

Assessing Inclusion  
of Marginalized Groups  
in GEF-Supported Projects,  
with Attention to Fragile and  
Conflict-Affected Situations

*Approach Paper*

June 3, 2024

## Table of Contents

I. Introduction .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
II. Background .....	4
III. Inclusion at the GEF .....	4
IV. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation .....	5
A. Evaluation Objectives and Audience.....	8
B. Definitions .....	9
C. Evaluation Design and Methodology .....	12
D. Data Analysis and Reporting .....	18
E. Stakeholder Engagement and Quality Assurance .....	19
V. Workplan, Schedule, & Deliverables .....	19
Key Deliverables.....	20
Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix.....	22
Annex 2: Relevant Self-Reported Flags.....	28
Annex 3: Background on Marginalized Groups, Conservation, and FCS .....	29
A. Gender .....	29
B. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities .....	31
C. Youth.....	32
D. Persons with Disabilities.....	34
Annex 4: Policy Frameworks for Inclusion.....	36
A. Inclusion at the GEF, Generally .....	36
B. Gender .....	36
C. IPLCs.....	39
D. Youth.....	41
E. Persons with Disabilities.....	42
Annex 5: Resources.....	44

## I. Introduction

1. Inclusion is increasingly recognized as an important consideration when designing and implementing environmental programming. Persons from marginalized groups are more likely to be excluded from decision-making, do not have the same rights to land and natural resources, and are disadvantaged in hiring and procurement.<sup>1</sup> While marginalized groups bring unique perspectives to bear on environmental issues, they often are not given a voice in consultations and processes to provide input on programming (Salvatore and Wolbring 2022). Challenges associated with inclusion may be amplified for those with multiple intersecting marginal identities. A growing body of evidence and practice indicates that marginalized groups not only need protection, but also that their engagement in development interventions improves the sustainability and effectiveness of an intervention as well as other measures of performance.<sup>2</sup>
2. In recent years, there has been increased involvement of marginalized groups in global environmental processes which has led to a greater consideration of social inclusion in implementation of existing multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and the establishment of new instruments, such as the Nagoya Protocol (Aguilar Delgado and Perez-Aleman 2021). As discussed in Annex 4, the Conference of Parties to a variety of MEAs—including the UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD, the Minamata Convention, and the Stockholm Convention—have adopted decisions advancing inclusion of and attention to various marginalized groups. The UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that “combating inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion are linked to each other and are interdependent” (UN 2015). UNICEF highlights equity, inclusion, and “leave no one behind” as principles underpinning its strategic plan and includes them as part of its strategy for progress on sustainable development goals (UNICEF 2021). The UNDP has incentivized staff to focus projects on vulnerable and excluded populations and requires that programs and projects explain how activities can or will significantly reduce exclusion, providing guidance for benefiting and engaging Indigenous Peoples (UNDP 2021).
3. This evaluation will examine whether, how, and to what extent GEF-supported projects are inclusive of historically marginalized groups—in particular people marginalized on the basis of gender (with a primary focus on women, but also girls and sexual and gender minorities),<sup>3</sup> Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), and other groups such as youth and persons with disabilities—and the effects of inclusion (or lack thereof). The evaluation will pay particular attention to the trends for inclusion of

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International 2024; Alam 2015; Jensen and Halle 2013; Schnabel, and Tabyshalieva 2012; GEF 2017.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Leisher et al. 2016; Agarwal 2009; Colfer 2010; Agarwal 2009; Barraclough et al. 2021; Dawson et al. 2021.

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of this evaluation, the term “people marginalized on the basis of gender” will refer to people marginalized by their sexual orientation as well as those marginalized by their gender identity, in line with the “World Bank Gender Strategy 2024 – 2030: Accelerate Gender Equality for a Sustainable, Resilient, and Inclusive Future” Consultation Draft (World Bank 2023d).

specific marginalized groups in GEF projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCS), recognizing that FCS contexts are characterized by problems of marginalization and exclusion that are distinct from stable situations. Building on a recent evaluation of GEF support in FCS contexts (GEF IEO 2020), this evaluation will assess the approaches and relative prevalence of inclusion of marginalized populations in GEF projects generally, as well as specifically in FCS contexts. It will also consider the effects of inclusion of marginalized populations on project outcomes as well as socioeconomic co-benefits. The evaluation will approach the issue of inclusion from a combined perspective of capitalizing on opportunities (e.g., inclusion as improving project outcomes) and managing risks (e.g., risks to projects and to stakeholders).

4. This Approach Paper serves as an overarching outline of the evaluation and includes relevant background literature, the evaluation objectives and questions, and the approach for responding to those questions. It begins with a brief overview of the literature on concepts specific to inclusion and the distinct set of challenges to inclusion in FCS contexts, discussed in more depth in Annex 3. Then, the Approach Paper continues with an overview of relevant GEF policies and strategies, discussed at greater length in Annex 4. Next, it outlines the purpose and scope of the evaluation, followed by the evaluation design and methodology, providing details on the information to be collected and analyzed as well as the work plan for completing the evaluation. Finally, the Approach Paper includes a detailed matrix outlining evaluation questions and sub-questions as well as the relevant indicators and source of information. Taken together, this Approach Paper serves as a guide for effectively undertaking the evaluation.

## II. Background

5. Groups marginalized on the basis of gender often have an important role in environmental management, notwithstanding their marginalization. Women often serve as the primary stewards and users of a wide range of natural resources. In most societies, particularly those where agriculture is highly manual, women are estimated to produce 60-80 percent of the food. Cultural expectations that women, as the primary caregivers, must provide for their family's water and food needs increase pressure on their relationships with the land and natural resources (Özçatalbaş and Sogué 2021). Yet, despite these distinct natural resource-related roles, women have historically had limited access to, and control over, land and natural resources and lacked the ability to participate in governance of the resources on which they depend (Leisher et al. 2016). In many countries, sexual and gender minorities also face discrimination that prevent them from fully participating in, benefiting from, and contributing to the economy, constraining their access and control over natural resources (Cortez et al. 2021).
6. Indigenous Peoples and local communities regularly face marginalization within legal systems that results in discrimination and exploitation of their communities, natural resources, and lands. This marginalization heightens their risk of experiencing extreme

poverty as well as armed and social conflict (Amnesty International 2024). Indigenous Peoples' connections with the natural environment in sustaining their cultures and livelihoods may also make them particularly vulnerable to the effects of air, water, and soil pollution (Fernández-Llamazares 2020). Conservation policies have had negative impacts on IPLCs, eliminating traditional livelihoods, leading to land appropriation, driving political exclusion, and causing cultural breakdown (Ben-Shmuel et al. 2023). One of the significant negative impacts that conservation actors may pose is the forced displacement of IPLCs in order to create conservation areas, which may lead to conflict regarding IPLCs' political, cultural, and economic rights (Beattie 2023).

7. Scholars have highlighted the importance and benefits of involving youth in efforts to address environmental challenges (Aden 2022). Young people have been found to experience elevated levels of interest and concern about climate change in comparison to older age groups and less of a tendency towards fatalism (Corner et al. 2015). Youth-led social movements demanding climate action and protection of the environment have been on the rise (Barraclough et al. 2021; UNEP 2023b). Educating, building capacity, and empowering youth to engage with conservation issues is particularly critical given that future generations will be responsible for land and resource conservation (Kelly et al. 2022). While youth have historically been omitted from engagement and consultation efforts on conservation programming, this is beginning to change (Barraclough et al. 2021).
8. Persons with disabilities offer unique needs and perspectives in environmental and natural disaster planning. However, environmental programming implementation and feedback mechanisms often fail to consider or include persons with disabilities, as well as other marginalized groups such as gender and sexual minorities and internally displaced persons (Gaskin et al. 2017; Salvatore and Wolbring 2022; Cortez et al. 2023).
9. FCS contexts pose challenges to engaging and benefitting marginalized groups in environmental programming. In FCS contexts, populations that have already been marginalized are often at heightened risk of exclusion and violence through political and social processes (Khawaja et al. 2019; World Bank 2020). During conflict and in post-conflict settings, marginalized groups—particularly women and gender and sexual minorities—are at a greater risk of suffering gender-based violence and displacement.<sup>4</sup> Youth and other marginalized populations may also serve as perpetrators in times of conflict.<sup>5</sup> In FCS contexts, governance is that much weaker, which amplifies vulnerability (e.g., weakened rule of law and enforcement of rights-related frameworks, insufficient justice mechanisms, including those related to livelihoods and the environment) (Bruch, Muffett, and Nichols 2016; Manjoo et al. 2011). While presenting distinct challenges, programming in fragile and conflict-affected settings also poses unique opportunities to

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<sup>4</sup> Castañeda et al. 2020; UN Office of Special Representative 2023; Manjoo and McRaith 2011; UN Women n.d.; World Bank 2020; Alam 2015; Boyer, Meijer, and Gilligan 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Wessells 2016; Wessells 2006; Dubow et al. 2012; Rosen 2007.

pursue global environmental benefits while reforming historically inequitable and exclusionary laws, institutions, and practices (Bruch, Muffett, and Nichols 2016; Jensen and Halle 2013). Annex 3 provides a more detailed overview of the relationships between these marginalized groups and the environment, particularly in FCS contexts.

### III. Inclusion at the GEF

10. The GEF has a long history of inclusion in its policies, guidelines, and strategies to ensure participation of key stakeholders in GEF projects and programs. The current suite of GEF policies that guide inclusion within GEF activities include the GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards, Policy on Stakeholder Engagement, and Policy on Gender Equality. These policies can be split into two main types: The GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards centers on risk mitigation while the GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement and the GEF Policy on Gender Equality seek to proactively include diverse stakeholders (GEF 2019; GEF 2017b; GEF 2017a). These policies address the inclusion of specific groups as well as disadvantaged or vulnerable groups more broadly. While the definition of “disadvantaged” or “vulnerable” can vary, it often includes individuals or groups who are affected because of their gender, Indigenous status, disability status, age, sexual orientation, or gender identity.
11. The most recent GEF-8 strategy emphasizes a “whole-of-society” approach that recognizes the crucial role that marginalized groups play in sustainable development and the delivery of conservation outcomes. As part of this approach, the GEF Secretariat has focused on strengthening its engagement with women, IPLCs, and youth in recent years (GEF 2024). In June 2023, recognizing the importance of an overarching framework of inclusion, the GEF Secretariat published a Gap Analysis of GEF Policies and Key Social Inclusion Issues. The Gap Analysis identified ways that the GEF could strengthen its approach and guidance on inclusion of people marginalized by sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), youth, and persons with disabilities (GEF 2023a). Annex 4 further analyzes the relevant GEF and GEF Agency policies, international law, and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) that shape how project teams conceptualize and approach inclusion.
12. The GEF has also undertaken initiatives to promote inclusion of specific marginalized groups. For example, the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI) is a GEF-7 project that promotes sustainable development and biodiversity conservation by addressing the needs and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Through the ICI, financial and technical support is provided to subprojects developed and executed by Indigenous Peoples organizations. The ICI is directed by Indigenous Peoples and the subprojects were selected by Indigenous Peoples. The ICI promotes community-based conservation approaches, strengthens governance and rights frameworks, and enhances the capacity of communities to participate in sustainable development activities. The ICI is

noteworthy in part because it was designed and is led by Indigenous Peoples, through the support and leadership of the GEF's Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG).

