

Management Action Record 2024 – Full Annex

Since 2006, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) annually presents the Management Action Record (MAR) to the GEF Council. The MAR is the key tool for accountability, tracking, and reporting on progress in implementation of the GEF IEO's evaluation recommendations. Implementation progress is assessed by evaluating the extent Management has executed its action plan to address each recommendation.

Before 2021, the Council endorsed the recommendations of the GEF IEO evaluations, and subsequently, the GEF IEO monitored their implementation. Assessing progress in implementing recommendations was challenging due to the non-prescriptive nature of the recommendations, leaving room for subjective interpretation.

Following the [Professional Peer Review of the Independent Evaluation Function of the Global Environment Facility](#), the GEF IEO, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat and the GEF Council, revised the MAR process. As part of this revision, GEF Management now responds to each GEF IEO evaluation recommendation with an action plan, which the Council reviews, comments on, and endorses. Subsequently, the GEF IEO tracks progress in the implementation of Management's action plan. The GEF Council began endorsing management's action plans in June 2021. MAR 2024 represents the second time the MAR is being prepared using the revised approach.

Management's self-assessment and its validation by the GEF IEO covers 16 evaluations – 14 of these were presented to the GEF Council and two to the LDCF Council. Following is the list of these 16 evaluations:

1. Program Evaluation of the Least Developed Countries Fund (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.29/E/01), December 2020 LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting
2. Evaluation of GEF Support in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (GEF/E/C.59/01), December 2020 GEF Council Meeting
3. Third Joint GEF-UNDP Evaluation of the Small Grants Programme (GEF/E/C.60/01), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting
4. GEF Support to Innovation – Findings and Lessons (GEF/E/C.60/02), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting
5. Evaluation of the Country Support Programme (GEF/E/C.60/03), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting,
6. Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach to Address the Drivers of Environmental Degradation (GEF/E/C.60/04/Rev.01), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting
7. Evaluation of GEF Engagement with Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (GEF/E/C.60/05), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting
8. Evaluation of Institutional Policies and Engagement of the GEF (GEF/E/C.60/06), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting
9. Results Based Management – Evaluations of the Agency Self-Evaluation Systems and the GEF Portal (GEF/E/C.60/07), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting
10. 2021 Program Evaluation of the Special Climate Change Fund (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.31/E/01), December 2021 Council Meeting
11. Evaluation of GEF support to Sustainable Forest Management (GEF/E/C.62/02), June 2022 GEF Council Meeting
12. Study on Climate Risk, Adaptation, and Resilience in the GEF Trust Fund (GEF/E/C.62/03), June 2022 GEF Council Meeting
13. Review of the GEF Management Action Record (MAR) (GEF/E/C.63/01), December 2022 GEF Council Meeting
14. Evaluation of the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on GEF Activities (GEF/E/C.63/02), December 2022 GEF Council Meeting
15. Evaluation of The GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security (GEF/E/C.64/01), Jun e2023 GEF Council Meeting
16. Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation of the Lower Mekong River Basin Ecosystem (GEF/E/C.64/02), June 2023 GEF Council Meeting

MAR 2024 will track progress in implementation of management's action plans for 39 GEF IEO recommendations within these 16 evaluations. These recommendations and the related management actions are listed in the annex. Management is requested to rate the level of implementation of the specified actions and describe the achievements along with areas of performance gaps in the designated columns of the annex tables. To facilitate the management in preparation of its assessment, only the relevant portions of the management response have been listed in the annex. The specified actions have been bolded. Links to the relevant documents have been provided for easy reference.

The four evaluations that were presented in the February 2024 Council, will not be covered in MAR2024 – these will be covered from 2025 onwards. These evaluations are listed in the annex for information but require not inputs from the Management.

