	Supported the country process for planning GEF resources to produce a national portfolio formulation document, which described the process of consultation held, national priorities, and the preliminary list of projects or project ideas to be pursued.	Phased out and merged with national dialogues
Pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members	Provide GEF Council members and alternates from recipient countries the opportunity to meet and discuss Council issues prior to each GEF Council meeting.	Organized at the request of Council members
Thematic workshops ^a	Thematic workshops focus on key subjects to help countries plan or prepare better for regional coordination on key environmental issues or support the development or enhancement of new and existing projects and programs. So far, they have been arranged around multicountry initiatives.	Held on an ad hoc basis
Direct support to OFPs	Provided direct funding support to OFPs to assist them with execution of their annual work plans.	Discontinued in GEF-6
Day-to-day correspondence	Country relations officers and the CSP staff are available at all times to answer questions of focal points, CSOs, other stakeholders, and the public in general, as well as to provide advice and follow-up on CSP events.	Continuous
Stakeholder Empowerment Series (SES)	The SES are online events introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic as an interim replacement for the ECWs. The events focus on specialized topics and aim to bring together countries from different regions to share experiences across constituencies.	Held on an ad hoc basis

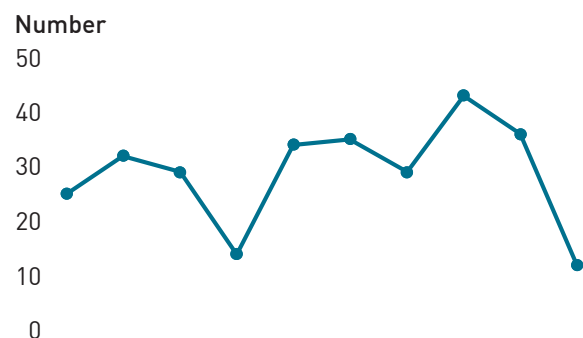
Note: CSO = civil society organization; OFP = operational focal point.

a. Thematic workshops are called "special initiatives" in GEF corporate scorecards (i.e., GEF 2020a).

the period evaluated, 51 countries, representing about a third (31 percent) of all 145 GEF recipient countries, benefited from the national dialogues.

A few countries—Chad, India, Indonesia, Sierra Leone, and Vietnam—have relied on this CSP service more than once.

Figure 1.1 Total number of CSP events by year



Source: Data provided by CSP in 2020.

Seven introduction seminars have been held since 2011 with a cumulative number of 560 participants, which averages out at about 80 per seminar. The GEF introduction seminars are not offered in transition years (2014, 2017, and 2018) between GEF replenishment periods.

One hundred and fifty-six constituency meetings have taken place since 2011, by far the largest share of CSP events held overall; an average of 16 meetings per year were held. Each of the 16 multicountry recipient constituencies and the constituency of Switzerland, Central Asia, and Azerbaijan may request two meetings per calendar year, to be held prior to Council meetings.² Although in principle these meetings are open only to GEF focal points of the constituency's member countries, Council members may invite other participants as necessary, including GEF Agencies. The total number of participants in attendance since 2011 is 4,583. The number of participants per meeting has fluctuated throughout the years but has generally been around 12–16 on average from 2011 until 2019. This average rose in 2020 to 20 participants, which may be attributed to the fact that all eight 2020 constituency meetings were virtual.

² Constituencies, Council members, and alternates can be found at the [GEF Council](#) web page.

Seventy-five NPFES have been held since 2011, 42 in the GEF-5 period and 33 in the GEF-6 period. In GEF-5, 45 percent of the countries that undertook an NPFE were least developed countries (LDCs) and 21 percent were small island developing states (SIDS). In GEF-6, 50 percent were LDCs and only two countries (7 percent) were SIDS.

The CSP also carried out three thematic workshops during 2018 and 2019 as well as seven Stakeholder Empowerment Series (SES) in 2020; the latter are exclusively held online because they emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic to replace face-to-face ECWs.³

Historically, the total number of events has steadily increased since 2011 as a result of the refocus of the CSP on expanding its reach and inclusiveness. Overall, there was a drastic drop in events in 2014, which aligns with the fact that no ECWs were held that year because of the replenishment process. A similar drop was not seen in the 2018 replenishment year because of an expansion of the national dialogues that year and the phasing out of the NPFES. Constituency meetings are rather stable every year, except for slight increases in numbers during replenishment years, as can be expected ([figure 1.2](#)).

From a regional perspective, the majority of CSP events have taken place in Africa. Thirty-nine percent (126 events) have taken place in the Africa region during the three GEF replenishment periods with about a similar distribution among primary CSP event types (ECWs, national dialogues, constituency meetings and NPFES). This was followed by the Latin America and the Caribbean region with 67 events. In contrast, the Middle East and North Africa region had the lowest number (4 percent) of events, and the Pacific region accounted for 9 percent ([figure 1.3](#)). The number of events hosted by

³ In 2020, some national dialogues, constituency meetings, and pre-Council meetings were also held online.

Table 1.2 Number of CSP events and participants, 2011–20

Event type	GEF-5			GEF-6				GEF-7			Total
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
ECWs	12	14	13	—	13	13	13	—	11	1	90
Participants	911	1,062	970	—	1,146	1,195	1,195	—	1,204	134	7,817
National dialogues	1	1	2	3	6	2	1	22	13	5	56
Participants	90	80	130	350	630	230	85	1,695	853	440	4,583
Constituency meetings	12	17	14	24	15	20	15	21	11	8	157
Participants	146	142	167	368	243	258	250	341	132	163	2,210
Introduction seminars	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	7
Participants	80	90	80	0	80	80	0	0	80	70	560
Thematic workshops	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
Participants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40 ^a	30	0	70
SES	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	7	7
Participants	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	345	345
Total events	26	33	30	15	35	36	30	44	37	13	320
Total participants	1,227	1,374	1,347	507	2,099	1,683	1,571	1,995	2,269	1,012	15,585
NPFE	42		0	0	33		0	0	0	0	75

Sources: GEF Secretariat; CSP in 2020.

Note: — = not available; n.a. = not applicable.

a. Participation data were available for only one thematic workshop in 2018.

Figure 1.2 Number of events by year and event type

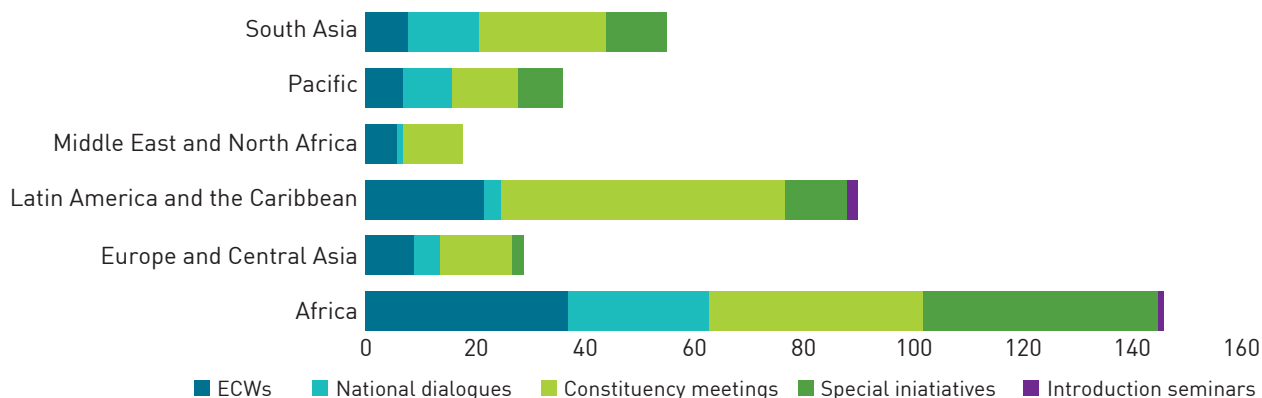


Source: Data provided by CSP in 2020.

each region is about the same for each GEF period except for the Middle East and North Africa and South Asia areas, which both seemingly hosted more events during GEF-6 compared with GEF-5

and GEF-7 (figure 1.4). The greater concentration of CSP events in Africa is explained by the fact that this is the region with the greatest number of recipient countries and constituencies.

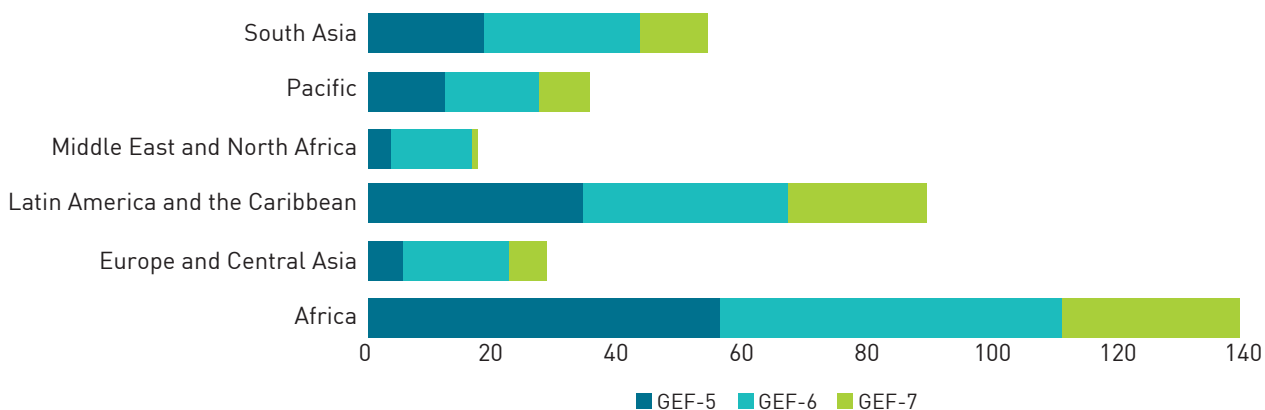
Figure 1.3 Number of events by region and type, 2013–20



Source: Data provided by CSP in 2020.

Note: Introduction seminars and SES are not included because the audience is usually from different regions.

Figure 1.4 Number of events by region and GEF replenishment period



Source: Data provided by CSP in 2020.

Note: Introduction seminars and SES are not included because the audience is usually from different regions.

There is a clear trend of LDCs hosting national dialogues and taking greater part in CSP events.

More than half of the national dialogues were requested by SIDS (17) and LDCs (58). In terms of ECWs, a random sampling⁴ of 17 ECWs showed that the majority of ECWs had participants from LDCs

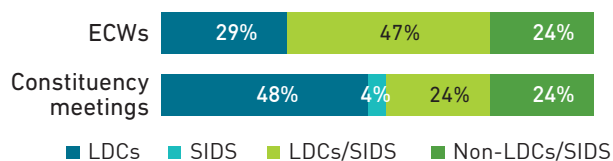
(figure 1.5). The same trend holds true for constituency meetings, where about 72 percent of events have participants from LDCs, 24 percent of these being from SIDS or LDCs.

1.2 Evaluation scope and key questions

The present evaluation was conducted by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) in 2020 to offer insights and lessons for the CSP during GEF-8. In the initial interviews and exchanges with the CSP

⁴ Given the number of events, and because the data did not include whether participants were from LDCs or SIDS, the evaluation team picked a sample of events and manually inserted participation origin (LDC or SIDS) to run the numbers. The random sampling includes 17 ECWs and 25 Council meetings.

Figure 1.5 Percentage of events with participants from LDCs, SIDS, and non-LDCs/SIDS 2013–20



Source: Data provided by CSP in 2020.

Note: Percentages are based on a sample.

team about the move to online service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was noted that the pandemic could have an important influence on the operations of the CSP in a post-pandemic context, when expanded online service delivery might become a permanent feature. As a result, the evaluation also sought to assess CSP’s ability to use the virtual environment to carry out its objectives.

The evaluation covers seven years of CSP operations across three GEF periods (table 1.3). It was carried out from July 2020 until January 2021. It aimed to be utilization-focused and useful to its intended users, particularly to the GEF Council and the CSP team at the GEF Secretariat, to guide decision making related to CSP support given to GEF Constituencies for the remainder of the GEF-7 (slated to end in June 2022) and in GEF-8 (July 2022–June 2026).

To achieve its objectives, the evaluation reviewed the CSP according to the criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and lessons learned from the CSP to recipient countries and the GEF.

Based on scoping discussions and interviews with the GEF IEO, the CSP team, and the GEF

Secretariat, the evaluation questions from the original terms of reference were slightly adapted to better suit the intended direction and objective of the evaluation. In addition, the evaluation team added questions related to the coherence criteria. The evaluation questions and their accompanying subquestions and indicators have been listed in the final evaluation matrix (annex B), validated during the inception phase of the evaluation, and then used to guide data collection from the various information sources and to structure the analysis. The main questions addressed by the evaluation team are listed below.

- **Relevance.** How relevant is the design of the CSP and its activities to its stakeholders in view of its intended objectives related to ownership of, access to, and leveraging of GEF resources?
- **Effectiveness and results.** How effective has the CSP been in increasing the capacity of countries to apply for GEF funding in a strategic and coordinated manner, while ensuring engagement of stakeholders?
- **Efficiency.** Is the CSP managed efficiently in view of its objectives and in a way that responds to the needs of stakeholders?
- **Coherence.** How are the CSP activities on programming priorities compatible with other multilateral environmental agreement–related support or funded initiatives in the country or at the regional level?
- **Lessons learned.** What have been the lessons learned through the CSP mechanism, and how has the GEF partnership integrated those lessons learned?

1.3 Approach and methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used for the evaluation, including both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis to improve

Table 1.3 Evaluation focus

GEF replenishment period	Years
GEF-5	2013–14
GEF-6	2014–18
GEF-7	2018–20

the validity and reliability of data and corresponding evaluation findings. The analytical approach for this evaluation draws on the intervention logic ([figure A.2](#)). In the absence of a results framework for the program, this was developed by the evaluation team based on initial document reviews and scoping interviews and validated during the inception phase with the CSP and the GEF IEO. It was then used to inform the assessment of whether the program has achieved its expected outcomes. This approach allowed the evaluation team to follow the explicit causal model behind the design of the CSP activities and assess the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of their strategy toward meeting the defined results and outcomes.

Only some modifications were required with the overall methodology to adjust to the current situation. Compared with the original proposal, all interviews were conducted virtually via WhatsApp, Skype, or Zoom to compensate for the inability to travel for in-person interviews.

In light of the large number of activities carried out by the CSP during the evaluated period, a purposive sample of regional and global CSP activities was drawn, based on the activity database provided by the CSP, for an in-depth review of event agendas, materials, and participants. The sampling criteria considered included geographic distribution (both in terms of regions and constituencies), GEF periods, and event modality (face-to-face and virtual) to allow for the identification of trends and regional patterns.

A purposive sample of 10 countries was selected to review the contribution of national events (NPFs and national dialogues) to country pipeline development.⁵ Sampling criteria included geographic distribution and the number of national activities

⁵ Armenia, Türkiye, Liberia, Cameroon (LDCs), Chile, Congo Democratic Republic (LDC), Argentina, St. Lucia (SIDS), Malaysia, and the Philippines.

held in each GEF period. This same sample was used for semistructured interviews with GEF focal points (current and former), convention focal points, and civil society organization (CSO) representatives to allow for data triangulation. In both cases, it was made sure that some SIDS and LDCs were included. At the data collection stage, some countries had to be substituted or dropped as information was not available on national events or because of difficulties in scheduling interviews in a pandemic context, reaching a final sample of eight countries ([annex C](#)).

Key informants were also selected for interviews among the following categories of stakeholders: CSP staff, other GEF staff (including Operations Unit, Programs Unit, and GEF IEO staff), GEF Agencies, and other key environmental funds ([annex D](#)).

To answer the questions in the terms of reference, the evaluation team used four main information-gathering approaches, which were analyzed and synthesized through the evaluation matrix that the evaluation team developed:

- **Document review.** Data collection began with an in-depth desk-based review. This was, however, a continuous process and document review took place throughout the various stages of the evaluation. Document review covered the program as a whole, but was also a more focused review of both CSP event reports and GEF portfolio data for the sampled countries ([annex E](#)). Documents reviewed included, among other key Council documents related to the CSP, previous evaluations, news and media clips, GEF project documents, GEF reports, CSP material and event reports, GEF portfolio data, and NPFs.
- **Electronic survey.** A short electronic survey (e-survey) was administered in English, French, and Spanish. The e-survey was launched on September 14, 2020, and ran for a month. The response rate was 17.2 percent, with a total of 727 responses from a balanced diversity of CSP

stakeholders and types of CSP events attended over the three GEF replenishment periods covered. The survey was sent to 4,220 participants in CSP activities, based on a census approach. The intent of the survey was to get an overall perspective on the CSP from a broad range of CSP participants ([annex F](#)).

- **Interviews.** A total of 47 interviews were conducted with a variety of CSP stakeholders⁶ to help add context and nuance and complement the already available information, to validate the desk-based review and survey data, and to assess the program's performance and impacts, particularly in the sampled countries for deep dives. Given the COVID-19-related travel restrictions, all interviews were conducted virtually using a semistructured approach and interview protocols tailored to each category of stakeholders ([annex G](#)). Interviews were conducted in English, French, and Spanish via Skype and telephone, based on the participants' preference (GEF 2020c).
- **Observations of CSP activities.** Between April and October 2020, the evaluation team attended five online events as observers ([annex H](#)). A list of events to observe in the period was provided by the CSP; however as other events not on the list were planned on a running basis, the CSP task team leader informed the evaluation team accordingly.

To support the triangulation of data, the analytical information technology platform Dedoose was used for the analysis because of the large number of documents that were reviewed and notes from the numerous interviews. The platform helped better coordinate and share information within the team

⁶CSP staff, GEF operational focal points, convention focal points, GEF Council members and alternates, GEF operations and programming staff, GEF Agency staff, CSOs, other Middle East and North Africa-relevant fund staff (Adaptation Fund, Green Climate Fund, Climate Investment Funds).

and offered a means for triangulation of findings drawn from the various sources by coding excerpts based on the evaluation matrix indicators.

1.4 Limitations

Because of travel restrictions and lockdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person interviews were replaced with remote informant interviews, which sometimes proved challenging. A detailed sampling process was conducted to ensure that the final list of interviewees was diverse and representative of the CSP participating countries, and to avoid any potential bias that could have resulted from interviewees from partner countries being the more active CSP stakeholders. The e-survey further allowed for obtaining data from a wide variety of CSP stakeholders, with a large portion of the respondents having participated in only one or two events, also spread over the various GEF periods covered by the evaluation.

The evaluation team also encountered issues with obtaining the relevant event and participation data as well as budget tracking and information for the efficiency analysis. Issues with regard to obtaining information required for sampling and later analysis further extended the timeline of the evaluation, and the lack of proper financial data actually prevented the evaluation team from conducting a proper assessment of the efficiency of the program's financial management. Despite the several requests made by the evaluation team to CSP management during the last three months of the evaluation, it was not possible to obtain financial reporting against project activities or program results over the various GEF periods covered by this evaluation.

Findings

2.1 Relevance and coherence

INFLUENCE OF PREVIOUS EVALUATIVE EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON CURRENT DESIGN OF THE CSP

The Country Support Program must continuously reinvent itself and adapt the content of its activities to remain a relevant platform to its stakeholders, focused on building capacity and providing important information and knowledge in the most effective and efficient manner. This evolution results partly from feedback from stakeholders and policy changes within the GEF as well as from taking on board previous recommendations based on evaluative evidence and reviews of CSP components.

During the past decade, the CSP has gone through two evaluations: notably the Terminal Evaluation of the CSP for Focal Points (Navajas 2010) and the Midterm Evaluation of the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise (GEF IEO 2014a). These evaluations yielded a set of recommendations that guided the transition to GEF management in 2010 as part of GEF-5, and the implementation of NPFs in GEF-6 before they were merged

with national dialogues. These recommendations were addressed at varying degrees, and some of them are still pertinent to be considered in the present evaluation, particularly those related to the timeliness and inclusiveness of NPFs, which are still relevant for national dialogues. The 2010 terminal evaluation resulted in a set of recommendations (six in all) that argued for the CSP to include a portfolio of wider support, which would go beyond focal points and integrate more stakeholders in the overall planning process on the ground. As part of the reform of the CSP in 2010, the portfolio was expanded to include six activities.¹ The six recommendations and the expansion of the CSP sprang from requests by participant countries for more systematic support from the GEF to ensure better alignment of GEF programming with the needs of countries. Given this expansion, the evaluation assessed the need to retain the CSP's

¹ This included the launch of (1) multistakeholder dialogues along the lines of the current National Dialogue Initiative; (2) constituency-level workshops to keep GEF national focal points, convention focal points, and other key stakeholders, including civil society, abreast of GEF strategies, policies and procedures, and to encourage coordination; (3) Council member support; (4) direct support to operational focal points; (5) the knowledge management tool; and (6) familiarization seminars.

ability to build capacity of GEF stakeholders despite the growing portfolio (Recommendation 1). This included a particular focus on using the ECWs (then called subregional workshops), and the Knowledge Facility website more intensely to interact with country stakeholders (Recommendation 2). Although the ECWs have been expanded greatly to achieve this objective, the use of ECWs by GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat continues to vary by constituency and event. The Knowledge Facility website was integrated into the GEF website (Recommendation 4); however, on review of the website, it is not clear which parts of the Knowledge Facility functionalities still exist within the GEF website.

According to interviews and observations from the present evaluation, the CSP has responded well to the recommendations and continues to ensure capacity benefits to recipient countries while increasing inclusiveness and offering a space for knowledge sharing. Interviews indicate that changes launched within the CSP following earlier recommendations have led to a higher focus on learning and dialogue at events, and that encouraging broader-based stakeholder participation remains a key priority. The increased interaction and dialogue at CSP events are viewed by some evaluation participants as one of the more important developments in keeping the CSP relevant, leading to more focused learning experiences at events. See [annex J](#) for a complete overview of the recommendations and responses from the CSP.

Although NPFE midterm review found that NPFEs were highly useful in bringing stakeholders together in the planning of GEF resources and helped strengthen the capacity of national governments to operate effectively within the GEF system, attendance at NPFE events is decreasing and demand for and uptake of NPFEs was low. At the time there was confusion between NPFEs and the national dialogues, with both having similar agendas and objectives. The NPFEs were ultimately phased out as a stand-alone component of the

CSP, and changes were made to the national dialogues to provide a more flexible platform, which allowed for addressing a wider variety of subjects. Almost all the national dialogues since then have had programming discussions as one of their main features.

While several of the recommendations for the NPFE have become obsolete, given its blending with national dialogues, some recommendations should be seen in light of changes in the national dialogues. Most notable was the recommendation (Recommendation 3) that programming support exercises should fall at the end of a GEF replenishment period rather than at the beginning of the period to better prepare countries. This continues to remain an issue under the national dialogues.

RELEVANCE AND ALIGNMENT WITH GEF PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS AND STRATEGIES

The CSP has been responsive to the evolution in GEF policies and programming strategies, which have helped shape the agenda and activities of the CSP, ensuring its ongoing relevance for GEF stakeholders. A review of the ECW agendas and material for this evaluation revealed that ECWs have aligned their agendas with the GEF strategic directions for each GEF period, including the GEF 2020 strategy, which took priority in the 2015 ECW agenda. Furthermore, observations indicate that new policies have been applied to CSP events; these include in particular the Gender Policy on Equality (GEF 2017a) and the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (GEF 2017b) during GEF-6, both of which have helped prompt wider inclusiveness within the CSP and promoted the strategy to increase inclusiveness in GEF programming and project development. Furthermore, the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF 2019a) and the recent private sector engagement strategy (GEF 2011)—the latter of which is still trying to

gain a footing within the GEF—have more recently played a role in shaping the direction and agenda of the CSP, as has the GEF priority to mainstream biodiversity (GEF IEO 2019). Under GEF-7, the focus on promotion and awareness building surrounding the impact programs has taken a central role to advance the GEF-7 programming directions. Overall, it can be said that in addition to responding to evaluation recommendations, important developments related to GEF programming, policies, and procedures work their way into CSP activities.

RELEVANCE ACCORDING TO STAKEHOLDER NEEDS AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES

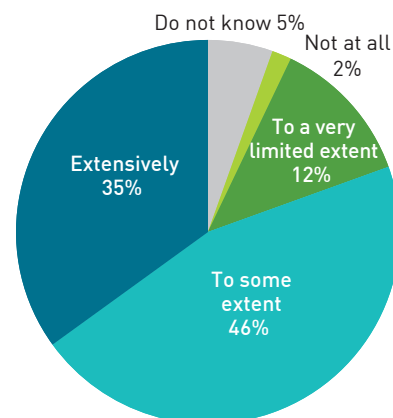
Needs of the stakeholders

The e-survey carried out for this evaluation revealed that CSP participants agree that their needs are being met by the program. Thirty-five percent of respondents noted that CSP events were planned around the needs of stakeholders; another 46 percent noted that CSP events were somewhat planned around their needs ([figure 2.1](#)). These results are lower than those of the survey carried out internally by the CSP program in 2020.²

The CSP has developed a flexible and participatory approach to planning events and activities, which

²According to the 2020 CSP survey, more than 95 percent of respondents found ECWs to be either very relevant or relevant in responding to their needs. Improved understanding of programming priorities, knowledge of operations and priorities, and networking opportunities provided during these meetings and holding bilateral meetings with the GEF Secretariat were considered the most important aspects of the ECWs. A similarly high percentage (90 percent of respondents) found national dialogues valuable or very valuable to them, mostly appreciating the opportunity to discuss programming priorities, national environmental policies, and project implementation.

Figure 2.1 Extent to which CSP events are planned around the needs of GEF stakeholders



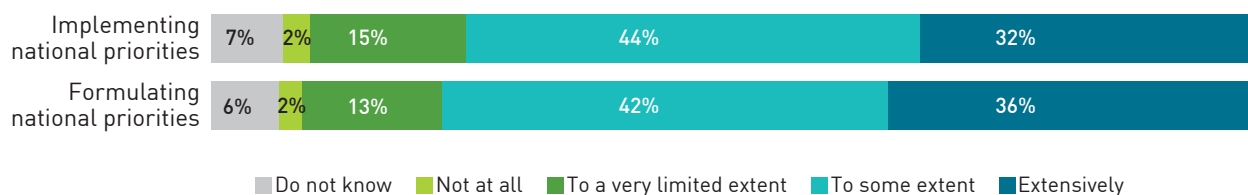
Source: GEF 2020c.

allows for identification and planning of events that cater to stakeholder needs and ensures knowledge sharing among peers. Adjustments to respond to stakeholders' needs is also evident in the introduction and expansion of activities. For example, it was noted in interviews that as stakeholders have requested more practical learning and knowledge sharing opportunities among peers, the CSP has integrated Knowledge Days and site visits at ECWs. More recently, as the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the CSP used the opportunity to test a new online event structure that fosters wider South-South learning and exchanges, which is an area that participants have expressed was often lacking within the CSP. Civil society participants in particular communicated to the evaluation team how they value South-South learning opportunities.

Relevance toward identification, formulation, and implementation of national priorities

Results of the e-survey indicate that countries consider the CSP relevant to help identify, formulate, and implement national priorities ([figure 2.2](#)). Overall, the majority of evaluation e-survey respondents consider that CSP activities contribute to

Figure 2.2 Extent to which CSP activities contribute to formulating and implementing national priorities



Source: GEF 2020c.

formulating and implementing national priorities to some extent or extensively.

The CSP is generally considered as one element in the broader GEF engagement process. Some interviewees explained that the main role of the CSP is to help governments match the strategic priorities of countries (which are defined as part of the public policy process) with those established by the GEF for a given period, thus facilitating GEF programming. This mainly happens through national dialogues. However, other respondents, including both GEF focal points and GEF staff, stress that portfolio building is a lengthy and iterative process, of which CSP events constitute only a small part. Other parts of that process include the GEF Secretariat programming high-level policy dialogue with the countries, as well as ongoing dialogue between GEF Secretariat programming, GEF Agencies, and countries.

The CSP, as a tool to help formulate and develop national priorities, is more relevant for countries with relatively low institutional capacities as compared with larger countries with more capacity and experience with GEF funding. Interviews reveal that some countries such as the Philippines, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and St. Lucia, reported that CSP events (NPFs and national dialogues) helped facilitate the creation of a list of national priorities and priority projects, several of which turned into actual project implementation on the ground. This has been more the case for the NPFs than for the national dialogues and has

proven particularly complementary to determining use of countries' System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) allocations. In the case of Nigeria, participants in a national dialogue for GEF-7 used the event to deliberate on projects that would later be submitted to the GEF for funding (Uwaegbulam 2019). Larger countries with higher institutional capacity and experience with GEF projects (such as Chile, Argentina, and China) report that the CSP is not as relevant toward formulation and development of national priorities because they have their own national institutional processes set up for this.

RELEVANCE OF CSP ACTIVITIES TO HELP FACILITATE STAKEHOLDER ACCESS TO THE GEF

Attending CSP events is viewed by many participants as a stepping-stone in positioning a country or stakeholder in the process to better access GEF financing. However, it should be noted that, according to the e-survey carried out for this evaluation, "accessing financing" was not ranked as one of the areas where the CSP was valued. A review of event agendas also indicated that modules on accessing resources are included in CSP information. For example, at the Liberia National Dialogue in 2019, an overview of the GEF included a focus on financing and another activity covered how to secure funding. A CSP event in Argentina included information on STAR and allocating resources to affect programs. In fact, the GEF started managing the

CSP roughly at the same time as the shift to STAR took place, one of the main source of GEF financing.

While recipient countries with lower institutional capacity report that the CSP plays a role in accessing GEF resources, those with higher capacity can access GEF resources independently and do not rely on the CSP for this. For example, in interviews it was noted that countries such as Liberia and Nigeria (EnviroNews 2019) claim that CSP events have played a direct role in programming GEF resources, and a particular project in the Philippines—Integrated Approach in the Management of Major Biodiversity Corridors (GEF ID 9584, UNDP)—was used as an example where CSP events were used at pivotal moments in project preparation. In contrast, countries with higher institutional capacity look toward the CSP more for access to information, through the ECWs, for example, so they can stay abreast of changes within the GEF. However, for many, it was noted that the GEF can be highly complicated where definitions and procedures are sometimes not entirely clear, and thus all information on accessing resources is welcomed, even if it does not result in actually accessing resources.

RELEVANCE OF INFORMATION REGARDING PROJECT DESIGN

The CSP does not provide project design training per se, but rather provides knowledge and information on GEF project design procedures and requirements and thus gives some indications of how a GEF project is designed. This happens, for example, through sessions on monitoring and evaluation (M&E), gender mainstreaming, public involvement, civil society, and private sector engagement, as well as modules looking at the overall project cycle. This is relevant because it still offers stakeholders an opportunity to gain understanding of how a GEF project is designed. Furthermore, some interviews confirmed that at

times the CSP integrates games and exercises based on project design aspects during ECWs.

Multiple sources indicate that the CSP has increasingly integrated more hands-on experience with project design. For example, the CSP introduced a simulation exercise where participants worked in groups and were requested to discuss and make a presentation on how to design a project. While the activity showed promise, it was a relatively short exercise, and participants expressed to the evaluation team that it would be beneficial to have an entire day dedicated to the design of a real project.

Overall, multiple interviewees found that it would be beneficial to expand modules focusing on project design, and stated that project design training modules have a value beyond practical guidance because GEF project elaboration can be overwhelming, and design modules can provide more hands-on training. Similar viewpoints were also expressed through this evaluation's e-survey, where several respondents suggested the CSP should focus more on project design and the STAR to guide the preparation of projects in the period. There was also further confirmation in the e-survey of participants requiring the CSP to provide basic support, for example, such as training in writing proposals for eligible projects. This was echoed in the 2020 CSP survey, where 85 percent of respondents indicated that it would be useful or very useful for the CSP to place more attention on how to design projects (GEF 2020c).³ It should be noted, though, that project design generally happens through the GEF Agencies, which ensure fiduciary standards are met, in the context of their mandate to assist countries in developing projects to use GEF resources, and as such, the CSP's role may be largely to enhance capacity in project design.