## IV. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

### A. Evaluation Objectives and Audience

9. The evaluation will provide evidence as an input to the GEF’s “whole of society” approach. When assessing inclusion of GEF projects, the evaluation will focus on historically marginalized groups identified and highlighted in both the GEF-8 “whole of society” approach and the 2023 Gap Analysis: people marginalized on the basis of gender (and particularly women), Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), and youth. In addition, the evaluation will focus on persons with disabilities, a group both discussed in the 2023 Gap Analysis as well as identified as important by feedback from Agencies during the first Reference Group meeting. At the recommendation of the evaluation Reference Group, the evaluation will also consider sexual and gender minorities and internally displaced persons.
  
10. The evaluation seeks to assess to what degree GEF projects have been inclusive of historically marginalized groups—specifically, people marginalized on the basis of gender (especially women), IPLCs, youth, and persons with disabilities— particularly in FCS contexts. It will also explore the results, both intended and unintended, of that inclusion both for GEF project success and co-benefits. Finally, it will identify ways that the GEF can improve inclusion, especially in FCS contexts, aligning with the GEF’s “whole of society” approach. As such, the evaluation has three overarching questions:
  1. How often/consistently do GEF-supported projects, both generally and in FCS contexts in particular, promote inclusion of marginalized groups? [This overarching question includes a related, corollary question: How often do projects comply with GEF’s policies related to inclusion of marginalized groups?]<sup>6</sup>
  2. What are the different ways that GEF-supported projects address inclusion of people marginalized on the basis of gender, IPLCs, youth, and disability, particularly in FCS contexts?
  3. What are the effects of addressing or failing to address inclusion of people marginalized on the basis of gender, IPLCs, youth, and disability, particularly in FCS contexts?
  
11. These questions, including relevant sub-questions and the indicators and sources of information for responding to them, are outlined in the evaluation matrix in Annex 1. The portfolio covered by this evaluation includes projects from GEF-5 onward.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This analysis will focus on whether and the extent to which GEF-supported projects comply with project-level requirements in the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards, the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement, and the Policy on Gender Equality. It is important to note that for more recent policies, there is a limit to the extent that long-term effects can be evaluated.

<sup>7</sup> This analysis will include projects that began before the three existing policies on inclusion were in effect. The Policy on Gender Equality and the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement both went into effect on July 1, 2018, for new activities and July 1, 2019, for ongoing activities. The Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards went into effect on July 1, 2019, for new activities and July 1, 2020, for ongoing activities. The analysis seeks to assess the spirit of inclusion in projects before 2018 while still acknowledging that the current policies were not yet in effect.



12. The primary audience of this evaluation is the GEF Council and Secretariat, GEF Agencies, the GEF CSO Network, the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group, and other stakeholders who have an interest in better understanding whether and how inclusion of historically marginalized groups affects GEF projects, and how GEF projects can be more inclusive.

## B. Definitions

13. To ensure consistency in the evaluation approach and the validity of findings, the evaluation will use the following definitions and understandings of key terms.

**Conflict.** Conflict is “a dispute or incompatibility caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests” between two or more parties that results in manifested action, such as protesting or fighting (Ide et al. 2021, p. 44). Violent conflict can take the form of inter-state wars, civil wars, or violence involving rebels, gangs, or other non-state actors (World Bank 2023c). Armed conflict is defined as “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year”; non-state armed conflicts are similar but none of the warring parties is a government (UCDP n.d.). Major armed conflicts are defined as those with 1,000 or more battle-related deaths (SIPRI 2006). This evaluation will refer to various types of conflict. However, in categorizing countries and therefore projects as occurring in conflict contexts, the default will be armed conflict (with at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year).

**Empowerment of Women and Girls.** Empowerment of Women and Girls is “an expansion of agency throughout women’s lives, via participation and decision-making, including support to (i) women’s rights, access to and control over resources; (ii) women’s access to opportunities and resources; (iii) actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality; and (iv) women’s ability to exert influence in society” (GEF 2017a).

**Fragility.** Fragility is “the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb, or mitigate those risks” (OECD 2020). Fragility often contributes to negative effects or outcomes, including increases in “violence, poverty, inequality, displacement, and environmental and political degradation” (OECD 2020). Gender inequality is an important dimension of fragility (Loudon, Goemans, and Koester 2021). Addressing the root causes of multidimensional fragility, including gender inequality, is essential to build a positive peace (GEF 2017a).

**Gender.** Gender refers to “the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the

social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, and age. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities” (GEF 2017, p. 7). The World Bank’s 2023 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Inclusion and Gender Equality Evidence and Practice Note expands on this definition, adapting it to be more inclusive of sexual and gender minorities: “Gender refers to the social, behavioral, and cultural attributes, and expectations and norms associated with being male or female” (Cortez et al. 2023). Gender intersects with other factors in the broader socio-cultural context, including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, and age.

**Gender Equality.** Gender equality can be defined as “equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female” (GEF 2017a). The World Bank’s 2023 SOGI evidence and practice notes that “gender inequalities and gaps are largely assessed and addressed on the assumption that there are only two genders defined as men/boys and women/girls”, which “excludes significant groups of people who identify outside of the strictly defined men/women system, such as intersex and nonbinary people, as well as those who do not abide by prescribed gender roles or gender expressions. Expanding the definitions and institutional understanding of gender outside binary terms is therefore critical to promoting equal access to outcomes and opportunities in relation to endowments, agency, and access to economic activities for all, including sexual and gender minorities” (Cortez et al. 2023).

**Gender-Responsive Approach.** A gender-responsive approach is one in which “the particular needs, priorities, power structures, status and relationships between men and women are recognized and adequately addressed in the design, implementation and evaluation of activities. The approach seeks to ensure that women and men are given equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from an intervention, and promotes targeted measures to address inequalities and promote the empowerment of women” (GEF 2017a).

**Internally Displaced Persons.** Internally Displaced Persons are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border" (UN 2021).

**Inclusion.** Inclusion is the process of improving the manner in which people take part in societal processes by providing opportunities and improving their abilities while respecting their dignity. It focuses particularly on people who are marginalized or disadvantaged due to some aspect or aspects of their identity.<sup>8</sup>

**Indigenous Peoples.** Indigenous Peoples refers to “people belonging to a distinct social and cultural group characterized in varying degrees by (i) self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous social and cultural group and recognition of this identity by others; (ii) collective attachment to geographically distinct Habitats, ancestral territories, or areas of seasonal use or occupation, as well as to the natural resources in these areas; (iii) customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are distinct or separate from those of the mainstream society or culture; and (iv) a distinct language or dialect, often different from the official language or languages of the country or region in which they reside. ‘To varying degrees’ reflects the fact that some characteristics may be less, or no longer, evident, but have been present and are relevant in identifying Indigenous Peoples” (GEF 2019). Keeping in line with current internationally accepted terminology, this evaluation will use the term “IPLCs.” This evaluation does not intend to create or develop new definitions regarding what constitutes Indigenous Peoples and local communities.<sup>9</sup>

**Persons with Disabilities.** Persons with disabilities “have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (UN 2006). Disabilities may be related to conditions present at birth or a consequence of injury, disease, or age (SDG Resource Centre, n.d.). Disabilities may take many forms, including those that affect a person’s vision, hearing, communicating, movement, thinking, and social relationships (CDC n.d.).

**Sexual and gender minorities.** Sexual and gender minorities refer to “persons whose sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression differ from those of the majority of the surrounding society” (Cortez et al. 2023).

**SOGIESC.** SOGIESC (sometimes shortened to SOGI) is an abbreviation for sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. Sexual

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<sup>8</sup> This definition is adapted from the World Bank’s definition of social inclusion, available here: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion>.

<sup>9</sup> According to the IPBES, “The Convention on Biological Diversity does not define the terms indigenous and local communities or Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples does not adopt or recommend a universal definition for Indigenous Peoples (Decision CBD/COP/DEC/14/13). As used in the global assessment, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) is a term used internationally by representatives, organizations, and conventions to refer to individuals and communities who are, on the one hand, self-identified as indigenous and, on the other hand, are members of local communities that maintain inter-generational connection to place and nature through livelihood, cultural identity and worldviews, institutions and ecological knowledge. The term is not intended to ignore differences and diversity within and among Indigenous Peoples and between them and local communities; Indigenous Peoples have recognized and distinct rights, which are not extendable to the broader and encompassing concept of local communities” (IPBES 2020, Section 1.3.2.1).

orientation refers to “each person’s enduring capacity for profound romantic, emotional and/or physical feelings for, or attraction to, person(s) of a particular sex or gender. It encompasses hetero-, homo- and bi-sexuality and a wide range of other expressions of sexual orientation.” Gender identity refers to “each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender (e.g., of being a man, a woman, in-between, neither, or something else), which may or may not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth, or the gender attributed to them by other people. Note that this sense of self is not related to sexual orientation. Gender identity is internal; it is not necessarily visible to others.” Gender expression refers to “The way a person shows their gender to the world, through clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, and other means.” Finally, sex characteristics refer to “Each person’s physical features relating to sex, including genitalia and other sexual and reproductive anatomy, chromosomes, hormones, and secondary physical features emerging from puberty.” (Cortez et al. 2023).

**Youth.** According to the UN, youth can be defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (UN 2013a). The GEF applies a broader definition of youth as persons up to 35 years old, which the evaluation team will use for this evaluation.<sup>10</sup> How youth are defined and define themselves varies depending on the surrounding economic, cultural, and social local context (UNICEF n.d.).

### C. Evaluation Design and Methodology

14. The portfolio covered by this evaluation will include projects from GEF-5 onward and include Medium- and Full-Sized Projects; in addition, the evaluation will examine Enabling Activities and the Small Grants Programme in the case studies (discussed below). The project team plans to use the World Bank Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the team will conduct tests of robustness to explore whether and how different classifications of conflict and fragility<sup>12</sup> affect the findings of the analysis (below).
15. A preliminary analysis of the GEF project portfolio shows that approximately one-fifth—between 20.9-22.3 percent—of GEF-funded projects for replenishment periods GEF-5 through GEF-8 are in countries affected by fragility or conflict (FCS), as defined by the World Bank (see Table 1). The percentage of projects in FCS countries with validated terminal evaluations (TEs) is slightly lower for each replenishment (17.8-19.3 percent).<sup>13</sup> The percentage of the GEF’s portfolio in FCS countries is similar when considered by percentage of GEF-allocated funding rather than the percentage of projects (see Table

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<sup>10</sup> Communication from GEF Secretariat staff (May 20, 2024).

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations>.