Rating Approach

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

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

- (a) **High:** the management action plan for the relevant recommendation has been fully implemented.
- (b) **Substantial:** The management action plan for the relevant recommendation has largely been implemented or most actions have been implemented, but some aspects/actions have not been fully implemented.
- (c) **Medium:** Some of the actions listed in the management's action plan have been implemented but not to a significant degree. While some of the specified actions have been implemented, there is only a limited progress in implementation of the key specified actions.
- (d) **Negligible:** Specified actions have not yet been implemented or the progress made so far is negligible.
- (e) **Not rated**
- (f) **N/A:** Not applicable

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

- (a) **Graduated** due to high or, where appropriate, substantial level of implementation of the management's action plan.
- (b) **Retired** because the evaluation recommendation and related action plan is not relevant anymore, or further progress on implementation of the action plan is unlikely. An automatic reason for retirement would be if a recommendation and the related action plan has been reported on in the MAR for five years.

Annex: Progress in implementation of management action plan

1. Program Evaluation of the Least Developed Countries Fund ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.29/E/01](#)), December 2020 LDCF/SCCF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 2: Continue to enhance the likelihood of the sustainability of outcomes. The GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies should continue to carry out relevant actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the Council document Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments. This should entail giving more emphasis to the project and context factors identified by this evaluation as affecting the sustainability of outcomes during project design and implementation</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.29/E/02)</p> <p>The Secretariat acknowledges IEO's recommendation to continue to enhance the likelihood of sustainability of outcomes. In this regard, <i>the Secretariat will continue to carry out relevant actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the Council document Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments, as recommended by the IEO, and will continue to urge Agencies to emphasize contextual factors affecting sustainability outcomes.</i></p>	Not specified	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Sustainability of LDCF projects is of utmost importance to the GEF Secretariat.</p> <p>In the GEF-8 period, the GEF Secretariat is implementing Dedicated Programs which aim to enhance the quality at entry and sustainability of LDCF projects as recommended by this evaluation. Of particular relevance is the Dedicated Program on outreach and capacity support for country planning and programming, and another Program on organizational learning and coordination.</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat is organizing sub-regional workshops with LDC representatives, technical personnel, CSOs, and agencies to help raise capacity and facilitate stakeholder engagement and coordination. These factors have been identified in the evaluation as factors contributing to sustainability.</p> <p>The Secretariat also provides relevant, science-based guidance to Agencies to elevate the likelihood of sustainability of LDCF programming, such as STAP guidance, including on climate risk management; and information on GEF policies designed to ensure the robustness and sustainability of</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The launching of the Dedicated Programs (I. Communications and Visibility Enhancements; II. Outreach and Capacity Support for LDCF and SIDS Planning and Programming; and III. Organizational Learning and Coordination) in GEF-8 and other ongoing efforts is acknowledged.</p> <p>The GEF IEO will track the implementation of the Dedicated Programs in line with the four main themes of the Durability document: 1) theory of change, 2) multi-stakeholder processes, 3) stakeholder involvement and 4) adaptive learning as well as the Secretariat's continuation of urging Agencies to emphasize contextual factors affecting sustainability of outcomes.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>In this period, the LDCF continued to implement the priorities of the GEF 8 strategy which duly integrated the IEO's recommendation. It focused on the proposed dedicated programs, collaboration with financial institutions and whole-of-society approach, which serve as key levers for durability of adaptation outcomes.</p> <p>In this FY, the GEF Secretariat delivered 5 sub-regional adaptation workshops under the dedicated programs covering all the LDCs and SIDS. These workshops led to improved capacity of countries in designing effective and durable adaptation projects in collaboration with agencies, technical experts, STAP, and UNFCCC. These sessions have also led to strong ownership and engagement of countries in the projects, which is expected to translate into durable outcomes.</p> <p>The GEF also strengthened its focus on leveraging large-scale funding from MDBs and other FIs to complement LDCF investments for long-term outcomes. These include strategic collaboration with</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Ongoing GEF-8 efforts including dedicated programs, sub-regional workshops, leveraging funding, and the whole society approach are acknowledged. The IEO encourages the Secretariat to continue enhancing the likelihood of the sustainability of outcomes through actions in project design and implementation as highlighted in the Council document Towards Greater Durability of GEF</p>