³ The survey, carried out by the CSP, took place during 2020.

COHERENCE AND COMPATIBILITY OF THE CSP PROCESS WITH OTHER MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENT-RELATED SUPPORT OR FUNDED INITIATIVES

Some GEF staff interviewed note that the existence of different funds imposes a burden on countries to participate in different capacity-building processes tailored to the particular focus and objectives of each fund. Given the web of support that is available under the various conventions and the overlapping or differing objectives of the various environmental funds,⁴ there is consensus on the need for compatibility and coordination of fund support activities to allow for some cohesiveness in country planning. Representatives of the different funds interviewed, including the GEF, noted that all agencies and donors are on the same page with regard to avoiding duplication and reducing cost, however. The challenge is determining how this can be done most effectively. Unfortunately, there are reasons, mostly practical ones, as to why achieving greater cohesiveness is not straightforward. For example, stakeholders interviewed for the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) noted that it is difficult because each environmental fund has its own procedures.

A comparative review of support processes at three environmental funds with objectives similar to those of the GEF was carried out by the evaluation team to assess similarities and duplications. This included the CIF, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and the Adaptation Fund. Overall, this review revealed that the processes used by the different funds are structured to work specifically with their programming, and thus vary greatly

⁴ The fund readiness and capacity-building programs and processes reviewed for this evaluation included the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund, the Climate Investment Funds, and support offered under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

in their objectives, scope, and delivery methods, making a direct comparison challenging. This is partly related to the fact that, although the GEF is multifocal, these funds have a single focal area; in addition, while only 3 out of 18 GEF Agencies are national, the GCF and the work with a greater number of national designated authorities (NDAs). This does and should not diminish the need for the funds to seek ways to find common approaches.

The evaluation found little evidence of duplication between the CSP and other support programs.

While the CSP shares some qualities with other support programs, the comparison of different programs with the CSP demonstrated the uniqueness of the CSP, which has a very structured work program around events aimed at building capacity to enhance countries' access and use of GEF resources. However, the CSP solely focuses on events, while project preparatory grants are provided to GEF projects through its agency. In contrast, the GCF's Readiness and Preparatory Support Program (Readiness Programme) provides direct funding to NDAs in grants of up to \$1 million to support the creation of country programs. These funds are then often executed in collaboration with GCF accredited Agencies and local stakeholders. The activities implemented may, like those of the CSP, include events and workshops to define programming, such as structured dialogue processes. However, activities also include, for example, feasibility studies and the development of concept notes for project preparation and programming of GCF projects. The Readiness Programme funding at the GCF very much drives the GCF programming process and is meant to help improve coherence at the national programming level, while the CSP is only one part of the wider GEF programming process. The Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme⁵ is much smaller in scope, though in addition to

⁵ For more information, see the Adaptation Fund's [Readiness Programme for Climate Finance](#) web page.

events, it also provides some grants (\$20,000–\$50,000) to support project design activities within the respective portfolios. The CIF does not have a dedicated capacity-building and readiness program; however, support is provided to recipient countries through country engagement and grants from the Forest Investment Program and the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience ([annex K](#)).

Interviews, particularly with CSP staff, reveal that there have been attempts to build coherence between the GEF and other funds in relation to support activities. Notably, the Adaptation Fund is located at GEF headquarters and generally GEF and Adaptation Fund staff have the advantage of being able to interact closely on a daily basis. Adaptation Fund staff members used to attend CSP events, but doing so took funding and eventually their inclusion was discontinued. For a while, a CSP staff person would continue to speak on behalf of the Adaptation Fund at CSP events to help increase cohesiveness, but this was viewed as not being ideal and was ultimately discontinued as well. Further, similar arrangements were made to coordinate with the GCF Readiness Programme. For example, representatives from the GCF have attended a CSP event in Vietnam. Subsequently, in the Pacific Islands, the GEF’s CSP and the GCF held back-to-back events. The costs of bringing people to a common location were shared, and although it took a lot of work and coordination, the events were successful. There was agreement to replicate the exercise, but it has yet to happen, because the event exposed the clear differences between the organizations. These start with the two funds looking at matters from different perspectives: the GCF works on the basis of regions whereas the CSP works with constituencies. In addition, administrative procedures are very different. One event organizer emphasized in an interview that the differences posed a challenge. There have been other examples of collaboration from the interviews. The CSP has done joint events on the Convention on

Biological Diversity (CBD), working with the Convention Secretariat in Montreal on the topic of financing. Furthermore, half-day sessions have been held by the CBD at CSP events to enhance coherence in programming. A number of sessions have also taken place with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Based on interviews conducted with GEF and GCF staff, the GEF and the GCF are currently examining how they can better complement each other at the programming level. Higher management-level discussions are presently under way to define further areas of complementarity and specific niches to help frame collaboration between the two funds. In the meantime, some pilot efforts at coordinating programming have taken place between the two funds in specific country contexts and this may indicate a path toward more cohesive CSP support activities. For example, in 2019, a joint GEF-GCF national dialogue was held in Lao Peoples’ Democratic Republic and in 2018, the GEF and GCF cohosted a side event on “Strengthening Collaboration for Supporting Countries in Implementing the Paris Agreement.” There have also been joint efforts to roll out coordinated engagement pilots at the country level, where interested countries can explore planning and programming of GEF and GCF resources to enhance synergies and maximize benefits and impacts. The government of Lao People’s Democratic Republic has taken the initiative to ensure complementarity and coherence in its programming plans for the GCF and the GEF. It is possible that there will be better opportunities for collaboration between support programs that would also result in, for example, support activities having a shared focus on building country priorities ([table 2.1](#)).

2.2 Effectiveness and results

The CSP does not have a strategy or implementation plan to guide its operations, nor does it have a

theory of change or logical framework. Some activities, such as ECWs, are carried out routinely, while others, such as national dialogues or constituency meetings, are implemented at the request of GEF focal points or Council members. Therefore, the CSP is demand-driven and does not approach capacity development as a continuous process at the country level. To evaluate the effectiveness and results of the CSP, the program's intervention logic was reconstructed by the evaluation team based on program documents and then validated by the CSP team. The findings below should thus be read in light of the desired outcomes included in this intervention logic.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE AND PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT COORDINATION OF GEF RESOURCES IN LINE WITH NATIONAL PRIORITIES

Involvement of different stakeholders in the design of CSP activities

The planning and preparation of national dialogues is primarily led by the host country operational focal point (OFP), with the assistance of the CSP staff. According to some interviewees, the OFPs set the agenda for national dialogues by submitting a brief concept note to the CSP with requests for the main focus of the event (e.g., gender, M&E). In some countries, for example, the Philippines, the GEF National Steering Committee discusses all CSP activities and event agendas prior to the events. There is some involvement of other stakeholders, and some GEF Secretariat interviewees express that these events cannot be done without stakeholder involvement. However, who is involved is highly dependent on the kind of event or the themes to be discussed; in any case, according to most stakeholders interviewed, they are primarily contacted for specific requests only once the agenda is decided. Program managers at the GEF are also

sought out on an as-needed basis for input to agendas, depending on the event theme.

Historically, according to several interviewees, CSOs and GEF Agencies have not been involved in the planning of events (national dialogues and ECWs), except when there is a request from the country, a constituency, or the GEF to partake in a session. This is seemingly more rare for GEF Agencies than CSOs. The evaluation did not identify many events that were done in collaboration with GEF Agencies. Observations suggest, however, that GEF Agencies are more involved during the Knowledge Day of ECWs as this includes a site visit and therefore necessitates the involvement of the respective GEF Agency in the site visit planning. For example, the site visit planned during a CSP event in Mali engaged the UN Food and Agriculture Organization heavily. The CSP has also invited Agencies to design their own sessions for ECWs, obtaining a limited response. Overall, there are some instances where CSOs are more integrated in national dialogues; for example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where CSOs play a large role in GEF programming and implementation of GEF resources. For ECWs, interviews indicated that CSOs have generally been involved in planning CSO-related sessions; again in GEF-7, they have been brought in to help plan CSO days. Both GEF Agency staff and many CSO representatives interviewed expressed the need and desire for more involvement.

The more recently launched thematic workshops have seen a larger variety of stakeholders involved in the planning process. These events are focused on a specific program or project and therefore may require more specialized input, which can only be offered by the GEF Agencies or other development partners, CSOs, and the private sector.

There has been limited involvement of convention focal points in planning events. Generally, more communication and consultations with convention focal points prior to events could increase their

Table 2.1 Comparative assessment of environmental funds' capacity support programs

	GEF Country Support Program	Green Climate Fund Readiness Programme	Climate Investment Funds Country Investment Support	Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme
Program objective	Capacity building to participate in the GEF partnership and make use of GEF resources	Resources for strengthening institutional capacities of NDAs or focal points and direct-access entities to efficiently engage with the GCF	Country engagement and learning and knowledge exchange in support of countries' development, preparation, implementation and monitoring of their CIF portfolio	Strengthen capacity of national and regional implementing entities to receive and manage climate financing, and manage all aspects of adaptation and resilience projects, from design through implementation to monitoring and evaluation
Work program budget	\$21 million for GEF-7	\$126.73 million for 2012	Not applicable ^b	\$652,960 in FY 2121
Total fund programming budget ^a	\$4.1 billion for GEF-7	\$2.3 billion for 2021	\$2,411 billion ^c	\$116 million pledged for 2024F
Type of support	Capacity building through focused event support	Grants may be provided of (1) up to \$1 million per country per year; of this, \$300,000 may be direct support to NDAs; and (2) up to \$3 million per country for the formulation of national adaptation plans Funds administered by NDAs	Capacity building through learning and knowledge exchange	Capacity building through focused event support
			Grants: Forest Investment Program allocates \$250,000 to countries to develop investment plans and Pilot Program for Climate Resilience allocates \$1 million. To develop Strategic Programs for Climate Resilience	Grants of \$20,000–\$50,000 for technical support to project design activities
Kinds of activities	Workshops and knowledge facilitation events	Dialogues, events, stakeholder forums, country assessments, technical support, concept note development, feasibility studies, etc.	Briefs, reviews, and assessments	Introduction seminars, project design support
Executing stakeholders	GEF staff at the CSP in collaboration with GEF focal points	NDAs who can hire national or international consultants; readiness activities are often done in collaboration with GCF accredited agencies	CIF administrative unit in collaboration with multilateral development bank focal point teams	Adaptation Fund headquarters staff with consultants
Beneficiary stakeholders	National governments, CSOs, private sector, indigenous groups, convention focal points, GEF Agencies	National and subnational government institutions (provincial, municipal etc.), private sector, nongovernmental organizations, indigenous groups, CSOs, GCF accredited Agencies	National governments; development organizations, CSOs, private sector	Accredited implementing entities and project stakeholders

Sources: CIF 2020b; Douthwaite et al. 2019; GCF 2020.

a. Based on best estimates from fund official documents. The various environmental funds do not have the same processes for budget preparation. For example, the CSP provides an estimated budget for the full GEF period, but not by year or fiscal year, while the GCF Readiness Programme provides an annual work program and budget, but no estimated budget for the full GEF replenishment period. The GEF fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

b. The CIF does not have a dedicated capacity-building or readiness program. However, CIF budgets \$566,000 for FY 2021 for country engagement activities, in addition to the Forest Investment Program and Pilot Program for Climate Resilience grants (CIF 2020b).

c. From the CIF (2020a): \$1.2 billion climate resilience, sustainable forest \$742 million, \$5.7 billion Clean Technology Fund, Energy Access \$769 million.

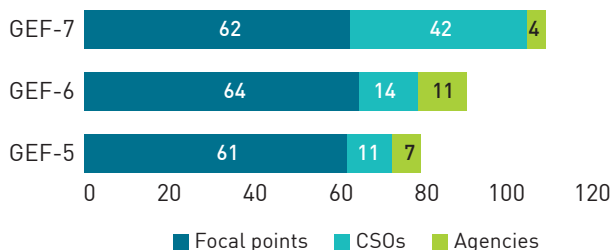
input to subjects specific to the conventions. The CSP is trying to give the conventions a slot in CSP events so they can use it for convention-related capacity building to help fulfill expectations related to different conventions. The CBD and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification are notable in this regard. The goal is to make CSP event participants aware of the latest objectives of the different conventions and enable people to connect the dots with the GEF projects in their regions or countries.

Stakeholder participation in CSP events

Since GEF-5, the CSP has focused on expanding stakeholder participation in events, with a particular intent to include CSOs. As a result, the overall participation rate of CSOs in ECWs have significantly gone up from 12 percent and 16 percent of participants in GEF-5 and GEF-6, respectively, to 40 percent in GEF-7. However, there is substantial variation in CSO involvement across the different ECWs. For example, in GEF-7, CSO involvement in ECWs ranged from 25 percent to 74 percent.⁶ As for GEF Agencies, while their participation in ECWs increased from GEF-5 to GEF-6, both in absolute and relative terms, reaching 12 percent on average (11 people), it has actually fallen to 3 percent in the ECWs carried out so far during GEF-7 (figure 2.3). The drop could be explained by the suspension of ECWs in GEF-7 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Country reviews and interviews also indicate that NPFs and national dialogues have been equally effective in opening a space for wider stakeholder participation in the definition of country priorities for GEF support at the national level. Based on the limited data available, the average participation of CSOs in national dialogues events has remarkably increased, especially from GEF-6 to GEF-7, reaching on average 16 percent of all national dialogue

⁶ Evaluation team calculations based on participant data provided by the CSP for the GEF-6 and GEF-7 periods.

Figure 2.3 Average number of participants in ECWs per GEF replenishment period



Source: ECW attendance lists provided by the CSP team.

participants, which seems low for a type of event that seeks broad inclusion of national stakeholders.

Overall, women have accounted for about one-third of ECW participation during the three GEF periods under analysis. Participation varies greatly among events, however; in GEF-7, for example, women’s participation ranged from 5 percent in the ECW held in The Gambia to 55 percent in the Fiji ECW (annex L). This points to the sharply below-average participation of women in some constituencies during the latest GEF period so far, which might relate to national or regional differences in the participation of women in the workforce and in their appointment as GEF focal points. There is not enough information available to quantify trends in women’s participation in national dialogues nor emerging and consistent trends from the interviews conducted at the country level.

Data indicate lower levels of participation of GEF Agencies, convention focal points, and the private sector; other groups such as indigenous peoples and local government were included when relevant. Some interviewees highlighted that CSP events have a limited number of attendants and therefore cannot include all the relevant country stakeholders, stressing their preference for continuous interaction through periodic meetings on specific topics or projects. Furthermore, interviewees point out that while the CSP tries to seek a balanced representation of participants, they are ultimately

selected by the OFPs, who may tend to privilege organizations that are in their contact network or that belong to GEF National Steering Committees, in the countries where these exist. Important stakeholder groups may be left out; for example, the NPFE midterm review (GEF IEO 2014a) reported that 32 of the 34 final documents produced from the NPFEs in GEF-5 indicated that although research institutes, national and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, and the private sector were included in consultations, the last two were least consulted. Private sector participation was reported in only seven events. The same can be said for private sector participation in national dialogues, which is low overall and has not increased throughout the evaluation period (4 percent in GEF-5, 5 percent in GEF-6, and 3 percent in GEF-7). Similarly, interviews also indicate that despite the participation of convention focal points in ECWs, in some countries their involvement in GEF projects is minimal and there is no follow-up on the decisions made during CSP events. Agency participation in ECWs was highest in GEF-6 but remains above 10 percent on average in GEF-7. Interviews carried out for the evaluation indicated that GEF Agencies feel more disconnected from the CSP and are not as involved in events. In the sample of countries that were reviewed as part of the evaluation, indigenous peoples' organizations and local governments were included when relevant to the geographic and thematic focus of the CSP event.

Several e-survey respondents suggested that the CSP should enable more stakeholder participation at the local level, including communities, indigenous people, local governments, and CSOs. Some interviewees shared the concern that in some cases CSP events failed to involve indigenous people, gender-related organizations, and, in particular, the private sector, while others remarked that the Small Grants Programme has played a

complementary role in increasing the involvement of local stakeholders in GEF activities.

As the CSP transitioned to virtual events in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SES were introduced, especially to replace ECWs temporarily. However, the SES events carry a much different structure and aim, which is to foster broader stakeholder participation and engagement on specific themes. For example, the first SES online event on Gender and Environment in October 2020 was attended by about 80 participants, including GEF Agencies, convention and GEF focal points, and some CSO representatives from different regions (Asia and Africa). The second SES online event in November 2020 was focused on dialogue between OFPs from Latin America and Lusophone Africa with the recently appointed GEF Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and was attended by 80 participants, mostly GEF OFPs.

Participation of line ministries in GEF projects, both as executing partners and in cofinancing, has decreased over time. While the average participation of line ministries in national dialogues has remained stable at about 25 percent since GEF-5, the country pipeline review shows that their participation in GEF projects both as executing partners and in cofinancing has decreased over time, a trend that appears related to a shift in focus from national projects to regional and global projects. Therefore, participation in national dialogues has not translated into a greater involvement of line ministries in GEF programming. **National dialogues offer the opportunity to foster policy coherence and the mainstreaming of the environment across government sectors through GEF programming.**

Generating inclusive dialogue and building partnerships

Overall, interviewees agree that CSP events have facilitated stakeholder inclusion by creating a safe

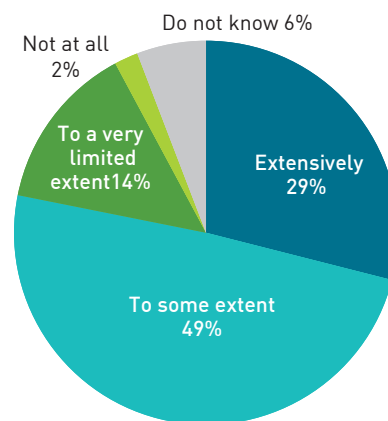
space where different actors can share their perspectives and experiences. Forty-nine percent of evaluation e-survey respondents consider that CSP activities facilitate inclusive dialogue to some extent, and 29 percent extensively (figure 2.4).⁷ E-survey respondents also deemed national dialogues useful to attend and indicated that these events provide a platform to engage stakeholders, such as CSOs and line ministries.

In some cases, this inclusive dialogue has positively influenced the project pipeline and helped strengthen partnerships. For example, the interviews carried out for this evaluation confirm that following a national dialogue in Cameroon, discussions took place between the OFP and CSO platforms to discuss specific issues and partnerships, which in turn led to the development of project ideas and concept notes. Similarly, it was reported that in Chile the participation of NGOs in NPFs helped them learn about the GEF and has led to the development of projects with the Chilean government. Likewise, in Democratic Republic of Congo, the CSP helped strengthen the partnership of the Congolese government with GEF Agencies as well as the Institut National de Conservation de la Nature, which led to the implementation of a GEF project focused on national parks.

Despite the significant increase in CSO participation in activities, there still remains overarching agreement that participation in CSP activities does not often translate into further dialogue between CSOs and focal point offices or the inclusion of some CSOs in activities on the ground. Interviews indicate that once CSP events are over, CSOs often return to their duties without experiencing any follow-up from national focal points to coordinate.

⁷This is in line with the findings of the 2020 CSP survey, whose respondents valued ECWs as useful for networking with colleagues, engaging with CSO representatives, and improving coordination with GEF Agencies, among other things (GEF 2020c).

Figure 2.4 Extent to which CSP activities facilitate inclusive dialogue



Source: GEF 2020c.

This provides a real disconnect in the work that the CSP does to increase inclusiveness in GEF programming and planning. CSOs often have a different take on issues within a country and are very often much more closely connected to local communities; they can therefore add significant value to GEF projects and programming on the ground. In the end, while CSO participation has increased both in events and even in project design, some CSOs still do not see the changes on the ground.

FOSTERING DIALOGUE AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING BETWEEN GEF SECRETARIAT AND COUNTRIES

The CSP is an important mechanism to provide updates to country stakeholders on new GEF policies, priorities, and strategies. This is particularly the case for the ECWs, with an agenda that changes each year based on new policies, strategies, and thematic focuses of the GEF. Throughout the years, ECWs have been focused on updating GEF stakeholders on new policies and guidelines. For example, ECW materials in 2013 included a presentation and a specific exercise on cross-cutting capacity development and national capacity self-assessments, which was a priority for GEF-5; in 2017, the materials included a presentation

on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy that was published by the GEF Secretariat the same year. However, the most notable example was the CSP's role in the introduction of the STAR allocation. Interviews confirmed that the CSP communication efforts on this subject came after the realization that countries did not know what the GEF resource allocation in GEF-4 was, because it was grouped and assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis.⁸ The CSP's experience in ensuring that countries have understood the STAR allocation system underlines the importance of the role the CSP plays in providing CSP participants basic information on how the GEF operates.

Introduction seminars are another key CSP activity that provides updated information on GEF policies, priorities, and resources, primarily to new GEF Agency staff. New focal points and some CSO representatives are also invited, while new GEF Secretariat and GEF IEO staff attend all or some sessions of interest to them. The contents covered in these seminars are identical to those of ECWs during the first year of a replenishment period. National dialogues can also include some information on GEF policies and resources, but the focus and depth vary according to the national dialogue's objectives. Finally, constituency meetings provide an opportunity for GEF focal points to review and discuss Council documents.

Interviews confirmed that ECWs are an opportunity for GEF Secretariat staff to interact, formally or informally, with country stakeholders, though this interaction does not occur equally for all. To this end, since GEF-6, ECWs have included specific time slots for bilateral meetings with OFPs to review countries' portfolios.⁹ Several interviewees

⁸ It must be noted, however, that the GEF-4 allocation system was not entirely done in groups; there were also individual country allocations for certain countries.

⁹ Since 2019, these time slots have been included in ECW agendas.

stressed the importance of bilateral meetings and informal interaction at CSP events for gathering feedback, clarifying issues, and moving projects forward. In line with the findings of the 2020 CSP survey, some interviewees also highlighted the need to share more experiences and good practices across countries, as well as to hold separate, periodic bilateral meetings with the GEF Secretariat to discuss country-specific issues regarding project implementation, the relationship with GEF Agencies, cofinancing, and so on.

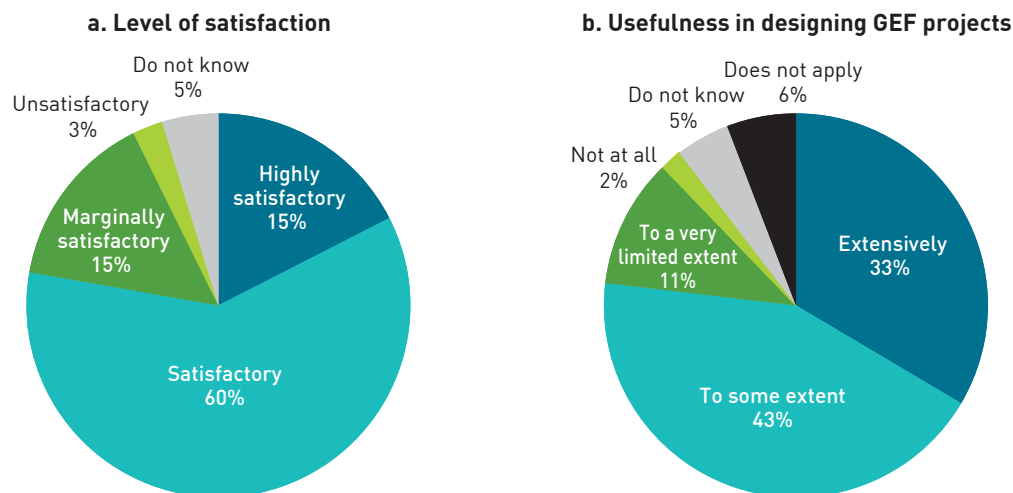
Interviews and observations highlight that other event types have also played a role in facilitating coordination between countries:

- Constituency meetings allow GEF focal points from the same constituency to develop common positions toward the GEF Council and to discuss common issues.
- Thematic workshops such as the Amazon Sustainable Landscape Program II Preparation Workshop (Brazil, 2018), the Regional Consultation on the GEF-7 Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Program (Gabon, 2019), and the Meeting on the Guaraní Aquifer System (Uruguay, 2019) have helped coordination among neighboring countries and thus facilitated the preparation of multicountry projects or programs.

The effort made by the CSP to channel information from the GEF Secretariat to country stakeholders is clearly reflected in the perception of e-survey respondents for this evaluation. Seventy-seven percent of respondents considered the information and resources provided by the CSP to be satisfactory or highly satisfactory, and 76 percent used the information provided to design GEF projects to some extent or extensively ([figure 2.5](#)).¹⁰ However,

¹⁰ These results are consistent with the 2020 CSP survey (GEF 2020c). The 2020 CSP survey reported that twice as many participants indicated that they understand GEF

Figure 2.5 Stakeholder satisfaction with and reliance on GEF information and resources provided through the CSP



Source: GEF 2020c.

the interviews carried out by the evaluation team point out that CSP events play very different roles for different actors: for example, for recently appointed GEF focal points and other stakeholders who are new to the GEF, CSP events are key to understanding how the GEF works. However, for more seasoned participants, CSP events are an opportunity to refresh and update their knowledge on new strategies, policies, and priorities.

Despite this overall positive perception, the e-survey carried out for this evaluation suggests that the retention of information is low. Only about half of e-survey respondents were able to recall three GEF policies, and just over one-third were able to identify three procedures and requirements, while a large portion of respondents left this question blank. GEF focal points have a higher response

policies and guidelines well or very well after attending CSP events, and 65 percent of respondents answered that they apply concepts, tools, and good practices made available during CSP activities in their day-to-day practice; they found it most useful to learn about programming priorities, operations, and policies, while they highlighted the opportunity to provide more guidance on project design and portfolio management.

rate, with two-thirds recalling three policies, and half recalling three procedures and requirements. (Staff turnover is one factor that may explain low information retention.) The most frequently mentioned policies were those on gender, cofinancing, stakeholder engagement, and environmental and social safeguards; updated versions of these were presented in 2019 at CSP events and were therefore fresh in the minds of participants. A diversity of procedures and requirements were mentioned, including, project cycle guidelines and project preparation requirements such as the Project Identification Form and endorsement by the OFPs.

Furthermore, interviews indicate the presence of a diversity of barriers to applying CSP-acquired knowledge and skills in the development of country pipelines. A common theme is the need for broader reach on GEF information within governments to foster institutional memory and to other country stakeholders such as CSOs. Both GEF Agencies and GEF focal points also find the CSP information largely theoretical, with little guidance on applicability, and cite challenges aligning projects with GEF strategies and policies and the GEF period with national budget cycles ([annex M](#)). Only

two interviewees did not mention any barriers and affirmed that CSP-acquired knowledge is easily applicable.

ENHANCING COUNTRY CAPACITY

The CSP has served as an enabler of strategic planning by helping countries match predefined national priorities with GEF priorities, alongside other programming processes facilitated by the GEF Secretariat. (The CSP does not help countries develop specific projects.) The CSP plays an important role in how it facilitates capacity building to ensure that countries can undertake this strategic planning. While this evaluation indicates that the capacity-building support from the CSP is important to countries, the level at which it is needed depends on the overall capacity of the country. GEF staff interviewed indicate that several countries make use of the CSP toward defining strategies and priorities. In this current GEF replenishment period, these would include Ukraine and Belarus. In previous periods, Kazakhstan and Jordan made exceptional use of CSP resources in this regard. In addition, national dialogues can provide momentum for environmental policy advocacy. For example, the 2019 national dialogue in Nigeria provided a space for stakeholders to advocate for the development of a national environmental action plan and a national environmental statistical system by the federal Government of Nigeria.

National events have helped countries plan GEF resources in a more systematic way. For example, the midterm review of the NPFs revealed that the NPFs constituted the first time that a systematic effort was made to plan countries' respective portfolios or ensure alignment with national priorities. The review also identifies that NPFs fostered the creation of national steering committees in some countries, which have been instrumental in providing a multistakeholder structure to review project concepts and make decisions. According to the

interviews carried out for this evaluation, in some countries these committees have worked well and are still active, including in the Philippines, Thailand, Côte d'Ivoire, Peru, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador, among others. Furthermore, considering that 45 percent of the countries that held an NPF in GEF-5 were LDCs and 9 percent were SIDS, findings suggest that the NPFs have played a capacity-building role at the country level, especially in assisting lower-capacity countries ([box 2.1](#)).

Some OFPs interviewed indicate that they find it more effective to carry out a continuous portfolio-building process through direct contact and periodic meetings with stakeholders on specific issues, instead of holding one-time national dialogues at the beginning of each GEF period.

Box 2.1 How did NPFs help shape the project pipeline?

The country pipeline review carried out for this evaluation provides two specific examples of how national portfolio formulation exercises have helped shape the project pipeline:

- In Cameroon, the GEF-5 period yielded 10 projects, 5 of which related directly to priority projects identified beforehand in the 2011 NPF, corresponding to \$11.4 million in grant funds and \$70.4 million in cofinancing. The remaining projects implemented under the GEF-5 System for Transparent Allocation of Resources allocation were also in line with national priorities, because they were closely related to biodiversity protection, which was identified as a top priority.
- In St. Lucia, 3 out of the 13 approved projects later in GEF-5 were explicitly identified as priorities in the final document of the 2012 NPF, and 4 more projects were aligned with priority areas identified in the NPF but did not cover the specific activities proposed.

While this is easier for OFPs who, having been in the role for several years, are knowledgeable about the workings of the GEF and well connected to stakeholders, it was stressed that more continuous capacity support is needed from the CSP for countries to develop their pipelines and to enable decentralized capacity building.

As previously mentioned, regional events such as ECWs consistently provide updated information on GEF priorities and are an opportunity for GEF focal points to discuss specific issues regarding country portfolios with GEF staff, thus contributing to advance strategic planning, albeit more indirectly. For example, after hearing about blue economy projects at the 2019 ECW in the Arab Republic of Egypt, Türkiye decided to prioritize this area and formulated three projects whose concepts were approved in 2020; these revolve around “blueing” the Black Sea, as well as fisheries and ecosystem-based management in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

More recently, thematic workshops have also played an important role in crystallizing multi-country projects, such as a Meeting on the Guaraní Aquifer System, which provided an opportunity for several countries to discuss common challenges and the way forward, covering different focal areas in a comprehensive manner ([box 2.2](#)).

Box 2.2 The role of thematic workshops in strategic planning for multicountry projects

In 2019, a Meeting on the Guaraní Aquifer System was held before the Latin American ECW in Uruguay. Country representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay discussed the second phase of the Guaraní Aquifer System project, which focuses on underground water management and preservation. Discussions spanned several issues such as biodiversity loss and hydropower infrastructure. A multicountry project was then submitted and approved by the CEO and is now under execution.

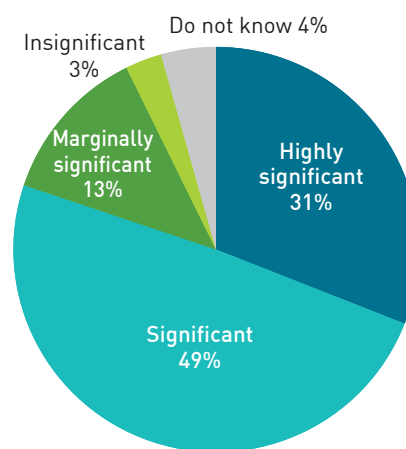
Similarly, the CSP Amazon Sustainable Landscape Program II Preparation Workshop (Brazil, 2018) and the Regional Consultation on the GEF-7 Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Program (Gabon, 2019) provided an opportunity for several countries to discuss common challenges and the way forward, covering different focal areas in a comprehensive manner. As a result, multicountry programs were submitted and approved by the GEF Council in record time.