<sup>12</sup> The primary alternative categorizations of fragility and peace are the OECD States of Fragility database (for fragility), the Fund for Peace’s Fragile States Index (for fragility), and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program’s (UCDP’s) Dataset (for conflict). The 2020 GEF IEO evaluation of GEF programming in fragile and conflict-affected situations relied on the Fragile States Index and the UCDP Dataset for categorizations. For a discussion on the challenges regarding various fragility indices, see Harsch 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Following IEO standard practice, the evaluation will use validated Terminal Evaluations (TEs) to conduct analysis on outcomes and other ratings.

2). It is noteworthy that while the percentages for project numbers (Table 1) and project funding (Table 2) are similar, for replenishments 5, 6, and 8 (to date) the percentages of project funding in FCS countries are consistently lower than the percentages of project numbers. This trend was not observed for GEF-7.

*Table 1: GEF Project Count by FCS Status*

	<b>FCS: Number of Projects (Percentage)</b>	<b>Non-FCS: Number of Projects (Percentage)</b>
<b>GEF-5</b>	211 (22.2%)	740 (77.8%)
<b>GEF-5 Validated TE</b>	67 (17.8%)	309 (82.2%)
<b>GEF-6</b>	133 (22.3%)	464 (77.7%)
<b>GEF-6 Validated TE</b>	5 (17.9%)	23 (82.1%)
<b>GEF-7</b>	114 (20.9%)	431 (79.1%)
<b>GEF-8</b>	43 (19.3%)	180 (80.7%)

*Note:* Project tallies reflect single-country projects with CEO endorsement. FCS status based on World Bank Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations.

*Table 2: GEF Project Funding by FCS Status*

	<b>FCS: Funding (Percentage)</b>	<b>Non-FCS: Funding (Percentage)</b>
<b>GEF-5</b>	\$651,639,314 (21.7%)	\$23,498,577,512 (78.3%)
<b>GEF-5 Validated TE</b>	\$278,140,489 (18.8%)	\$1,203,082,479 (81.2%)
<b>GEF-6</b>	\$467,869,423 (19.4%)	\$1,946,659,425 (80.6%)
<b>GEF-6 Validated TE</b>	\$7,058,495 (9.0%)	\$71,454,162 (91.0%)
<b>GEF-7</b>	\$535,693,846 (22.5%)	\$1,847,539,263 (77.5%)
<b>GEF-8</b>	\$98,086,141 (17.9%)	\$450,818,966 (82.1%)

*Note:* Project tallies reflect single-country projects with CEO endorsement. FCS status based on World Bank Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations.

16. The project team analyzed the self-reported flags for gender<sup>14</sup> for single-country projects in FCS and non-FCS countries in GEF-7 (Table 3). [GEF-7 represents the only period for which the flags have been used throughout the full replenishment period.] For each gender-related flag, the percentages of tagged projects are relatively close in FCS and non-FCS countries with modest but consistently higher percentages in FCS countries. As Table 3 shows, relatively few projects are flagged "No" and there is a substantial proportion (between 11.4-31.6 percent) for which data on the project's response to the flag is not available (either entered as "N/A" or left blank).

*Table 3: Self-Reported Gender Flag Responses by FCS Status*

<sup>14</sup> The flags include gender sensitive, gender responsive, resource, economic benefit, and participation. For an explanation of each flag, see Annex 2.

<b>GEF-7: Number of projects (Percentage)</b>	<b>Gender Sensitive Flag</b>	<b>Gender Responsive Flag</b>	<b>Resource Flag</b>	<b>Economic Benefit Flag</b>	<b>Participation Flag</b>
<b>In FCS country tagged "Yes"</b>	97 (85.1%)	101 (88.6%)	101 (88.6%)	88 (77.2%)	99 (86.8%)
<b>In non-FCS country tagged "Yes"</b>	358 (83.1%)	364 (84.5%)	364 (84.5%)	292 (67.7%)	357 (82.8%)
<b>In FCS country tagged "No"</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<b>In non-FCS country tagged "No"</b>	2 (0.5%)	2 (0.5%)	2 (0.5%)	3 (0.7%)	0 (0%)
<b>In FCS country tagged "N/A"</b>	17 (14.9%)	13 (11.4%)	13 (11.4%)	26 (22.8%)	15 (13.2%)
<b>In non-FCS country tagged "N/A"</b>	71 (16.5%)	65 (15.1%)	65 (15.1%)	136 (31.6%)	74 (17.2%)

*Note:* Project tallies reflect single-country projects with CEO endorsement. FCS status based on World Bank Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations.

17. The project team analyzed other self-reported flags—namely, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, private sector, and stakeholder—for single-country projects in FCS and non-FCS countries in GEF-7 (Table 4). It is notable that for all four flags, the percentages of projects with tagged "Yes" is lower than for gender-related flags. Interestingly, the private sector and stakeholder flags are the only flags of those analyzed for which higher percentages of tagged "Yes" responses are found in non-FCS countries than in FCS countries.

*Table 4: Responses for Other Self-Reported Flags Related to Inclusion by FCS Status*

<b>GEF-7 Projects: Number of projects (Percentage)</b>	<b>Indigenous Peoples Flag</b>	<b>Civil Society Flag</b>	<b>Private Sector Flag</b>	<b>Stakeholder Flag</b>
<b>In FCS country tagged "Yes"</b>	52 (45.6%)	79 (69.3%)	64 (56.1%)	20 (17.5%)
<b>In non-FCS country tagged "Yes"</b>	174 (40.4%)	271 (62.9%)	250 (58%)	84 (19.5%)
<b>In FCS country tagged "No"</b>	3 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.9%)	4 (3.5%)

<b>In non-FCS country tagged "No"</b>	4 (0.9%)	2 (0.5%)	2 (0.5%)	1 (0.2%)
<b>In FCS country tagged "N/A"</b>	59 (51.8%)	35 (30.7%)	49 (43%)	90 (78.9%)
<b>In non-FCS country tagged "N/A"</b>	253 (58.7%)	158 (36.7%)	179 (41.5%)	346 (80.3%)

*Note:* Project tallies reflect single-country projects with CEO endorsement. FCS status based on World Bank Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations.

18. The project team also ran a chi-squared Fisher test comparing the FCS status where the project was located and responding "Yes" to a flag. This analysis found that for GEF-6 there is statistically significant evidence that the likelihood of being tagged "Gender sensitive", "Gender responsive", and "Resource" are greater for projects in FCS than non-FCS countries ( $p=0.05$ ). In GEF-7, the odds of being tagged "Economic Benefit" are greater for FCS than non-FCS projects are also statistically significant ( $p=0.05$ ). No other correlations between FCS status and flags were found to be statistically significant. The evaluation will interrogate the relationships described in the preceding paragraph through the data collection activities outlined below.

19. To achieve the evaluation objectives and effectively respond to the questions as laid out in the evaluation matrix, this evaluation will use a mixed methods approach reviewing projects from GEF-5 onward with the following data collection tools (budget permitting):

**High-Level Portfolio Analysis:** The evaluation team will undertake several quantitative analyses related to inclusion and fragility for single-country projects using data provided in the GEF Portal. First, the team plans to test the association between whether a project expects to be inclusive (as self-reported through various standard flags) and FCS status for all projects starting in GEF-7 when the relevant flags were introduced. Relevant GEF flags include: gender sensitive, gender resources, resource, economic benefits, participation decision, Indigenous Peoples, civil society organization, stakeholder, and private sector entities.<sup>15</sup> Second, the project team will perform a macroanalysis assessing correlations between various macro-factors and inclusion of the relevant marginalized groups and the project performance rankings, which can be determined using projects with validated TEs. These macro-factors will include country-level metrics on women's position in society, such as the United Nations Development Programme's Gender Inequality Index and Gender Development Index, as well as the estimated proportion of IPLC owned or managed land and proportion of youth share in the population. The

<sup>15</sup> Though not directly relevant to inquiries on inclusion of marginalized groups, the private sector entities flag may also be included in this analysis as part of a broader review of inclusion. See Annex 2 for a list of flags and their definitions.

outcome and sustainability rankings of single-country projects with validated TEs will be used to determine the project performance rankings.

- **Pilot Test of the Deep Dive Questionnaire:** The evaluation team will conduct an assessment of a sample of GEF projects by reviewing all project documentation and coding the projects based on the evaluation criteria using a questionnaire. The evaluation team will develop and pilot test this questionnaire before undertaking the portfolio review.
- **Review of Dropped, Suspended, and Canceled Projects:** The evaluation team will review all the GEF 5-7 projects that were suspended or canceled to ascertain whether any of the reasons were related to issues of inclusion, for example the failure to engage IPLCs. It will also consider a sampling of dropped projects from this period.
- **Portfolio Review:** After conducting a high-level review of all projects based on available data, the evaluation team will then conduct a deeper dive into a random sample of projects to collect additional information as necessary to answer the evaluation questions. The evaluation team will divide the projects up into two cohorts based on project progress, i.e., whether the projects have been completed (i.e., the performance cohort) or only have design documentation (i.e., quality-upon-entry cohort), as outlined in Table 5 below.

The sample of projects from the GEF portfolio will cover all focal areas, only include projects that are endorsed as of January 1, 2024, and include a sampling of full-sized projects and medium-sized projects and focus on single countries (to enable statistical analysis). Budget permitting, the evaluation team proposes sampling a total of 300 projects as follows:

*Table 5: Sampling*

	<b>GEF-5 and GEF-6 (closed projects with validated TEs)</b>	<b>GEF-7 and GEF-8 (design only)</b>
<b>Single-country projects</b>	200	100

Using a portfolio review template developed through a robust piloting process, the evaluation team will collect detailed information on projects’ approach to inclusion for relevant marginalized groups, flagging notable projects for further investigation. The project team will codify and quantify projects’ inclusion with respect to certain marginalized groups using a social inclusion assessment tool.<sup>16</sup> After coding reviewed projects, the team will conduct a regression analysis to understand how

<sup>16</sup> The tool will be modified based on the World Bank’s Social Inclusion Assessment Tool (SiAT).



various factors (dependent variables<sup>17</sup>) are related to the independent variable of FCS status. This analysis will shed light on any relationships between fragility and conflict on the one hand and the extent and nature of inclusion on the other; these relationships will be further explored in the case studies. Qualitative and quantitative analyses of the 300 projects in this sample will be supplemented by in-depth reviews of other projects of particular relevance, including the Inclusive Conservation Initiative and Small Grants Programme projects.

- **Case Studies:** Based on the information gathered during the in-depth review of projects as well as any opportunities or gaps identified, the evaluation team will identify five contexts in which deep-dive case studies can be completed. The purpose of these case studies is to explore the dynamic connections between inclusion and FCS contexts as well as the associated effects on project outcomes and stakeholders and the causal pathways through which these effects take place. Each case study will rely on detailed information gathered from detailed document review, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and/or site visits. This will allow the evaluation team to engage with a multiplicity of stakeholders involved in each project, capturing various perspectives and experiences, triangulating findings, and building out detailed cases that include causal mechanisms and stakeholder perceptions of them.