		<p>project outcomes, which are regularly communicated to Agencies (such as on Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Equality). These guidelines and policies are also directly communicated to countries through expanded constituency workshops, national dialogues, and Introduction Seminars. These measures, as well as the GEF Secretariat’s project/program review process, which includes both technical and policy review followed by a review by STAP, aim at ensuring strong project design.</p> <p>Some measures identified in the IEO’s 2020 LDCF Evaluation are beyond the scope of direct GEF Secretariat influence, namely “insufficient capacity of the project team, staff turnover and delays in recruitment” and “weak project management”. These issues pertain to weaknesses at the Agency or country level that the GEF Secretariat has no means or mandate to oversee. We hope also that evaluators will recall the very difficult circumstances that LDCF projects tend to be implemented.</p>		<p>the World Bank IDA for scaling up NBS in LDCs and partnership with the GCF and IFAD on a regional adaptation project in Great Green Wall region countries. Overall, the share of MDBs and DFIs in LDCF programming has increased in GEF 8.</p> <p>The whole-of-society approach was also integrated in several LDCF projects which were approved by the Council in the reporting period. These projects have included approaches to engage stakeholders across governance levels, inclusive community-based governance structures, establishment of multi-sectoral dialogues, collaboration with the private sector, and engagement of communities and civil society in decision making and implementation of adaptation activities. Such a wider societal engagement in projects would likely pave the path for greater ownership, improved monitoring and a process of learning for durable outcomes.</p>	<p>Investments and continue to urge Agencies to emphasize contextual factors affecting sustainability outcomes.</p>
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2. Evaluation of GEF Support in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations ([GEF/E/C.59/01](#)), December 2020 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 2: To improve conflict-sensitive programming while also providing flexibility to Agencies and projects, the GEF Secretariat could develop guidance for conflict-sensitive programming. This guidance could address measures across the programming lifecycle, from design to implementation and closure. GEF guidance on conflict-sensitive programming could draw upon both the commonalities and innovations of the guidance that has been developed by 10 Agencies.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.59/06)</p> <p>The Secretariat appreciates the extensive range of innovative guidances for fragile and conflict-affected circumstances that has been developed and is being practiced by many of the Implementing Agencies. <i>The Secretariat will build upon these to develop jointly with Agencies GEF guidance on conflict-sensitive programming.</i> This will provide a framework that all Agencies can adopt during project design and across the project life cycle.</p>	<p>Not specified</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The GEFSEC has worked towards establishing guidance for work in Fragile and Conflict-affected countries by first producing an internal set of best practices. This document is ready and is now being used to guide a more in-depth study of GEF Agency best practices to establish a more formal guidance document to be presented to council in the upcoming meetings.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO notes that the GEFSEC has produced an internal guidance document for work in Fragile and Conflict-affected countries. Further, the undertaking of an in-depth study of best practices is a positive step towards formally guiding the GEF Agency's work in these challenging contexts.</p> <p>The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress of this action.</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The Secretariat produced an Information Note for Council in June 2023, that was subsequently deliberated by Council in Feb 2024. Council endorsed the course of action described therein.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO notes that the GEFSEC has produced the Information Note for the GEF Council. This undertaking is a positive step towards formally guiding the GEF partnership on fragile and conflict contexts.</p> <p>The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress of this action.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: To improve conflict-sensitive design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of GEF projects, the GEF Secretariat together with the Agencies should leverage existing platforms for learning, exchange, and technical assistance. These platforms are designed to effectively foster learning</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.59/06)</p> <p>The Secretariat takes note of the recommendation to leverage existing knowledge platforms to improve conflict-sensitivity. <i>The Secretariat considers this recommendation as usefully related to the present Knowledge Management evaluation, and will therefore</i></p>	<p>Not specified</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>See above. This more in-depth assessment being undertaken at this time, will lead to best practice and comprehensive guidance on work in Fragile and Conflict-affected countries. The harnessing of knowledge platforms and IPs will also feature in the new KM strategy being presented to council.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges that the development of an in-depth assessment currently being undertaken will help provide comprehensive guidance for work in Fragile and Conflict-affected countries. This is an important area and having effective guidance and best</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Based on the FCS paper and Council decision, the Secretariat is drafting guidance that will be circulated to Council for information after the June 2024 meeting.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO notes that the GEFSEC is drafting a guidance note. This is a positive step towards improving conflict-sensitive design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of GEF projects.</p>