IMPACT AREAS OF THE CSP

Effectiveness at enhancing access to GEF resources

The CSP has contributed to helping countries with access to GEF resources alongside the activities carried out by the Programs Unit. Eighty percent of evaluation e-survey respondents consider that CSP activities are significant or highly significant in enabling stakeholders to access GEF resources ([figure 2.6](#)). Several stakeholders interviewed also agree that the CSP supports the

Figure 2.6 Significance of CSP activities in enabling stakeholder access to GEF resources



Source: GEF 2020c.

project preparation process and thus contributes to greater success when a project is submitted. For example, in Cameroon the projects and programs

discussed through the CSP for GEF-7 are at the design stage, and two were submitted so far: the Impact Program on the Congo Basin and the Land Degradation Program with the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization. The document review shows that countries such as Argentina and Rwanda have also benefited from CSP support to develop child projects under the Sustainable Cities Impact Program. In Argentina, the CSP supported the project preparation process through a national dialogue; in Rwanda, the CSP triggered the process, and then the country worked with support from the Programs Unit.

The document review carried out for this evaluation indicated that the national dialogues have helped drive prioritized environmental projects for funding by the GEF. For instance, the 2010 Vietnam National Dialogue concluded that top priority would be given to (1) projects that promote low-carbon technology, energy efficiency in commercial and residential buildings, and investment in renewable energy; and (2) projects that include conservation in protected marine and wetlands and mainstream conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Likewise, at the 2019 Nigeria National Dialogue, two projects were found relevant to the GEF strategic directions and were thus selected for further development in GEF-7. More recently, according to the document review and the interviews carried out as part of this evaluation, the 2018 national dialogue in Argentina facilitated the preparation process for the country's child project in the framework of the Sustainable Cities Impact Program ([box 2.3](#)).

Some interviewees point out that some countries have not proactively made use of CSP activities to increase their effectiveness in accessing GEF resources, for reasons such as GEF focal point turnover or government reorganization. This is also reflected in the Portfolio Overview, which indicates, for example, that only about a third (31 countries) benefited from national dialogues during the evaluation period. Interviews also point out a need

Box 2.3 The High-Level Dialogue on Sustainable Cities in Argentina

The CSP High-Level Dialogue on Sustainable Cities held in Argentina in 2018 had 80 participants, including line ministries, provincial and municipal governments from the five cities selected for the Sustainable Cities Impact Program (Salta, Mendoza, Ushuaia, Mar del Plata, and Buenos Aires), GEF Agencies, and some CSOs and private companies. The event agenda included a presentation on the GEF CSOs network with a focus on Argentina. As highlighted by an interviewee, the event made it possible for the national government to have a face-to-face dialogue with local government representatives, which is of special importance in a federal country with a large territory, and thus supported the project preparation process. This was approved in 2019 with a budget of more than \$25 million, which constitutes about 40 percent of the grant funds approved for Argentina in GEF-7.

for the CSP to provide more specific information to countries, especially LDCs and SIDS, on what resources they have available and on former projects, given the often-high OFP turnover rate and low country capacities. The already mentioned bilateral meetings taking place in ECWs have been useful to this end. More recently, the Country Factsheet tool, a report on the progress made by a country in preparing and implementing projects with financing from the GEF, was piloted at the East Africa ECW in February 2020, and then rolled out in CSP events. Although the Country Factsheet was useful in that respect, key interviewees also highlighted the need for closer coordination within the broader GEF on the Country Factsheets to avoid mixed messages, notably with respect to the actual availability of GEF allocations in view of past and ongoing parallel GEF programming discussions around specific country pipelines.

Effectiveness to enhance country ownership of GEF resources³

Most interviewees agree that the CSP has helped increase country ownership and empowerment vis-à-vis GEF Agencies by helping country governments play a more active role in GEF programming.¹¹

The CSP has conveyed the message to country governments that they ought to decide how GEF resources are to be spent, and the CSP is merely there to periodically provide updated information to GEF focal points and country stakeholders about the GEF system and project cycle, as well as to support a dialogue about country programming, as described in the previous sections of this chapter.

Based on interviews, in several LDCs, SIDS, and lower-middle-income countries with limited institutional capacities, GEF Agencies still tend to retain greater control over GEF programming, which hinders country ownership and seems to generate, at least in some cases, a certain dependence on GEF Agencies. In contrast, GEF focal points in countries with capacity reveal in interviews that they have become more involved in project execution and better able to engage with GEF Agencies on an equal footing, while also increasing the interest and knowledge of national stakeholders regarding the GEF and their participation in portfolio development and project execution. In the Philippines, for example, participation in developing the GEF project portfolio has broadened, with stakeholders such as the League of Municipalities and Provinces and the Chamber of Commerce now sitting on the GEF Steering Committee. In Cameroon,

¹¹ In this evaluation, country ownership is intended as the capacity of country governments and other stakeholders, such as local governments, CSOs, and the private sector, to drive GEF portfolio development and be fully involved in implementation, so that GEF financing is fully aligned with and contributes to national priorities and capacity development.

in turn, project implementation is increasingly done by national partners instead of GEF Agencies. This is in line with the 2014 midterm review of NPFs, which found that, in most countries, these events were perceived as a tool for their empowerment vis-à-vis GEF Agencies and enhanced ownership through consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and through the creation of national steering committees to provide a broader decision making and coordinating structure for GEF programming.

Furthermore, as some governments in relatively higher-income countries have taken a greater lead in programming, tensions with the GEF Agencies have arisen regarding their respective roles. For example, an OFP remarked: “The funds do not belong to the GEF Agencies. The GEF Agencies position themselves in an ‘I decide what to do’ role. The line between administrative and public policy processes is not clear.” Regarding NPFs, another focal point mentioned: “Based on all the proposals that came up, decisions were made with the political focal point and the environmental authority. However, the implementing agencies negotiated projects through other channels, without informing the focal points.” These tensions are related, in part, to the relative power that GEF Agencies, mostly multilateral organizations, still hold within the GEF system, and in part to the fact that some OFPs are not decision makers within governments and have limited influence in political negotiations.

Effectiveness of the CSP to help leverage GEF resources

While it is not the role of the CSP to help countries securing cofinancing and CSP events are generally not considered a space where this happens systematically, the participation of a wider variety of stakeholders in national dialogues can sometimes lead to the identification of synergies between ongoing and potential future activities in some countries and future potential cofinancing.

One example that was mentioned is that following a national dialogue in South Africa, \$12 million in cofinancing was secured from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for a biodiversity conservation project that included national policy enabling activities and activities on the ground in Kruger National Park. In any case, CSP events help discuss difficulties and clarify rules regarding cofinancing. For example, a 2020 CSP Survey respondent commented: “We are better able to identify partners that have a comparative advantage in investing in specific focal areas and have the ability to provide additional financial support to add onto GEF financing.”

2.3 Efficiency

LEVEL, TIMELINESS, AND QUALITY OF CSP SUPPORT

Types of support provided by the CSP: logistical planning for CSP activities and day-to-day guidance to recipient countries

According to interviews, the CSP emphasizes the importance of countries taking the lead in the planning of events and activities to promote ownership and capacity development, and it provides logistical and planning support as needed. Because the World Bank is the trustee of the GEF, the CSP has to follow World Bank transaction procedures and financial controls, and thus logistical support such as interpretation services, hotel booking, meal services, travel arrangements, and setting up site visits is always carried out by the CSP team.

Besides logistical support, the CSP team reports that they also help plan and think through the event agendas and how these have to evolve according to each fiscal year (FY) and replenishment period. (The GEF fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.) Although ECW agendas are predetermined by the CSP every year and only slight adjustments are made based on host country and constituency

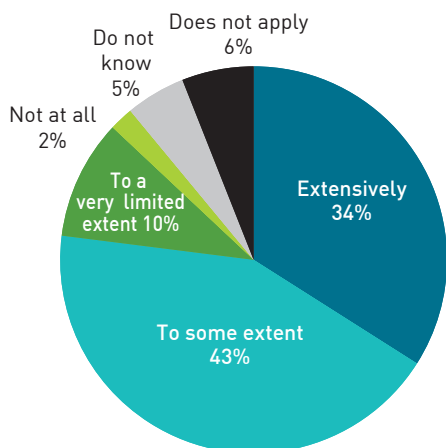
requests, and constituency meetings are usually planned around Council meetings and therefore Council agendas, national dialogues and thematic workshops are more dependent on country requests. CSP team members are always present at the events to help facilitate and ensure easy coordination. Stakeholders interviewed as part of this evaluation generally expressed appreciation for the assistance the CSP provides to maximize creativity in event agendas and think through relevant themes and focus of the events.

A few GEF Secretariat stakeholders have expressed the need for more collaboration between the CSP and the GEF programs and communication teams in the planning process. This could particularly help raise the relevance of the CSP to overall programming and the corporate branding in the activities to ensure that they are also in full alignment with current GEF priorities and needs.

The CSP responds to daily inquiries on demand and acts as a liaison not only between the countries and the GEF, but also between stakeholders on bridging partnerships or addressing bottlenecks. Overall, OFPs’ experience is that they have a direct line of communication with the CSP team, which answers all questions ranging from GEF policies and procedures to GEF operations. Interviewees for this evaluation particularly expressed that the CSP is instrumental in providing the support needed by the focal points, which includes mentoring and coaching to ensure that focal points function well and are informed of their rights and responsibilities. As assessed through the e-survey carried out as part of this evaluation, a high number of respondents (77 percent) said that they rely extensively or to some extent on information provided by the CSP ([figure 2.7](#)).

The level of day-to-day operational guidance for stakeholders outside focal point offices varies substantially between countries and types of stakeholders. For example, several CSO participants

Figure 2.7 The extent to which event participants rely on information provided by the CSP



Source: GEF 2020c.

express that they have a close working relationship with the CSP and receive the same on-demand guidance as described by focal points. GEF Agencies, on the other hand, indicate that they work more directly with focal points and that within the GEF they tend to contact and communicate more with the representatives of the GEF focal areas, all depending on which project they seek feedback on. They do not very often communicate directly with the CSP, but they do communicate with the country relations team to address issues related to the

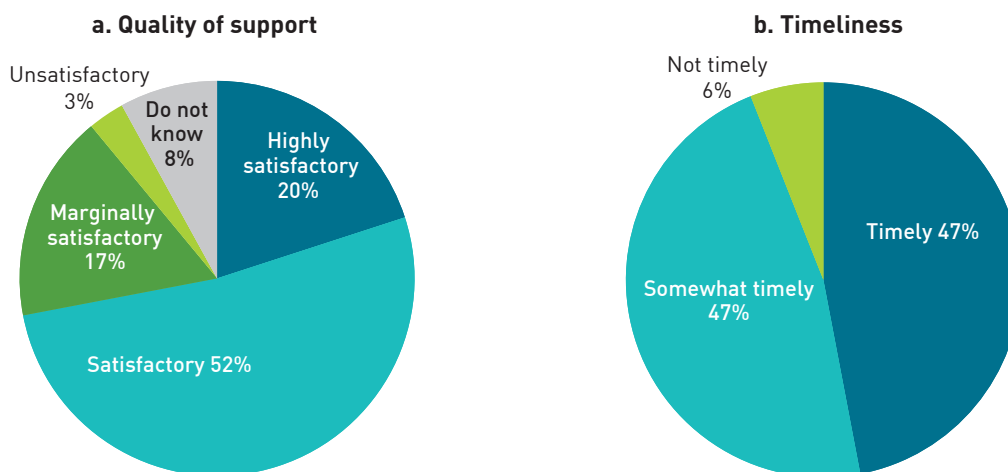
preparation of projects; to facilitate communications and understanding among others.

Quality and timeliness of CSP support

Overall, the quality of the services and support provided by the CSP is perceived as good. In the survey carried out as part of this evaluation, about 72 percent of respondents found the overall quality of the support provided by the CSP and its country officers to be satisfactory or highly satisfactory (figure 2.8a). Several interviewees for this evaluation note that the quality of information provided by the CSP really helps increase the countries' understanding and use of GEF resources and allows for coordinated and streamlined planning of events. In addition, because the CSP staff, in particular the country support officers, are also specialized in various thematic areas, they are recognized as being able to add content support on issues related to, for example, gender or safeguards.

Forty-seven percent of survey respondents found the support provided by the CSP as timely, and 46 percent found it somewhat timely (figure 2.8b). However, interviews show that the timeliness of national dialogues and introduction seminars could be improved. Country interviewees almost all note

Figure 2.8 Quality and timeliness of support provided by the CSP



Source: GEF 2020c.

that national dialogues seem to come too late. Most often, as soon as the new replenishment period begins, interviewees note that they compete for early dates in the new period for national dialogues. This is in line with the past finding of the midterm review of the NPFs that programming exercises should not fall in the beginning of a GEF period. The CSP staff recognizes this issue, but note that it is not possible, with the current size of the CSP team, to hold national dialogues for all countries at the same time. As a result, some national dialogues are held months into the new GEF period. A few interviewees pointed to a similar issue with introduction seminars, which take place once a year; i.e., these are not always timely for new GEF focal points who take office immediately or shortly after an introduction seminar because they have to wait a full year for a thorough overview of the GEF. It deserves mentioning, though, that this is outside the control of the CSP, because incoming staff changes are caused by internal national processes.

The ECWs and constituency meetings are generally considered timely. The ECWs are held throughout the year mainly from February to November. They are never carried out near Council meetings, and they are also not planned right at the beginning of a replenishment period as this would clash with all the requests for national dialogues and the time and capacity to prepare both is not there. Constituency meetings are usually planned in coordination with Council meetings given their focus on discussing Council documents; this seems to be an optimal time that fits political and OFPs who attend the meetings. However, there are some requests for more lead time to plan for the constituency meeting and get through all the documents discussed.

As reported by countries, the day-to-day support and willingness of the country relations team to respond to issues is almost always immediate, providing timely answers to pressing issues. However, there are instances when the country relations team may need additional time to find the right

person within the GEF who can help with questions or make the connection on the ground; but the time this takes is still seen by countries as fair.

Another timing bottleneck is that countries' national financial planning or presidential and other elections may interfere with the timing of CSP events and GEF periods—that is, when CSP events such as national dialogues as well as the GEF replenishment run counter to international financial planning. In other instances, new incoming governments taking office halfway through a GEF replenishment period may change country priorities, which means their priorities may no longer necessarily match those established earlier in the GEF period.

Quality of the material used by the CSP

The quality of CSP materials has improved over time, and in recent years more interactive tools have been introduced. The evaluation team's overall review of all event material used in the ECWs found that the design of presentations has improved over time; they are more legible and concise. Furthermore, it was observed that the presentations are often modified to cater to the region, country, or constituency where they are given, using country- and region-appropriate examples of projects or initiatives. Additionally, in recent years the CSP has begun using games and other interactive tools, which, according to interviews, have been welcomed by participants. For example, card games are used in which participants have to build a project on the spot using the cards: picking the focal area, GEF Agencies, outcomes, and so on. These games have been seen as positive ways to stimulate discussion and get participants more engaged. In addition, event participants note that it has been a much simpler way of teaching focal point ministry staff about GEF concepts and procedures. This is supported by 75 percent of respondents to the evaluation e-survey, who found the quality of the material and tools used in

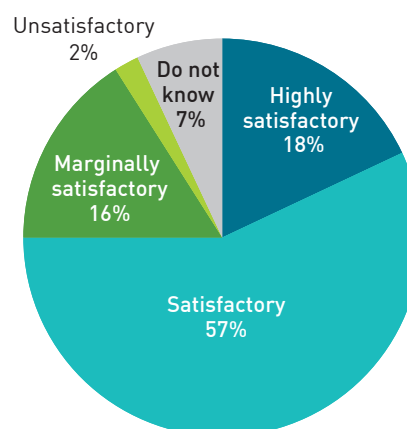
communicating with stakeholders highly satisfactory or satisfactory (figure 2.9).¹² As mentioned by some interviewees, the materials, especially from ECWs and Introductory Seminars, are very useful for learning about the GEF and its new policies, procedures, and guidelines, and they often use the ECW material when introducing someone new to the GEF.

The evaluation team also observed that event pages now include a GEF introductory video and a link to an online course about the GEF, both of which are of very high quality and provide a clear and concise overview of the GEF. These can indeed help prepare participants in advance of the event, both those who need a refresher on the basics of the GEF and those who are completely new to it. The material used in national dialogues is much more targeted than the material in ECWs, as is also reflected in interviewees' opinions.

Some interviewees for this evaluation expressed a need for more information on project management and implementation, good practice examples, how to establish successful alliances, or even more in-depth training on the new GEF period with a wider variety of participants. Suggestions were also made for better balancing dialogue and presentations because too many presentations can cause fatigue in participants. These findings are further supported by the outcomes of the 2020 CSP survey, whose participants stressed the need to add presentations on individual country performance and coordination with GEF Agencies and increase bilateral face-to-face discussions with the GEF Secretariat ahead of CSP events. Participants also underlined the importance of sharing examples of good and innovative practices from their region and

¹² Similarly, more than 90 percent of respondents to the 2020 CSP survey indicated that they found the level of information exchanged during CSP events to be good or very good (GEF 2020c).

Figure 2.9 Quality of material used by the CSP



Source: GEF 2020c.

of discussing in more detail the delivery of global environmental benefits at the local level.

The evaluation found that locating event material on the CSP on the GEF website is very difficult; for example, upcoming events are not updated or listed on the front page, and material from previous events is often not available. The CSP results are presented in terms of number of events and participants, but this information cannot be found on the website either. The evaluation team also noted the absence of social media use by the CSP to promote concepts, themes, and ideas related to the GEF. Although the GEF has a high level of social media presence, the CSP does not.

Reliability of tools

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised the importance of the reliability of tools used for events.

Before the pandemic, the reliability of tools used was not as crucial as in the current environment, where everything has temporarily, at least, become virtual. The majority of participants interviewed for this evaluation note that PowerPoint presentations and setups within countries where events have been hosted have worked well and have suffered only minor technical issues. They add that the CSP

has taken advantage of a wide variety of technologies in communicating with countries during and between events, using platforms such as WebEx, Skype, Zoom, and WhatsApp. The majority of event participants find the guidance provided on how to use the different videoconferencing services clear, and prior to events, the CSP discusses the tools proposed with the countries to ensure their functionality within the host country of the event and to pick the platform that the national stakeholders prefer to use. Interviewees report that the tools used have been reliable and are suitable for the achievement of well-organized forums. Of course, as can be expected, there are times when technology and connections fail, particularly in more remote areas and some of the least developed areas throughout Africa and Asia where internet connectivity is limited.

RESPONSIVENESS OF CSP MANAGEMENT IN VIEW OF THE NEEDS OF STAKEHOLDERS

Changes at the CSP and within the GEF prompted as a result of Stakeholder feedback and needs

The CSP is constantly evolving, as is reflected in the changes in the design of the program since 2010; which show it has worked to become more participatory, engaging, and increasingly useful to its participants. As an effort to improve the CSP and ensure that feedback from stakeholders is received, the CSP launched a survey during GEF-7 to be shared at the end of each activity. From this survey, the CSP obtains anonymous feedback from different types of stakeholders. Another survey has also been launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to make sure necessary adjustments are made to event style, subjects, and tools so they are best suited to the virtual environment. The responses to the surveys are specifically used to help the CSP evolve and devise changes to improve events and align them better with the needs of participants. In

addition, the CSP receives feedback directly from focal point offices through direct consultations, and in some instances, countries have provided direct written feedback to the CSP.

Two very clear adjustments made by the CSP in response to expressed needs are the efforts to increase inclusiveness and adjust event agendas to accommodate participants' expressed needs. During the earlier years of the evaluated period, events were generally structured exclusively around the need to promote global environmental benefits, but now CSP agendas integrate more content on gender and safeguards. Within some countries, this change has led to actual results; for example, in Liberia, the information from the CSP event enhanced the country's capacity to develop a policy on gender and climate change.

Furthermore, according to both CSP and GEF staff working on CSP events, the efforts to make events more interactive are also in response to feedback from participants. Over time, there has been a shift from presentations concerned more with theory to interactive sessions.

Evolution of the tools, platforms, and activities offered by the CSP

The CSP used to host a knowledge management platform. The platform provided quick access to information and knowledge to focal points and a space for engaging in online discussion forums. Although it was assessed that the platform was valued by users, overall usage was extremely low. Many focal points were reluctant to initiate online discussions, and only 30 percent reported that they used the website on a monthly basis or more often. A similar percentage—27 percent—claimed to “never” use the website. Given these numbers, the knowledge management platform was ultimately integrated into the overall GEF website, which is managed by the GEF communication team.

Observations from this evaluation indicate that the CSP continues to explore and carry out knowledge sharing through other pathways. The CSP has partnered with the knowledge management function to support and disseminate several initiatives that are valuable for CSP participants. For example, GEF Knowledge Days were launched in 2016 and became a part of the ECWs, and a [knowledge and learning](#) web page was launched alongside a learning guidebook published in several languages. In 2019, the GEF Good Practice Briefs were developed to introduce best practice on recent GEF investments. In 2020, an online workshop on the art of knowledge exchange was held for CSOs ([annex N](#)). The CSP has also produced its own publications: *The A to Z of the GEF, A Guide to the Global Environment Facility* was published as a GEF Secretariat publication in 2011 and 2015, but in 2019, it was produced as a CSP publication. In 2020, the GEF also launched [Kaleo](#), which offers a question-and-answer platform that serves GEF partners and stakeholders. Interviews confirmed that the tool was marketed to all GEF member countries, but marketing outside the usual network seems to be limited, which means Kaleo may not have reached key players such as local governments, CSOs, and private sector companies. It is up to the countries to promote the tools launched by the GEF and the CSP, which is difficult to do, given limited GEF presence within the countries.

Finally, the GEF Academy was launched in 2018 as a learning activity that provides both online and face-to-face curriculum courses and learning events to help advance the capacity of GEF partners and stakeholders. The base course, "Introduction to the GEF," has been translated into French and Spanish and is now offered with a link directly through the CSP event pages to provide stakeholders with a key intro to the GEF prior to events. In addition, an [e-course](#) has been launched focusing on mainstreaming gender in environment. Other courses, currently under development, relate to

results and stakeholder engagement, issues that have been raised in prior CSP events.

Responses to COVID-19 pandemic

Because of the COVID-19 crisis, the CSP was forced to postpone face-to-face events, but has begun to successfully pilot events to support countries. The CSP has adapted and moved to leverage information technology tools to continue engagement with GEF recipient countries. Although the ECWs have been put temporarily on hold as the CSP tries to reformulate these for the virtual environment, several constituency meetings, some national dialogues, and several pre-Council meetings have taken place virtually.

The pre-Council Meetings of recipient Council members have been held with some success. Interviews suggest that this is likely to be because they are attended by fewer people who are brought together with a specific goal: to understand and ask questions regarding the upcoming Council and related Council documents. Familiarity is also believed to be key, and the fact that people already know each other seems to play a role. The majority of stakeholders express that familiarity allows for more direct engagement in the virtual environment because most participants have already met in person on prior occasions and are used to discussing issues with each other.

The evaluation team observed a few online events throughout 2020, which revealed that great improvements in the later events, compared with the first events, had taken place. Slides had been made much clearer and the technological ambition of events had been much more pronounced with, for example, the introduction of breakout groups. Despite a few hiccups still, the CSP is learning and slowly advancing in the virtual environment.

Overall, there are several positives with the virtual environment because it opens up a space for

different forms of creativity and opportunities that the CSP did not exploit prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. CSP staff note that critical meetings can be put together with less lag time, and the virtual space allows the CSP to bring stakeholders together based on thematic areas or South-South learning, which it noted would previously have been outside the budget of the CSP to host. For example, African countries can be brought together with Asian countries on specific topics, and events can be made language-specific to ease communication and understanding among participants. This is being done through the launch of the SES, which is proposed as an interim replacement for ECWs, and aims to provide all stakeholders most of the benefits they would have derived from the ECWs. The SES is made up of a series of webinars to be delivered until the ECWs can resume. The webinars have the following characteristics:

- Bringing countries together from different regions, thus encouraging sharing of experiences across GEF constituencies;
- Presenting projects from different countries;
- Grouping countries and participants based on shared languages and time zones, among others; and
- Designing webinars of 90–120 minutes' length that are offered several times so that all stakeholders have the opportunity to benefit.

Most of the CSP and GEF staff interviewed also note that, given the working relationship between the GEF Secretariat and OFPs, the CSP was also mobilized to organize a series of events during the fall of 2020 to help get a better sense of the challenges countries face during the COVID-19 pandemic and, in particular, of the potential impact of the updated GEF Cancellation Policy. It was explained to the evaluation team that it had become apparent to the GEF that the pandemic was affecting the pace of project development, approval, and cofinancing mobilization, and the GEF did not want the

policy to adversely affect countries because of this external factor. According to most focal points, the events proved very useful and provided a nuanced view of the challenges faced by countries. In the same spirit, a paper was produced for the 59th Council meeting in December 2020 that reviewed the impacts of the pandemic and, in addition to confirming the need for amendments to the GEF Cancellation Policy, suggested further strategic support to GEF stakeholders from the GEF Secretariat to assist them with implementation and supervision of GEF activities during the pandemic (GEF 2020b).

Shortcomings of virtual events

There is wide agreement that face-to-face events are preferred and provide greater benefits: direct contact, being better able to consult with CSP staff and stakeholders, to participate in the planning process, and to make decisions. CSP participants as well as GEF staff all agree that it is difficult to develop synergies and come to agreement on key subjects with other stakeholders in virtual events, especially when they do not know each other personally. It was also expressed that virtual meetings work for knowledge transfer, but developing new projects and setting a country portfolio are not as simple to do through virtual meetings. It has also been noted that even when breakout sessions are held in virtual events, these are not as effective; there is more interaction and socialization in face-to-face events as well as discussions happening on the margins of the events, which often provide added benefits and learning to the participants. Online fatigue is another shortcoming of virtual events noted by several CSP participants. Although this is not unique to the CSP,¹³ it is an important factor to take into account as the program has gone online because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the ideas considered by the

¹³See, e.g., Sklar (2020).

CSP to help remedy online fatigue are, for example, holding an array of shorter meetings of 2–3 hours over several days. Some of the other key issues, which were also experienced by the evaluation team as they participated in the virtual events, were related to the length of the events and the time differences, which both seemed to affect the retention of participants during the event. Not only do time differences lead to some participants cutting their participation short, they also add to the time it takes to plan the event to ensure the time chosen fits across all participants' time zones.

While connectivity is typically one of the primary vulnerabilities of virtual events, it has thus far not been a major issue for the CSP. However, if the CSP has to maintain an online capacity over the long term, it may become a wider issue, mainly for those who live in more remote parts of countries (e.g., CSOs, indigenous groups, etc.) without stable internet connection or continued high-cost mobile data connections; this may very well affect the variety of stakeholder participation in the long run.

BUDGET ANALYSIS AND ADEQUACY OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The CSP budget has been funded since its inception in 2010 through the Replenishment Document

and confirmed by Council Decisions. The total budget allocated to the CSP over GEF-5, GEF-6, and GEF-7, according to Council documents, amounts to \$70 million ([table 2.2](#)).

The CSP balance rolls over each GEF period. This means that the cumulative resources allocated for the CSP since its inception have reached \$47.9 million to date (and not \$70 million as reported through Council documents). This is only 68.4 percent of the actual amount allocated through Council documents. Furthermore, cumulative disbursement is reported to have reached \$32 million, resulting in a trust fund balance of \$15.9 million ([table 2.3](#)). If calculated against the actual cumulative grant amount as reported by the CSP, this represents a burn rate of 66.7 percent for the three GEF periods. However, if calculated against the Council allocation of \$70 million, it amounts to a burn rate of only 45.7 percent of actual budget spent for the full evaluation period. It has not been possible for the evaluation team to obtain data that show the amounts that have rolled over for each GEF period. However, if the actual cumulative grant amount is only 68.4 percent of the requested amount of \$70 million as reported through Council documents, it raises the question why \$20 million is requested per GEF period—data suggest a reasonable amount of the budget rolls over between

Table 2.2 Budget allocations for CSP activities (million \$)

Activity	GEF-5	GEF-6	GEF-7
Expanded constituency workshops	10.0	12.0	14.7
National dialogues	2.0	2.0	
Constituency meetings	3.5	5.0	5.0
Introduction seminars	1.9	1.2	1.0
National portfolio formulation exercises	3.0	2.4	—
Pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members	0	0.4	0.3
Direct support to OFPs	5.5	—	—
Knowledge management	0.1	—	—
Total target budget	26	23	21
Share of total GEF budget (%)	0.6	0.5	0.5

Sources: GEF 2010a, 2014, 2018b, 2018d.

Table 2.3 CSP cumulative budget, disbursement, and fund balance

Event	Cumulative grant amount	Cumulative disbursements	Fund balance
Constituency meeting	13,490,789	8,263,298	5,227,491
ECW	21,999,907	16,665,898	5,334,008
Introduction seminar	3,075,000	214,501	2,860,499
National dialogue	9,300,553	6,816,423	2,484,130
Total	47,866,250	31,960,121	15,906,129

Source: CSP summary budget and costs report to the evaluation team, December 1, 2020.

the GEF periods. According to the CSP, the budget request is necessary because of the country—driven nature of the program. It is not possible to say exactly how many national dialogues, constituency meetings, and workshops other than ECWs are requested each period, and the higher budget request allows the program the flexibility to attend to any and all request that might be presented.

It has not been possible to do a detailed budget analysis of the actual versus planned budget per GEF period because the evaluation team was not able to obtain adequate data on spending per fiscal year for the three GEF periods covered in the evaluation. This is because of the absence of the actual tracking of results within the CSP and because the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Program is the only data collection system used to track expenses. According to CSP management, Structural Adjustment Program does not allow for budget reporting by activities, but only by the various GEF Trust Fund codes created in the system. These codes are not uniform and do not distinguish between the activities. The reporting was also provided by year and not by fiscal year, which rules out the option to measure actual versus planned budget per GEF period, which starts and ends in accordance with the World Bank and GEF fiscal year calendar. In addition, World Bank systems do not prevent maintaining activity-level information.

According to budget data provided for GEF-7 (FYs 2018–21), as of December 2020, the total

combined expenditure (staff variable cost plus event variable cost) of the CSP is about \$12 million. The spending divides into about \$5.3 million in staff costs (time), and \$12.3 million in variable spending (travel, hotel, allowance, courier service, translation, venue, meal service, etc.) (table 2.4). It is important to note that all staff costs are charged to the GEF administrative budget, however, and thus are not covered from the CSP allocation. As a result, the current burn rate for CSP allocation in GEF-7 is only 33.5 percent.