The five contexts may be either individual country contexts or regional projects. They will be selected based on the final evaluation matrix criteria, the findings from the other pieces of the evaluation, and other, relevant sampling criteria, including:

- Geographic balance
  - Conflict and fragility
  - Diversity of situations with respect to key marginalized groups
  - The GEF portfolio (including size and the focal area diversity of the portfolio)
  - Any innovative approaches to inclusion (such as in the Inclusive Conservation Initiative) and the potential for scaling of those approaches.
- **Interviews with key stakeholders:** The evaluation team will conduct interviews with GEF agency staff, the GEF Secretariat, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), the Gender Partnership, the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Network, the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG), the Small Grants Programme, and the Inclusive Conservation Initiative, as well as with experts on inclusion of marginalized groups.
  - **Survey of GEF Civil Society Organizations Network:** The evaluation team will survey the GEF CSO Network (which includes a diverse array of civil society non-

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<sup>17</sup> Regression analysis may be performed on the following dependent variables: inclusion of women in project design, inclusion of women in project implementation, level of engagement with IPLCs, level of inclusion of persons with disabilities, focus on intersectional identity groups, and evidence of exclusion by design.

governmental organizations partnering with and benefitting from the GEF) to gauge their experiences and perspectives on social inclusion in GEF projects and programming. The survey will also seek to identify particular GEF projects that are worth examining in further detail due to their approaches and experiences related to the inclusion of marginalized groups.

20. Throughout data collection, the evaluation team will use informed consent when interacting with stakeholders. The appropriate process for obtaining informed consent will be devised in partnership with the IEO and checked to ensure it is relevant to the sociocultural context, particularly for the case studies. Extra care will be taken for any engagements with marginalized groups, especially in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

#### D. Data Analysis and Reporting

21. The evaluation team will conduct its analysis based on the evaluation questions and matrix and seek to use all the relevant information to ensure sufficient validation and triangulation of findings. Early in the analysis, the evaluation team will rely predominantly on quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, to look for correlations and trends within the GEF project portfolio. The evaluation team will subsequently incorporate more qualitative analysis, relying more heavily on interviews, focus group discussions, document review, and (potentially) observation to provide depth and detail. The evaluation team will also undertake a regression analysis to understand the effects that FCS contexts may have on variables of inclusion, performing checks to caution against endogeneity. Taken together, the depth and breadth of information will allow the evaluation team to triangulate the information gathered, identify any gaps or inconsistencies, and gather additional data as necessary.
22. The evaluation team recognizes that the groups of focus for this evaluation—people marginalized on the basis of gender (especially women, as well as sexual and gender minorities), IPLCs, youth, and persons with disabilities—as well as others such as internally displaced persons are diverse. They are not homogenous. As such, even as the evaluation analyzes broad trends and impacts of inclusion of regarding groups broadly, the evaluation will also highlight the heterogeneity within a particular group and the importance of understanding and engaging people as they are, not how they are conceived.
23. The data collection and analysis will also highlight intersectionality. For the evaluation, the team expects that this will include intersectionality between the groups of focus (for example, girls (i.e., women and youth) and Indigenous women) as well as intersectionality between groups of focus and other marginalized groups.

24. The evaluation will culminate in Case Study Reports and a Final Evaluation Report. The evaluation team may also provide preliminary presentations of the findings to stakeholders to vet the findings.

#### E. Stakeholder Engagement and Quality Assurance

25. Stakeholder engagement and quality assurance processes will be guided by IEO protocol. A reference group comprising key stakeholders from the GEF Partnership (Secretariat, STAP, Agencies, GEF Gender Partnership, GEF CSO Network, and IPAG) was formed to provide access to data and contacts to key informants as well as feedback on this Approach Paper, and the Draft Evaluation Report. A meeting was held to discuss feedback on this Approach Paper, and comments from the Reference Group and GEF Secretariat have been integrated into this final version.

26. Extra care will be taken regarding country and project work to ensure inclusion of a cross-section of project stakeholders (women, youth, etc.). The evaluation will be conducted under the oversight and quality assurance of an IEO evaluation officer and overall direction of the IEO chief evaluation officer and the IEO director. In addition to the quality assurance provided by the IEO, the evaluation team will also solicit quality assurance from an external peer reviewer who has in-depth experience with evaluation, inclusion, and FCS contexts throughout the work.

## v. Workplan, Schedule, & Deliverables

The evaluation will take place over a period of 12 months, from January to December 2024. Table 6, below, provides an overview of the workplan for the evaluation, including the timeline.

*Table 6: Workplan*

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	TIMELINE
<b>Inception &amp; High-Level Review</b>		
<b>Inception Interviews</b>	The evaluation team will conduct interviews with 3-5 key stakeholders who can inform the direction of the evaluation and the finalization of the Approach Paper.	Jan. – June 8, 2024
<b>Preliminary Literature &amp; Data Review</b>	The evaluation team will conduct a desk review of relevant literature—including GEF policies, strategies, and other documents—as well as conduct a high-level review of the existing project data. This will guide the finalization of the evaluation matrix and the Approach Paper.	
<b>Development of Data Collection Tools</b>	Based the interviews and review of literature and data, the evaluation team in collaboration with the GEF IEO will finalize the data collection tools. This will primarily focus on the questionnaire/portfolio review tool used to review projects and project documents as well as the finalization of the quantitative analysis approach.	

<b>High-Level Portfolio Analysis</b>	Using the evaluation matrix as a guide, the evaluation team with support from the IEO will conduct a quantitative analysis of the full GEF project portfolio using available data to develop descriptive statistics and conduct relevant quantitative analyses.	April – July 15, 2024
<b>In-Depth Review</b>		
<b>Portfolio Review</b>	The evaluation team will conduct a deeper dive of a sample of projects, reviewing relevant project documentation and completing the questionnaire following the evaluation matrix.	June – Sept. 2024
<b>Case Study Research</b>	The evaluation team will conduct in-depth research on each of the case selected, including potential site visits for interviews, FGDs, and project observation. This research will be guided by the evaluation questions and matrix. The approach will also be informed by the findings from the previous analyses of the evaluation.	June – Oct. 2024
<b>Survey of CSO Network</b>	The evaluation team will survey the GEF CSO Network to gauge their experiences and perspectives on inclusion of marginalized populations in GEF projects and programming.	July 2024
<b>Interviews</b>	The evaluation team will conduct interviews with GEF agency staff as well as experts on inclusion of marginalized groups.	July – Oct. 2024
<b>Data Analysis (regression and sensitivity analysis)</b>	The evaluation team will conduct a range of regression and sensitivity analyses on the data generated from the portfolio review, survey, and other means. This analysis will complement the qualitative analysis of the data gathered through those and other means.	Oct. – Nov. 2024
<b>Preliminary Findings Report &amp; Presentation</b>	Based on the information gathered and analyzed, the evaluation team will draft a Preliminary Findings Report for the GEF IEO and present the preliminary findings to relevant stakeholders for feedback	Nov. – Dec. 2024
<b>Case Study Reports</b>	Based on the data collected during case study research, the evaluation team will draft Case Study Reports with high-level findings in response to the evaluation questions and matrix. The final month will include vetting the analysis with the countries.	Oct. – Nov. 2024
<b>Evaluation Report</b>	The evaluation team will craft a Draft and Final Evaluation Report, inclusive of the findings from the various analytic methods of the evaluation and encompassing relevant recommendations with clear linkages to the findings. This will be presented to the GEF IEO and other relevant stakeholders for feedback prior to finalization.	Dec. 2024 – Mar. 2025

**Key Deliverables**

The evaluation will include the following key deliverables:

- **Approach Paper:** The Approach Paper will include a final evaluation matrix, detailed workplan, and methodology, as well as any relevant data collection tools for the evaluation. It will be reviewed by relevant GEF IEO and other stakeholders prior to finalization.
- **Preliminary Findings Report:** A draft Preliminary Findings Report will be crafted based on the global review. It will be shared with the GEF IEO for feedback.

- **Case Study Reports:** For each case study, a 10-20 page report will be developed with a summary of the findings. Selected stakeholders will have a chance to review and provide feedback on draft case study reports prior to their finalization.
- **Draft Evaluation Report:** The Draft Evaluation Report will present the findings from the various analytic methods of the evaluation as well as recommendations with clear linkages to the findings. This will be presented to the GEF IEO and other relevant stakeholders for feedback prior to finalization.
- **Final Evaluation:** The Final Evaluation Report will include an executive summary as well as the compilation of the findings from the evaluation. It will provide key recommendations for the GEF regarding inclusion, particularly in FCS contexts, that are grounded in the findings.

## Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Indicator	Information Source / Methodology
<b>1. How often/consistently do GEF-supported projects, both generally and in FCS contexts in particular, promote inclusion of marginalized groups?</b> <b>[COROLLARY: How consistently do projects comply with GEF’s policies related to inclusion of marginalized groups?<sup>18</sup>]</b>	<b>1.1 How often do projects describe inclusion of marginalized groups (including people marginalized on the basis of gender, IPLCs, youth, persons with disabilities)?</b>	<b>1.1.1</b> Inclusion of the specific marginalized group in project documents  <b>1.1.2</b> Evidence that the specific marginalized group was involved in, consulted, and/or considered during project development	Qualitative review and quantitative assessment of a sample of GEF projects, case studies, analytic framework based on modified SiAT
	<b>1.2</b> To what degree do projects meet the requirements of the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards’ <u>Minimum Standard No.1 (MS1)</u> as it relates to specific marginalized groups (gender, IPLCs, youth, persons with disability)? To what extent is this different in FCS contexts?	<b>1.2.1</b> Evidence that the risks and potential impacts to the relevant marginalized group was assessed to ensure that differentiated mitigation measures were incorporated  <b>1.2.2</b> For persons with disability, evidence of other consideration in the screening and planning process	Qualitative review and quantitative assessment of a sample of GEF projects, case studies

<sup>18</sup> This analysis will include projects that began before existing policies on inclusion were in effect. The Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards went into effect on July 1, 2019, for new activities and July 1, 2020, for ongoing activities. The Policy on Gender Equality went into effect on July 1, 2018, for new activities and July 1, 2019, for ongoing activities. The Policy on Stakeholder Engagement went into effect on July 1, 2018, for new activities and July 1, 2019, for ongoing activities.