<p>and exchange, build capacity, and provide specialized assistance. Since conflict sensitivity is a cross-cutting issue, lessons learned should be exchanged on existing knowledge platforms supported through programs such as the Integrated Approach Pilots, Impact Programs, Global Wildlife Program, and planetGOLD, among others, as well as on the online GEF Portal.</p>	<p><i>address this through its coming advancements in Knowledge Management as per the recommendations of that report.</i></p>			<p>practices can help ensure that the GEF's work in these contexts is as effective and impactful as possible. The inclusion of relevant knowledge from other programs and IPs in the new KM strategy is also a positive step. The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress of this action.</p>		<p>The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress of this action.</p>
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3. Third Joint GEF-UNDP Evaluation of the Small Grants Programme ([GEF/E/C.60/01](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>(to the GEF and UNDP). As recommended in the 2015 evaluation, the SGP should conduct a consultative process towards the formulation of an updated long-term vision for the SGP. This process should begin by taking stock of the past 25+ years of programming and should serve to inform future replenishment discussions. The process should be inclusive of upgraded countries, countries participating in the SGP global programme, GEF Council and UNDP, and the final vision should be adopted by the GEF Council/Assembly. The purpose would be to ensure that the vision, mission and mandate of the SGP are clear and consensual and serve as a guiding framework for policy decisions through future GEF periods.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23)</p> <p><i>From the GEF: The Secretariat will build on the efforts and work to update and lead a consultative process towards the formulation of a longer-term vision for the SGP in close collaboration with UNDP and the SGP Steering Committee. Considering that the SGP is a community-driven and country-led programme, the GEF Secretariat will collaborate closely with UNDP and the SGP Central Programme Management Team to ensure that the consultative process adequately engages upgraded countries and countries participating in the SGP global programme, including national coordinators, national steering committees, together with other stakeholders including government representatives, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.</i> It is expected that the results of the formulation of this longer-term vision will inform the GEF SGP Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8 and will serve as a broader SGP guiding framework for future GEF replenishment periods.</p> <p><i>From UNDP: UNDP accepts the recommendation and will work with</i></p>	<p>GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>SGP 2.0 outlines a new vision for the SGP and increased ambition to engage and support civil society actors and organizations to deliver on the GEF-8 Strategy and beyond. Building on early stock taking analyses and technical discussion during development of the SGP 2.0 in 2022, the GEF Secretariat will facilitate a broader stocktaking of lessons learned of SGP and engage countries and other stakeholders to build consensus around this new vision in GEF-8 that will also serve as a guiding framework for SGP in GEF-9.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The GEF IEO notes that the Secretariat states in the SGP 2.0 implementation arrangements for GEF-8 that it will facilitate processes to engage countries and other stakeholders in stocktaking of lessons learned to support the implementation of SGP 2.0 and that these efforts will contribute to building consensus around a longer-term vision of SGP 2.0. The IEO will continue to track the progress of this process.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has advanced several important steps in the roll out of the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8. Relevant to the long-term visioning exercise include the selection of FAO and CI as two additional SGP Implementing Agencies. The GEF Secretariat determined that a longer-term visioning exercise for the SGP would generate greater added value once all three agencies were on board, especially with a view to GEF-9 and to position the exercise within the wider context of GEF’s “whole of society approach”. Initial steps have been initiated to consult with all three agencies, and the exercise is expected to start in the second half of 2024 and to be concluded by December 2024 to inform the GEF-9 Replenishment discussions.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges that the steps taken by the GEF Secretariat and will continue to track the progress of this process.</p>