The staff cost is high compared with the program cost, especially considering that the staff has other responsibilities within the GEF Secretariat in addition to the CSP. Staff cost aligns with the number of activities within the CSP. For example, staff cost was significantly higher in 2019, which corresponds with the higher number of events in FY 2019; nearly twice as many events as FY 2018 and FY 2020 (figure 2.10). Estimation of the exact staffing cost is somewhat complex, because each of the 10 GEF staff mapped to the CSP also allocate part of their respective work programs to non-CSP priorities. To account for the full costs associated with the CSP, staff costs have been estimated even if they are funded from sources different from the CSP trust fund (table 2.5). Staff cost is based on average salary and benefits, number of staff involved, and estimated time assigned to CSP work.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has translated into a sharp underspending of resources

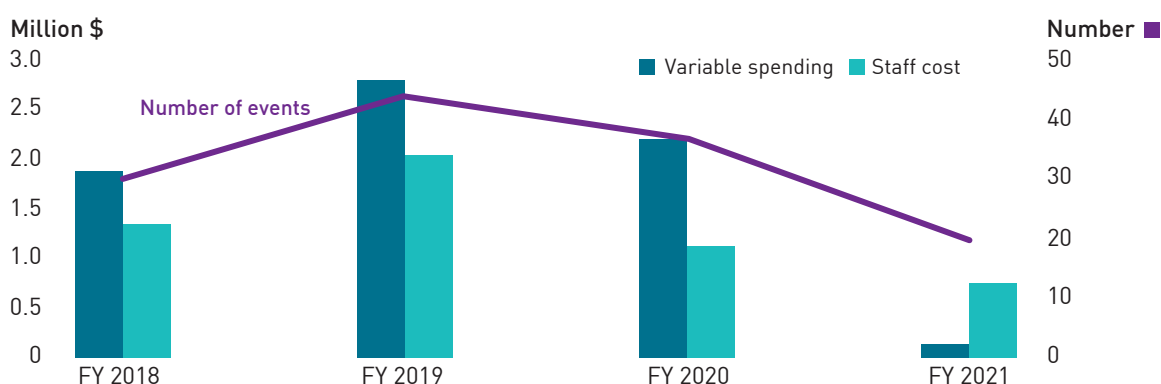
Table 2.4 Total costs of CSP in GEF-7 FYs 2018–21

Item	National dialogue	ECW	Constituency meeting	Introduction seminar	Thematic workshop/ SES	Total
FY2018						
Event cost	97,858	1,081,141	696,754	—	—	1,875,753
Staff cost	87,728	219,321	1,052,741	—	—	1,359,791
FY2019						
Event cost	736,327	1,563,346	397,530	113,514	—	2,810,717
Staff cost	1,359,791	219,321	438,642	43,864	—	2,061,618
FY2020						
Event cost	129,384	1,771,336	264,371	52,704	—	2,217,795
Staff cost	219,321	307,050	570,235	43,864	—	1,140,470
FY2021						
Event cost	11,095	—	120,131	—	—	131,226
Staff cost	87,728	—	350,914	—	307,050	745,692
Total						
Total event cost	974,664	4,415,823	1,478,787	166,218	—	7,035,492
Total staff cost	1,754,569	745,692	2,412,532	87,728	307,050	5,307,570
Total actuals	2,729,232	5,161,515	3,891,319	253,946	307,050	12,343,062
Total allocation	14,700,000		5,000,000	1,000,000		21,000,000 ^a
Total remaining						13,964,508

Source: CSP summary budget and costs report to the evaluation team, December 1, 2020.

a. Information on pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members was not provided; the initial budget has \$300,000 allocated.

Figure 2.10 Budget spending under GEF-7 versus number of events



Source: CSP summary budget and costs report to the evaluation team, December 1, 2020..

earmarked for the CSP in FY 2021, given the cancellation of face-to-face events. However, data indicate that staff variable costs have not seen this same steep decline compared with, for example, FY 2020.

This is mainly because events are still ongoing, but they do not have any costs associated with them, given the shift to online events only. Staff, however, despite not having to travel, continue to work on the

Table 2.5 Allocated CSP staff costs in GEF-7

Grade	Staff	Number	% of time assigned for CSP	3-year cost
GC	Transaction processor	1	50	206,380
GD	Senior program assistant	1	50	245,140
GE	Logistics coordinator	1	50	335,920
GE	Logistics coordinator	1	90	604,656
GF	Country liaison officer	3	90	2,399,652
GG	Senior CSO coordinator/senior operations officer	2	20	459,952
GG	Senior result specialist (FY 2020 only)	1	20	57,494
GG	GPU program manager	2	10	229,976
GG	CSP coordinator	1	50	768,400
	Total	13		5,307,570

Source: CSP summary budget and costs report to the evaluation team, December 1, 2020.

planning of events and on coordination with recipient countries. Furthermore, interviews with the CSP team reveal that there has been a substantial increase in adaptive workload for the GEF Secretariat team during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may be why the decline is not so steep as one may have expected once travel cost is omitted. This scenario is likely to persist for a long time under GEF-7 if not till the end, given travel restrictions and individual country rules on gatherings.

The ECW events tend to incur the highest cost at an average of \$259,754 per event, followed by introduction seminars at \$83,109. Constituency meetings and national dialogues seem to incur lower variable costs, at around \$24,000–\$27,000 per event. The seven events from August to November 2020 were all in virtual form, and therefore no costs were associated with these. When reviewed against cost per participant, constituency meetings are considerably more cost efficient compared with ECWs, considering that both events require more extensive travel, compared with, for example, national dialogues. However, this may be because of the additional days and, in particular, arrangements related to site visits. National dialogues are highly cost efficient per participant, because only internal country travel in the host country is

needed. The introduction seminars cover travel and lodging expenses for OFP and CSO participants, while GEF Agency participants pay their own expenses; this brings down the average cost per participant (table 2.6).

Financial constraints identified in responding to country needs to achieve CSP objectives

The reviews and interviews carried out for this evaluation do not point to any significant issues with constraints resulting in underfunding. There is some flexibility in the number of events; while ECWs are preset—leaving aside the COVID-19 pandemic—the budgets for national dialogues and constituency meetings are more flexible and are based on estimates per fiscal year.

Other factors affecting efficiency

As with the rest of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a key obstacle for the CSP, and even though the program has managed to start piloting events in the virtual environment, it is not without its challenges. First of all, given urgent travel restrictions and complete country shut-downs, overall implementation of the CSP was significantly delayed in 2020. In addition, as earlier

Table 2.6 Cost of events per participant

Event	Average cost of event (\$)	Average number of participants	Cost per participant (\$)
National dialogue	24,367	83	293,58
ECW	259,754	100	2597,54
Constituency meeting	26,887	16	1680,44
Introduction seminar	83,190	80	1039,88

Source: Calculated based on data from the CSP on events and budget spending.

mentioned, the CSP canceled the ECWs during the pandemic, which is a key activity of the CSP to ensure that it achieves its objectives of supporting countries in their programming and use of GEF resources.

Physical presence on the ground has, however, been an issue even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; not so much during the actual events, because CSP staff have then traveled to the host country. However, as noted by the CSP staff, all event planning has always been done remotely, and there is no CSP presence on the ground to organize the logistics, which is a complicated process carried out by the same staff that is responsible for content and technical planning. Furthermore, it is noted that the CSP team is small, with only about 10 people (give or take consultants) organizing 100+ activities per year, in addition to performing other functions beyond the CSP because the program does not have dedicated staff. Of course, the CSP benefits from the additional assistance from the GEF programs staff. However, the level of participation of the GEF Secretariat staff depends on the size of their own team and their own capacity to dedicate that additional time within their own very busy schedules.

2.4 CSP processes for feedback, sharing, and integrating lessons learned

INTEGRATION OF LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned from CSP activities have sometimes been integrated into the formulation of new and evolving GEF policies and strategies through the inclusion of policy-specific session and informal conversations at ECWs, constituency meetings, and Council meetings. Some GEF and CSP staff note that follow-up on feedback provided by the stakeholders is primarily carried out by the CSP management and that overall GEF management rarely gets involved, unless issues raised during CSP events are relevant to potential changes in GEF policies. Furthermore, although the CSP provides opportunities for feedback on GEF policies and strategies, some interviewed stakeholders have noted that this is not the primary role of the CSP, because feedback on GEF policies and strategies is primarily provided through the Council meetings.¹⁴ That said, a few policies can be noted to have evolved based on feedback from CSP events. For example, the letter of endorsement was changed as a response to concerns raised that projects were being approved that were not seen as national priorities, and the GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (GEF 2017b) was developed as a result

¹⁴ The GEF Secretariat undertakes dedicated consultations with stakeholders in the formulation of all new policies, guidelines, and strategies.

of feedback provided by CSP participants and other sources.¹⁵ In addition to this, the Project Cancellation Policy (GEF 2018c)¹⁶ was revised to be more subtle and responsive to countries, rather than take the form of a blanket decision based on recommendations from GEF Agencies and OFPs during CSP events. The CSP's role in the evolution of both of these policies speaks to the importance of the program in creating a communication channel between the GEF and country-level stakeholders.

In general, CSP activities (ECWs, national dialogues, constituency meetings, pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members, and the recently launched SES) have all emerged as important platforms for providing feedback on GEF policies, priorities, and strategies. Examples of this include, for example, ECW participants having the opportunity to express their opinions on GEF policies, ask questions of GEF Secretariat staff, and provide feedback on GEF policies such as the Gender Policy or Safeguards Policy. In GEF-6, GEF and CSP staff would engage with stakeholders to gather feedback in support of the upcoming GEF-7. Participants were given a list of possible programming options that they could prioritize. From the GEF's side, these events were also an opportunity to have an information exchange, keeping in mind that GEF staff have to respect the input coming from the Council and donors. But such ECWs can influence the GEF strategic directions positively and this is an important consideration to keep in mind.

¹⁵ The policy was approved by the GEF Council in 2017 and sets out the core principles and mandatory requirements for stakeholder engagement in GEF governance and operations, with a view to promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity as well as effective participation and inclusion.

¹⁶ The policy states the principles, rules, and procedures to cancel or suspend projects and programs at different stages in the GEF project cycle.

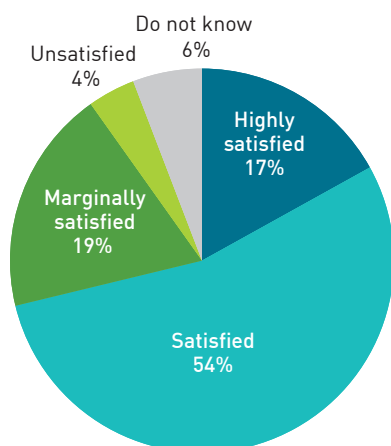
The transition to online events has not halted the feedback process. The virtual environment has demonstrated that online platforms can complement in-person events in allowing stakeholders the opportunity to provide direct feedback to the Secretariat on important matters. An example of this new online capability to provide feedback was a webinar on gender and environment held on October 22, 2020, as part of the CSP SES; participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the implementation of the GEF's Gender Policy.

CSP MECHANISMS FOR SHARING LESSONS LEARNED

The ECWs are considered by participants an important mechanism for the exchange of ideas between different stakeholder groups. Most of the event agendas and materials reviewed for this evaluation include group discussions, exercises, and games, as well as spaces for sharing experiences; for example, the 2015 ECWs included a dedicated session for OFPs to share their experience, lessons learned, and feedback. Furthermore, the integration of Knowledge Days and project site visits was noted by some interviewees and participants as significantly valuable in increasing knowledge sharing; it allows for seeing how others put policy into practice. In the new virtual environment, the SES have proven to be able to somewhat take over this role for the time being, though without the Knowledge Days and hands-on experience. For example, the SES of October 22, 2020 dedicated a good portion to sharing good practices and lessons learned from the Philippines, Senegal, and Tajikistan, which garnered some engagement, as assessed by the evaluation team.

Seventy-one percent of e-survey respondents are satisfied or highly satisfied with the way CSP activities are facilitating knowledge exchange and coordination ([figure 2.11](#)). According to some of the interviews, CSP activities help

Figure 2.11 Satisfaction rate among stakeholders with CSP activities in facilitating knowledge exchange and coordination



Source: GEF 2020c.

country stakeholders learn from each other's experiences, identify opportunities for collaboration (e.g., regional projects, as mentioned before), and develop common positions on relevant GEF issues. Knowledge events go both ways, and CSP events have also been useful for GEF staff to better understand country realities and stakeholder needs, even as the CSP is only one of the channels used to support country programming. They also provide opportunities for GEF staff to facilitate knowledge exchange and deliver knowledge management products, as well as to collect and disseminate M&E information.

Furthermore, the GEF Secretariat along with the CSP has produced a line of products that are used to share lessons learned across the partnership. For example, the corporate scorecard aims to report progress made toward the achievement of GEF targets. It also looks at how the GEF is using resources made available for its seventh replenishment period and making progress in the implementation of key policies. Furthermore, the GEF Secretariat produced five Good Practice Briefs that were shared at the 57th Council meeting to advance best practice within GEF operations. The briefs are a pilot series that identifies good

practical examples from the GEF project portfolio that are in line with key GEF 2020 strategic priorities and GEF-7 programming directions and policy recommendations. These briefs were an outcome of the needs expressed by recipient countries during CSP events on how to design projects better, and they have been shared through CSP activities. Recipient countries can now use the lessons learned from the briefs to develop GEF-7 projects.

Several instances have been noted in which the sharing of these lessons led to engagement with partners—for example, OFPs realizing that their role could be enhanced or modified based on lessons shared by other OFPs during CSP events. Upon returning to their respective countries, they introduced changes based on these lessons learned. Interviews for this evaluation yielded a few good examples of such sharing of lessons learned between OFPs. In Africa, a group of countries did not know how to handle emerging issues with the executing agency, but they were able to use a neutral agency as a result of experiences shared between countries during a CSP event. A similar experience exchange occurred between Malaysia and Thailand: Malaysia learned how to institutionalize its monitoring process and achieve project approval as a result of Thailand sharing its lessons learned on the topic during a constituency meeting.

In another instance, Chile was looking to include health in its budgets for GEF projects, with the support of the Ministry of Health, in order to implement health safety measures. The CSP events provided a platform for sharing lessons learned and having constructive dialogues and exchanges with other OFPs to ensure that this integration was done effectively and efficiently.

Limiting events to constituencies, has, however, been a barrier to sharing lessons learned. As noted in interviews, while this limit has proved positive in the sense that participants tend to get to know each other over the years, which eases

overall communication, some participants have expressed that a given constituency does not always provide the most relevant and most conducive environment for lesson sharing and learning. Challenges and barriers noted by stakeholders include setting the right constituencies for meetings while considering language and countries with similar ecosystem challenges. Further, there have been challenges in engaging with underrepresented groups such as the private sector and incorporating South-South learning, as mentioned earlier. The emerging use of online events may help address this.

Observations from interviews also suggest that the fear of discussing failures also restricts some sharing of lessons learned. Generally, countries prefer to share their successes as opposed to their challenges and the instances where projects may have encountered significant issues. However, the

latter may sometimes be more important than the former. According to one interviewed stakeholder, resistance to sharing potential lessons learned when part of what was planned in a project did not work out is rather common. This is likely a result of stakeholders fearing how they may be perceived by the GEF and their peers. There is, however, interest from donor countries in finding solutions to recurring problems, and therefore providing an open platform to share failures without fearing repercussions is important.

Conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

OVERALL RELEVANCE AND RESPONSIVENESS OF THE CSP TO ITS STAKEHOLDERS

Conclusion 1: The CSP has evolved in accordance with evaluation recommendations and overall GEF strategic directions. Recommendations from previous evaluations, namely the Terminal Evaluation of the CSP for Focal Points (Navajas 2010) and the Midterm Evaluation of the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise (GEF IEO 2014a) guided the transition to GEF management and the implementation of NPFs in GEF-6 before they were merged with national dialogues. These recommendations were addressed overall, but some challenges remain with the timeliness and inclusiveness of national dialogues. The CSP has consistently integrated evolving GEF strategic priorities and changes in GEF policies into the overall focus and design of the CSP, events, and subject matter of CSP activities so as to remain relevant to its stakeholders. Global environmental concerns and Council priorities have also been consistently taken into consideration. At the same time, the CSP has been able to respond to the desire of a growing base of country-level stakeholders to see CSP

events better address their needs. Communicating the changing requirements of the GEF is a key reason why the CSP remains so relevant. This includes communicating understanding on important matters such as the introduction of the STAR. The ability of the CSP to respond to changing circumstances has ensured that the program has remained highly pertinent. An important defining characteristic in this regard has been the ability of CSP events to facilitate dialogue between increasingly diverse participants. The increased interaction and dialogue at CSP events are viewed by evaluation participants as one of the more important developments in keeping the CSP relevant.

Conclusion 2: The CSP contributes indirectly to helping countries with greater access to GEF resources but is one element feeding into the development of GEF country portfolios. The CSP is a key mechanism used to coordinate and align GEF resources with national priorities and to facilitate the development of the GEF country portfolios for each GEF period, because it helps set up the enabling conditions and develop basic capacities that allow for the engagement of focal point offices and other GEF stakeholders. How the CSP is used to enhance access to GEF resources differs

according to the institutional capacity of countries, with LDCs, SIDS, and lower- middle-income countries looking more to the CSP to assist with project development and accessing GEF resources, while middle- to high-income countries see the CSP as providing information on GEF policies and priorities. On the whole, the information shared and the capacities built through the CSP allow countries to better understand the GEF and its processes, which is only one element contributing to accessing GEF resources.

Conclusion 3: The CSP has made some efforts to coordinate and build synergies with other global environment funds. The CSP has made some attempts at coordination and enhanced synergies with the engagement process of other global environment funds to ensure that funding is effectively allocated to implement environmental conventions. For instance, there have been pilot attempts in recent years (pre-pandemic) at planning coordinated regional and selected national events between the GEF and the GCF on the climate front. At the broader institutional level (beyond the CSP), discussions are still ongoing between the management of the two funds on a potential memorandum of understanding to set the institutional context for enhanced coordination. This challenge is compounded by the fact that at both the regional and country levels, both the governance structure of funds and the scope of their engagement process are different and not always well coordinated by the countries themselves.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CSP IN ENSURING ENGAGEMENT OF ALL CSP STAKEHOLDERS

Conclusion 4: The CSP does not have a theory of change or logical framework, nor a strategy or plan to guide its operation. Some activities, such as ECWs, are carried out routinely, while others, such as national dialogues or constituency

meetings, are implemented at the request of GEF focal points or Council members. Therefore, the CSP is demand-driven and does not approach capacity development as a continuous process at country level.

Conclusion 5: A limited variety of stakeholders is involved in the planning of CSP activities. The planning of activities could benefit from higher engagement and involvement of a wider variety of stakeholders (CSOs, private sector, and GEF Agencies, as well as, potentially, GEF programming and communications teams). CSOs and convention focal points have particularly expressed interest in having more involvement in the planning of events, namely ECWs and national dialogues. Generally, more communication and consultations with convention focal points prior to events could increase their input on subjects specific to the conventions. The process for involving convention focal points has already begun, as the CSP has been trying to give the conventions a regular slot in CSP events for convention-related capacity building to help fulfill convention-specific requirements.

Conclusion 6: Inclusiveness and diversity of participants in CSP events have increased over time but still vary greatly between countries, constituencies, and events. CSP events have facilitated stakeholder inclusion by creating a safe space where different actors can share their perspectives and experiences. In some cases, this inclusive dialogue has positively influenced the project pipeline and helped strengthen partnerships. The CSP has progressively financed the participation of a greater number of stakeholders, focusing on the inclusion of CSOs. Women have represented about one-third of all participants in events on average during the three GEF periods. Their actual participation by event varies greatly, which points to their sharply below-average participation so far in a few constituencies during GEF-7. While the average participation of line ministries other than GEF focal points has remained stable since GEF-5 at about

25 percent, the country pipeline review shows that their participation in GEF projects both as executing partners and in cofinancing has decreased over time. Private sector participation in national dialogues is overall low and practically nonexistent in ECWs and has not increased throughout the evaluated period (4 percent in GEF-5, 5 percent in GEF-6, and 3 percent in GEF-7 for national dialogues), while indigenous peoples' organizations and local governments were included when relevant to the geographic and thematic focus of the CSP event. As for GEF Agencies, their participation has generally decreased so far during GEF-7.

Conclusion 7: Inclusiveness does not extend beyond CSP events. Participation in CSP activities does not translate into further dialogue between CSOs and focal point offices, nor in the inclusion of CSOs in activities on the ground after CSP events. Interviews indicate that once CSP events are over, CSOs often return to their duties, without experiencing any follow-up from national focal points to coordinate. This points to a disconnect between the work done by the CSP and actual inclusiveness in GEF programming and planning. Thus, the CSP has still a role to play in encouraging inclusion beyond events.

FOSTERING EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Conclusion 8: The CSP effectively shares knowledge on the GEF with stakeholders. The CSP is the primary tool used to provide updates to country stakeholders on new GEF policies, priorities, and strategies. The ECWs have been key in this CSP role as a knowledge facilitator. They have evolved throughout the past decade to include more comprehensive information and to present it in a more interactive manner. The information and resources provided by the CSP through its different events is seen as satisfactory or highly satisfactory by participants.

Conclusion 9: Retention of information, reach within countries, and South-South exchange remains suboptimal. Information retention on GEF policies and procedures appears to be low among participants beyond OFPs, and a number of barriers to applying CSP-acquired knowledge and skills in the development of country pipelines are still present, notably the need for a broader reach of GEF information and capacity building within governments and to other country stakeholders such as CSOs and local actors. The need to share more experiences and good practices across countries and to facilitate discussion on global issues and their link to national strategy formulation was also highlighted and was explored more in depth in the GEF IEO Evaluation of Knowledge Management (GEF IEO 2022a).

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CSP IN INCREASING COUNTRY CAPACITY TO APPLY FOR GEF FUNDING

Conclusion 10: The CSP has contributed to increasing the capacity of the countries to apply for GEF funding in a strategic and coordinated manner, contributing to programmatic efforts that help countries access GEF resources, by promoting country ownership and helping countries match national priorities with GEF priorities, alongside other programming processes facilitated by the GEF Secretariat. National dialogues and the NPFs have helped countries be more systematic in their planning on GEF resources and advanced country policy planning, such as planning for national policy advocacy, which has been the case in, for example, Nigeria and Vietnam. The NPFs also helped establish GEF National Steering Committees in several countries, which remain active in the overall planning of GEF resources. Some countries may benefit more from the CSP as a capacity-building tool; for example, evidence shows that LDCs and SIDS take great advantage of national dialogues, and (previously) NPFs, but

are also a majority of attendants at ECWs. In some countries (e.g., Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Argentina), CSP events have played a direct role in preparation of projects approved for GEF funding. Overall, it is found that countries with a high level of capacity value the CSP resources for better linking predefined national priorities to GEF priorities. Some LDCs, SIDS, and lower middle-income countries, on the other hand, confirm that CSP events have helped bring people together to shape national priorities, including prioritizing project activity and intervention zones.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CSP IN ENHANCING COUNTRY OWNERSHIP

Conclusion 11: The CSP has contributed to increasing country involvement in the GEF process, but some LDCs, SIDS, and lower middle-income countries still depend heavily on GEF Agencies. The CSP has helped increase country ownership and empowerment vis-à-vis GEF Agencies by helping country governments play a more active role in GEF programming, and by fostering greater inclusiveness in events at the national level. GEF focal points have overall become more involved in project execution and more able to engage with GEF Agencies on an equal footing, while also increasing the interest and knowledge of national stakeholders regarding the GEF. Some countries with lower institutional capacity continue to depend heavily on GEF Agencies while some higher-income countries that have been empowered through the CSP now experience tensions in their relationship with GEF Agencies regarding their respective roles.

Conclusion 12: The CSP has the opportunity to play a greater role in fostering cofinancing and leveraging of resources. Though it is not the role of the CSP to help countries securing cofinancing and CSP events are generally not considered a space where this happens systematically, the

participation of a wider variety of stakeholders in national dialogues can sometimes lead to the identification of synergies between ongoing and potential future activities in some countries and therefore lead to potential cofinancing down the road.

OVERALL EFFICIENCY OF THE CSP

Conclusion 13: CSP monitoring and reporting information is incomplete, preventing a full efficiency analysis. The use of financial resources in view of the program objectives is one of the crucial metrics to measure program efficiency, along with the following three identified at inception: (1) level, timeliness, and the quality of CSP support; (2) adaptative management of the program to respond to stakeholder needs; and (3) additional assessment on the response to the COVID-19 crisis. In the absence of budgetary data, the efficiency assessment is thus partial.

Conclusion 14: The quality of CSP support is satisfactory and day-to-day communications are timely. Recipient countries express a high level of gratitude for the services and the support that the CSP provides; in particular in relation to the CSP's open-door policy, which offers focal point offices and to some extent other stakeholder a day-to-day line of communication with CSP staff and GEF staff when needed. The CSP staff are swift to reply to requests for clarification on GEF policies and strategies. Furthermore, activities are seen as being well organized and event material is clear and concise and generally considered valuable by participants who make use of the information provided.

Conclusion 15: The timing of the national dialogues is not optimal in many countries. National dialogues play a key role for many recipient countries in commencing the planning process for GEF resources in a new GEF period. While it is only one part of the overall programming exercise that countries undertake with the GEF, the national

dialogues are seen as a key entry point in developing programming. However, because national dialogues are not hosted until the new GEF period commences, this often results in competition for CSP support between recipient countries; generally, CSP stakeholders have raised a desire to hold national dialogues as soon as there is some indication of GEF priorities for the new period. There are also some notable concerns about GEF introduction seminars; because these are only held once a year and early in the year, staff and stakeholders that commence a position immediately following a familiarization seminar have to wait almost a year to access this training.

EFFICIENCY OF THE CSP DURING COVID-19

Conclusion 16: The CSP has piloted adaptation in the COVID-19 context that has allowed it to continue to respond to some program stakeholder needs; however, the online environment has significant limits when it comes to GEF partnership building and networking. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the CSP with a new set of unknowns and challenges, which caused some delays during GEF-7. However, the CSP has piloted some events in the virtual environment using reliable tools and gradually improving technical execution. Findings suggest that online tools could be more innovative and include programs that allow for greater direct participation by the audience through case studies, group work, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, games, brainstorming activities, and surveys. Coupled with the direct communication between the focal point offices and the CSP team, the pandemic has not halted the CSP's transfer of knowledge and capacity building. Nevertheless, it is without a doubt that participants still prefer face-to-face events. Online events work best for participants who already know each other and are used to discussing GEF-related subjects, not so well for establishing partnerships

and making valuable connections, which are usually done more informally in face-to-face meetings. An additional factor to consider is the fatigue from the increase in virtual events. This is to some extent already being addressed by the CSP through the introduction of the SES, which are short, very specialized, and targeted sessions. Finally, though organizing events remotely has always been a challenge for the CSP, the challenge has been amplified during the pandemic.

Conclusion 17: The resource envelope for the CSP is underutilized. The CSP is more than adequately funded each replenishment period. Given its important role in the suite of GEF programs, the CSP could operate more efficiently; most particularly this relates to the staff capacity within the CSP and its access to localized support. The CSP team would benefit from strengthened information, financial, and monitoring and reporting expertise and additional staff with time dedicated fully to the CSP to help manage the program, because most staff have other responsibilities within the GEF Secretariat. Of course, the CSP benefits from the additional assistance from the GEF Secretariat focal areas. However, the level of participation of the GEF Secretariat staff depends on the size of their own team and on their own capacity to dedicate that additional time to the CSP.

INTEGRATION OF LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH THE CSP MECHANISM IN OVERALL CSP PROGRAMMING

Conclusion 18: Lessons learned and feedback from CSP events have contributed to shaping some GEF policies and strategies. Given that the focus of ECWs, constituency meetings, and pre-Council meetings of Recipient Council members is on presenting new GEF policies and strategies, they are prime for gathering feedback from the actual users of these policies. It is commonly agreed that these CSP activities have all

emerged as important platforms for providing feedback from stakeholders. A few GEF policies can be noted as having been affected by feedback provided from the CSP events—most notably, the GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement and the Project Cancellation Policy, which was revised to be more subtle and responsive to countries rather than a blanket decision based on recommendations from GEF Agencies and OFPs.

Conclusion 19: CSP events provide an important platform for engagement and knowledge sharing between stakeholders, but a few challenges remain.

The ECWs in particular are considered a big laboratory for the exchange of ideas because of innovations such as the Knowledge and Learning Days that have been incorporated into the activities of the workshops. Other CSP events such as the constituency meetings and national dialogues were also identified as important platforms for the exchange of lessons learned and engagement between stakeholders. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the enhanced virtual environment has demonstrated that online platforms can complement in-person events by allowing stakeholders the opportunity to provide direct feedback to the GEF Secretariat on important matters. There are, however, also challenges in sharing lessons learned across countries, such as matching constituencies with the same language and similar ecosystems or societal challenges for meetings. Further challenges include engaging with under-represented groups such as the private sector and incorporating South-South learning. Although the sharing of lessons learned has been received positively overall, there is some resistance to sharing potential lessons learned that may portray a project or stakeholders in a negative light, thus limiting the full scope of the potential learning in the GEF partnership. A focus on sharing good practices has encountered a positive response, however.

Conclusion 20: COVID-19 and the resulting increase in virtual events may in the longer term

negatively affect the level of engagement and the quality of exchanges between stakeholders. With more events being held online, there is a general fear that interactions will be limited. Stakeholders hope to have the required flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic while still maintaining project progress and quality. The positive aspect of this is that the uptake of more virtual events, such as the SES, as a response to the pandemic has resulted in countries from different regions, but sharing similar interests and challenges, being in the same platform and having the opportunity to share relevant best practices and lessons learned.

3.2 Lessons learned

Several lessons can be drawn from this evaluation. The main ones are as follows:

- **A Secretariat-managed program such as the CSP can play a pivotal role in establishing an enabling environment for wider engagement of countries with the GEF.** To maximize its potential for improved relevance and effectiveness in accessing as well as leveraging GEF resources, the CSP's efforts must be well coordinated with the other programming processes that the GEF undertakes with countries as well as its corporate communication services. This requires commitment within the different GEF units and at senior management level to ensure that the CSP, as well as its branding and messages, are properly coordinated in this process.
- **Relevant representatives are often not present at CSP events.** People in positions of authority who ultimately decide on the use of national GEF allocations (including, among others, GEF political focal points, finance ministries, etc.), and who can effectively leverage GEF resources through other sources of cofinancing or national programming, are often not present at CSP events. Political focal points can, however, designate advisers to attend in their place. This

may make CSP events less attractive to other stakeholders such as GEF Agencies and GEF programming staff, which have their own processes for supporting the effective development and implementation of country pipelines.

- **Although not a new challenge, the need to move beyond focal ministry–led projects to maximize impacts and bring about transformative actions became even more apparent under GEF-7 with the introduction of the impact programs.** In this context, empowering and building the capacity of GEF focal points around in-country processes must focus more on the convening, facilitation, and monitoring roles of the OFPs than on playing a leadership role in actual project design and implementation.
- **For multistakeholder engagement in the strategic planning of GEF resources and policy dialogue to be truly inclusive, it must lead to opportunities for nontraditional actors in GEF projects to access GEF resources and to become involved in GEF portfolio design and implementation after CSP events.** As experience has shown, simply adding a CSO-specific session in ECWs and raising the number of participants from CSOs, women’s groups, or line ministries does not necessarily translate into active participation and engagement in GEF interventions on the ground after the events.
- **Different countries take advantage of the CSP in different ways.** Different needs require different approaches. The need of less developed countries to improve their ownership of the GEF process and their access to GEF resources covers the full range of capacity strengthening, from guidance in strategic planning and development to enhancing project development skills. Higher-capacity countries have different priorities, such as networking opportunities and gaining up-to-date information on GEF strategies and policies as inputs into their own often well established in-country strategic planning and portfolio development processes.
- **The CSP is not just an administrative support program but is a consequential ownership-building, knowledge sharing, and capacity-building program meant to promote more effective access and use of GEF resources with and by partner countries.** The absence of a proper monitoring and reporting system greatly impedes the conduct of any comprehensive assessment of progress and actual impacts of the CSP in that respect.
- **To maximize effectiveness, the timeliness of CSP events must consider several factors, including, in particular, the best timing for dissemination of information to stakeholders and for assisting with programming and planning of GEF resources.** Another factor is the need to consider national financing and budgeting periods as well as national elections and changes in government leadership, which are not necessarily predictable.
- **Interaction, proactive dialogue, and field visits have allowed CSP events to become more dynamic learning and knowledge building platforms.** They have also resulted in increased participation and interest in CSP events, which can help advance partnerships.
- **Virtual events are a good way to explore specialized topics and bring together stakeholders who share similar interests and responsibilities.** One of the best examples of this are the CSOs that have been able to use the online platform to share information and opinions among a unique and important GEF stakeholder group. It also brings country stakeholders together from across constituencies and regions and takes away constraints related to budget and calendar conflicts caused by necessary travel, which allows more and a wider range of stakeholders to participate.
- **New services and tools, such as Kaleo, the introduction of Knowledge and Learning Days, the GEF Good Practice Briefs, the A to Z of the**

GEF, and the GEF Academy can help increase engagement, foster knowledge sharing, and ensure that the CSP platform evolves to fit the needs of the stakeholders and conveys information more efficiently; but more must be done to ensure these services and tools are promoted on the local level, where GEF information very often does not flow freely.