	<p><b>1.3</b> To what degree do projects meet the requirements of the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards’ <u>MS8</u> as it relates to women,<sup>19</sup> youth, and persons with disability? To what extent is this different in FCS contexts?</p>	<p><b>1.3.1</b> Inclusion of measures regarding anti-discrimination and/or anti-harassment of persons with disabilities</p>	<p>Qualitative review of a sample of GEF projects</p>
	<p><b>1.4</b> How does the prevalence of gender sensitivity and gender responsiveness compare across FCS and non-FCS contexts?</p>	<p><b>1.4.1</b> GEF project flags for gender sensitive and gender responsive projects (self-reported)</p>	<p>Quantitative assessment of GEF project portfolio</p>
	<p><b>1.5</b> At the design stage, do projects consistently meet all the requirements under the <u>policy on gender equality</u>? To what extent is this different in FCS contexts?</p>	<p><b>1.5.1</b> Evidence of compliance with policy on gender equality including sex-disaggregated data, gender analysis, gender action plan, and gender sensitive indicators</p>	<p>Qualitative review of a sample of GEF projects</p>
	<p><b>1.6</b> To what extent do projects self-report that they consulted IPLCs?</p>	<p><b>1.6.1</b> GEF Portal Flag: “Indigenous” (Were Indigenous Peoples and local communities consulted during the project identification phase?) <i>(From GEF-7 onward)</i></p> <p><b>1.6.2</b> Evidence of consultation with IPLCs in project documents</p>	<p>Quantitative assessment of GEF project portfolio</p> <p>Qualitative review of a sample of GEF projects</p>

<sup>19</sup> Here, the use of the word “women” (rather than “gender”) reflects the language used in the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards: “Appropriate measures are in place to prevent harassment, intimidation, and exploitation, and to protect vulnerable Workers, including but not limited to women, children of working age, migrants and persons with disabilities.”

	<p><b>1.7</b> To what degree do projects meet the requirements of the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards' <u>Minimum Standard no. 5</u>? How are they meeting the standard and to what extent is this different in FCS contexts?<sup>20</sup></p>	<p><b>1.7.1</b> Evidence of discussion, design, or implementation of Minimum Standard no. 5 (FPIC and other required consideration)</p> <p><b>1.7.2</b> Perceptions of adequacy of implementation of Minimum Standard no. 5</p>	<p>Qualitative review of a sample of GEF projects</p> <p>Case studies, interviews</p>
	<p><b>1.8</b> To what extent does the level of inclusion vary by GEF project focal area or project modality? To what extent is this different in FCS contexts?</p>	<p><b>1.8.1</b> Evidence of inclusion within different GEF project focal areas</p> <p><b>1.8.2</b> Evidence of inclusion as indicated in question 2</p>	<p>Quantitative assessment of GEF project portfolio and/or quantitative analysis of project sample using modified SiAT</p>
	<p><b>1.9</b> To what extent do projects comply with the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement?</p>	<p><b>1.9.1</b> Evidence of stakeholder engagement plan and perceptions of its adequacy</p>	<p>Qualitative review of a sample of GEF projects and quantitative analysis of project sample using modified SiAT</p>
<p><b>2. What are the different ways that GEF-supported projects address inclusion of people marginalized on</b></p>	<p><b>2.1</b> In what ways do GEF projects ensure inclusion of gender, IPLCs, youth, and persons with disabilities in their approaches? To what extent is this different in FCS contexts?</p>	<p><b>2.1.1</b> Evidence of various mechanisms for including, involving, or considering these stakeholder groups in project design and implementation</p> <p><b>2.1.2</b> Perceptions of adequacy and responsiveness of approaches and implementation</p>	<p>Qualitative review of a sample of GEF projects</p> <p>Case studies, interviews</p>

<sup>20</sup> The Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples and the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement offer further articulation on FPIC and the inclusion of IPLCs.



<p><b>the basis of gender, IPLCs, youth, and disability, particularly in FCS contexts?</b></p>		<p><b>2.1.3</b> Evidence of GEF projects being designed and implemented to address the specific needs of these stakeholder groups</p> <p><b>2.1.4</b> Engagement by GEF projects of civil society organizations to ensure inclusion of marginalized groups</p>	<p>Qualitative review of a sample of GEF projects, case studies, interviews</p> <p>Qualitative review of a sample of GEF projects, case studies, interviews</p>
	<p><b>2.2</b> What factors affect GEF projects' ability to be inclusive? To what extent is this different in FCS contexts?</p>	<p><b>2.2.1</b> Evidence of national policies affecting project implementation as it relates to marginalized groups</p> <p><b>2.2.2</b> Evidence of local and other policies affecting project implementation as it relates to marginalized groups</p> <p><b>2.2.3</b> Evidence of identified policy coherence (or potential incoherence) at design stage</p> <p><b>2.2.4</b> Evidence of other factors hindering or helping to promote inclusion</p>	<p>Review of GEF project documents, case studies, interviews</p>
	<p><b>2.3</b> In what ways are GEF project implementation teams prepared to support inclusion? Do these teams reflect the diversity of targeted stakeholders and beneficiaries?</p>	<p><b>2.3.1</b> Composition of project implementation teams</p> <p><b>2.3.2</b> Incorporation of training or other activities focused on inclusion</p> <p><b>2.3.3</b> Examples of innovation related to inclusion, especially in FCS contexts</p>	<p>Review of GEF project documents, case studies, interviews</p>

	<b>2.4</b> To what extent is there exclusion by design of marginalized groups in GEF projects? To what extent is this different in FCS contexts?	<b>2.4.1</b> Perceptions of exclusion by design	Case studies, interviews
<b>3. What are the effects of addressing or failing to address inclusion of people marginalized on the basis of gender, IPLCs, youth, and disability, particularly in FCS contexts?</b>	<b>3.1</b> To what extent does inclusion of different stakeholder groups (or a lack thereof) affect project outcomes? How does this differ in FCS and non-FCS contexts?	<b>3.1.1</b> Regression analysis of correlation between project outcome rating and levels of inclusion  <b>3.1.2</b> Analysis of reasons for project cancellations  <b>3.1.3</b> Perceptions or evidence linking project outcomes to levels of inclusion	Quantitative assessment of GEF project portfolio, qualitative review of GEF project documents, quantitative analysis of project sample using modified SiAT, case studies, interviews
	<b>3.2</b> What are the actual, expected, or likely impacts of GEF projects on different stakeholder groups? How does this differ in FCS and non-FCS contexts?	<b>3.2.1</b> Evidence of actual, expected, or likely impacts on affected stakeholder groups	Qualitative review of GEF project documents, case studies, interviews
	<b>3.3</b> What have been the unintended impacts of GEF projects on different stakeholder groups? How does this differ in FCS and non-FCS contexts?	<b>3.3.1</b> Evidence of unintended impacts on affected stakeholder groups	Qualitative review of GEF project documents, case studies, interviews
	<b>3.4</b> To what extent does inclusion of different	<b>3.4.1</b> Regression analysis of correlation between project sustainability rating and levels of inclusion	Quantitative assessment of GEF

	<p>stakeholder groups (or a lack thereof) affect the likelihood of sustainability of project outcomes? How does this differ in FCS and non-FCS contexts?</p>	<p><b>3.4.2</b> Perceptions and evidence of project sustainability</p>	<p>project portfolio, qualitative review of a sample of GEF projects, quantitative analysis of project sample using modified SiAT, case studies, interviews</p>
	<p><b>3.5</b> What are the impacts of GEF projects on IPLC lands and on IPLCs? How does this differ in FCS and non-FCS contexts?</p>	<p><b>3.5.1</b> Evidence of effects of GEF-supported projects on IPLC managed lands</p>	<p>Case studies, interviews</p>

## Annex 2: Relevant Self-Reported Flags

The GEF asks project teams to self-report (i.e., “flag”) whether the project may have specific impacts related to particular historically marginalized groups. Following are relevant flags introduced in GEF-7,<sup>21</sup> organized by their focus. The GEF flag is set in italics, with the GEF’s descriptive wording following in roman text.

- Gender-related flags:
  - *Gender sensitive* - will the project’s results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?
  - *Gender responsive* - does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment?
  - *Resource* - is the project expected to contribute to gender equality in the following result area: closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources?
  - *Economic benefits* - is the project expected to contribute to gender equality in the following result area: generating socio-economic benefits or services for women?
  - *Participation decision* - is the project expected to contribute to gender equality in the following result area: improving women’s participation and decision-making?
- Other flags related to social inclusion:
  - *Stakeholder* – the project team confirms that stakeholders were consulted during PIF development as required per GEF policy and that the project description clearly articulates their relevant roles to project outcomes and articulates a plan to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan before CEO endorsement.
  - *Indigenous Peoples* - were Indigenous Peoples and local communities consulted during the project identification phase?
  - *Civil society organization* - were civil society organizations consulted during the project identification phase?
  - *Private sector entities* - was the private sector consulted during the project identification phase?

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<sup>21</sup> Tagging started on July 1, 2018, which was the beginning of GEF-7. It is worth noting that GEF-6 projects that were CEO-endorsed on or after that date also provide self-reported tag information.

## Annex 3: Background on Marginalized Groups, Conservation, and FCS

### A. Gender

1. In most societies, national and customary laws, traditional gender roles, and societal gender norms perpetuate inequalities regarding who can access and control land and natural resources. Women and girls, as well as other marginalized groups such as sexual and gender minorities, are often placed at a disadvantage because of these laws, cultural roles, and norms (GEF 2023a; Castañeda et al. 2020).
2. While women are not a homogenous group, generally speaking, traditional gender norms and laws often result in gender-differentiated roles related to land and resources, which disadvantage women economically and socially, amplifying their vulnerability to gender-based violence, poverty, and other threats. Gender-based violence may be employed against women as a way to reinforce power imbalances or exploit women's marginalization in accessing and controlling natural resources (Castañeda et al. 2020). Women's typical roles related to natural resources, such as collection of water and firewood, may put them at risk of gender-based violence—a risk that amplifies as climate and ecological shocks trigger droughts and resource scarcity, requiring women to travel farther for provisions (Sommer et al. 2015; Wan et al 2011). While women are not inherently more at risk to climate change, climate impacts will be experienced differently as a consequence of overlapping socio-economic structures, power imbalances, and social expectations (USAID; Andrijevic et al. 2020).
3. Despite the distinct natural resource-related roles that women and girls play in many societies, historically, women have had a minimal voice in natural resource governance and decision-making (Mercy Corps 2018). In many countries, women tend to be excluded from land inheritance and tenure, further limiting their participation and decision-making power regarding natural resources (Jhaveri 2021). Similarly, in many countries, sexual and gender minorities face discrimination that prevent them from fully participating in, benefiting from, and contributing to the economy, constraining their access and control over natural resources (Cortez et al. 2021). A person's efforts to protect and conserve the environment may also receive differential treatment due to gender inequalities and stereotypes (Castañeda et al. 2020). Without the participation of women, environmental conservation and climate resilience programs may fail to incorporate their specific perspectives and needs, reinforcing gender inequalities in the extent to which women and men benefit from programming (Castañeda et al. 2020). Studies show it is possible to address gender inequality while advancing climate resilience and recent international development efforts have focused on this intersection (Andrijevic et al. 2020; USAID 2022; Mercy Corps n.d.).
4. There is a growing body of evidence that greater participation of women in natural resource governance and management leads to better and more sustained conservation

outcomes (Leisher et al. 2016; Agarwal 2009; Colfer 2010). Involving women in natural resource governance creates the conditions for taking account of women's knowledge of and expertise on the ecosystem, expands the pool of those committed to conservation efforts and on the lookout for transgressors, and can help to instill a conservation ethic in children, to name a few (Agarwal 2009).