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	<p>the GEF and the SGP Steering Committee to conduct a consultative process towards the formulation of a long-term vision for the SGP, with a focus on growth, synergies and scaling up.</p> <p>...</p> <p>To ensure that the vision, mission and mandate of the SGP are clear and consensual, a consultative process for an agreed vision has also been initiated among partners and stakeholders in the context of developing the SGP strategy for GEF-7 and GEF-8 replenishment.</p> <p>...</p> <p>The SGP Steering Committee, reconvened as of July 2020 and revitalized as a multi-stakeholder governance body of the SGP comprising the GEF secretariat, UNDP and the GEF Civil Society Organization (CSO) network, could serve as the primary mechanism for consultative and regular review of the SGP long-term vision, mandate and strategy in GEF-8 and beyond. Because the SGP is a community-driven and country-led programme, a consultative process involving national coordinators, national steering committees and other stakeholders will inform the work of the SGP Steering Committee.</p>					
Recommendation 4:	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09 , DP/2021/23)	GEF-8 replenishment, by	Rating: High	Rating: Substantial	Rating: High	Rating: Substantial

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<p>(to the Central Programme Management Team). The ways that SGP interventions are packaged, such as strategic initiatives, focal area results, innovation programmes and Grantmakers Plus initiatives, should be simplified. A small number of thematic frameworks (e.g., landscape/seascape approach) may be adopted to steer or shape programming, incentivize innovation or address urgent and emerging issues, but the pace of change should be slow enough to allow for local adoption and internalization by local communities.</p>	<p><i>From the GEF:</i> The Secretariat takes note of this recommendation and will support the Central Programme Management Team, as needed, in line with UNDP's management response to this Evaluation. <i>The Secretariat will further work to ensure that the SGP strategy for GEF-8 is aligned with GEF Policies and Guidelines and forthcoming GEF-8 Policy Agenda, including ensuring that SGP adopts a results framework that is compatible and aligned with the GEF-8 results architecture, while taking into consideration the feasibility of and capacity for applying them at the community level, and the GEF forthcoming strategy on knowledge management and learning.</i></p> <p><i>From CPMT:</i> The Central Programme Management Team and UNDP accept this recommendation and will work to simplify its interventions to support faster adoption and internalization by local communities. Going forward, lessons emerging from the various programming windows will be integrated into a limited number of strategic initiatives and cross-cutting frameworks.</p>	<p>June 2022</p>	<p>GEF -8 Strategy and programming directions, including the SGP 2.0 implementation arrangements as approved by the GEF council in December 2022 (see https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/EN_GEF.C.63.06.Rev_.01_GEF%20Small%20Grants%20Programme%202.0%20Implementation%20Arrangements.pdf) incorporates and builds on the landscape/seascape approach and directions as outlined in GEF-7 SGP Core Projects.</p>	<p>The plans for the SGP 2.0 results framework included in the SGP 2.0 implementation arrangements are acknowledged. The IEO will continue to monitor the incorporation of guidance on the results framework in the SGP 2.0 operational guideline.</p>	<p>In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has prepared and finalized the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines for GEF-8 (soon to be posted on GEF website). In the process to finalize the guidelines, the GEF Secretariat has convened technical working group discussions with UNDP, FAO and CI to solicit their input and feedback. Discussions on the Results Framework for GEF-8 has been an integral part of these consultations. The GEF-8 SGP Results Framework, in line with the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8, has been elaborated in in the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines. The framework aligns with the GEF-8 Core Indicators, and, for the first time, include common SGP-specific indicators to capture, monitor and report on social inclusion and livelihood outcomes.</p> <p>In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has also convened regular technical meetings with UNDP to ensure that the tranche 1 SGP project is aligned with the GEF-8 Programming Directions, the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8 and the recently completed Operational Guidelines and Results Framework.</p> <p>Furthermore, the GEF Secretariat has facilitated technical meetings with all three SGP implementing agencies to support further alignment with the GEF-8</p>	<p>The IEO welcomes the preparation of 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF website). The IEO will continue to monitor the adoption and application of these guidelines.</p>