- **Constituency setups are not always optimal for South-South knowledge exchange and learning in cases where language barriers and biophysical and ecosystem realities differ among member countries.** Virtual forums built around focused groupings of stakeholders have shown promise as a complementary channel for capacity building and mutual learning.
- **Familiarity with the CSP process and dynamics and other participants, gained from prior face-to-face events, allows for improved dialogue and more direct engagement during subsequent virtual events.** This underlines that regardless of technological advancements in improving online activities, face-to-face CSP events will continue to be crucial to the mix because they allow for more direct engagement, informal networking, and development of partnerships, and are a more open space for participants who are new to the GEF partnership.
- **Differing governance and focal point structures, support modalities, funding and programming cycles, as well as evolving discussions on institutional niches occupied by the different global environmental funds, can be factors impeding coordination and full coherence in engagement mechanisms and processes with countries and regions.** This is the case even though the objectives of these various funds ultimately all revolve around the effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. Overcoming these barriers requires vision and strong political leadership from the management of the global funds and the countries to align processes in a

complementary fashion. It also requires a pragmatic approach to determine how the support activities of the different funds can be better coordinated.

3.3 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Build on current efforts to collaborate with other global environmental funds. To help countries to respond better to the commitments of countries vis-à-vis the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements that the GEF is supporting along with other global funds, CSP management should build further on past efforts to collaborate on readiness activities with other funds. Overall, the management of the CSP should continue to monitor developments to identify where substantive opportunities for collaboration can be established beyond the current efforts.

Recommendation 2: Develop a clear CSP strategy and an implementation plan with an appropriate budget and resource envelope. The CSP would benefit from developing a comprehensive program strategy for every replenishment period, with appropriate activities designed based on country grouping needs, and with proper implementation plans to guide its actions. Such a strategic planning approach should build on a validated theory of change for the program, with clear expected results, milestones, and targets in its main spheres of influence. The CSP has a significant scope and reach and can more proactively strengthen the crucial role it plays as a key entry point in the GEF dialogue, knowledge sharing, and capacity-building process with GEF partners at the global, regional, and country levels.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen the CSP management team and systems. CSP management should improve the program's dedicated professional capacity and its ability to provide more

localized support, to meet the high demands placed on the CSP team across countries and regions. In light of the insufficient program data management and reporting, CSP management should also put in place results-based data management, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems to track the use of resources, as well as activities, outcomes, and impacts. These systems should provide the basis for more systematic and comprehensive reporting at each GEF period to both GEF management and the GEF Council.

Recommendation 4: Revisit the reach and timing of national dialogues to align them better with country needs for support. The CSP should explore ways to improve the timing of the national dialogue or develop other up-front strategic dialogue mechanisms on the future use of GEF resources. These should be planned as early as possible and should pursue deeper multistakeholder engagement in the process. Finally, the CSP should examine with GEF programming staff how national dialogues and ECWs could more directly contribute to programming objectives.

Recommendation 5: Enhance inclusiveness, so that inclusiveness at events turns into improved collaboration on the ground. Though the CSP cannot be held responsible and accountable for how country focal points manage their GEF programs, it is in a unique position to offer best practices that ensure successful GEF programming in practice. In this context, the CSP could play an important role in ensuring that the inclusiveness

they have promoted in their events continues past the CSP activity and results in active and fruitful collaboration. The CSP can be a gateway to better integration of CSOs and other groups into GEF programming after CSP events.

Recommendation 6: Apply a customized approach to capacity building. Because a one-size-fits-all approach to capacity building limits the number of participants that can be reached, the CSP should develop more customized approaches to capacity building, with consideration for more flexibility on the number of participants from each stakeholder group and their level of capacity. The CSP should also continue to empower OFPs by better informing them on their roles in GEF portfolio management beyond portfolio development. At the same time, it should place emphasis on their crucial facilitation role in keeping an ongoing dialogue with, and bringing on board, other actors such as line ministries, the private sector, local communities, and CSOs to ensure the mainstreaming and leveraging effect of GEF resources to support national commitments to multilateral environmental agreements.

See [annex I](#) for options related to implementing these recommendations.

Approach paper

This annex has been lightly edited for style and consistency. Most of its original annexes have been appended to this final evaluation report and the references updated accordingly. The full [approach paper](#) is on the GEF IEO website.

A.1 Evaluation context

For over the last decade, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) partnership has been modifying its direction including most recently to advance more integrated programming that enhances synergies between the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to achieve greater results and better help meet the rising challenges currently presented under GEF-7. The GEF's broad responsibilities toward approaching the objectives of the MEAs offer it a unique opportunity to harness synergies across the different MEAs to ensure implementation of projects and programs in a more holistic and systematic fashion. In combination with its traditional investments under the MEAs, the new direction, as laid out in the Summary of the Negotiations for the GEF-7 Replenishment (GEF 2018d), set out the GEF strategy to

- Focus investments on activities that catalyze transformational change in key systems driving

major environmental loss—in particular energy, cities, and food;

- Prioritize integrated projects and programs that address more than one global environmental problem at a time, building on the GEF's unique position and mandate to act on a wide range of global environmental issues; and
- Implement new strategies and policies to enhance results, including stronger engagement with the private sector, indigenous peoples, and civil society, and an increasing focus on gender equality.

During GEF-7, the Secretariat aims to disseminate information about the strategy and to work closely with its constituencies, GEF focal points, Agencies, civil society, and other stakeholders to further refine the approach as well as assist them with integration of the approach in national strategies and programming.

During the 58th Council meeting in December 2019, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) presented its strategy for the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7), which will be structured around two broad themes: (1) GEF strategy, institutional issues, and programming; and (2) GEF performance, impact, and sustainability (GEF

IEO 2020). As part of these two themes, the Country Support Program (CSP) was recognized as a focus area, launching preparation for an evaluation, which will be carried out between June 2020 and March 2021. Final evaluation findings will be presented to the GEF IEO in March 2021 and integrated into OPS7.

GEF BACKGROUND

The GEF is a multilateral environmental organization that brings together a partnership of 183 participant countries for international collaboration to tackle some of the world's most pressing environmental issues and challenges. Through its mandate, it supports developing countries and countries with economies in transition to implement projects and programs, develop policies and strategies, and strengthen institutions to advance transformational change that enhances biodiversity, supports environmental protection, and promotes global environmental benefits. Since 1991, GEF programming has supported 170 countries with \$20.5 billion in grants and mobilized \$112 billion in cofinancing for 4,800 projects. The GEF is currently halfway through its seventh replenishment period (GEF-7), which has committed an additional \$4.1 billion in financing support. Each GEF investment cycle lasts four years; including one pilot phase, there have been eight investment periods.

Designed as a network facility as per the GEF Instrument (GEF 2019b), the GEF occupies a unique space in global environmental finance as it derives its mandate from several MEAs and conventions including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Minamata Convention, the Stockholm Convention, and the Montreal Protocol, in addition to providing targeted support for transboundary freshwater and marine issues.

The GEF's governing structure is organized around an Assembly, the Council, the Secretariat, 18 Agencies, a Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, and the IEO. The GEF's main governing body comprises 32 members appointed by constituencies of GEF member countries.¹ Council members rotate every three years or until the constituency appoints a new member. The Council meets twice a year and is responsible for developing and adopting the main strategies and operational policies and procedures that guide GEF activities. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel is responsible for providing scientific and technical advice on all policies, operational strategies, programs, and projects that go to the Council for approval. The panel is made up of six internationally recognized technical experts in the GEF key areas of work.

The GEF Secretariat is the coordinating body of the GEF. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C., at the World Bank, which acts as the Trustee of GEF funding. The Secretariat is led by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is appointed for a four-year one-time renewable term and currently consist of a 75-person staff, not including consultants. The Secretariat is responsible for reporting to the Council on GEF progress, implementing GEF policies and strategies, coordinating with the secretariats of the conventions, and coordinating with the GEF Agencies on project and program implementation including coordination among Agencies. Accountability is enhanced by the GEF IEO, which provides ongoing monitoring and evaluation of GEF activities as well as develops GEF evaluation tools and methodologies. The GEF IEO reports directly to the Council.

Implementation of GEF activities occurs in collaboration between the GEF Agencies and designated national focal points. All GEF member countries

¹ Fourteen from developed countries, 16 from developing countries, and 2 from economies in transition.

have designated government officials who are responsible for GEF activities and to liaise with the GEF Secretariat and the GEF Agencies. There are two kinds of GEF focal points: a political focal point focusing mainly on governance, including policies and decisions; and an operational focal point (OFP) focusing on the operations of GEF activities within the country. Not all countries will make use of both focal points. The GEF currently consists of 18 Agencies, which act as the operational arm of the facility. In collaboration with the focal points, other international institutions, academia, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector, these Agencies develop and implement GEF projects and programs in recipient countries.

Primary GEF funding comes from the GEF Trust Fund, which is replenished every four years. The GEF-7 programming directions are organized around four key areas. The majority of the programming continues to be implemented through the GEF's five focal area strategies by Agencies in collaboration with country focal points. In addition, as part of GEF-7, the GEF launched three impact programs on food systems, land use, and restoration; sustainable forest management; and sustainable cities. These programs are bringing countries together to work cooperatively on common environmental challenges with direct ecological, economic, and social benefits at the regional and global scales. The GEF also implements two corporate programs. The Small Grants Programme is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on behalf of the GEF; and the Corporate Support Program is the main vehicle for capacity building for GEF programming and overall participation in the GEF system, managed directly by the GEF Secretariat ([figure A.1](#)). The GEF also administers several other minor trust funds including the Special Climate Change Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund, the Capacity-Building Initiative for Transparency, and the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund; and

acts as the Interim Secretariat for the Adaptation Fund.

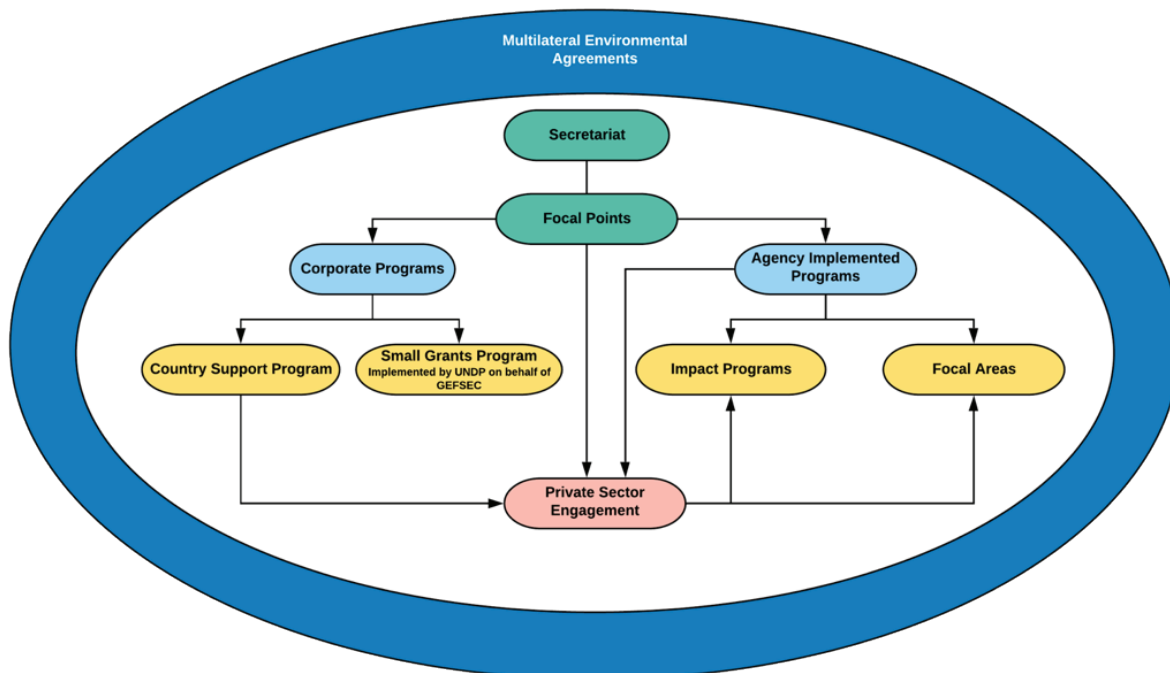
COUNTRY SUPPORT PROGRAM: BACKGROUND AND EVOLUTION

The CSP is a GEF-funded corporate program with the objective of assisting GEF stakeholders—focal points, GEF Agency staff, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), CSOs, and private sector actors—increase and maintain the capacity necessary to navigate the GEF landscape and work more effectively with GEF financing in a way that increases country ownership. It is a GEF-executed, direct-access program offering funding to GEF recipient countries to develop events and capacity-building activities with the aim of improving access to and better leveraging GEF resources as well as developing a stronger, coordinated, and inclusive dialogue among GEF stakeholders to ensure strategic GEF planning that fits with national priorities.² The CSP is the main tool for carrying out the GEF Country Relations Strategy and acts as the major outreach facility for the GEF to convey the strategies, policies, and programs of the GEF to stakeholders at the country level and to strengthen capacity of national governments, particularly GEF focal points. Overall, the CSP aims to

- Provide assistance to countries to enhance their understanding of and ability to apply GEF policies and procedures in program planning;
- Help strengthen capacity to apply for GEF funding in a coordinated manner and ensure more strategic planning that aligns with country priorities;
- Improve in-country coordination between national focal points and national stakeholders,

²Inclusiveness here refers to the consideration of gender equity, and the inclusion of civil society and indigenous peoples as well as other vulnerable groups.

Figure A.1 GEF-7 Programming Strategy



Note: Interpretation by the evaluation team based on GEF website and programming documents.

and foster greater engagement and an inclusive dialogue of all interested stakeholders in GEF programming;

- Strengthen coordination and learning within and between countries and constituencies; and
- Enhance integration of global environmental issues in national strategies and policies and establish greater coherence with other MEAs.

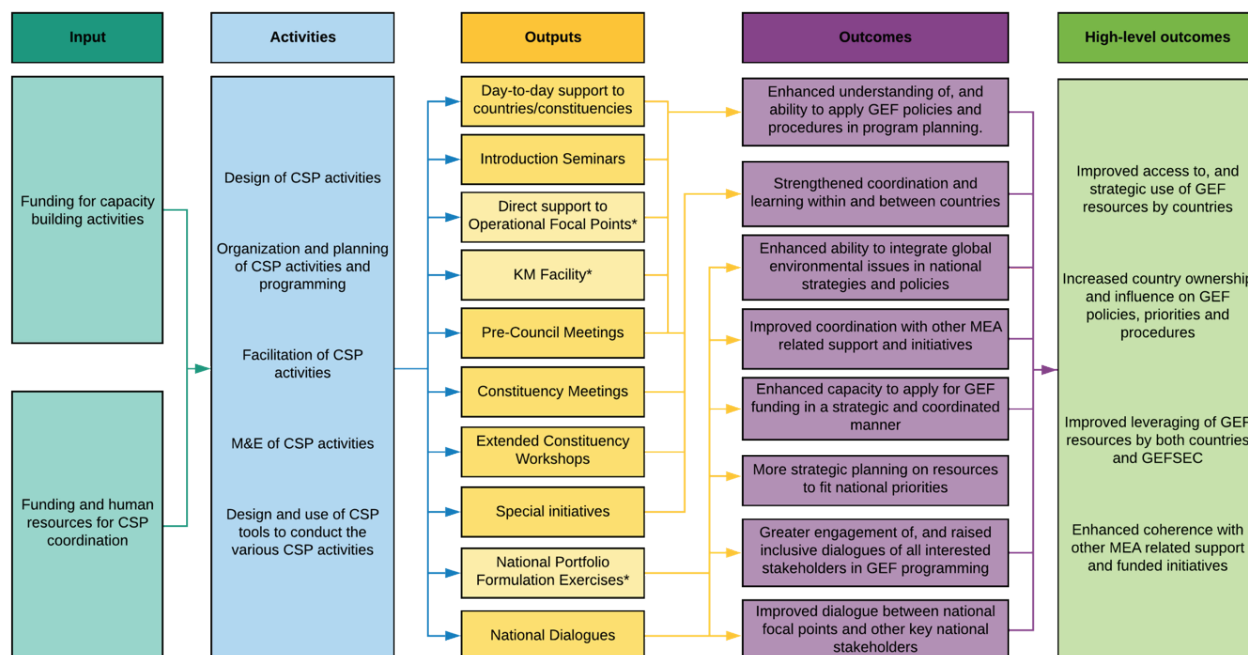
In the absence of a results framework, the evaluation team developed an intervention logic (figure A.2) based on the GEF and CSP websites and Council documents. It will be used throughout the evaluation in order to assess whether the program has achieved its expected outcomes.

The first CSP was approved in 1999 in response to recommendations provided during the second replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund to strengthen country-level coordination and promote genuine country ownership through a focal point support

program. A subsequent program evaluation proved it had little profound impact on the knowledge of focal points, and needs for stronger coordination and knowledge sharing continued to be high—in particular among least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS). A new four-year phase of the program was approved in 2005 to help strengthen national focal points and Council members. The new program was designed around three components with Component 1 (country capacity-building assistance based on national portfolios) managed by the United Nations Environment Programme, and Components 2 (knowledge management framework) and 3 (targeted capacity-building activities) managed by UNDP.

During GEF-5, the replenishment focus was directed toward strengthening country ownership while continuing to build on the processes established during GEF-4 to ensure that GEF

Figure A.2 Intervention logic



*These activities are no longer active but included in the evaluation as they were active during part of the evaluation period.

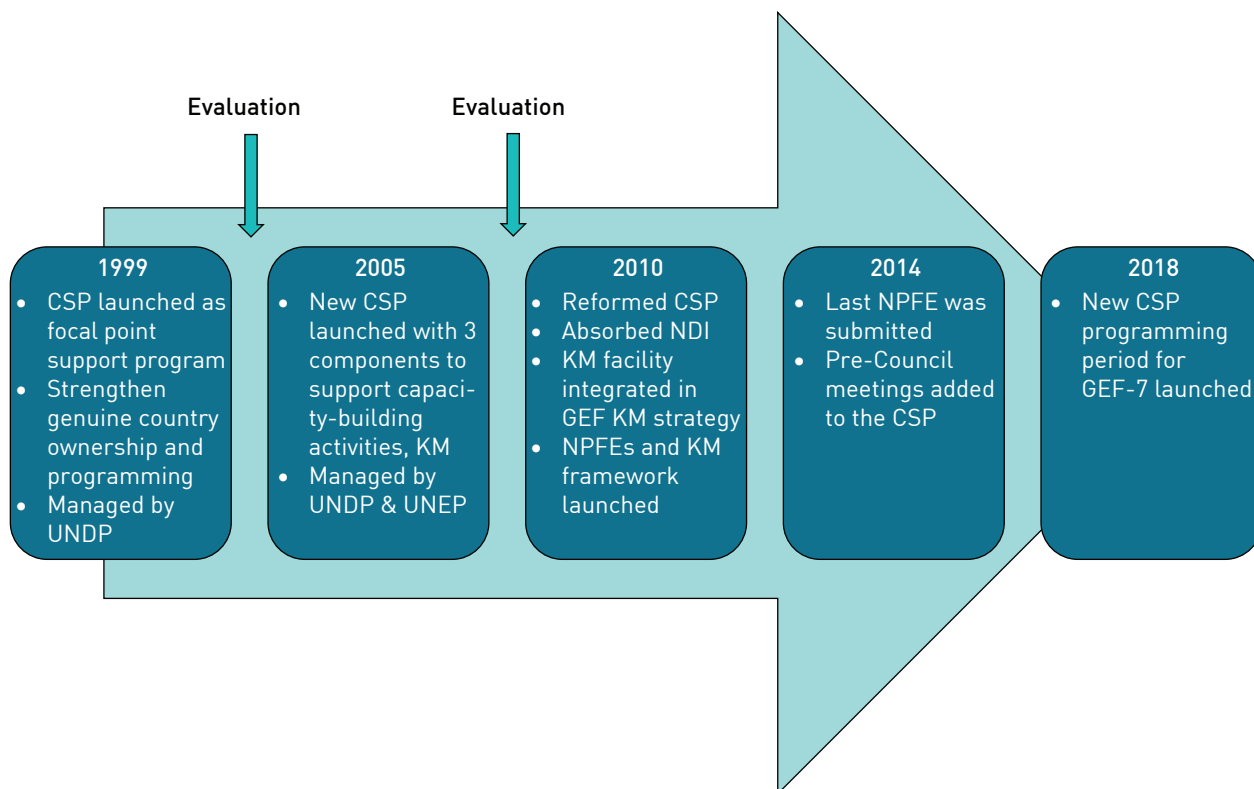
programming was more closely tied to the needs and priorities of recipient countries. Around the same time, a second evaluation of the CSP was carried out. While this evaluation found that each of the components had contributed to some capacity building as well as to enhanced articulation of national priorities for GEF support, expanded stakeholder involvement, and strengthened institutional memory in the participating countries, it also found instances of cost-ineffectiveness and inefficiency, and low participation with about 30 percent of eligible countries not accessing the funding (Navajas 2010).

Consequently, agreement was reached to bring all of the GEF’s country support activities under one umbrella with the goal to better “facilitate the mainstreaming of global environmental priorities into national strategies and development training.” The reformed CSP absorbed the other GEF capacity-building programs—namely the National Dialogues Initiative established during GEF-2

which was implemented by UNDP (GEF 2010b). Support of the reformed CSP (figure A.3) was refocused to country planning for GEF funding and strengthening in-country coordination of GEF activities through direct support to focal points, Council members, GEF familiarization seminars, and constituency workshops (GEF 2010b). At a corporate level, the Secretariat estimated that the program could be managed for substantially lower costs if it was brought under direct GEF management as opposed to its various components being managed by different GEF Agencies. This was also expected to result in increased cohesiveness of all country support activities. Since the transition in 2010, the GEF Council allocated more than \$20 million to the CSP per period to implement different capacity-building and coordination activities and services in recipient countries around the world (figure A.4).

During the past decade, the CSP has evolved, with new mandates coming and going. Following the

Figure A.3 Evolution of the Country Support Program



Note: KM = knowledge management; NDI = National Dialogues Initiative.

Figure A.4 Expected impacts of the reformed Country Support Program 2010

Corporate impact	Country impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase cohesiveness of all country support activities Increased efficiency of administrative spending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing country ownership on GEF programming Tying GEF finance to national priorities and existing strategies and action plans Better coordination among in-country GEF stakeholders Easier access to GEF information

recommendation of the GEF IEO's Fourth Overall Performance Study (OPS) of the GEF (GEF IEO 2010), in 2010 the GEF launched its voluntary national portfolio formulation exercise (NPFE), which were included as part of the CSP. NPFEs were

established to enhance country ownership and strengthen national processes as well as mechanisms to better facilitate GEF programming. The last stand-alone NPFE was carried out in 2014, and the programming support has been combined with the national dialogues—and the GEF, mainly during year one of any given GEF period, helps countries to decide how best to make use of resources available through the GEF (GEF 2018a). The original CSP included a Knowledge Management Facility (GEF 2010b)—a website that served as constant access to resources for GEF stakeholders, providing information, discussion forums, and country-managed webpages. The website was integrated into the GEF website in 2010. In 2014, as part of GEF-6, pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members were added under the CSP mandate, which offers Council members and alternates a

forum to discuss Council issues prior to each Council meeting.

With the planning of GEF-7, additional modifications were made to the program, primarily to make adjustments that would allow for the facilitation of work and information on the development of the GEF-7 impact programs. The CSP programming was clustered into four elements: (1) GEF programming and training, which included the national dialogues and expanded constituency workshops (ECWs); (2) GEF constituency meetings; (3) GEF introduction seminars; and (4) pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members. The CSP also manages a few other minor activities, such as Knowledge Days, which are carried out during the ECWs: participants visit a GEF project that is especially suitable for knowledge sharing. Thematic workshops have also been included in GEF-7, with the objective of exchanging knowledge and lessons from specific GEF subjects.

In 2020, when COVID-19 hit, the CSP made the decision to postpone all face-to-face events between March and June 2020. The CSP team has been working on a strategy to move activities online, and it is expected that as many as 20 online events could be held by September ([table A.1](#)).

A.2 Scope of the evaluation

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation is expected to provide insights and lessons for the CSP and GEF Secretariat regarding the CSP and its services moving forward into the GEF-8 replenishment discussions.

It is understood that the evaluation will produce recommendations that serve both learning and accountability functions. The evaluation will be carried out in such a way that it is utilization-focused and useful to its intended users, in particular the

Table A.1 Overview of CSP activities and services, and reach between 2011 and 2018

Core activities	Active
National portfolio formulation exercises (integrated in NDI after 2014)	x
National dialogues	x
Direct support to operational focal points	x
Expanded constituency workshops	x
Constituency meetings	x
Knowledge Facility ^a	x
Introduction seminars	x
Pre-Council meetings	x
Special initiatives	x

Note: NDI = National Dialogues Initiative.

a. This is still available as part of the knowledge management activities of the Secretariat. In fact, it has been upgraded to its own stream with e-courses. It is also visible during ECWs on the Knowledge Days.

GEF Council and the CSP team in the GEF Secretariat in their decision making related to support given to GEF constituencies for the remainder of GEF-7 (slated to end in June 2022) and in GEF-8 (July 2022–June 2026).

In the initial scoping interviews and exchanges with the CSP team regarding the move to online service delivery during the pandemic, it was noted that the pandemic could have an important influence on the operations of the CSP in a postpandemic context where expanded online service delivery might become a permanent feature. There were certain advantages that could be gained, such as bringing together a group of participants speaking the same language in the same time zone or exploring specific thematic issues across constituencies. However, some downsides may also be felt when having to use trainers that live across time zones and when GEF staff from headquarters have to participate. It was felt by the evaluation team that further modifications would be required in the methodology to adjust further to the new circumstances in terms of what could be learned to inform the report. Online activities—and more importantly,

their participants—could have important insights. In addition, given increased global connectivity, this time also allows the Secretariat to look toward the future and assess the possibility for a blended approach to dissemination of activities with more events being held online, even in the postpandemic period. However, this should not negate the larger responsibility the evaluation team has to assess the overall performance of the CSP through GEF-5, GEF-6, and GEF-7.

To help facilitate this shift in focus, it is suggested that only the last two years of GEF 5 (2013–14) be assessed (table A.2). It is noted that 2014 had no ECWs or introduction seminars. This also helps the evaluation team to not examine activities that were completed many years ago, which may present challenges in terms of gathering information and speaking to key informants. All of GEF-6 will be included; it is recognized that in 2018, there were no ECWs or introduction seminars. While activities implemented under GEF-7 will not have progressed much in terms of achieving results, they are critical to the evaluation in terms of the inclusion of the impact programs as well as for those activities implemented from roughly April to September 2020 for the reasons noted above.

Table A.2 Evaluation focus

GEF replenishment period	Years
GEF-5	2013–14
GEF-6	2014–18
GEF-7	2018–20

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

To achieve its objectives, the evaluation will review the CSP according to the criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and results, and lessons learned from the CSP for recipient countries and the GEF. The focus on coherence was a suggested addition made by Baastel, the evaluation

team, in its original proposal. As noted in the proposal, given the multiple relationships between GEF focal points, convention focal points, civil society, and GEF Agency staff who are part of the CSP environment, it was appropriate to add coherence. This evaluation criteria was adopted as part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s evaluation criteria in December 2019, and should help better capture synergies, linkages, innovations, and partnership dynamics between the various GEF stakeholder groups.

In addition, seen in the light of the increased focus on gender equity and closing the gender gap in the international development community, as well as implementation of the GEF’s Gender Equality Implementation Strategy, the evaluation will apply a gender-responsive approach to assessing the CSP. This will be done as follows:

- Ensure that consultations are carried out by both men and women, in an inclusive manner, sensitive to the needs, interests, and context of all stakeholders, and that gender-related and other barriers to participation are identified and addressed wherever relevant in the design phase of the evaluation.
- Assess whether gender mainstreaming and GEF-specific policies and strategies on gender have been disseminated through CSP events and received by the recipient countries.

Further, given the increased focus on the inclusion of LDCs and SIDS, the evaluation will also pay particular attention to the inclusion and use of the CSP by LDCs and SIDS.

The main questions to be addressed by the evaluation team are listed below. Based on scoping discussions and interviews with the GEF IEO, the CSP team and the GEF Secretariat (operations and programming) carried out during the inception phase, the evaluation questions from the original terms of reference have been modified to better

suit the direction and objective of the evaluation. In addition, the evaluation team has added questions related to the coherence criteria. It should be noted that all elements contained in the original evaluation questions from the terms of reference are nevertheless covered in one way or another through the revised evaluative approach proposed here.

- **Relevance.** How relevant is the design of the CSP and its activities to its stakeholders in view of its intended objectives related to ownership of, access to, and leveraging of GEF resources?
- **Effectiveness and results.** How effective has the CSP been in increasing country capacity to apply for GEF funding in a strategic and coordinated manner, while ensuring engagement of stakeholders?
- **Efficiency.** Is the CSP managed efficiently in view of its objectives and in a way that responds to the needs of stakeholders?
- **Coherence.** How are the CSP activities on programming priorities compatible with other MEA-related support or funded initiatives in the country or at the regional level?
- **Lessons learned.** What have been the lessons learned through the CSP mechanism, and how has the GEF partnership integrated those lessons?

These evaluation questions and their accompanying subquestions and indicators are listed in [annex B](#), which will be used to guide the data collection from the various information sources and to structure the analysis to follow. This evaluation matrix will oversee the process of triangulation for each question and line of inquiry. Triangulation will be the critical step in the development of key findings and recommendations. The CSP evaluation will draw on existing evaluative evidence generated by the GEF Secretariat, the GEF IEO, the GEF political and operational focal points, the GEF NGOs

and civil society, the GEF Agencies, and other GEF stakeholders.