5. Inclusion of women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities may be even more challenging in FCS contexts. During conflict, women and girls more often experience gender-based violence (GBV), displacement, forced sex work, and forced labor (Bouvier 2016). GBV is used as a weapon of war (Smith, Olosky, and Fernández 2021; Applebaum and Mawby 2018), with some studies suggesting that approximately 70 percent of women experience GBV in conflict zones compared to 35 percent of women worldwide (ActionAid 2017; Loudon, Goemans, and Koester 2021).<sup>22</sup> Vulnerability to GBV continues or may even increase in post-conflict settings,<sup>23</sup> and women and children comprise more than 80 percent of those in refugee camps and resettlement zones (Alam 2015; Boyer, Meijer, and Gilligan 2020). Women who are directly involved in the conflict, including female ex-combatants, may face additional discrimination and be denied resources provided to male ex-combatants (Jensen and Halle 2013; UNEP 2014).
6. Sexual and gender minorities also experience amplified vulnerability to violence, discrimination, and exclusion during times of fragility and conflict. Sexual and gender minorities may face barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance and basic services, weak access to justice and impunity, and sexual and gender-based violence, among other challenges. These challenges are exacerbated by the lack of a global protection framework to safeguard the rights of sexual and gender minorities (World Bank 2020).
7. Gender dynamics during conflict also affect men and boys. Men and boys are more vulnerable to forced recruitment by militaries and non-state armed groups, torture, arbitrary detainment, and violence (Bouvier 2016; Wright 2014). These factors mean that men are more likely to die during conflict. For example, deaths among boys were found to outnumber those among girls two to one in Syria in 2014 (Wright 2014).
8. While women are often thought of solely as victims of conflict, many play considerable roles as providers and take on diverse roles in times of crisis.<sup>24</sup> With more men away during conflict, women often take on roles historically assigned to men. In post-conflict contexts, 30-40 percent of households may be women-headed (Lukatela 2012). Moreover, the destruction of agricultural lands, disruption of food markets, and increase in food prices during times of conflict may be particularly burdensome for women, who produce the majority of food in most developing countries. Conflict-

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<sup>22</sup> These estimates are likely low given that instances of GBV often go unreported, in large part due to the shame and stigma associated with them (Baaz 2013; UN Office of Special Representative 2023; Praveen n.d.; Manjoo and McRaith 2011; UN Women n.d.).

<sup>23</sup> Manjoo and McRaith 2011; True 2012; Praveen n.d.; Capasso et al. 2021; Boyer, Meijer, and Gilligan 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Boyer, Meijer, and Gilligan 2020; Ide et al. 2021; Johnston and Lingham 2020.

related disruptions to nutrition and food security can interfere with their income-generating activity and leave them more vulnerable to food insecurity. These challenges are often amplified as women are expected to provide for their family's food needs as the primary caregivers (Özçatalbaş and Sogué 2021). Women are also important contributors to peacebuilding, providing different perspectives, conceiving of peace and security issues more holistically, and identifying alternative solutions (UN Security Council Resolution 2000; O'Reilly, O Suilleabhain, and Paffenholz 2015; Ensor 2022). Indeed, when women are involved in peace negotiations, peacebuilding agreements are more likely to be implemented and peace is likely to last longer.<sup>25</sup> Involving women in managing natural resources can provide opportunities to empower and enhance their role in peacebuilding efforts. This includes promoting women's participation in natural resource governance, protecting women from resource-related security risks (including violence), developing women's capacity for sustainable natural resource use, and capitalizing on these processes for more effective and sustainable peacebuilding (Jensen and Halle 2013).

## B. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

9. Generally speaking, the GEF follows the approach of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) when it comes to IPLCs.<sup>26</sup> The CBD does not define IPLCs, and indeed it has noted that adopting a universal definition for "Indigenous Peoples" or IPLCs is not recommended (CBD/COP/DEC/14/13 2018). The GEF Policy on Environment and Social Safeguards<sup>27</sup> describes the term "Indigenous Peoples," while several GEF agencies provide their own definitions of the term. The term "IPLCs" acknowledges that conservation efforts are often undertaken by both Indigenous Peoples and local communities and is intended to be inclusive enough to allow for self-identification and self-determination by specific ethnic and cultural groups (Cultural Survival 2022; Athayde 2021). Recent environmental policy frameworks, including the Kunming-

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<sup>25</sup> Berry and Lake 2021; Chistien and Mukhtarova 2020; Hudson 2015; Krause, Krause, and Branfors 2018; O'Reilly, O'Suilleabhain, and Paffenholz 2015; Shair-Rosenfield and Wood 2017; Stone 2014.

<sup>26</sup> The evaluation team is using the term "IPLCs" because "IPLCs" is the current terminology used by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which the GEF follows. It is important to note that there is criticism of the term IPLCs for conflating Indigenous Peoples, who have specific legally protected status and rights, with local communities who are not necessarily guaranteed those same rights.

<sup>27</sup> The Policy on Environment and Social Safeguards (2019) describes Indigenous Peoples as "belonging to a distinct social and cultural group characterized in varying degrees by (i) self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous social and cultural group and recognition of this identity by others; (ii) collective attachment to geographically distinct Habitats, ancestral territories, or areas of seasonal use or occupation, as well as to the natural resources in these areas; (iii) customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are distinct or separate from those of the mainstream society or culture; and (iv) a distinct language or dialect, often different from the official language or languages of the country or region in which they reside. "To varying degrees" reflects the fact that some characteristics may be less, or no longer, evident, but have been present and are relevant in identifying Indigenous Peoples." However, the Policy also notes "This clarification is intended solely for the purpose of this Policy, given that there is no universally accepted definition of Indigenous Peoples, and given that these terms and concepts are subject to national legislation and to the different national circumstances of each country, taking into account that many countries have specific interpretations for terms and concepts that already apply within their jurisdictions. Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions" (GEF 2018, p. 6).

Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, acknowledge the contributions and rights of IPLCs and seek to ensure that these groups and their traditions and worldviews are respected and documented through free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

10. The literature shows that conflict is more likely to occur on IPLC lands than non-IPLC lands. Of all the armed conflict that occurs in biodiversity hotspots, four-fifths occurs on IPLC lands.<sup>28</sup> While many armed conflicts are not related directly to IPLC lands, the conflicts are often fought on those lands. When conflicts—both social and armed—do relate directly to the IPLC lands, they can include disagreements between IPLCs, government, conservationists, and/or development actors over control and access to land and resources as well as disputes over IPLCs’ political, cultural, and economic rights.
11. To prevent or address these conflicts, good practices include increasing the political representation and strengthening the rights of IPLCs in ways that increase autonomy and self-determination (Acuña 2015). Indigenous leaders can also play an important role in conflict management, particularly in places where formal courts are inaccessible (Baloyi et al. 2023). When the rights of IPLCs and Indigenous institutions are recognized, there are often positive social and ecological outcomes (Dawson et al. 2021). A number of studies provide evidence that conservation outcomes are improved when Indigenous Peoples and local communities play a central role in the decision-making process (Dawson et al. 2021).

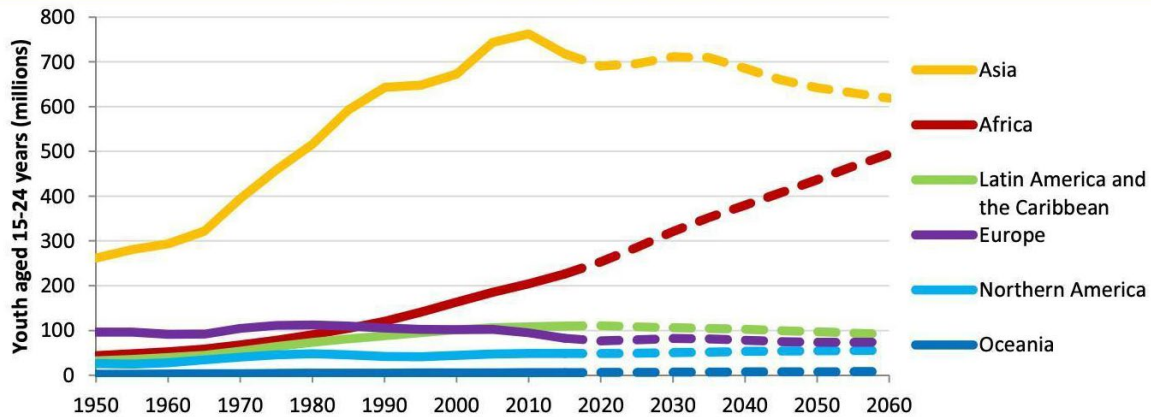
### C. Youth

12. Many countries in the Global South, particularly Asia and Africa (see Figure 1), are experiencing so-called “youth bulges” (Urdal 2012; World Populations Prospects 2012). A youth bulge is a demographic pattern in which a large portion of a country’s population is made up of children and young adults and is typically driven by a decline in infant mortality coupled with a persistence of high fertility rates (Lin 2012). The literature highlights security challenges with youth bulges: youth bulges increase the risk of the outbreak of low-intensity armed conflict, particularly in countries in which young people face high unemployment, weak institutions, and other grievances (Urdal 2012; Del Felice and Wisler 2007; Dixon 2023).

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<sup>28</sup> Beattie et al. 2023; Daskin and Pringle 2018; Hanson et al. 2009; Scheidel et al. 2023.





**Figure 1: Youth Aged 15-24 Years, by Region, 1950-2060**

Data Source: United Nations (2013) World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision

13. In many countries affected by armed conflicts, children and youth make up the majority of the population and are thus disproportionately affected by war (Tynes 2011). Most soldiers and combatants are youth (i.e., less than 24 years old); thousands of children are combatants in armed conflicts around the world or are detained as national security threats (Wessells 2016; Wessells 2006). Participation in armed conflict has serious implications for their physical and emotional well-being, with youth exposed to violence experiencing higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (Dubow et al. 2012; Rosen 2007). Many children are killed and maimed during conflict. In 2022, more than 8,600 children were killed or maimed in conflict worldwide (UN 2023). Children are also particularly vulnerable to environmental hazards, such as landmines and unexploded ordnance, after conflict has ended. In multiple post-conflict settings, children were victim to around half of the injuries caused by explosive remnants of war (Shenoda et al. 2018).
14. Rehabilitation and reintegration efforts are particularly critical for youth formerly associated with armed groups to break cycles of violence and find a new existence after a life of conflict and distress (Wessells 2016; Tynes 2011). Efforts to reintegrate youth back into society after conflict include providing sustained psychosocial support, vocational training, education, health care, and meeting other vital needs (United Nations 1989). According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children associated with armed forces or armed groups should be considered primarily as victims, meaning that alternatives to prosecution and detention are prioritized in circumstances where children are accused of committing serious crimes while in an armed group (United Nations 1989).
15. While youth may be both victims of and violent actors in conflict, they can also be agents of peace and positive social change, participating in youth-led peacebuilding efforts and initiatives (Del Felice and Wisler 2007). Young people are typically more open to change, future-oriented, and knowledgeable about the needs of their peers

than adults—characteristics that support their potential and power to sustain peace (Del Felice and Wisler 2007). Youth engagement in peacebuilding, which frequently occurs through informal channels, often goes unnoticed and is marginalized by actors with more social power (Dixon 2023).