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					programming directions, SGP 2.0 implementation arrangements, and the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines in the preparation of SGP 2.0 tranche two project design.	
<p>Recommendation 5: (to the SGP Global Steering Committee and the Central Programme Management Team). As recommended in the 2015 joint evaluation, the SGP should review and re-energize its governance at the global and national levels. This will help to avoid misunderstandings and strengthen the relationship, through revised terms of reference, improved communication, agreed operational language or more frequent meetings. At the national level, the Terms of Reference of the national steering committee should be reviewed with emphasis on building synergies with the national UNDP programmes and creating spaces for new committee members that could help in increasing the broader adoption of SGP small grant projects (such as including</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23)</p> <p><i>From the GEF:</i> The Secretariat welcomes this recommendation and stands ready to support UNDP and the Central Programme Management Team in line with UNDP's management response to this Evaluation that specifies their commitment to review and re-energize its governance at the national and global levels, including the GEF Steering Committee lead by the GEF Secretariat.</p> <p><i>From CPMT:</i> UNDP accepts this recommendation and will work with the SGP Steering Committee to review and re-energize SGP governance at the global and national levels.</p>	Not specified	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>SGP 2.0 Implementation arrangements as approved by the GEF council (see https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/EN_GEF.C.63.06.Rev_01_GEF%20Small%20Grants%20Programme%202.0%20Implementation%20Arrangements.pdf) incorporates a strengthened role of the Secretariat to provide oversight, ensure coordination and program consistency and provide continuous monitoring and reporting under a new model with more than one SGP Implementing Agency. The SGP 2.0 implementation arrangements also places greater importance of the global SGP Steering Committee for program consistency, monitoring, guidance, and decision making. In line with this re-energized governance, the GEF Secretariat will lead the process to update the Terms of</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The GEF IEO notes the incorporation of the Secretariat's and the global SGP Steering Committee's strengthened role in the SGP 2.0 implementation arrangements for GEF-8. The GEF IEO will track the progress of this process and the development of the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The approval of the two new SGP implementing agencies demands a renewed coordination and governance model at the global level. Directly following the selection of the FAO and CI as the two new SGP implementing agencies, the GEF Secretariat convened, in January 2024, a first expanded SGP 2.0 Global Steering Committee Meeting. This meeting facilitated early onboarding issues for the additional SGP implementing agencies and discussions on measures to support needed collaboration between the agencies. Following this meeting, the GEF Secretariat convened a face-to-face meeting with all agencies during the GEF Council meeting in February 2024, and initiated regular technical working group meetings. It is expected that the Steering Committee will discuss and approve a renewed TOR of the SGP Global Steering Committee at its next meeting to be scheduled by the GEF Secretariat before the June 2024 council meeting.</p> <p>Efforts to re-energize national level governance are being advanced as part</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges actions taken by the GEF Secretariat including approval of new SGP Agencies, the expanded SGP 2.0 Global Steering Committee Meeting, and efforts to re-energize national level governance. The IEO will continue to track the progress of this process.</p>