A.3 Evaluation approach, methodology, and limitations

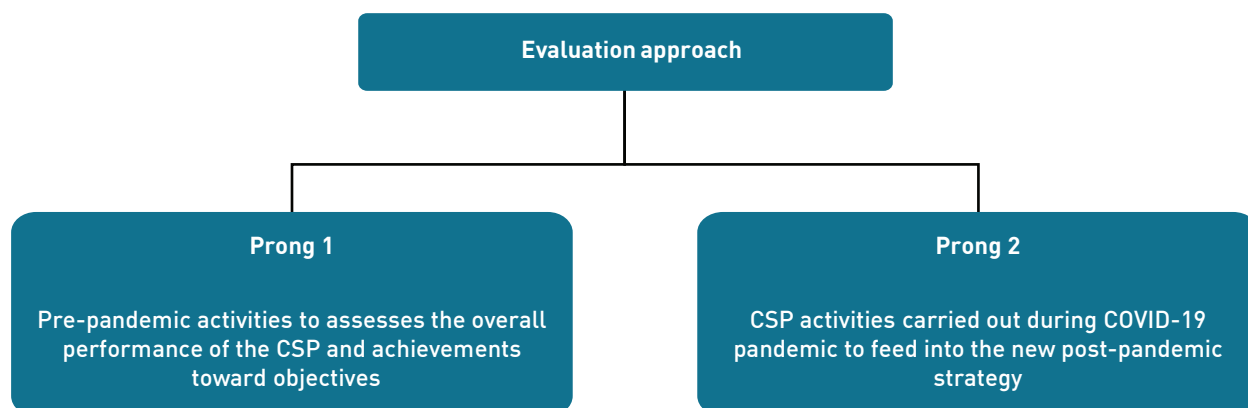
GENERAL APPROACH

The evaluation team will work closely with the GEF IEO and the CSP task team leader responsible for the day-to-day management of the evaluation. The evaluation deliverables will be shared through the GEF IEO. After an initial review of preliminary CSP and GEF documents as well as orientation discussions between the evaluation team and the IEO, the task team leader, and GEF heads of operations and programming, the team produced this inception report outlining an approach to conducting the evaluation. The following sections further detail the approach. Tools such as the evaluation matrix and interview protocols can be found in the annexes.

It is important to note that the methodology outlined in the subsequent sections has been modified from the original approach presented as part of Baastel's proposal. The reason for this is the implication that the COVID-19 model is having in important areas such as face-to-face interviews, direct observation, and most importantly, the influence on the CSP delivery model that obliged the evaluation team to reconsider its strategy for evaluating the CSP.

As a result, the evaluation team proposes a two-pronged approach ([figure A.5](#)) that covers pre-pandemic activities (prong 1) and recent activities during COVID-19. The bulk of the evaluation will be placed on pre-COVID-19 activities, while the second focus on more recent and current activities will be assessed to see how these may be used to inform the future format and focus of the CSP.

Figure A.5 Evaluation approach



DATA COLLECTION

The evaluation will use a mixed-methods approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis to improve the validity and reliability of data and corresponding evaluation findings. The analytical approach for this evaluation will draw on the intervention logic (figure A.2) developed by the team based on initial document reviews and scoping interviews. The aim will be to assess the extent to which the CSP has met its objectives. This approach will allow the evaluation team to follow the explicit causal model behind the design of the CSP activities and assess the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of their strategy toward meeting defined results and outcomes.

Baastel anticipated that obstacles would be created by the pandemic and noted this in its initial proposal to the GEF IEO. Only some modifications will be required in the overall methodology to adjust to this new reality. Compared with the original proposal, there will be an increased emphasis on conducting virtual interviews to compensate for the inability to travel for in-person interviews. Thus, this will be an entirely home-based/at-a-distance strategy evaluation with the possibility of a short

extension of the original time frame stipulated in the terms of reference.

To answer the questions in the terms of reference, the team will use five main information-gathering approaches, which will be analyzed and synthesized through the evaluation matrix the evaluation team has developed.

Document review

Data collection will begin with an in-depth desk-top review, but it is expected that document review will take place throughout the various stages of the evaluation. The references section presents a bibliography of documents consulted. Below are some of the more critical documents to the evaluation process:

- Relevant CSP Council documents
- GEF Annual Reports 2011 and 2012 (GEF Secretariat 2012, 2014)
- GEF strategy documents
- GEF replenishment programming directions
- GEF scorecards
- Annual monitoring reviews
- CSP participant exit surveys

- CSP implementation arrangement reports
- Previous CSP evaluations
- Other GEF IEO evaluations relevant to the CSP (OPS5 and OPS7 [GEF IEO 2014b, 2022b])
- GEF IEO OPS7 approach paper (GEF IEO 2020) and other OPS7 strategic documents
- Relevant activity and event summaries, articles, and reports.

Given the magnitude of the number of documents to be reviewed, the team will utilize the analytical platform Dedoose, which Baastel has experience with, to help coordinate and share information within the team and better triangulate the findings drawn from the documentation. Dedoose supports the qualitative and quantitative analysis of a large number of documents and interviews.

Survey tools

Baastel's experience in designing, managing, and analyzing multilingual online surveys will remain an important part of the approach. Quantitative data will be collected from feedback surveys completed by participants of CSP activities during GEF-7 and part of GEF-6. It is understood that some surveys were written on paper and have been lost, but in the last few years they have been put online in a manageable electronic form.

In addition, to complement these, the evaluation team will develop and distribute a short electronic survey (e-survey) according to the methods described above. This will be finalized after a testing phase once the inception report is validated by the IEO. The intent of the survey is to obtain an overall perspective on the CSP from a broad range of participants. As originally proposed, the survey will be sent to all CSP participants since 2013 (census based).

Interviews

Online interviews will be planned so as to help bring additional context and nuance, and complement already available information, to validate the desktop review and survey data, and assess the program's performance and impacts. The evaluation team will conduct key informant interviews with GEF stakeholders in the following categories:

- CSP staff
- GEF OPFs
- Convention focal points
- GEF Council members and alternates (as represented by GEF political or operational focal points)
- GEF operations and programming staff
- GEF Agency staff
- Country-level government and CSO representatives (including indigenous peoples' organizations)
- Key donors to the GEF
- Key donors or implementing agencies supporting other MEA-related capacity-building initiatives, such as the Adaptation Fund, the Green Climate Fund, and regional organizations.

The lists above would ensure that a representative selection of CSP activity participants are interviewed based on the sampling methods explained in [section A.4](#).

Even though there is no foreseeable possibility of holding in-person interviews, the underlying approach for conducting the interviews remains the same. Regardless of what online platform is used, key informant interviews will be conducted using a semistructured approach and will include a specific list of questions (see the interview protocol in [annex G](#)), tailored to each category of stakeholder derived from the evaluation matrix ([annex B](#)). Some identical questions (e.g., stakeholder's perception of the relevance and key achievements of

the program, as well as the strengths and challenges associated with the program) will be asked to a variety of interviewees for data comparison and confirmation.

Key informant individual interviews can be conducted remotely in English, French, or Spanish (via Skype/telephone/WhatsApp or other web-teleconference software, depending on the participants' preferred method). Regardless of the circumstances, Baastel will be able to call upon, among other tools, Skype, Zoom, Adobe Connect, Jitsi, Goto Meeting, Microsoft Teams, Klaxoon, or Miro for conducting semistructured individual interviews, and instant survey questions. It is expected that a maximum of 100 interviews will be conducted as part of this evaluation process.

Observation of CSP activities

In its proposal, Baastel suggested the use of local consultants to attend events and for the team leader based in Ottawa to attend meetings at GEF headquarters with different stakeholders in Washington, D.C. Given the current circumstances in the United States and the level of unpredictability related to future virus outbreaks across the globe, the possibility of these happening is judged highly unlikely at this stage. However, the evaluation team will remain open to any opportunity where local consultants might be used to enhance data collection, provided it can be done in a safe manner, according to relevant COVID-19 guidelines. This can be discussed with the GEF IEO during the evaluation if the current situation evolves and if at all relevant.

As it does not seem that in-person observation of CSP-sponsored events will be possible, the attention of the evaluation team will be directed toward observing online events in coordination with the CSP task team leader. These observations will be conducted in an unstructured manner with no actual participation in the events. A list of events

to observe in the period between mid-July to September 2020 is expected to be provided by the CSP team. The number of events to be observed depends on the activities held during the evaluation period, but it is expected that about four such events will be observed: one per evaluation team member.

Group interviews

It was originally foreseen that Baastel would conduct focus group discussions and possibly validation webinars. Under this new approach and in the current context, the evaluation team will work with the GEF IEO and the CSP staff to determine if, how, and when online focus group discussions might be held with CSP stakeholders and possibly participants in CSP online events between mid-July and September 2020. The logistics of this are to be determined. At the moment, the revised methodology detailed in the evaluation matrix is rather focused on making use of some group interviews structured around a limited number of open questions, as this approach is judged more amenable to online tools. A maximum of eight group interviews is planned: five country-level multistakeholder group interviews as well as three purposive sample group interviews focusing on focal points and GEF Agencies (for details, see [table A.5](#)).

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

As indicated above, the evaluation team plans to examine quantitative and qualitative evidence from a wide range of both primary and secondary data sources. The aim will be to obtain the widest possible breadth of information, to analyze the evidence carefully, and to base findings on information that has been successfully validated from multiple sources/lines of inquiry. An evaluation matrix has been developed with the aim of offer a framework on how to collect and analyze the data and organize the findings and recommendations ([annex B](#)).

The proposed table of contents for the evaluation report is as follows:

- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Challenges and limitations
- Methodology
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Lessons learned
- Recommendations
- Annexes—terms of reference, evaluation matrix, data collection instruments, bibliography, list of interviewees, etc.

LIMITATIONS AND RISKS

This evaluation will encounter a number of challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as detailed above, it is felt that alternative approaches can be employed that will not affect the quality of the evaluation. It will not be possible to speak to people in person, and many of the intangibles that come with meeting people directly may be lost. A similar assessment can be made about carrying out in-person focus groups. However, a proactive strategy for speaking to people through online platforms can mitigate these inconveniences. Through effective use of the evaluation team's time and a combination of individual and group interviews, more people can be interviewed in a semistructured format via online platforms such as Skype or Zoom. As mentioned earlier, the evaluation team will work with the CSP task team leader to identify opportunities to speak to stakeholders in group settings. Also, with the focus on recent online activity, there will be a value-added quality to the analysis that will help in overcoming the limitations created by the pandemic.

The CSP does not maintain a portfolio database per se. The team is mitigating this by developing its

own database based on the list of events per country/constituency with the corresponding year for each event. This will help with the detailed sampling during the data collection phase as well as provide for a more in-depth portfolio overview.

A.4 CSP portfolio overview and sampling

PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

Since 2011, the CSP has organized 295 events with 14,819 participants and has provided support for 72 NPFEs in GEF-5 and GEF-6 ([table A.3](#)). In the first semester of 2020, only 12 events were held, given the COVID-19 pandemic and the decision to move all events online. As the CSP continues to adapt to the new reality, the number of online events is expected to increase.

The different types of events and other activities carried out by the CSP since 2011 are as follows.

- The **ECWs** focus on updating the GEF focal points, convention focal points, and other key stakeholders, including civil society, on GEF strategies, policies, and procedures, while simultaneously providing a space to analyze the various aspects of GEF work, exchange knowledge and experiences, and foster collaboration and coordination between stakeholders. The ECWs are fully organized and financed by the GEF Secretariat; hosting countries provide advice and guidance on best locations, projects to visit, and dissemination through local media. In GEF-7, ECWs are open to up to eight participants per country (GEF focal points, four convention focal points, and two civil society representatives). Since 2011, the CSP has organized 90 ECWs with a total of 7,817 participants. On average, 13 ECWs have taken place every year since 2011, excluding the years 2014 and 2018, when the transition from one replenishment to

Table A.3 Number of CSP events and participants, 2011–20

Event type	GEF-5				GEF-6				GEF-7			Total
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
ECWs	12	14	13	—	13	13	13	—	11	1	90	
Participants	911	1,062	970	—	1,146	1,195	1,195	—	1,204	134	7,817	
National dialogues	1	1	2	3	6	2	1	22	13	5	56	
Participants	90	80	130	350	630	230	85	1,695	853	440	4,583	
Constituency meetings	12	17	14	24	15	20	15	21	11	8	157	
Participants	146	142	167	368	243	258	250	341	132	163	2,210	
Introduction seminars	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	7	
Participants	80	90	80	0	80	80	0	0	80	70	560	
Thematic workshops	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	
Participants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40 ^a	30	0	70	
SES	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	7	7	
Participants	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	345	345	
Total events	26	33	30	15	35	36	30	44	37	13	320	
Total participants	1,227	1,374	1,347	507	2,099	1,683	1,571	1,995	2,269	1,012	15,585	
NPFES	42		0	0	33		0	0	0	0	75	

Source: GEF Secretariat; CSP in 2020.

Note: — = not available; n.a. = not applicable.

a. Participation data were available for only one thematic workshop in 2018.

another occurred and the GEF Assembly took place.

- **National dialogues** are carried out with the aim of engaging a broad range of stakeholders within a country in the planning process to identify national priorities for GEF support, develop ideas for new projects, and take decisions on participation in the GEF's impact programs on food systems, land use, and restoration; sustainable forest management; and sustainable cities. They are also directed at fostering a better understanding of GEF strategies and policies and the integration of global environmental concepts into national strategy and policy formulation, accounting, and regular procedures. National dialogues must be requested by OPFs, who then plan the events in close collaboration with the GEF Secretariat. Participants may include representatives from government ministries and agencies, NGOs/CSOs, communities,

academic and research institutions, and the private sector, as well as partners and donors. Since 2011, 54 national dialogues have been held; 35 of these were held in 2018 and 2019 (i.e., at the beginning of the GEF-7 period), as they have taken the role of NPFES. The total number of participants is 4,478, making them the second most widely attended CSP event after ECWs. The blending of NPFES into national dialogues aims at strengthening national dialogues as a programming component that can then be used flexibly for multiple purposes, including discussions on how best to use GEF-provided resources, which was the focus of the NPFE.

- **Constituency meetings** are the main instrument for the Council members to engage their constituency members in preparing for decision making at the GEF Council; they also provide an opportunity to further explain GEF strategies, policies, and procedures. They are organized by

and at the request of the Council member, with technical and logistics support provided by the GEF Secretariat. Each of the 32 existing constituencies may request two meetings per calendar year, to be held prior to Council meetings. Although in principle these meetings are open only to GEF focal points of the constituency's member countries, Council members may invite other participants as necessary, including GEF Agencies. Since 2011, 144 constituency meetings have been held (an average of 15 per year), with a total of 1,964 participants.

- **Introduction seminars** (called familiarization seminars in GEF-5) are organized by the GEF about once a year in Washington, D.C., to provide information and training about GEF strategies, policies, operations, and procedures to new GEF Agency staff, country focal points, convention secretariat staff, and selected stakeholders from line ministries, the media, other organizations that are part of the current financial environmental architecture, and the private sector. Seven introduction seminars have been held since 2011, with a total number of 560 participants—about 80 per seminar. They were not offered in the “transition years” of 2014 and 2018, nor in 2017.
- **NPFEs** were held during the first 18 months of the GEF-5 and GEF-6 replenishment periods to help interested recipient countries decide on how best to use the resources available through the GEF. The output of such meetings is a national portfolio formulation document, which describes the process of consultation held and the preliminary list of projects or project ideas to be pursued. A total of 72 NPFEs were held since 2011, 42 in the GEF-5 period and 30 in the GEF-6 period; in GEF-5, 45 percent of the countries that undertook an NPFE in GEF-5 were LDCs and 21 percent were SIDS. The decision to hold an NPFE was voluntary, and the GEF OFP was responsible for submitting the application. A quick review of the NPFEs available on

the GEF website suggests that the process was tailored to each country, with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders (relevant ministries, academia, and CSOs, as well as the private sector) through different mechanisms, including committees and consultations. The NPFE initiative underwent an evaluation in 2013 [GEF IEO 2014a) that concluded that it was relevant both to the GEF and country needs, promoted country ownership of GEF programming, and provided a structure for a more systematic alignment of GEF support with country strategies. However, the report points out the limited effectiveness of NPFEs in countries where stakeholder capacities are low; as well as several opportunities regarding uptake, administrative execution, and guidelines.³ As explained above, in GEF-7, the NPFE was blended into national dialogues; however, the logic of the NPFE is still used in the latter.

In addition, the work of the CSP has included the following:

- **Pre-Council meetings.** Since GEF-6, these have been organized by and at the request of the Council member to provide GEF Council members and alternates from recipient countries the opportunity to meet in order to discuss Council issues prior to each GEF Council meeting. Between 2014 and 2018, 110 people took part in these meetings, which the CSP continues to support under GEF-7, noting that they have increased the capacity of Council members and alternates to understand their respective positions and views, while affording them the opportunity to share concerns, receive

³ In particular, the evaluation highlights that, due to delays in groundwork for implementation and difficulties accessing GEF grants, only 42 countries participated in the NPFE process, compared to the budgeted participation of 100 countries in GEF-5, 10 of which used their own resources.

clarifications from the GEF Secretariat, and develop common positions [GEF 2018b].

- **Special initiatives.** Through GEF-7, the CSP provided support to the following events: a meeting on the Guarani Aquifer System (Uruguay), the Amazon Sustainable Landscape Program II Preparation Workshop (Brazil), and the Regional Consultation on the GEF-7 Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Program (Gabon, January 2019). As a result of these meetings, programs for the Amazon and the Congo were submitted and approved by the GEF Council in record time, while the medium-size project for the Guarani Aquifer was submitted and approved by the CEO. All are currently being executed.
- **Direct support to OFPs.** In GEF-5, countries were able to receive \$9,000 each year for executing annual work plans; funds were available for in-country activities intended to strengthen country-level coordination and consultation, as well as to promote country ownership of GEF-financed activities. According to the 2011 and 2012 GEF Annual Reports, 20 countries received support for executing their annual work plans in FY 2011 and 28 in FY 2012 [GEF Secretariat 2012, 2014]. This activity, which was intended to address the need of financial support expressed by focal points, was discontinued in GEF-6, as only a handful of focal points were able to access the funds due to the administrative procedures required both by the GEF and country governments.
- **Knowledge management.** As the management of CSP transitioned from UNDP to the GEF Secretariat in GEF-5, the Knowledge Management Facility website, which provided information to focal points, was integrated into the GEF website. The further development of the Knowledge Management Facility website was then incorporated into the GEF-wide strategy on knowledge management and learning, approved by the Council in its meeting of November 2011.

- **Day-to-day coordination and correspondence.** Alongside these core activities, country relations officers and the CSP staff are available at all times to answer the questions of focal points, CSOs, other stakeholders, and the public in general, as well as to provide advice and follow-up on CSP events.

The total budget allocated to the CSP through GEF-5, GEF-6, and GEF-7 amounts to \$70 million, covering the activities and corresponding funding allocations noted in [table A.4](#).

This overview of CSP work in the 2011–20 period highlights some important considerations for the evaluation sampling strategy:

- CSP activities are highly diverse in terms of scale, number of participants, and types of stakeholders involved.
- CSP activities have evolved through time: some activities were discontinued (NPFs, direct support to OFPs, and knowledge management), while others were introduced (pre-Council meetings and special initiatives).
- While the frequency of activities directly organized by the CSP, such as ECWs and introduction seminars, have been stable throughout the 2011–20 period, there is greater variation in the number of events held each year when these are organized at the initiative of focal points or Council members. In addition, the uptake of NPFs and national dialogues by recipient countries is relatively low. This evaluation can be an opportunity to shed light on the factors that influence uptake.
- As the CSP is transitioning toward online events, the evaluation can play an important role in providing timely feedback by interpreting and analyzing early learning as this new approach is rolled out in the following months.
- Another value added that this evaluation can provide is to organize the available information

Table A.4 Budget allocations for CSP activities (million \$)

Activity	GEF-5	GEF-6	GEF-7
Expanded constituency workshops	10.0	12.0	14.7
National dialogues	2.0	2.0	
Constituency meetings	3.5	5.0	5.0
Introduction seminars	1.9	1.2	1.0
National portfolio formulation exercises	3.0	2.4	—
Pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members	0	0.4	0.3
Direct support to OFPs	5.5	—	—
Knowledge management	0.1	—	—
Total target budget	26	23	21
Share of total GEF budget (%)	0.6	0.5	0.5

Sources: GEF 2010a, 2014, 2018b, 2018d.

about the CSP portfolio in a database, which can be later used by CSP staff for monitoring and dissemination, in addition to being instrumental for this evaluation.

SAMPLING

A two-pronged approach will be adopted to provide both a comprehensive analysis of CSP work through GEF-5 (second half), GEF-6, and GEF-7, and immediate feedback on the new heightened emphasis by the CSP on the use of online events as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Table A.5](#) provides details on the approach to sampling. A short description is provided here.

Sampling for covering pre-COVID-19 activities

- **Portfolio analysis.** With input from CSP management, a detailed database of CSP events will be developed, validated by CSP management and analyzed to identify relevant trends and patterns across time and geographies that the evaluation should further look into. The database will provide a historical overview of all CSP events held between 2013 and 2020, as well as a clear picture of their geographical

reach. Information to be entered in the database includes: type of activity, year, GEF period, region, constituency, country where it took place, other participating countries, LDC and SIDS involvement, focal area, number of participants, and links to relevant documents ([table A.6](#)).

- **E-survey.** A census-based e-survey will be administered to all CSP activity participants during the period 2013–20 (up-to-date CSP attendance lists to be provided by CSP management).
- **Semistructured interviews.** As per the different categories of stakeholders mentioned above, a purposive sample of interviewees will be developed by the evaluation team with input from CSP management. In addition to ensuring that the various categories of stakeholders are interviewed, other selection criteria will include geographic distribution (in terms of constituencies), types of events attended, as well as distribution in terms of involvement over time in the CSP period covered by the evaluation, to ensure that a perspective on the evolution of the CSP can also be captured through interviews.

Table A.5 Sampling strategy

Data collection method	Sources (according to evaluation matrix)	Sampling strategy
Document review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP end-of-activity surveys ● CSP training material ● Brochures, website ● CSP activity reports ● Document review of selected country pipelines ● Financial reporting/activity ● Project documents (strategies and policies) ● GEF Council meeting documents ● CSP procedures and knowledge management tools ● Evaluation reports, review of CSP communication materials, training material highlighting lessons learned, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a portfolio database (activities) ● Draw a sample of 8-10 countries for pipeline review based on trends and patterns in the database; CSP national activities will also be reviewed for those countries (NPFs, National Dialogues Initiative, direct support to focal points) ● Draw a sample of 20 regional or global CSP activities to be reviewed (ECWs, constituency meetings, introduction seminars, special initiatives) ● Review all country-relevant sources listed in matrix ● Review all GEF program-level relevant documents
E-survey	All participants 2013–20	Census (up-to-date CSP attendance lists provided by the GEF)
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GEF program staff ● GEF operations staff ● GEF IEO staff ● CSP staff ● GEF OFPs ● GEF political focal points ● GEF Agencies ● Representatives of funds ● Convention focal points ● Council members ● CSOs 	<p>Approximately 105 individual interviews are planned with the following broad distribution foreseen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GEF program staff: 6 ● GEF operations staff: 4 ● GEF IEO staff: 2 ● CSP staff: 4 ● GEF current and past OFPs: 30 ● GEF current and past political focal points/constituency representatives: 20 ● GEF Agencies: 5 ● Representatives of other funds: 4 ● Convention focal points: 15 ● Council members: 10 ● CSOs: 5
Group interviews (maximum 10 participants per group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National stakeholders ● GEF Agencies ● GEF focal points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5 country-level multistakeholder group interviews with national stakeholders: government, CSO, private sector (5 countries) ● 1 group interview to a purposive sample of GEF OFPs across countries ● 1 group interview with a purposive sample of GEF political focal points/constituency representatives ● 1 group interview with a purposive sample of GEF Agencies (newer and older Agencies)
Observation	Selected CSP online activities	Convenience sampling: depending on events scheduled by the CSP during evaluation period and feasibility to attend; four attendances are planned

Table A.6 Proposed portfolio database structure

Event	Type of activity	Year	GEF period	GEF-7 focal area(s)	Region	Constituency	Country where held	Other participating countries	LDC involvement	SIDS involvement	No. of participants	Links to relevant documents

Sampling of CSP events held since the beginning of the pandemic (2020)

- **Survey.** Participants in CSP online activities held since the breakout of the pandemic will form a subset of the larger census-based survey sample described above. This way, the evaluation team will be in a position to analyze their responses separately as needed to provide insights from that perspective on relevant survey questions.
- **Semistructured interviews.** Within the broader sample of interviewees mentioned above, attention will be given to ensure attendees of recent CSP online activities are also interviewed.

- **Observation.** In addition, a sample of virtual events will be selected for unstructured observation based on planning by the CSP, if possible, within the timing of the evaluation and considering the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A.5 Updated workplan

Based on the scoping discussions and the revisions made to the evaluation approach in this inception report, the workplan has been adjusted accordingly ([table A.7](#)).

Table A.7 Updated workplan

	June 2020				July 2020					August 2020				September 2020					October 2020				November 2020			
	w1	w2	w3	w4	w1	w2	w3	w4	w5	w1	w2	w3	w4	w1	w2	w3	w4	w5	w1	w2	w3	w4	w1	w2	w3	w4
Inception phase																										
Kick-off meeting																										
Collection of key documents																										
Preliminary documentation review																										
Preliminary key informant interviews																										
Preparation of draft inception report																										
Comments from GEF on draft inception report																										
Finalization of the inception report																										
Finalization of sampling for interviews; testing of survey																										
Data collection phase																										
Portfolio analysis, sampling for, and in-depth documentation review																										
Contact lists for key informant and group interviews, and survey scheduling																										
Key informant interviews (online)																										
Administration of online survey																										
Group interviews																										
Observation of CSP online activities																										
Analysis and reporting phase																										
Data analysis																										
Preparation of draft evaluation report																										
Presentation of draft evaluation report to IEO and CSP																										
Comments received on draft																										
Final evaluation report																										

Note: D = deliverable.

Evaluation matrix

Subquestion	Indicator	Data collection method	Information source
Q1. How relevant is the design of the CSP and its activities to its stakeholders in view of its intended objectives related to ownership of, access to, and leveraging GEF resources? (relevance and coherence criteria)			
1.1 How have recommendations from past evaluations been taken into account in the redesign of the CSP?	1.1.1 List of recommendations from past evaluations relating in particular to ownership of, access to, and leveraging of GEF resources	Documentation review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP past evaluations ● CSP strategy and Council documents ● CSP staff
	1.1.2 Changes in design and activities under the CSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP strategy and Council documents ● CSP staff
1.2 How relevant are the CSP activities regarding planning to address the needs of stakeholders, including identification, formulation, and implementation of national priorities for countries?	1.2.1 Degree to which CSP events are planned around the needs of stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● E-survey ● Interviews ● Group interviews ● Observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP activity agendas and relevant evaluations ● CSP end-of-activity surveys ● Survey participants ● National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF staff ● GEF focal points ● Selected CSP online activities
	1.2.2 Extent to which CSP activities contribute toward building and implementing national priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● E-survey ● Interviews ● Group interviews ● Observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual monitoring review and evaluation reports ● CSP end-of-activity surveys ● Survey participants ● National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF staff ● GEF focal points ● Selected CSP online activities
1.3 How relevant are CSP activities to the stakeholders in facilitating their access to the GEF?	1.3.1 Perceived importance of CSP activities in enabling stakeholders to access GEF resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● E-survey ● Interviews ● Group interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Survey participants ● GEF program staff ● GEF focal points ● GEF Agencies
	1.3.2 Proportion of CSP activities and resources content focused on providing knowledge on how to access the GEF	Documentation review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP activity agendas and materials ● Brochures, website

Subquestion	Indicator	Data collection method	Information source
1.4 How relevant is the information provided to stakeholders to assist them with project design?	1.4.1 Presence of training modules focused on project design aspects	Documentation review	CSP activity agendas and materials
	1.4.2 Perceived degree of adequacy of project design guidance provided by the CSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-survey Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey participants National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector GEF Agencies GEF Secretariat program staff
	1.4.3 Degree to which stakeholders rely on information provided by the CSP in designing GEF projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-survey Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey participants National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector GEF Agencies GEF program staff
1.5 Coherence: How are the CSP activities on programming priorities compatible with other multilateral environmental agreement-related support or funded initiatives in the country or at the regional level?	1.5.1 Type of country or regional programming activities carried out by other key environmental funds (Adaptation Fund, Green Climate Fund, Climate Investment Funds, Montreal Protocol Multilateral Fund, Global Mechanism for Desertification Convention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation review Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program information on other environmental funds' websites Representatives of funds Convention focal points GEF Agencies
	1.5.2 Examples of complementarity and duplication with CSP process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation review Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents on dialogue/ programming mechanisms administered by other global funds Representatives of other funds Convention focal points CSP staff
Q2. How effective has the CSP been in increasing capacity of the countries to apply for GEF funding in a strategic and coordinated manner, while ensuring engagement of all CSP stakeholders? (effectiveness and result criteria)			
2.1 To what extent do CSP activities help build inclusive dialogue and partnerships among country stakeholders (central and local, public and private) to better coordinate GEF resources in line with national priorities?	2.1.1 Change over time in the proportion of participation by types of stakeholders in CSP events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation review E-survey Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of CSP activity reports Survey participants CSP staff
	2.1.2 Perceived extent to which CSP activities facilitated inclusive dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation review E-survey Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of CSP activity reports National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector GEF focal points GEF Agencies CSP staff GEF program staff Survey participants
	2.1.3 Examples of national partnerships developed around GEF projects through CSP activities (including public-private partnerships)	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector GEF focal points GEF Agencies CSP staff GEF program staff
	2.1.4 Examples of inclusive dialogues witnessed	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector GEF focal points GEF Agencies GEF program staff
	2.1.5 Level of mainstreaming gender equity and social inclusion commitments in CSP materials	Documentation review	CSP agenda, website, and training materials

Subquestion	Indicator	Data collection method	Information source
2.2 To what extent is the CSP a strong and effective mechanism for dialogue between the GEF Secretariat and countries, providing information on GEF policies, priorities, and resources; and fostering knowledge exchange and coordination between countries?	2.2.1 Level of satisfaction of CSP participants with GEF information and resources provided through the CSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● E-survey ● Group interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP end-of-activity surveys ● Survey participants ● National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF focal points
	2.2.2 Level of satisfaction of CSP participants with the way CSP activities are facilitating knowledge exchange and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● E-survey ● Group interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP end-of-activity surveys ● Survey participants ● National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF focal points
	2.2.3 Level of emphasis in agendas of CSP activities on (1) information on GEF policies and priorities (including gender and social inclusion), (2) information on GEF resources, and (3) fostering knowledge exchange and coordination between countries	Documentation review	CSP materials
2.3. To what level has the CSP helped enhance understanding of and ability to apply GEF policies, procedures, and requirements in the development of the country pipeline?	2.3.1 Examples of CSP participating countries establishing consistent pipeline of GEF projects and programs facilitated by the CSP	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Document review of selected country pipelines ● Country participants in CSP activities
	2.3.2 Percentage of CSP country participants who can name at least three: (1) GEF policies, (2) GEF procedures, (3) GEF requirements	E-survey	Survey participants
	2.3.3 Types of barriers to applying CSP-acquired knowledge and skill sets in the development of country pipelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews ● Group interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GEF focal points ● GEF Agencies ● National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector
2.4 To what extent has the CSP enhanced the country capacity for strategic planning?	2.4.1 Examples from countries of prioritized environmental programs as a result of CSP involvement	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GEF focal points ● GEF Agencies ● GEF Secretariat ● CSP staff ● GEF program staff
	2.4.2 Level of quality and quantity of information provided to stakeholders regarding the integration of global environment issues into national strategy and policy formulation	Documentation review	CSP publications, training modules, etc.