16. Youth also serve as agents of positive socio-ecological change in environmental action (UNFCCC 2022). Youth-led social movements demanding climate action and protection of the environment have been on the rise (Barraclough et al. 2021). Mentorship and engagement of youth in training and empowerment programs is critical for sustaining land and resource conservation into the future, given that youth will become the future professionals in various sectors and pro-environmental behavior is found to begin in childhood (Kelly et al. 2022; Afeti et al. 2024). While youth have historically been omitted from engagement and consultation efforts on conservation programming, this is beginning to change (Barraclough et al. 2021).

#### D. Persons with Disabilities

17. Inclusion of persons with disabilities in development programming is particularly challenging during conflict. Persons with disabilities, including children, often experience disproportionately negative effects from conflict including the inability to flee violent conflict, risk of abandonment, limited access to basic and assistive services, stigma and discrimination, deepened poverty, and psychological and physical harm (Ćerimović 2019). During conflict, persons with disabilities are especially affected by the breakdown of infrastructure and services, such as a lack of assistive devices and accessible services. Threats of violence may also lead families to curtail the mobility of disabled individuals, leading to social isolation and entrapment, as observed during conflict in Northern Ireland (Berghs 2015). The needs of persons with disabilities may not be understood or considered during the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance, compounding their disproportionately negative experiences of conflict (Human Rights Watch 2019; Rohwerder 2013).
18. Persons with disabilities and their family members who have been displaced face compounding vulnerabilities in displacement and refugee camps. In these camps, persons with disabilities often contend with inaccessible and inadequate infrastructure as well as a lack of assistive devices like wheelchairs. This lack of accessible infrastructure and devices can diminish their access to water and sanitation, worsen their disability, and cause their health to deteriorate (Human Rights Watch 2019; HelpAge International 2014). Moreover, persons with disabilities tend to incur extra healthcare costs associated with their impairment while also facing greater difficulties accessing income-generating activities (HelpAge International 2014). As a result, persons with disabilities and their families are more likely to resort to informal negative coping mechanisms, such as begging, stealing, and sex work, and/or fall into extreme poverty (Gary and Chesochi 2020; Berghs 2015). Displaced children with disabilities, particularly girls, face added barriers in accessing education. Girls with disabilities are also at greater

risk of sexual violence, trafficking, and enslavement (Human Rights Watch 2018; Quinn, Kayess, and Gamba 2022; Dunkle et al. 2018).

19. Violent conflict frequently causes disability. Gunshots, bombing, shrapnel, landmines, torture, and chemical weapons all inflict life-long physical disability and psychological damage (Garry and Chechhi 2020). For example, a 2014 survey found that one in five Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon are affected by physical, sensory, or intellectual impairment, with 20 percent affected by more than one (HelpAge International 2014). After military service, combatants often suffer mental health problems such as PTSD, depression, suicidality, and substance abuse disorder, which can—if not addressed effectively—lead to further perpetration of violence, destabilizing peacekeeping efforts (Robjant et al. 2020).
20. Persons with disabilities have unique perspectives to bring to bear on peacebuilding, particularly as they are uniquely affected by conflict and post-conflict dynamics (Murray and Nimr 2022). Their perspectives are all-the-more relevant given that conflict often disables numerous combatants and civilians alike (Murray and Nimr 2022). To date, though, the perspectives of persons with disabilities are often left out of peacebuilding processes.
21. Persons with disabilities also have unique perspectives and social networks that position them as agents of social change in environmental movements and in natural disaster response (Gaskin et al. 2017; Wolbring 2009). In the aftermath of natural disasters, the resilience and social networks of persons with disabilities can make them “critical in household and community recovery, important as distributors of relief efforts and in reconstruction design” (Wolbring 2009, p. 3). Despite this, environmental discourse and disaster planning often fail to consider or include persons with disabilities (Salvatore and Wolbring 2022).

## Annex 4: Policy Frameworks for Inclusion

### A. Inclusion at the GEF, Generally

1. Public engagement, the foundation of inclusion, is key to the GEF's work and has been set out in policy since 1996 (GEF 2023, p. 3; GEF 2014, p. 3). Since then, the GEF has developed additional policies on stakeholder engagement, gender quality, and environmental and social safeguards. These are discussed below. While the GEF does not have an official policy on social inclusion per se, a 2023 Gap Analysis found that the GEF is broadly aligned with global strategies and policies of peer institutions when it comes to social inclusion. The GEF also integrated issues related to inclusion in the GEF-8 Programming Directions. Further, the Gap Analysis notes that the GEF recognizes the benefits of a framework for inclusion as it integrates existing policies to increase the engagement and inclusion of non-state actors in its work. It also acknowledged broader trends among development finance institutions to (1) expand the groups that may be considered priorities for inclusion and (2) shift the focus from vulnerability, risks, and needs to one that focuses on rights, agency, non-discrimination, and empowerment (GEF 2023a, p.3).
2. Most recently, a 2024 brief on environmental security by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) highlighted different existing approaches to FCS that could inform GEF practice. This included ensuring effective stakeholder engagement, particularly with sensitive populations in FCV contexts.

### B. Gender

3. In 2017, the GEF adopted a new Policy on Gender Equality based on the findings of the IEO's Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the GEF to replace the 2012 Policy on Gender Mainstreaming. The Gender Equality policy establishes the guiding principles and mandatory requirements for mainstreaming gender across the GEF's governance and operations with a view to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in support of the GEF's mandate to achieve global environmental benefits. As a result, gender mainstreaming is required at all stages, including project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management and learning. The GEF's Policy on Gender Equality committed the Secretariat to developing a strategy and action plan to further support the implementation of the policy, and the resulting GEF Gender Implementation Strategy was developed in 2018.
4. Gender is included within the definition of disadvantage groups or individuals in the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards. Under Minimum Standard 1, projects must be screened for gender-related risk and gender-based discrimination and there must be protocols in place to address gender-based violence and sexual exploitation (GEF 2019, p.18). Under the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement, Agencies must have

policies that ensure gender-responsive consultations and the Secretariat must report gender-disaggregated data where appropriate (GEF 2017b, pp. 6-7).

5. International law provides many protections and rights related to gender. Key instruments include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),<sup>29</sup> 1981 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),<sup>30</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1325,<sup>31</sup> and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.<sup>32</sup> These instruments reaffirm the agency of women and girls in promoting peace, development, and conservation, they promote nondiscrimination, and they offer protections against GBV and other violations.
6. Many multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) promote gender equality through the text of the MEAs, decisions of the conferences of the parties (COPs), and other policy and guidance documents. These provisions guide the GEF. Indeed, the GEF Secretariat framed the 2017 Policy on Gender Equality as a “a logical step stemming from the increased attention to gender equality and women’s empowerment by the conferences of the parties to the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) that the GEF serves” (GEF 2017c). Various MEAs emphasize the important role that women play in natural resource management and conservation as well as their distinct vulnerabilities to environmental issues.<sup>33</sup> The Conference of Parties for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), for example, highlighted the intersectionality of climate change, human rights, and gender equality (UNFCCC 2017, UNFCCC 2021). The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) have underscored the importance of promoting women’s participation and empowerment in decision-making processes on environmental issues. The GEF Gender Partnership, a platform for knowledge and learning exchange, acts as a gender focal point for agencies and international environmental conventions including CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC, the Minamata Convention, and the Stockholm Convention (GEF n.d.).
7. All 18 GEF implementing Agencies address gender in their policies and safeguards and, according to the 2024 Progress Report on GEF Agencies’ Compliance with GEF Minimum Standards, are in compliance with the Policy on Gender Equality (GEF 2023b). Agency policies and guidance address gender action plans (DBSA 2020, p. 38; IFAD 2021, p. 23), gender-sensitive impact assessments, gender mainstreaming analysis (DBSA 2020, p. 82; IFDA 2021, p. 323; IUCN n.d., p. 7), and gender empowerment assessments, among others (IFAD 2021, p. 351).

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<sup>29</sup> International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, 999 U.N.T.S 1, Dec. 1966.

<sup>30</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, UN General Assembly, A/RES/34/180, Dec. 18, 1979.

<sup>31</sup> UN Security Council, S/RES/1325, Oct. 31, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Fourth World Conference on Women, “Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,” 1995, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Convention on Biological Diversity, 1860 U.N.T.S. 69, June 5, 1992, Preamble; UN Convention to Combat Desertification, 1954 U.N.T.S. 3, Oct. 14, 1994, pmb., arts. 3(a), 5(d), 10(e), 19(1.a), 19(3.e).

8. GEF implementing Agencies have undertaken internal evaluations to assess how their projects address gender inequalities and inform future policies, including in fragile and conflict-affected situations. In 2023, the World Bank Group published an independent evaluation report on projects addressing gender inequalities, specifically women's and girls' economic empowerment and gender-based violence, in countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (World Bank 2023b). The report identified four factors that shape how transformational the efforts to address gender inequality are: (1) the agency's prioritization, (2) the modalities of stakeholder engagement, (3) financial and human resources and capacities, and (4) country contextual factors (World Bank 2023b, p. xiv). Recognizing the complexity and challenges of working in fragile and conflict-affected countries, the report recommended engaging gender issues at a country level not just on an individual project basis and tailoring interventions to the contexts in a decentralized, culturally sensitive way (World Bank 2023b, p. xvii).
9. Other research, such as a 2020 IUCN report for USAID, has continued to highlight the triple nexus of gender inequality, state fragility, and climate vulnerability (A.E. Boyer et al. 2020). The IUCN report highlights the importance of taking a strategic integrated approach to address the interconnected nature of the triple nexus and the need to understand both the drivers and impacts of climate hazards, fragility, and inequality.
10. Increasingly, international attention is understanding the impacts of and seeking to address marginalization based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). As for other marginalized groups, this is both a protection issue (trying to prevent harm) and an agency issue (trying to enhance outcomes by engaging around SOGI). There is substantial institutional and social movement on SOGI, and the policies and international agreements are still evolving.
11. There is no standalone GEF policy that focuses specifically on SOGI, although like youth and persons with disabilities, sexual orientation and gender identity are included in the definition of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups or individuals in the GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF 2019). The definition of gender in the Policy on Gender Equality includes sexual orientation as a part of the broader social-cultural context that informs gender (GEF 2017a, p. 3).
12. There are no global human rights treaties that specifically address SOGI. That said, in the last 20 years, soft law documents like the Yogyakarta Principles, have sought to create a guide for protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Both the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council have addressed SOGI in various resolutions (OHCHR n.d.). Additionally, international bodies, such as the UN Human

Rights Committee, have repeatedly recognized the protection of sexual orientation based on the ground of sex.<sup>34</sup>

13. There are a few references to SOGI in MEA-related documents, and such inclusion often remains controversial. For example, sexual orientation and gender identity were included in the draft Gender Plan of Action of CBD as aspects of marginalization related to gender before later being removed (CBD 2021). However, there have been instances of successful inclusion. For example, a 2022 decision of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD encouraged parties to pay special attention to intersectionality, including sexual orientation, when implementing the Gender Action Plan (UNCCD 2022a).
14. At least 6 GEF Agencies address SOGI in their policies and safeguards (GEF 2023, pp. 35-42). These references are most often found in the definition of vulnerable groups or gender equality. For example, the Inter-American Development Bank's Environmental and Social Policy Framework has incorporated SOGI across most of its environmental and social standards. In particular, its Standard 9 on Gender Equality encompasses SOGI inclusion in provisions on risk assessment, nondiscrimination, gender-based violence, and participation (IDB 2020, pp. 99-103).