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members with expertise in building business models or inclusion of private sector representatives).			Reference of both the national steering committees and the global SGP Steering Committee as part of the operational guidelines to be developed.		of the design of the three SGP implementing agencies' projects and supported by the GEF Secretariat as part of technical discussion and project review efforts.	
<p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p>(to the Central Programme Management Team). The SGP should test new ways to track and aggregate the intangible results generated by countries benefiting from SGP inputs such as the benefits received from its capacity-building activities, monitoring and evaluation, communications and knowledge management. There should be a systematic process in which the global programme countries benefit from the experiences of the upgraded countries and vice versa. At the country level, the SGP should be able to track the evolution of the grantees they support and the broader adoption of activities that have been implemented, to maximize the space for innovation and support the evolution of its grantees. The team</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23)</p> <p><i>From the GEF: The Secretariat will further work to ensure that the SGP strategy for GEF-8 is aligned with GEF Policies and Guidelines and forthcoming GEF-8 Policy Agenda, including ensuring that SGP adopts a results framework that is compatible and aligned with the GEF-8 results architecture, while taking into consideration the feasibility of and capacity for applying them at the community level, and the GEF forthcoming strategy on knowledge management and learning.</i></p> <p><i>From CPMT: The Central Programme Management Team and UNDP accept this recommendation.</i></p> <p>...</p> <p>SGP will further refine and formalize the system to monitor the efficiency and results of capacity development, knowledge management and communication, including the definition and capture of appropriate indicators.</p>	<p>GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>Discussion on intangible results of SGP is currently being considered as part of the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines to be informed by the GEF-8 results framework and consultation with the UNDP.</p>	<p>Rating: Negligible</p> <p>The Secretariat agrees with the recommendation but has taken minimal action so far. The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress of adopting a results framework that is compatible and aligned with the GEF-8 results architecture, while taking into consideration the feasibility of and capacity for applying them at the community level, and the GEF forthcoming strategy on knowledge management and learning and the inclusion in the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>In this reporting period, the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines for GEF-8 were prepared by the GEF Secretariat and discussed with the three SGP implementing agencies for their input and feedback. The SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines for GEF-8 (soon to be posted on GEF's website) outlines the SGP 2.0 Results Framework for GEF-8. The Results Framework builds on previous versions and aligns with the GEF-8 results architecture, and, for the first time, includes SGP-specific indicators that captures and monitors the social inclusion and livelihood outcomes underlined in the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8. In addition, the SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines incorporates M&E guidelines aligned with the GEF Core indicators and the new SGP specific indicators, whilst allowing for flexibility and further reporting, by each agency, on capacity development and other social and economic indicators when relevant.</p> <p>The SGP 2.0 Operational Guidelines include sections on Knowledge Sharing</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO welcomes the preparation of 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF website). The IEO encourages the GEF Secretariat to take into consideration the feasibility of and capacity for applying them at the community level and will continue to monitor the adoption and application of these guidelines.</p>

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<p>should continue to ensure that adequate knowledge management strategies are in place with related capacity to implement these strategies, so as to allow the maximization of broader adoption opportunities stemming from SGP initiatives.</p>					<p>and Learning, consistent with the GEF Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (GEF/C64/07) and which clearly sets out the guidance on these issues for the implementing agencies.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 7:</p> <p>(to the Central Programme Management Team, UNDP, and the GEF). The approach to and measurement of sustainability in the SGP should be improved to capture the tangible and intangible benefits of the programme. A first layer of sustainability could be measured at the level of small grant projects, while another could be measured at the level of grantees. A measure of sustainability in this context may be whether the organizations continue to operate in the environmental space after the SGP grant is concluded. A scale of CSO capacity could be devised that would allow for long-term tracking of SGP grantees and their</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23)</p> <p><i>From the GEF:</i> In the context of this evaluation and this recommendation, and building on the work already being done in the wider GEF portfolio, the Secretariat will work with UNDP and the CPMT to understand more deeply the factors that influence sustainability in the SGP, and the ways in which these factors can be influenced within the parameters of the program. Sustainability considerations can also be discussed as part of efforts to develop an appropriate approach to capture the intangible benefits of SGP interventions (see response to recommendation 6) as well as in the formulation of an updated long-term vision for the SGP (see response to recommendation 1).</p> <p><i>From UNDP:</i> The Central Programme Management Team and UNDP accept</p>	<p>Not specified</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>Issues of sustainability will be considered as part of the development of the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines and results framework. However, additional effort will need to be undertaken to better understand the factors that influence sustainability in the SGP longer term.</p>	<p>Rating: Negligible</p> <p>Considering issues of sustainability in the development of the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines and results framework are welcome. The GEF IEO will continue to track action to better understand factors that influence sustainability in the SGP and the inclusion of issues of sustainability in the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines and results framework.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has considered issues of sustainability in the preparation of the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines, results framework, and project reviews. The PIF, approved by Council in June 2023, for the SGP Tranche 1 (UNDP) include strategies for sustainability of grantee projects. The Project identifies how local communities, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged groups will benefit from technical and grant assistance for interventions allowing them access to knowledge and information and capacity and skills development that enhance socioeconomic conditions and generate global environmental benefits. The project incorporates strategies to support a positive enabling environment for building skills and technical capabilities beyond each project's lifespan.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO welcomes the preparation of 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF website) and the considerations of sustainability issues in the selection of new Agencies and the PIF approval process. The IEO will continue to track actions to better understand factors that influence sustainability in the SGP and to monitor the adoption and application of the guidelines.</p>