Subquestion	Indicator	Data collection method	Information source
2.5 What have been the impacts of the CSP in terms of access to and leveraging of GEF resources, country ownership, and influence on GEF priorities?	2.5.1 Examples from countries of approved GEF financing for projects and programs stemming from CSP-acquired skills	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GEF focal points ● GEF Agencies ● GEF Secretariat ● CSP staff ● GEF program staff
	2.5.2 Examples from countries of strategic use made of GEF resources	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GEF focal points ● GEF Agencies ● GEF Secretariat program staff ● CSP staff ● GEF program staff
	2.5.3 Examples of cofinancing or scaling-up financing secured by countries	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GEF focal points ● GEF Agencies ● GEF Secretariat ● CSP staff ● GEF program staff
	2.5.4. Perceived evolution of national stakeholder role in policy, program, and project design and implementation (country ownership)	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF focal points ● Council members ● GEF Agencies ● CSP staff
	2.5.5. Examples of influence on GEF policies, priorities, and procedures that can be traced back to conclusion of CSP activities	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP staff ● Constituency representatives at Council
Q3. Is the CSP managed efficiently in view of its objectives and in a way that responds to the needs of stakeholders? (efficiency criteria)			
3.1 Is the level, timeliness, and quality of support of the CSP team adequate for stakeholders in view of the CSP objectives?	3.1.1 Types and levels of support provided by the CSP team and its senior country officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● E-survey ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP materials ● Survey participants ● National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF focal points ● GEF Agencies ● Constituency representatives ● CSP staff
	3.1.2 Perceived quality and timeliness of the types of support provided by the CSP team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● E-survey ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Survey participants ● National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF focal points ● GEF Agencies ● Constituency representatives ● CSP staff
	3.1.3 Actual timing of activities versus optimal timing in view of GEF replenishment period and Council activities	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National stakeholders, government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF Agencies ● GEF staff ● GEF focal points ● Constituency representatives
	3.1.4 The level of quality of materials and tools used in communicating with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● E-survey ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP materials ● Survey participants ● National stakeholders, government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF Agencies ● GEF focal points ● Constituency representatives
	3.1.5 Level of reliability of tools used by the CSP in day-to-day communication and for activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● E-survey ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Survey participants ● National stakeholders, government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF Agencies ● GEF focal points ● Constituency representatives

Subquestion	Indicator	Data collection method	Information source
3.2 How is the management of the CSP responsive in view of the needs of stakeholders?	3.2.1 Examples of involvement of different stakeholders in the design of CSP activities, and stages at which they are involved (including GEF Agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews ● Group interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National stakeholders: government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF Agencies ● GEF program staff ● CSP staff
	3.2.2 Needs and feedback expressed by different types of stakeholders (including women)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP end-of-activity surveys ● CSP staff ● GEF focal points ● National stakeholders
	3.2.3 Evolution of tools and platforms offered by the CSP (including changes in the knowledge management platform and in response to COVID-19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● Interviews ● Group interview ● Direct observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP materials ● Evaluation reports ● CSP staff ● GEF focal points ● Selected virtual CSP events
	3.2.4 Examples of follow-up by management on the themes discussed during the CSP activities	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP staff ● National stakeholders ● GEF focal points
	3.2.5 Perceived usefulness of tools, platforms, and activities supported by the CSP (including specifically in the context of COVID-19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● E-surveys ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP end-of-activity surveys ● Survey participants ● National stakeholders; government, CSOs, private sector ● GEF program staff ● GEF focal points
	3.2.6 Examples of changes in activity design in response to expressed needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP materials ● CSP staff ● GEF program staff ● GEF focal points
3.3 Are the financial resources allocated for the program adequate and efficiently used in view of its objectives?	3.3.1 Financial constraints identified in responding to country needs to achieve CSP objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial reports ● GEF corporate scorecard ● GEF operational staff ● CSP staff ● GEF focal points
	3.3.2 Planned versus actual reach per budget unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial reporting and activity ● CSP staff ● GEF operational staff
	3.3.3 Other factors affecting efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documentation review ● Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP activity reporting ● CSP staff ● GEF operational staff ● GEF operational focal points

Subquestion	Indicator	Data collection method	Information source
Q4. What have been the lessons learned through the CSP mechanism, and how has the GEF partnership integrated those lessons learned?			
4.1 How can lessons learned from CSP activities be integrated into the formulation of evolving and new GEF policies and strategies?	4.1.1 Lessons learned from CSP activities and examples of related changes in GEF policies and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation review • Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents (strategies and policies) • GEF Council meeting documents • CSP staff • GEF focal points • Constituency representatives at GEF Council meetings
	4.1.2 Actual and potential mechanisms built into the CSP to provide feedback on GEF policies and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation review • Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSP policy and procedures • CSP staff • GEF program and operational staff • GEF focal points • GEF Agencies
4.2 How are lessons learned from CSP activities shared across the broader partnership to foster effective engagement?	4.2.1 Actual mechanisms in place to share lessons learned from the CSP with partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation review • Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSP procedures and knowledge management tools • CSP staff • GEF operational staff
	4.2.2 Examples of lessons learned that were shared with partners and led to engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation review • Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation reports, review of CSP communication materials, training material highlighting lessons learned • CSP staff • GEF operational staff • GEF Agencies • GEF focal points
	4.2.3 Existing barriers and opportunities to improved sharing of lessons learned	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSP staff • GEF Agencies • GEF focal points

Final sample for country pipeline review and interviews

Country	Region	Constituency	SIDS	LDC
Argentina	LAC	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay		
Armenia	ECA	Armenia, Belarus, Russian Federation		
Cameroon	AFR	Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe		
Chile	LAC	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay		
Congo, Dem. Rep.	AFR	Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe		
Eswatini ^a	AFR	Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe		
India ^a	SAR	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka		
Kiribati ^a	Pacific	Cook Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu		
Liberia	AFR	Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo		
Malaysia	SAR	Cambodia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam		
Philippines, the	Pacific	Cook Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu		
St. Lucia	LAC	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago		
Türkiye	ECA	Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Türkiye		

Note: SIDS = small island developing states; LDC = least developed country; AFR = Africa; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and Caribbean; SAR = South Asia.

a. Countries that were initially sampled, but reviews were not possible because there was no reply from country stakeholders or there was a lack of information regarding CSP events within the countries.

Interviewees

CONVENTION FOCAL POINTS

Jannel Gabriel, Convention on Biological Diversity Focal Point, Sustainable Development and Environment Officer, St. Lucia

Benjamin Karmoh, Executive, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Liberia

GEF FOCAL POINTS AND GEF COUNCIL

Nathaniel Blama, OFP, Former Executive Director, Liberian Environmental Protection Agency, Liberia

Caroline Eugene, former OFP, Permanent Secretary, Department of Sustainable Development, St. Lucia

Florencia María Gloria Gómez, OFP, Inter-Jurisdictional and Inter-Institutional Undersecretary, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Argentina

Sheela a/p Inthiram, Assistant Principal Secretary, Climate Change Division, Ministry of Environment and Water, Malaysia

Nagulendran a/l Kangayatkarasu, OFP, Malaysia

Yüstra Gül Tozoğlu Koçoğlu, Environmental Engineer, Türkiye

María Julia Lardone, Adviser to the Political Focal Point, Directorate of Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Argentina

Marcia Levaggi, former Political Focal Point, Directorate of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Argentina

Marhaini binti Mat, Ministry of Environment and Water, Climate Change Division, Malaysia

Godefroid Ndaukila Muhinya, Ministère de l'Environnement et Développement Durable, Democratic Republic of Congo

Justin Nantchou, Former OFP, Cameroon

Ximena George-Nascimento, former OFP, Chile

Analiza Reuelta, OFP, the Philippines

Miguel Stutzin, OFP, International Affairs Office, Ministry of the Environment, Chile

Haman Unusa, OFP, Cameroon

Silvia Beatriz Vázquez, Political Focal Point, Director of Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Argentina

Yan Wei, Foreign Environment Cooperation Center, Ministry of Ecology and Environment, China

GEF AGENCIES

Angela Armstrong, GEF Executive Coordinator, World Bank

Daniela Carrion, Regional Technical Adviser for Latin America, Conservation International

Shaanti Marie Kapila, Senior Environmental Specialist, World Bank

Doreen Robinson, Wildlife Chief, United Nations Environment Programme

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Kona Kollie, Executive Director, Young Liberian Women Organization for Improvement

Musau Osée, Coordonnateur, Action Communautaire pour le Développement, Democratic Republic of Congo

Joanna Rosemond, Natural Heritage Program Officer, Saint Lucia National Trust

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Jekk Paderes, Officer, Development Management Division, Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Philippines

Teara Rabang, Officer, Development Management Division, Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Philippines

Alma Segui, Officer, Development Management Division, Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Philippines

Maridel Villalon, Officer, Development Management Division, Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Service, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Government of the Philippines

GEF STAFF

Ulrich Appel, Senior Environmental Specialist (Europe and Central Asia Regional Coordinator), GEF Programs Unit

Avril Benchimol, Senior Financial Specialist, GEF Programs Unit

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William Ehlers, Country Relations Director, CSP

Gustavo Alberto Fonseca, Program Director, GEF Programs Unit

Yasemin Biro Kirtman, Knowledge Management Coordinator, GEF Operations

Peter Lallas, Adviser, GEF Front Office

Susan Wangui Matindi, Country Relations Officer, CSP

Neeraj Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer, GEF IEO

Nicolas Marquez Pizzanelli, Operations Analyst, CSP

Juan José Portillo, Senior Operations Officer, GEF IEO

Pilar Barrera Rey, Senior Operations Officer/Partnerships Coordinator, CSP

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Ibrahima Sow, Senior Environmental Specialist (Africa Regional Coordinator), GEF Programs Unit

Anna Vigg, Senior Evaluation Officer, GEF IEO

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Ines Susana Angulo De Aviles, Climate Investment Funds (CIF) Administrative Unit, CIF

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Christopher Head, Private Sector Specialist, CIF

Pa Ousman Jarju, Director, Country Programming Division, Green Climate Fund

Kouassi Emmanuel Kouadio, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, CIF/World Bank

Farayi Madziwa, Readiness Programme Officer, Adaptation Fund

Loreta Rufo, Climate Change Specialist, CIF

Neha Sarma, Evaluation and Learning Specialist, CIF

Hanna Karima Schweitzer, Climate Resilience and Learning Analyst, CIF

Hugh Searight, Operation Investment Officer, CIF

Alemayehu Belay Zeleke, Analyst, CIF

Detailed portfolio data

Organizer	Key objectives	Scope	Avg. no. of participants	Stakeholders	GEF period	Comments
Expanded constituency workshops						
Fully organized and financed by the GEF Secretariat; hosting countries provide advice and guidance on best locations, projects to visit, and dissemination through local media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep the GEF focal points, convention focal points, and other stakeholders, including civil society, abreast of GEF strategies, policies, and procedures Provide a space to analyze, in depth, the various aspects of GEF work Provide an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience, and to encourage collaboration and coordination 	Constituency	87	GEF focal points; convention focal points; other stakeholders, including civil society	GEF-5, GEF-6, GEF-7	In GEF-7, ECWs are open to up to eight participants per country (GEF focal points, four convention focal points, and two civil society representatives)
National dialogues						
Can be requested by OFPs; when planning dialogues, GEF Secretariat works in close collaboration with OFP offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the means to engage a broad range of stakeholders within a country in the planning process to identify national priorities for GEF support and develop ideas for new projects Serve to better understand GEF strategies and policies and to take decisions on participation in the various impact programs 	Country	83	Government ministries and GEF Agencies, nongovernmental and CSOs, communities, academic and research institutions, and the private sector, as well as partners and donors	GEF-5, GEF-6, GEF-7	In GEF-7, national dialogues can be used for the purpose of a national portfolio formulation exercise

Organizer	Key objectives	Scope	Avg. no. of participants	Stakeholders	GEF period	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the integration of global environment concepts into national strategy and policy formulation, accounting, and regular procedures Provide an opportunity to further explain GEF strategies, policies, and procedures 					
Organized by and at the request of Council member with technical and logistics support by GEF Secretariat; each constituency may request two meetings per calendar year, to be held prior to Council meetings	Main instrument for Council members to engage their constituency members in preparing for decision making at the GEF Council	Constituency	14	GEF CSP finances participation of GEF political focal points and OFPs; Council members may invite other participants as necessary, including GEF Agencies and other resource partners	GEF-5, GEF-6, GEF-7	
Introduction seminars						
Organized by the GEF once a year in Washington, DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide pertinent information and training to new GEF Agency staff, new country focal points, convention secretariat staff, and selected stakeholders about GEF strategies, policies, operations, and procedures Allow outreach to other audiences that may be critical to GEF success, particularly line ministries, the media, those from other organizations that are part of the current financial environmental architecture, and the private sector, where possible 	Global	80	New GEF Agency staff, new country focal points, convention secretariat staff, selected stakeholders (from line ministries, the media, other organizations part of the current financial environmental architecture, and the private sector)	GEF-5, GEF-6, GEF-7	Called familiarization seminars in GEF-5

Organizer	Key objectives	Scope	Avg. no. of participants	Stakeholders	GEF period	Comments
National portfolio formulation exercises (NPFEs)						
Decision to hold an NPFE is voluntary and at the sole discretion of a country government; the GEF operational focal point is responsible for submitting the application template duly filled; normally held during the first 18 months of a GEF replenishment period	Help interested recipient countries decide on how best to use the resources available through the GEF; the output of such meetings is expected to be a national portfolio formulation document that will describe the process of consultation held and the preliminary list of projects or project ideas that will be pursued	Country	Not available	A quick review of the outputs seems to suggest that the process was tailored to each country, with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders (relevant ministries, academia, and civil society organizations as well as the private sector) through committees and consultations	GEF-5, GEF-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An evaluation of the NPFE initiative in 2013 recommended its continuation In GEF-7, NPFEs have been blended into national dialogues to offer a broader programming activity with multiple purposes
Pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members						
Organized by and at the request of the Council member	Provide GEF Council members and alternates from recipient countries the opportunity to meet to discuss Council issues before each GEF Council meeting	Global	Not available	Council members and alternates from recipient constituencies	GEF-6, GEF-7	Introduced in GEF-6
Thematic workshops						
At the request of stakeholders with CSP support	As a result of these meetings, programs for the Amazon and the Congo Basin were submitted and approved by the GEF Council in record time, while the medium-size project for the Guaraní Aquifer was submitted and approved by the Chief Executive Officer; all are currently being executed	Stakeholders	Not available	Country, GEF Agency, and GEF representatives	GEF-7	The three special events are a meeting on the Guaraní Aquifer System (Uruguay), the Amazon Sustainable Landscape Program II Preparation Workshop (Brazil), and the Regional Consultation on the GEF-7 Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Program (Gabon, January 2019)
Direct support to operational focal points						
GEF Secretariat	Support the execution of annual work plans, especially in-country activities intended to strengthen country-level coordination and consultation, as well as to promote country ownership of GEF-financed activities	Country	Not available	Operational focal points	GEF-5	Not continued in GEF-6 and GEF-7

Organizer	Key objectives	Scope	Avg. no. of participants	Stakeholders	GEF period	Comments
Knowledge management						
GEF Secretariat	Integrate the UNDP Knowledge Facility into the GEF website. The purpose of the Knowledge Facility is to provide constant access to knowledge, experience, and best practices targeted to meeting the needs of focal points, as well as to facilitate learning through discussion forums, private information exchange among constituencies, and country-managed country pages	Global	Not applicable	Focal points	GEF-5	Concluded in GEF-5; further knowledge management activities were included in GEF-wide strategy on knowledge management and learning

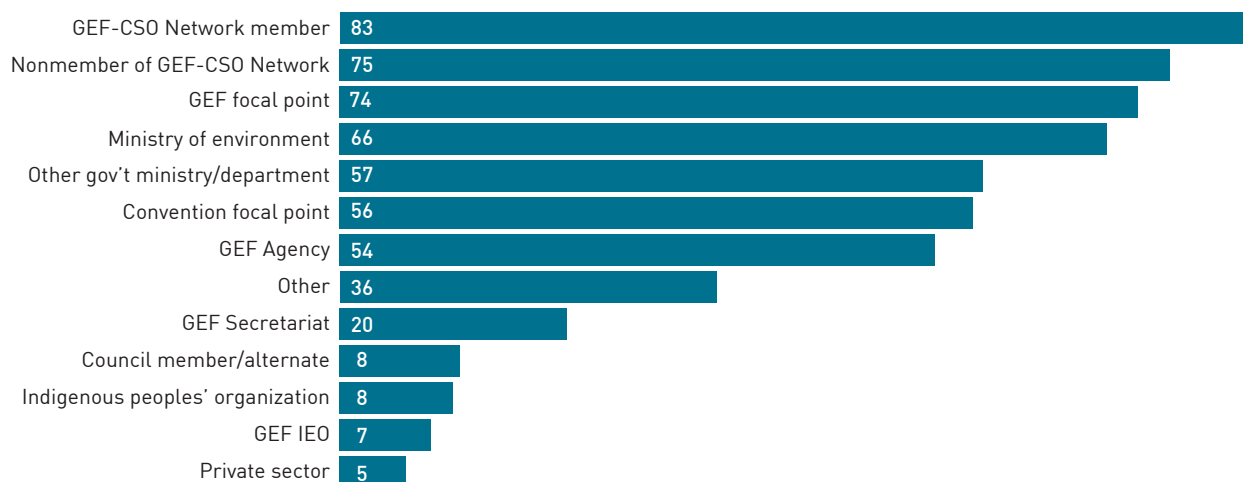
Sources: GEF 2010b, 2014, 2018b; GEF IEO 2014a; GEF Secretariat 2012, 2014, 2019; [Country Support Program web page](#); data provided by CSP management.

Survey results

An online survey was carried out as part of the evaluation of the Country Support Program. The survey was conducted by Le Groupe-conseil Baastel Itée on behalf of the GEF IEO. It sought to gather the views of a wide range of stakeholders who have been involved in the CSP to obtain insights and inform lessons that can feed into the program for the future. The e-survey, sent to an audience of 5,653 persons, was launched September 14, 2020, and ran for a month.

The response rate was 17.2 percent. A total of 727 responses from a balanced diversity of CSP stakeholders and types of CSP events attended over the three GEF periods covered were received after being sent to 4,220 participants in CSP activities over the three GEF periods. The list of participants was based on a census approach. The intent of the survey was to obtain an overall perspective on the CSP from a broad range of participants.

Q1. In what capacity did you mainly participate in CSP activities? CSP activity participants attended as GEF focal points (13.5 percent), convention focal points (10.2 percent), representatives of ministry of environment (12.0 percent), or other government ministries/departments (10.4 percent); from CSOs not part of the GEF-CSO Network (13.7 percent) or from CSOs in the GEF-CSO Network (15.1 percent), or as Council members or alternates (1.5 percent). Indigenous peoples' organizations (1.5 percent), the private sector (0.9 percent), GEF Agencies (9.8 percent), the GEF Secretariat (3.6 percent), the GEF IEO (1.3 percent), and other affiliations (6.6 percent) were also represented.



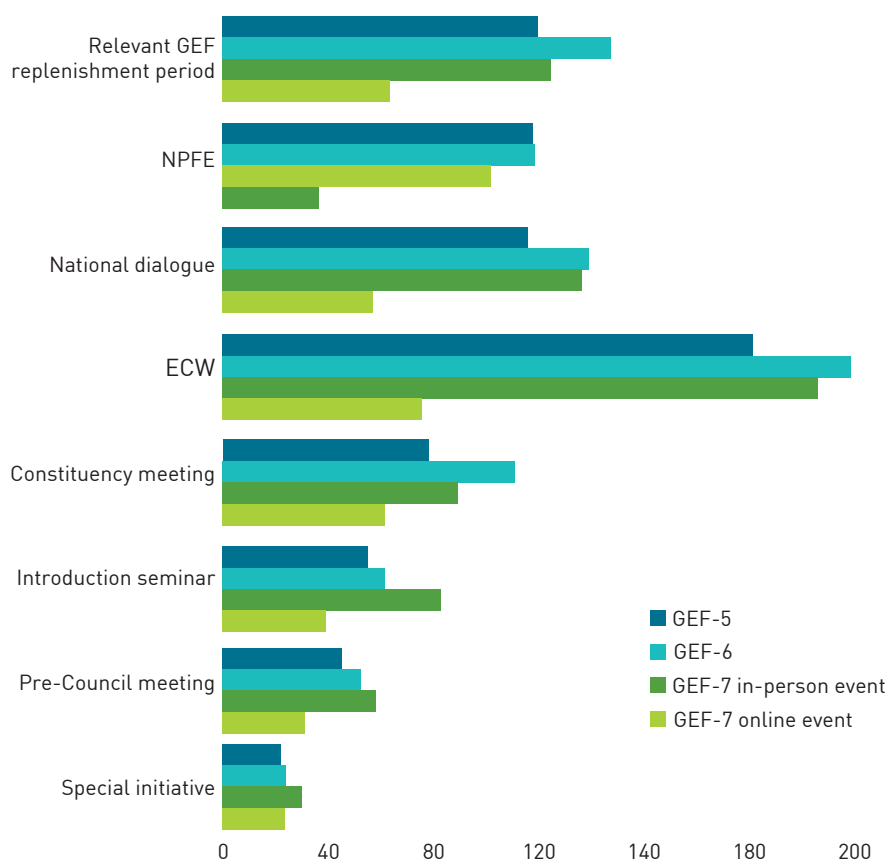
Q2. Are you from a GEF recipient country? If yes, please specify your country. Eighty-eight percent of respondents were from a GEF recipient country.



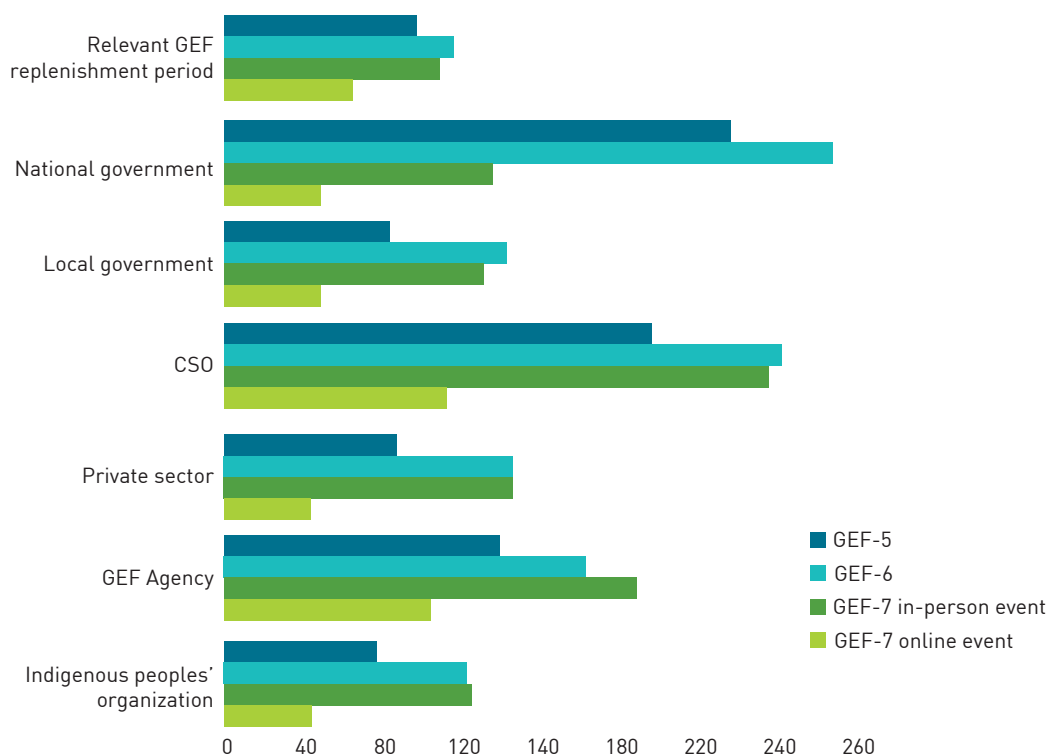
Q3. Gender. Fifty-eight percent of respondents were male and 42 percent were female.

Response	Percent	Number
Female	41.71	229
Male	58.29	320
Total	100	549

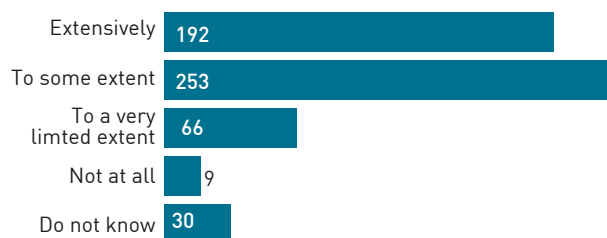
Q4. To the best of your recollection, please check below the GEF period(s) you participated in at least one CSP event. For each GEF period you participated in, please specify which type(s) of event you attended.



Q5. Which stakeholder group(s) were represented in the events you participated in?



Q6. In your opinion, to what extent are CSP events planned around your needs as a GEF stakeholder? Most respondents (81 percent) stated that CSP events were planned around their needs extensively (35 percent) or to some extent (46 percent). The other respondents were less positive: to a very limited extent (12.39 percent); not at all (1.64 percent); do not know (5.46 percent).



Q7. Have you been involved in designing any CSP event? Thirty-three percent of respondents had been involved in designing a CSP event, while 67 percent were not.



Q8. If yes, specify event and for each event, specify at which stage? Respondents had been involved at the initiation, planning, and presenting stages in these activities: national portfolio formulation exercise, national dialogue, expanded constituency workshop, constituency meeting, introduction seminar, pre-Council meeting, thematic workshops.

Activity	Initiation		Planning		Presenting		Total no.
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	
NPFE	34.53	77	37.67	84	27.80	62	223
National dialogue	30.86	75	37.04	90	32.10	78	243
ECW	28.07	64	34.65	79	37.28	85	228
Constituency meeting	30.19	48	32.70	52	37.11	59	159
Introduction seminar	31.18	29	35.48	33	33.33	31	93
Pre-Council meeting	32.00	24	32.00	24	36.00	27	75
Thematic workshop	30.56	22	31.94	23	37.50	27	72

Q9. In your opinion, to what extent do CSP activities contribute to formulating and implementing national priorities? According to respondents, CSP activities contribute extensively to formulating national priorities (36 percent) and implementing national priorities (33 percent). They contribute to some extent to formulating national priorities (43 percent) and implementing national priorities (44 percent).

Response	Extensively		To some extent		To a very limited extent		Not at all		Do not know		Total no.
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	
Formulating national priorities	35.70	196	42.44	233	13.11	72	2.37	13	6.38	35	549
Implementing national priorities	32.42	178	43.53	239	14.75	81	2.37	13	6.92	38	549

Q10. How significant do you think CSP activities are in enabling stakeholder access to GEF resources? According to 31 percent of respondents, CSP activities are highly significant in enabling stakeholder access to GEF resources. For 49 percent, CSP activities contribute in a significant way. For 13 percent of respondents, they are marginally significant, and 3 percent state they are insignificant.

Response	Percent	Number
Highly significant	30.97	170
Significant	49.18	270
Marginally significant	12.57	69
Insignificant	2.91	16
Do not know	4.37	24
Total	100	549

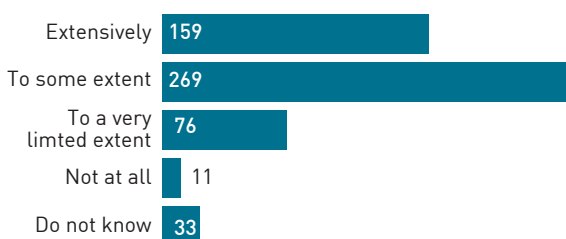
Q11. In your opinion, how adequate is the project design guidance provided through the CSP? According to 14 percent of respondents, the project design guidance provided through the CSP is fully adequate. Some 54 percent of respondents think it is adequate, while 23 percent of respondents state it is somewhat adequate. For 1 percent of respondents, this guidance is inadequate.

Response	Percent	Number
Fully adequate	14.21	78
Adequate	54.46	299
Somewhat adequate	23.32	128
Inadequate	1.46	8
Do not know	6.56	36
Total	100	549

Q12. To what degree do you rely on information provided by the CSP to actually design GEF projects? Respondents rely extensively (34 percent) and to some extent (43 percent) on information provided by the CSP to actually design GEF projects, 11 percent rely to a very limited extent on that information, and 2 percent do not rely at all on this information.

Response	Percent	Number
Extensively	33.52	184
To some extent	43.35	238
To a very limited extent	10.93	60
Not at all	1.82	10
Do not know	4.55	25
Does not apply	5.83	32
Total	100	549

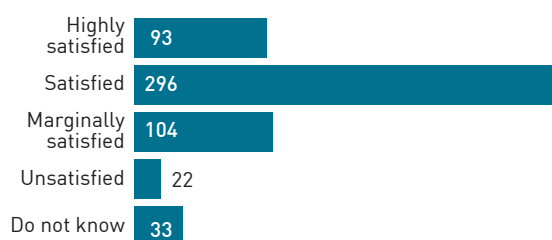
Q13. To what extent do CSP activities facilitate inclusive dialogue? Inclusive dialogue here refers to the active involvement of stakeholders such as indigenous people, women, and other vulnerable stakeholders in the activities. Seventy-eight percent of respondents are positive about CSP activities' contribution to inclusive dialogue. For 29 percent, CSP activities extensively facilitate inclusive dialogue. According to 49 percent, CSP activities facilitate inclusive dialogue to some extent, while 14 percent think they contribute to a very limited extent. For 2 percent, CSP activities do not facilitate inclusive dialogue at all, and 6 percent of respondents do not know.



Q14. From your perspective, how satisfactory are the GEF information and resources provided through the CSP? GEF information and resources provided through the CSP are highly satisfactory to 17 percent of respondents. Sixty percent think they are satisfactory. They are marginally satisfactory for 15 percent and unsatisfactory for 3 percent; 5 percent of respondents state they do not know.

Response	Percent	Number
Highly satisfactory	17.49	96
Satisfactory	60.29	331
Marginally satisfactory	14.94	82
Unsatisfactory	2.55	14
Do not know	4.74	26
Total	100	549

Q15. How satisfied are you with CSP activities in terms of facilitating knowledge exchange and coordination? When it comes to facilitating knowledge exchange and coordination, 17 percent of respondents are highly satisfied and 54 percent are satisfied. Nineteen percent are marginally satisfied, 4 percent are unsatisfied, and 6 percent stated they do not know.



Q16. From your participation in CSP events, can you name three GEF policies and three GEF procedures/requirements you have learned about? Respondents mentioned several GEF policies, procedures, and requirements they have learned about. The full list has been shared with the GEF IEO and the CSP.

Q17. Apart from the different events you participated in, what other type(s) of support from the CSP have you benefited from, if any? Please describe. Respondents mentioned different events they participated in and other types of support they have received from CSP. The full list of responses has been shared with the GEF IEO and the CSP.

Q18. How would you rate the overall quality of the support provided by the CSP team, including in particular the support from its country relations officers? According to respondents, the overall quality of support provided by the CSP team is highly satisfactory (20 percent), satisfactory (52 percent), marginally satisfactory (17 percent), or unsatisfactory (3 percent).

Response	Percent	Number
Highly satisfactory	19.85	109
Satisfactory	51.91	285
Marginally satisfactory	16.76	92
Unsatisfactory	2.73	15
Do not know	8.74	48
Total	100	549

Q20. From your experience, how would you rate the quality of the materials and tools used by the CSP in communicating with stakeholders and for activities? According to respondents, the quality of the materials and tools used by the CSP in communicating with stakeholders and for activities is highly satisfactory (18 percent), satisfactory (57 percent), marginally satisfactory (16 percent), or unsatisfactory (3 percent).

Q19. How would you qualify the timeliness of the support provided by the CSP team and its senior country officers? According to respondents, delivery of support provided by the CSP team and its senior country officers was timely (47 percent), somewhat timely (47 percent), or not timely (6 percent).

Response	Percent	Number
Highly satisfactory	18.03	99
Satisfactory	56.65	311
Marginally satisfactory	15.66	86
Unsatisfactory	2.73	15
Do not know	6.92	38
Total	100	549

Response	Percent	Number
Timely	46.99	258
Somewhat timely	46.63	256
Not timely	6.38	35
Total	100	549

Q21. How would you rate the usefulness of the tools, platforms, and activities supported by the CSP before COVID-19? According to respondents, the tools, platforms, and activities the CSP supported before the COVID-19 pandemic were useful (54–61 percent) or somewhat useful (35–41 percent).