#### C. IPLCs

15. Minimum Standard 5 of the GEF's Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards lays out requirements for GEF implementing Agencies in engaging Indigenous Peoples. This includes obtaining FPIC if there is any anticipated impact on Indigenous lands or natural resources, if relocation of Indigenous Peoples is required, or if there is a significant impact on Indigenous cultural heritage (GEF 2019, pp. 23-24). Implementing Agencies must also ensure that adverse impacts to Indigenous Peoples are appropriately mitigated, that Indigenous Peoples are engaged at all project stages, and that Indigenous Peoples receive the benefits to which they are entitled during project implementation (GEF 2019, p.24). This is an expansion from the 2011 GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards which limited FPIC requirements to projects in ILO 169 signatories or countries where it was required by domestic law or other international obligations (GEF 2011, pp. 6, 17). The GEF also affirms inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in its Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples and its Policy on Stakeholder Engagement. The GEF requires that all GEF-financed projects afford full respect for Indigenous Peoples such that the benefits of the projects are socially and culturally appropriate. Additionally, participation of Indigenous Peoples should be full and effective throughout "identification, development, monitoring, and evaluation of all relevant project activities" and this responsibility is handled by the country, either the government or agency, and supported by GEF implementing Agencies (GEF 2012, p.4).

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<sup>34</sup> Toonen v. Australia (31 Mar. 1994) Human Rights Committee Communication No. 488/1992, UN Doc. CCPR/C/50/D/488/1992 (1994). A

16. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 on the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries is the foremost international treaty on the rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and enshrines provisions guaranteeing the rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples to natural resources pertaining to their lands and obligates that free and informed consent will be undertaken before any relocation.<sup>35</sup> The effectiveness of the Convention is limited by the number of ratifications, which stands at 22 countries as of May 2024. While nonbinding, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirms a variety of important rights for Indigenous Peoples including the collective right to live in freedom, peace, and security as distinct peoples; the right to the lands, territories, and resources that they have traditionally possessed; and the right to the conservation and protection of the environment. The Declaration also obligates<sup>36</sup> States to obtain FPIC before relocation, the taking of cultural property, land or natural resources, the undertaking of administrative or legislative measures that affect them, the storage or disposal of hazardous materials on Indigenous lands. Article 41 of the Declaration specifically addresses the responsibility of intergovernmental organizations, such as the GEF, to contribute to the realization of the Declaration (GEF 2012, p.4).<sup>37</sup> Neither of these instruments explicitly uses the term “local communities” or “IPLCs.”
17. MEAs also recognize the need to involve and address the concerns of IPLCs given their traditional knowledge of and environmental connections. The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (a protocol to the CBD) emphasizes the need to obtain FPIC from Indigenous and local communities and negotiating benefit-sharing agreements for genetic resources.<sup>38</sup> While the UNCCD does not refer to IPLCs in the body of the text, subsequent documents by the Conference of the Parties have recognized IPLCs as key stakeholders (UNCCD 2022c). The UNFCCC has established a Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform for sharing best practices on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Minamata Convention<sup>39</sup> and the Stockholm Convention<sup>40</sup> recognize the vulnerabilities of Indigenous communities, particularly in Arctic ecosystems, due to biomagnification and contamination of traditional foods. At the November 2023 meeting, the Conference of Parties to the Minamata Convention adopted a decision on the effects of mercury pollution on IPLCs that encouraged greater inclusion of IPLCs in processes related to the Convention (UNEP 2023a).

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<sup>35</sup> Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, International Labour Organization (ILO), C169 (June 27, 1989).

<sup>36</sup> While the language of article 19 is obligatory – “States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.” – the Declaration remains soft law.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, GA Res 61/295, Sept. 13, 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Oct. 29, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Minamata Convention on Mercury, Oct. 10, 2013, pmb. & art. 1

<sup>40</sup> Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, 2256 U.N.T.S 119, May 22, 2001, pmb., arts. 7, 10.



18. All 18 GEF Agencies have at least one mention of Indigenous Peoples in their policies and safeguards. Unlike youth or persons with disabilities, which Agencies usually mention in the broader context of historically marginalized groups, Indigenous Peoples are often defined as their own standalone group and explicitly mentioned throughout the policy as important key stakeholders and rights holders.<sup>41</sup> All of the Agencies, except for one, explicitly lay out when a project needs to obtain FPIC from affected Indigenous Peoples (GEF 2021b; GEF 2023b). The Asian Development Bank has almost finalized its revised safeguard policy, which is anticipated to include FPIC requirements.

#### D. Youth

19. While there is no standalone GEF policy that addresses youth per se, the issue of child labor is highlighted in the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards. Minimum Standard 8 on Labor and Working Conditions requires agencies to put into place policies and procedures that ensure working age children are protected in line with the ILO Conventions and are free from harassment, intimidation, and exploitation (GEF 2019, p.27). Projects must avoid child labor (GEF 2019, p.28). GEF policies also address youth to varying degrees in other contexts, such as gender. The Policy on Gender Equality calls for GEF-financed activities to be “conducted, designed, and implemented in an inclusive manner so that women’s participation and voice are, regardless of their background, *age*, race, ethnicity or religion, reflected in decision-making ....” (GEF 2017a). The policy also requires special consideration for women and girls during the development and implementation of projects and programs. Additionally, the policy addresses youth in its definition of the term “gender equality” as meaning “the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and of girls and boys.” Finally, the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement requires agencies to have policies, procedures, and capabilities to ensure that consultations that involve stakeholders are responsive to the needs and interests of disadvantaged and groups experiencing vulnerability, including youth and children (GEF 2017b, p. 10).

20. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights treaty.<sup>42</sup> It recognizes numerous rights for children—defined as any human being below 18 years of age—including the rights to health, an adequate standard of living, education, and freedom from economic exploitation.<sup>43</sup> Article 38 requires states to respect the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to children during armed conflict. In August 2023, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a comment on children’s rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change, which stated that “children are entitled to protection from infringements of their rights

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<sup>41</sup> E.g., ADB 2009, p. 58 (“The borrower/client will provide relevant information, including information from the above documents in a timely manner, in an accessible place and in a form and language(s) understandable to the affected Indigenous Peoples and other stakeholders.”).

<sup>42</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1577 U.N.T.S. 3, Nov. 20, 1989. As of May 2024, all but two UN Member States had ratified the convention.

<sup>43</sup> UNCRC, arts. 24, 27, 28, 32.

stemming from environmental harm and to be recognized and full respected as environmental actors” (UN 2023b).

21. MEAs including the CBD, the Stockholm Convention, UNCCD, and UNFCCC highlight the need to involve youth in addressing environmental challenges through educational programs, capacity building, and engagement. The Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP, the formal youth engagement mechanism to the UNEP, also engages with the governing bodies of MEAs and, in some cases, contribute to the substantive development of negotiations (Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP n.d.; Kulovski et al. 2024).
22. All 18 GEF implementing Agencies mention children, youth, or young people in their policies and safeguards. The most common youth-related policies center on labor and working conditions, with 14 Agencies discussing the issue.<sup>44</sup> Other references involve community health and safety, involuntary resettlement, environmental and social assessment, and pollution prevention. Youth are often recognized as a distinct, group experiencing vulnerability, as well as changemakers. Some Agencies have developed programs and frameworks that support youth such as IUCN’s Youth Strategy, IDB’s Youth Development and Outreach Program, and ABD’s Youth for Asia (IUCN 2022; IDB 2020b; ABD n.d.). These efforts seek to empower youth engagement and inclusion within the Agencies.

#### E. Persons with Disabilities

23. Like for youth, there is no standalone GEF policy that addresses persons with disabilities, although they are acknowledged as a vulnerable population in the GEF Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards (GEF 2019, p. 5), and Minimum Standard 1 requires inclusion of persons with disabilities. GEF implementing Agencies must ensure that differentiated risks and potential impacts of projects on persons with disabilities are systematically addressed during environment and social assessments (GEF 2019, p. 17). Additionally, Minimum Standard 8 on labor and working conditions outlines appropriate measures to prevent harassment, intimidation, and exploitation of persons with disabilities (in line with ILO Conventions) (GEF 2019, p. 29).
24. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is a key international treaty promoting the rights of persons with disabilities across various areas, including the physical environment, transportation, and information.<sup>45</sup> Article 11 of the convention calls on states to ensure the safety and protection of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including armed conflict.<sup>46</sup> Article 23 of the UN

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<sup>44</sup> AfDB 2023, pp. 49-50; DBSA 2020, pp. 52-53; EBRD 2019, p.16; FAO 2022, pp.47-38; FECO 2020, p. 15; IDB 2020a, p.42; IFAD 2021, pp.60, 63; UNDP 2021, pp.51-53; UNEP 2020, p.16, p42; UNIDO n.d., p.22, p.58; World Bank n.d. p. 31; Conservation International, p.11.

<sup>45</sup> Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2515 U.N.T.S. 3, Dec. 13, 2006, art. 9.

<sup>46</sup> CPRD, art. 11.

Convention on Rights of the Child specifically recognizes the right of disabled children to “enjoy a full and decent life.”<sup>47</sup>

25. MEAs vary in their explicit acknowledgement of persons with disabilities. While few MEAs specifically address persons with disabilities, a growing number address this group through COP decisions. For example, the UNCCD Conference of the Parties has extensively acknowledged the rights of persons with disabilities, recognizing the importance of inclusivity, encouraging the involvement of CSOs working with vulnerable populations, and emphasizing the empowerment of persons with disabilities in the context of land degradation.<sup>48</sup> Since COP 26 in 2021, the UNFCCC has recognized a disabilities caucus (Costley and de Miguel 2022).
26. All 18 GEF Agencies address persons with disabilities in their policies and safeguards. Relevant provisions address human rights, community health, and working conditions. At least eight Agencies have policies recognizing persons with disabilities as stakeholders.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> UNCRC, art. 23.

<sup>48</sup> UNCCD 2022a; UNCCD 2022b; UNCCD 2022c; UNCCD 2022d.

<sup>49</sup> UNEP 2020, p. 49; DBSA 2020, pp. 30-31; FAO 2022, p. 16; UNDP 2021, p. 68; IFAD 2021; IDB 2020a, p. 96; EBRD 2019, p. 48; World Bank n.d., p. 99.

## Annex 5: Resources

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