Response	Useful		Somewhat useful		Not useful		Total no.
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	
Tools	60.29	331	35.70	196	4.01	22	549
Platforms	54.83	301	40.80	224	4.37	24	549
Activities	59.56	327	36.98	203	3.46	19	549

Q22. How would you rate the usefulness of the tools, platforms, and activities supported by the CSP in the recent context of COVID-19? In the context of the pandemic, the CSP-supported tools, platforms, and activities were found useful by 30–34 percent, and somewhat useful by 30–33 percent, of respondents.

Response	Useful		Somewhat useful		Not useful		Not applicable		Total no.
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	
Tools	33.52	184	30.97	170	3.10	17	32.42	178	549
Platforms	31.88	175	32.79	180	3.28	18	32.06	176	549
Activities	30.97	170	32.42	178	3.64	20	32.97	181	549

Q23. Do you have any suggestions for changes or improvements to the CSP? Respondents mentioned several suggestions for changes or improvements to the CSP. The full list of responses has been shared with the GEF IEO and the CSP.

Comprehensive interview protocol

Note: Subsets of this comprehensive interview protocol will be used and adapted for different categories of stakeholders to be interviewed, including for group interviews.

G.1 Relevance

1. Could you describe how the main recommendations from past evaluations of the CSP have been taken into account in the subsequent design of the CSP and its activities?
2. In your opinion, to what degree are CSP events planned around the needs expressed by its stakeholders?
3. To what extent are CSP activities contributing to building and implementing national priorities?
4. How significant do you think CSP activities are in enabling access to GEF resources?
5. What proportion of CSP activities/resources/content is focused on providing knowledge on how to access the GEF?
6. In your opinion, how adequate is the project design guidance provided?

Fully adequate	
Adequate	
Somewhat adequate	
Inadequate	

1. Could you describe how the main recommendations from past evaluations of the CSP have been taken into account in the subsequent design of the CSP and its activities?
2. In your opinion, to what degree are CSP events planned around the needs expressed by its stakeholders?
3. To what extent are CSP activities contributing to building and implementing national priorities?
4. How significant do you think CSP activities are in enabling access to GEF resources?

Highly significant	
Significant	
Marginally significant	
Insignificant	

7. To what degree do you rely on information provided by the CSP in actually designing GEF projects?

Extensively	
To some extent	
To a very limited extent	
Not at all	

8. Are you aware of country/regional programming activities carried out by other key environmental funds (Adaptation Fund, Green Climate Fund, Climate Investment Funds, Montreal Protocol Multilateral Fund, Global Mechanism for Desertification Convention), and if so, is there any complementarity and/or duplication with the CSP process?

9. Can you provide examples of these complementarities/duplications with the CSP process?

G.2 Effectiveness and results criteria

10. Have you observed any change over time in the types of stakeholders in CSP events? If yes, how have CSP events played a role in diversifying the types of participants and what stakeholder groups are notable in this regard?

11. To what extent do CSP activities facilitate inclusive dialogue? Please elaborate. (Inclusive dialogue refers to the consideration of gender equity, inclusion of civil society and indigenous peoples as well as other vulnerable groups.)

Extensively	
To some extent	
To a very limited extent	
Not at all	

12. Can you provide examples of national partnerships that developed around GEF projects through CSP activities (including public-private partnerships)?

13. Do you have direct knowledge of examples of inclusive dialogues through the CSP process? Please explain.

14. In your opinion, how satisfactorily are gender equity and social inclusion commitments mainstreamed in CSP materials? Please explain your rating.

Highly satisfactory	
Satisfactory	
Marginally satisfactory	
Unsatisfactory	

15. Can you provide examples of CSP participating countries establishing a consistent pipeline of GEF projects and programs facilitated by the CSP? Please elaborate.

16. What are the barriers/challenges, if any, to applying CSP-acquired knowledge and skill sets in the development of country GEF project pipelines?

17. Can you provide concrete examples of country environmental programs that were prioritized as a result of CSP activity involvement in the process? Please describe the CSP influence in the process.

18. Can you provide examples of approved GEF financing for projects/programs that was made possible through the skills acquired through the CSP process? Please elaborate how it links back to the CSP process.

19. Can you provide examples from countries where a more strategic use of GEF resources was made possible as a result of support provided by CSP activities? Please elaborate.

20. Can you provide concrete examples of cofinancing or scaling-up financing secured by countries made possible through support provided by the CSP? Please elaborate.

21. As a result of CSP support, has there been an evolution in the role of national stakeholders in national policies, as well as in program and project design and implementation? If so, please elaborate on how this evolution can be witnessed (national ownership).

22. As a result of CSP support, can you provide examples of influence on GEF policies, priorities, and procedures that can be traced back to conclusions of CSP activities? Please elaborate.

G.3 Efficiency criteria

23. Describe the types/levels of support provided by the CSP team at the GEF Secretariat, including in particular by its senior country officers.
24. What was the quality and timeliness of the support provided by the CSP team and in particular by its country officers? Please elaborate.
25. Are there any issues regarding the timing of CSP activities versus optimal timing in view of GEF replenishment periods and Council activities? Please elaborate.
26. How would you rate the quality of the tools and materials used in communicating with stakeholders and for activities? Please explain.

Highly significant	
Significant	
Marginally significant	
Insignificant	

27. How would you rate the reliability of the tools used by the CSP in day-to-day communication and for activities? Please explain.

Highly reliable	
Generally reliable	
Marginally reliable	
Unreliable	

28. Can you provide examples of the involvement of different stakeholders in the design of CSP activities? If so, please describe how they were involved in the design process.
29. How have CSP activities been responsive to the needs and responded to feedback provided by different stakeholder types including women? Please elaborate by providing examples.
30. Have tools and platforms offered by the CSP evolved to adapt to changing circumstances (including the changes in the Knowledge Management platform and in response to COVID-19)? If so, please explain how.

31. Are you aware of examples of follow-up by GEF Secretariat management on the themes discussed during CSP activities? Please elaborate.
32. How would you rate the usefulness of tools, platforms, and activities supported by the CSP (including those being used in the context of COVID-19)? Please elaborate by providing examples.

Very useful	
Useful	
Somewhat useful	
Not useful at all	

33. Are you aware of any examples of changes in activity design in response to needs expressed by stakeholders? Please elaborate.
34. Have you been aware of any financial constraints in responding to country needs to achieve CSP objectives? Please elaborate.
35. What is the planned versus actual reach per budget unit?
36. Are you aware of other factors affecting efficiency?

G.4 Lessons learned

37. Do you know of instances where lessons learned from CSP activities led to changes in GEF policies and strategies? Please elaborate.
38. Are you aware of actual or potential mechanisms built into the CSP to provide feedback on GEF policies and strategies? Please explain.
39. Are there currently mechanisms in place to share lessons learned from the CSP with partners? Please elaborate.
40. Are you aware of examples of lessons learned that were shared with partners and led to engagement/changes? Please elaborate.
41. Are you aware of existing barriers and opportunities to improve the sharing of lessons learned? Please explain.

Events observed

- CSP Cape Verde National Virtual Dialogue, July 22–23, 2020
- Stakeholder Empowerment Series: Updated Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle (Latin America and Lusophone Africa), November 11, 2020
- Art of Knowledge Exchange for CSOs, November 18, 2020 (see [annex N](#))
- GEF CSP Stakeholder Empowerment Series: Gender and Environment session/webinar, October 22, 2020
- The 59th Meeting of the GEF Council, December 7–11, 2020

Options for recommendation implementation

Recommendation 1: Build on current efforts to collaborate with other global environmental funds

Options could include the development of joint virtual events between the various global environmental funds. Greater advantage could be taken, for instance, of the Green Climate Fund's interest and mandate to collaborate with the GEF on country-level engagement through its Readiness Programme to foster more joint national and regional events, given the highly complementary objectives of these two funds.

Recommendation 2: Develop a clear CSP strategy and an implementation plan with an appropriate budget and resource envelope

Recommendation 3: Strengthen the CSP management team and systems

Options could include the following:

- The development and adoption by the CSP, as a first step, of a logical framework that clearly defines its intervention logic and targets from the activity to the impact level, building on the intervention logic developed for this evaluation
- The hiring of a dedicated financial reporting and monitoring staff member to structure

and produce proper results-based financial reporting

- Formalized access to localized support through retainer arrangements in the regions where the program is active to assist with logistics for events at a minimum
- Independent evaluations of the CSP at the end of every two GEF periods to inform future programming.

Recommendation 4: Revisit the reach and timing of national dialogues to align them better with country needs for support

Options could include conducting more national dialogues at the end of the previous GEF period, which could help provide a better bridge for the next replenishment period and ease the pressure of having to respond to requests for a large number of countries wanting to hold national dialogues in the same time period. This would require that the CSP coordinate more closely with GEF management during the replenishment process so as to be at the forefront of key strategies and priorities that are likely to emerge from the replenishment. Further, it would require the CSP to take a more proactive approach in discussing with countries the planning of events to ensure that the timing of

country-driven national dialogue events is better—particularly given that these events are usually requested by countries and not launched by the CSP. This could also involve holding more meetings at CSP events where decision makers are provided a platform.

Recommendation 5: Enhance inclusiveness, so that inclusiveness at events turns into improved collaboration on the ground

Options could include having the CSP team do the following:

- Provide an open communication channel (such as a mailing list) for dialogue to continue beyond events. This would encourage operational focal points to follow up on the ideas and potential partnerships discussed with civil society organizations (CSOs) and other country stakeholders during CSP events.
 - Coordinate, in conjunction with GEF senior management, CSP dialogues more closely with the programming and resource allocation process that occurs through other channels.
 - Contribute to ensuring a deeper integration of CSOs and other stakeholders after CSP events by building bridges between operational focal points and CSOs—not only those that attended the CSP event, but also other CSOs, including those that attended virtually.
 - Involve a wider variety of stakeholders in the planning and preparation of events. Wider involvement during the planning process will (1) help better target the event (mainly national dialogues and expanded constituency workshops) toward key country or constituency issues and needs, (2) help bring the GEF “world” together with groups that are more in tune on the ground and could potentially make the CSP more effective, and (3) raise the quality of messaging in the activities and ensure they are better targeted to country and regional priorities.
- Increase the guidance provided to countries to ensure inclusiveness in national dialogues, especially for indigenous peoples’ organizations, women, local actors such as local or district government and community leaders, and the private sector.
 - Take advantage of the flexibility provided by the virtual platforms in particular to design and organize short and focused events specifically targeted to the private sector. The goal is to raise engagement, dialogue, and feedback potential using formats that are more amenable to this group, in view of its low participation rate in past CSP events and platforms, and in response to the priority the GEF is now putting on improving its engagement with that stakeholder group.
 - Continue to promote the CSP as a tool for gathering feedback from stakeholders on policy. Because expanded constituency workshops, constituency meetings, and pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members focus on presenting new GEF policies and strategies, they are prime opportunities for gathering feedback from actual policy users. The online model for feedback on policy could be expanded by the CSP to ensure wider participation and inclusiveness of stakeholders in the feedback loop on GEF policy development and strategic plans.

Integration of recommendations from earlier CSP evaluations

Recommendation	Integration in the redesigned CSP
Terminal Evaluation of the CSP for GEF Focal Points (Navajas 2010)	
1. The GEF Secretariat needs to ensure that the capacity benefits of the CSP and subregional workshops in particular do not diminish as the scale of participants (and expectations) expands during the next project phase.	The CSP still prioritizes capacity development of stakeholders despite the much larger event portfolio.
2. The subregional workshops and Knowledge Facility website offer long-term mechanisms for interaction with country focal points and should be used more intensively by the GEF Secretariat and implementing GEF Agencies.	The subregional workshops are now the expanded constituency workshops (ECWs), which are used more extensively to engage with stakeholders; however, the level at which Agencies and the wider GEF Secretariat participate varies widely between events and constituencies. The Knowledge Facility website no longer exists, nor do any of its functions that were used for interaction between focal points.
3. Direct funding support for countries should be more closely coordinated with national dialogues during the next phase of the CSP.	Direct funding support to focal points was canceled for varying reasons. However, the national dialogues were ramped up in the redesign of the CSP. The national portfolio formulation exercises (NPFs) were also launched, though later canceled and their functions integrated in the national dialogues.
4. During the next phase, consideration should be given to incorporating the Knowledge Facility website (or selected tools) into the GEF webpage.	The Knowledge Facility website was incorporated into the GEF website, though not all functionalities are fully operational at present.
5. The continued participation of GEF Agencies is important for practical and political reasons.	The CSP continues to include GEF Agencies in CSP events, though to varying degrees.
6. A gradual transfer of project functions and responsibilities is recommended to sustain momentum and effectiveness between program phases.	The transfer of project functions and responsibilities was successful between UNDP and the GEF.

Recommendation	Integration in the redesigned CSP
Midterm Review of the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise (GEF IEO 2014a)	
1. The NPFE should continue since it is highly relevant to supporting countries in addressing the pre-identification phase of the project cycle.	The NPFEs were merged into national dialogues, many of which now include programming support exercises.
2. The revised NPFE should continue to be implemented by the Secretariat, to maintain neutrality between countries and GEF Agencies, and to provide funding for a country-led NPFE on a voluntary basis.	The NPFEs were merged into national dialogues, which are organized with GEF support at the request of GEF operational focal points.
3. Programming support exercises should be offered at the end of a GEF phase rather than at the start of a new phase to ensure countries are ready for the new phase when it starts.	The timing of national dialogues, many of which now include programming support exercises and are implemented at the beginning of the GEF replenishment period, continues to cause issues for stakeholders.
4. The capacity development initiatives of the GEF should aim to support a more comprehensive understanding of the GEF with country-level partners and stakeholders, especially in least developed countries and small island developing states.	Inclusiveness and capacity development for low-income, low-capacity countries, including small island developing states and least developed countries, continue to be a priority for the CSP.
5. The NPFE guidelines should address the information needs of countries for programming on topics such as eligibility criteria, cofinancing expectations, and funding modalities.	The NPFE uptake was low, and ultimately it was phased out and integrated into the national dialogues. The recommendation is obsolete.

Comparative assessment of funds' capacity support programs

Objectives of support/readiness activity	Delivery mechanism (staff, consultants)	Financial structure and financial tools	Support events and activities	Stakeholders
Climate Investment Funds (CIF) Country Investment Support				
Supports country engagement and learning and knowledge exchange in support of countries' development, preparation, implementation, and monitoring of their CIF portfolio.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIF administrative unit acts as the central coordinating unit of CIF partnership activity. • MDB-coordinated country engagement activities are implemented by MDB focal point teams, in response to demand from CIF countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FY21 country engagement budget is \$566,000. • FY20 country engagement activities budget was \$415,000. • Countries are allocated funding to develop their investment plans. For example, the Forest Investment Program allocates \$250,000 to each country for development of their investment programs. In the case of the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience, the allocation is \$1 million per country to develop its strategic program for climate resilience. • Country support coordinated by CIF administrative unit or MDBs is based on demand from countries. In the latter case, it is done through a call for proposals. 	<p>Examples of activities in 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender and energy briefs • Gender assessment and gender mainstreaming in climate change • Stakeholder review on implementation of new forestry law and decree • Enhancement of monitoring and reporting systems for climate and disaster risk management activities • Integrating climate resilience in infrastructure development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National governments • Citizen groups • Private sector entities • MDBs • UN agencies • Other development partners

Objectives of support/readiness activity	Delivery mechanism (staff, consultants)	Financial structure and financial tools	Support events and activities	Stakeholders
Green Climate Fund (GCF) Readiness Programme				
<p>Provides resources for strengthening institutional capacities of NDAs or focal points and direct access to entities to efficiently engage with the GCF. NDAs can elect delivery partners to implement approved activities. Delivery partners can be a GCF-accredited entity, or another organization capable of implementing technical assistance and capacity development grants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resources may be provided in the form of grants up to \$1 million per country per year or technical assistance. ● Funds are administered by NDAs which have the flexibility to hire national and international consultants to support readiness activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In 2019, approved 129 requests worth \$95.07 million, including 19 for adaptation planning worth \$41.72 million. ● In 2020, an additional 10 adaptation planning requests (\$20.36 million) and four other readiness support requests (\$2.41 million) were approved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Processes such as dialogues (national and in some cases regional) and stakeholder forums undertake country assessments, and provide direct technical support to improve capacity of countries to plan resources for climate actions while informing the strategic, country-driven programming of mitigation and adaptation initiatives. ● Outputs include no-objection procedures established; nominations of entities for direct access accreditation; work programs of accredited DAEs aligned with corresponding country programs; country programs developed submitted to the Secretariat, updating or enhancing NDCs; country programs revised to better serve NDCs, national adaptation plans; sectoral adaptation plans; adaptation-focused concept notes; and concept notes covering the spectrum of GCF results areas, including energy transition, forestry, agriculture, and green urban development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National and subnational institutions such as provincial and municipal governments ● Stakeholders across sectors ● Diverse stakeholders (private sector, NGOs, indigenous groups, community organizations)

Objectives of support/readiness activity	Delivery mechanism (staff, consultants)	Financial structure and financial tools	Support events and activities	Stakeholders
GEF Country Support Program (CSP)				
Provides recipient countries with assistance and capacity building to participate in the GEF partnership and make use of the trust fund's resources. Informs, assists, and enables GEF focal points, convention focal points, Council members and alternates, CSOs, and GEF Agencies to advance the protection of the global environment through an improved understanding of the GEF.	Run by CSP and GEF headquarters staff with focused event-level support provided by national and regional stakeholders such as CSOs and government (policy and technical staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2011, 320 events have been organized with 15,585 participants supporting 72 national portfolio formulation exercises in GEF-5 and GEF-6. Total budget allocated to the CSP for these activities through GEF-5, GEF-6, and GEF-7 amounts to \$70 million. • Budget spending as of this writing in GEF-7 estimates about \$5.3 million in staff costs, and \$12.3 million in variable spending (travel, hotel, allowance, translation, meal service, etc.). • Unused funds can carry over from previous replenishment period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings and workshops to promote dialogue and build capacity of stakeholders including national dialogues, ECWs, constituency meetings, introduction seminars, and pre-Council meetings of recipient Council members. • Recent shift to online events such as the Stakeholder Empowerment Series. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National government stakeholders such as government ministries, focal points, convention staff • GEF Agencies • CSOs • Private sector • Other environmental finance providers
Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme				
Strengthens the capacity of national and regional implementing entities to receive and manage climate financing, and manage all aspects of adaptation and resilience projects, from design through implementation to monitoring and evaluation.	Run by headquarters staff support including the use of consultants to provide technical support with project design activities and review the use of Adaptation Fund grants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program budget was \$512,000 in 2019 and \$652,960 in 2020. • Total number of readiness grants approved to date is 45, for a total of \$1,555,767. Nine readiness grants were approved between 2019 and 2020. • The process to access the readiness grants is country driven. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction seminars, facilitating peer-to-peer learning • Provision of grants to support project formulation and the implementation of gender, environmental, and social policies 	Accredited implementing entities and project stakeholders

Sources: Adaptation Fund 2019; CIF 2020b; GCF 2020; GEF website, [Country Support Program](#), accessed January 20, 2022; NDC Partnership website, [Green Climate Fund—Readiness Programme](#), accessed January 20, 2022.

Note: FY = fiscal year; DAE = direct access entity; MDB = multilateral development bank; NDA = national designated authority; NDC = nationally determined contribution; NGO = nongovernmental organization.

Women's participation in GEF-7 ECWs

ECW	Women (%)	Region	Constituency
Gambia, The	5	AFR	Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, The Gambia
Cameroon	9	AFR	Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe
Belarus	16	ECA	Armenia, Belarus, Russian Federation
Uruguay	16	LAC	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay
Kenya	25	AFR	Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda
Togo	27	AFR	Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo
Rwanda	30	AFR	Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda
Mongolia	30	SAR	Cambodia, Demcratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam
Egypt, Arab. Rep.	34	MENA	Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia
Angola	39	AFR	Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Eswatini, Zambia, Zimbabwe
St. Lucia	40	LAC	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago
Fiji	55	Pacific	Cook Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

Source: ECW attendance lists provided by the CSP, August 2020.

Note: AFR = Africa; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA = Middle East and North Africa; SAR = South Asia.

Barriers to applying CSP-acquired knowledge and skills

Stakeholder	Barrier
GEF focal points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CSP events have a limited outreach, and therefore do not fully address the need for continuous involvement of a greater number of stakeholders. ● Staff turnover causes a “knowledge flight” as people move on to other jobs or positions. There is a need for more ready access to GEF information for newcomers, as well as for other staff (e.g., advisers). ● CSP events provide general knowledge, but there is an ongoing need for country-specific issues and challenges to be addressed in bilateral meetings. ● In some countries, the gap between national cycles and those of the GEF means that new GEF focal points “inherit” projects from the previous administration with limited room for adjustments. ● The dominant position of Agencies in developing projects limits the role GEF focal points can play. ● There is a need for the CSP to bring traditional knowledge forward, as this is often in tension with the governance framework in some countries.
CSOs and other country stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a lack of follow-up by government with CSOs after CSP events regarding the opportunities for collaboration or involvement identified. ● There is a lack of financing to play a more active role in the GEF system. ● Sharing of CSP information within CSOs is limited: “The information just stays with one individual, but it has to trickle down the organization to be operationalized.”
GEF Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The knowledge provided by the CSP is theoretical. More guidance is needed on how to apply it. ● It is sometimes a challenge for Agencies to align projects with both GEF strategies and national priorities. ● High national capacity is required to access GEF resources.

Summary of online art of knowledge exchange CSO workshop

OBJECTIVES

- Help participants develop an understanding of knowledge exchange within the context of environmental development solutions
- Introduce and help participants learn how to use a systematic and results-focused approach to knowledge exchange
- Introduce a range of instruments and activities that contribute to successful knowledge exchange.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants included a variety of stakeholders from several CSOs, CSP participants, and other GEF staff.

OBSERVATIONS

The seminar was a bit slow in the beginning. There were 43 participants attending in the early stages of the event. This number had dropped by the end as it

seemed people were unable to commit to the entire event, especially given the time difference, which was as much as 13 hours for participants from Asia.

The first part of the seminar introduced the concept of knowledge exchange, having people explain their understanding of the concept, and challenges related to knowledge exchange as a practice. Eventually, the format evolved, with participants dividing into breakout groups to discuss specific topics before returning to the main group to share their group experiences on the topic. However, the breakout groups were of a very short duration, because the workshop itself was short; tackling any particular topic in any depth was therefore difficult. The workshop nevertheless did allow for some exchanges between CSO participants.

Management response

This annex presents the management response from the GEF Secretariat to the working document version of this report. It has been formatted but not edited, and all quotations refer to the working document, not the published report.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat appreciates the useful findings arising from the Evaluation of the Country Support Program (CSP) and is in broad agreement with its conclusions and recommendations.

2. The Secretariat is encouraged by the many positive findings of the report, including the contribution of the CSP to enabling a greater, more strategic, better-coordinated access of countries to GEF resources, and the role of the program as both a communication-mechanism for the changing requirements of the GEF and as a feedback-mechanism on new GEF policies. The Secretariat welcomes the report's acknowledgements of the role played by the CSP in engagement and knowledge-sharing between stakeholders, and in facilitating dialogue between increasingly diverse stakeholders. The Secretariat is pleased by the report's conclusions on the quality and timeliness of CSP support and communications.

3. At the same time, the Secretariat welcomes the areas that are identified for improvement and further evolution of the program, particularly the areas highlighted by the six recommendations of the Evaluation. This management response focuses specifically on these recommendations and articulates potential strategies for addressing them going forward. As the Evaluation highlights, the CSP has evolved in accordance with past evaluation recommendations and GEF Council decisions, which have guided the transition of the program into its current formulation. Therefore, the Secretariat is confident that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this Evaluation will similarly guide the future evolution of the program that will be articulated by the CSP Strategy currently under development for the GEF-8 replenishment.

RECOMMENDATION (A)

“Build on current efforts to collaborate with other global environmental funds. To help countries to respond better to the commitments of countries vis-à-vis the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements that the GEF is supporting along with other global funds, CSP management should build further on past efforts to collaborate on readiness activities with other funds. Overall, the management of the CSP should continue to monitor developments to identify where substantive

opportunities for collaboration can be established beyond the current efforts.”

4. The Secretariat welcomes this recommendation. The Secretariat has already been taking steps towards closer collaboration with other funds and will intensify these efforts in response to this recommendation. The GEF CEO has stated as one of his goals a broad relation of complementarity with related funds, in particular the Green Climate Fund (GCF). To this end, a parallel document¹ is being presented for discussion and consideration at the current 60th Council meeting that describes the agreement reached between the GEF and GCF Secretariats and sets the overarching framework for deeper cooperation between the two funds. Within this framework, the CSP will explore options to enhance collaboration in a manner that most effectively build capacities of OFPs and other stakeholders to access GEF resources and to learn about GEF policies and guidelines. Any progress will be reflected in the annual joint progress report that will be submitted to both the GEF Council and the GCF Board. The experiences and lessons from this initiative as it develops, can serve as guidance for possible collaborations with other global environmental funds as appropriate and relevant.

RECOMMENDATION (B)

“Develop a clear CSP Strategy and an implementation plan with an appropriate budget and resource envelope. The CSP would benefit from developing a comprehensive program strategy for every replenishment cycle, with appropriate activities designed based on country grouping needs, and with proper implementation plans to guide its actions. Such a

¹ GEF/C.60/08, Long-Term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence and Collaboration between the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting_documents/EN_GEF_C.60_08_Long-Term%20Vision%20on%20Complementarity%2C%20Coherence%20and%20Collaboration%20between%20the%20Green%20Climate%20Fund%20and%20the%20Global%20Environment%20Facility.pdf

strategic planning approach should develop a validated theory of change for the program, with clear expected results, milestones, and targets in its main spheres of influence. The CSP has a significant scope and reach and can more proactively strengthen the crucial role it plays moving forward as a key entry point in the GEF dialogue, knowledge sharing and capacity building process with GEF partners at the global, regional and country level.”

5. The Secretariat is in agreement with this recommendation. The Secretariat is in the process of developing a comprehensive program strategy for the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations that includes activities and the necessary corresponding implementation plans. As a part of shaping this strategy, and in response to this recommendation, the Secretariat will develop a logical framework that defines its intervention logic.

RECOMMENDATION (C)

“Strengthen technical expertise in the CSP team and monitoring and reporting systems. CSP management should improve the program’s dedicated technical capabilities and its ability to provide more localized support, to meet the high demands placed on the CSP team across countries and regions. In light of the insufficient program data management and reporting, CSP management should also put in place results-based data management, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems to track the use of resources, as well as activities, outcomes, and impacts. These systems should provide the basis for more systematic and comprehensive reporting at each GEF cycle to both GEF management and the GEF Council.”

6. The Secretariat takes note of this recommendation. As discussed in response to recommendation (b) above, the Secretariat is in the process of developing a comprehensive program strategy for the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations. Resulting from the scope of this strategy, the Secretariat will also elaborate on any further technical team skill gaps to meet the high demands for more localized support that has been identified by the Evaluation. In response to this recommendation, this strategy will

elaborate a logical framework, and this framework will also include proposed monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems for the program.

RECOMMENDATION (D)

“Revisit the reach and timing of National Dialogues to align them better with country needs for support. The CSP should explore ways to improve the timing of the National Dialogue or develop other up-front strategic dialogue mechanisms on the future use of GEF resources. These should be planned as early as possible and should pursue deeper multi-stakeholder engagement in the process. Finally, the CSP should examine with GEF programming staff how National Dialogues and ECWs could more directly contribute to programming objectives.”

7. The Secretariat takes note of this recommendation. Experience over previous GEF replenishment periods as well as the valuable findings of this Evaluation demonstrate that the National Dialogue component of the CSP needs to be rethought and reformulated. As discussed above in response to other recommendations, the Secretariat is in the process of developing a comprehensive program strategy for the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations, and as part of this strategy, the National Dialogues component can be reconfigured to bring it more in line with both GEF-8 strategies and specific country needs. The Secretariat is currently in the process of exploring the feasibility of different options to this end. For example, one such option may be the disaggregation of the National Dialogues into smaller, more specific activities with a dedicated focus to particular GEF-8 programming and policy strategies. In response to this recommendation, specific proposals along these lines will be articulated in the GEF-8 CSP strategy currently under development.

RECOMMENDATION (E)

“Enhance inclusiveness, so that inclusiveness at events turns into improved collaboration on the

ground. Though the CSP cannot be held responsible and accountable for how country focal points manage their GEF programs, it is in a unique position to offer best practices that ensure successful GEF programming in practice. In this context, the CSP could play an important role in ensuring that the inclusiveness they have promoted in their events continues past the CSP activity and results in active and fruitful collaboration. The CSP can be a gateway toward better integration of CSOs and other groups into GEF programming after CSP events.”

8. The Secretariat takes note of this recommendation. The Secretariat also notes the finding of the Evaluation that while inclusiveness and diversity of participants in CSP events has increased over time, these vary greatly between countries, constituencies, and events. In this regard, the Secretariat would like to highlight that participants in CSP events are in fact determined by the countries themselves. Notwithstanding this fact, the Secretariat is currently exploring options to greatly enhance inclusivity and collaboration at CSP events as one of the parameters that can lay the groundwork for better collaboration on the ground. As an example, SES (virtual) and ECW (in person) sessions can be dedicated to sharing best practices on dimensions that can enhance collaboration on internal organization; how to work more closely with agencies; understanding the financial aspects of projects; how to manage portfolios; how to read a PIF, project documents, project implementation reports, and financial closure reports; and how to work effectively with CSOs. In response to this recommendation, the GEF-8 CSP strategy currently under development will showcase learnings and best practices of inclusiveness through events facilitated by the CSP program.

RECOMMENDATION (F)

“Apply a customized approach to capacity building. Because a one-size-fits-all approach to capacity building limits the number of participants that can be reached, the CSP should develop more customized approaches to capacity building with

consideration for more flexibility as to the number of participants from each stakeholder group and their level of capacity. The CSP should also continue to empower OFPs by better informing them on their roles in GEF portfolio management beyond portfolio development. At the same time, it should place emphasis on their crucial facilitation role in keeping an ongoing dialogue with, and bringing on board other actors such as line ministries, the private sector, local communities, and CSOs to ensure the mainstreaming and leveraging effect of GEF resources to support national commitments to multilateral environmental agreements.”

9. The Secretariat takes note of this recommendation. The Secretariat is currently exploring the feasibility of options to introduce new components of the CSP that will be targeted to specific stakeholders’ needs. For example, this can include support for OFPs tailored to their specific needs and circumstances; training for government executing agencies; CSO to CSO training on how to work with OFPs and become executing partners; creating a community of practice for GEF focal points across the world; and creating a platform for journalists to access information on GEF projects as illustration for their work. In response to this recommendation, proposals along these lines will be included in the GEF-8 CSP strategy currently under development.

CONCLUSION

10. As highlighted above, the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this Evaluation will play a key role in influencing the GEF-8 CSP Strategy that is currently under development for the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations. Detailed proposals along each of these dimensions, with references to this Evaluation, will be included in subsequent versions of the Programming and Policy Directions of the GEF-8 replenishment that will be considered during the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations, as well as in the CSP Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8 that will be presented to the 62nd Council in June 2022. Progress on the implementation of each of these recommendations will also be tracked through the IEO’s standard Management Action Record. The CSP program activities will also continue to be tracked and presented to Council by the regularly updated GEF Scorecards, as well as through other council reports as needed and appropriate.

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