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<p>progression along the development continuum, especially for those who receive repeat funding or whose activities are replicated or upscaled through new projects.</p>	<p>this recommendation and will work with the GEF for its implementation.</p> <p>As part of efforts to develop an appropriate approach to capture the intangible benefits of SGP interventions (see response to recommendation 6), the SGP will also explore ways to measure sustainability at the level of grantees, as recommended.</p> <p>...</p> <p>With an emphasis on further integration of SGP country teams with UNDP country offices in GEF-7 and beyond, sustainability of results will be maintained through linkage with relevant national policies and programmes, as well as by scaling up through larger donor- and government-led programmes and projects.</p>				<p>As part of the GEF Secretariat's selection process of the additional SGP implementing agencies, specific selection criteria were incorporated to evaluate Agencies' capabilities and experience in developing community level and grantee capacities, providing technical assistance, fostering alliances and partnerships, leveraging and mobilizing resources. Strategies and approaches for enhancing local sustainability will also be an important consideration of the GEF Secretariat's technical discussion and review of SGP 2.0 Tranche two projects.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 8:</p> <p>(to the Central Programme Management Team). The team should create operational mechanisms to improve and incentivize innovation and business-oriented approaches in country programmes. These mechanisms would maximize the potential for environmental benefits and</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23)</p> <p><i>From the GEF:</i> The Secretariat welcomes this recommendation and will seek to collaborate with UNDP and the Central Programme Management Team to leverage linkages with the newly approved GEF Private Sector Engagement Strategy and lessons learned from the GEF Non Grant Instruments (NGI). During GEF-8, the GEF's ambition is to build on</p>	<p>GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>SGP 2.0 Implementation arrangements as approved by the GEF Council (see https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/EN_GEF.C.63.06.Rev_.01_GEF%20Small%20Grants%20Programme%202.0%20Implementation%20Arrangements.pdf) incorporates emphasis on the importance of leveraging private</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The incorporation of leveraging private sector approaches in alignment with the GEF's Private Sector Engagement Strategy in the GEF 2.0 implementation arrangements, building on the UNDP SGP guidance note on</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>In line with the SGP 2.0 Implementation arrangements and the Operational guidelines, the GEF Secretariat has initiated renewed discussion on among the three SGP implementing agencies, through technical group discussions, on opportunities to further leverage their experiences and specific practices or tools for private sector engagement.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges discussion on among the three SGP Agencies on practices or tools for private sector engagement, the earmarking for the Microfinance Initiative financing window, and welcomes the preparation of 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF</p>

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<p>social inclusion while creating opportunities for long-term viability of supported SGP small grants. The social economy model provides a useful avenue for the SGP to expand to new beneficiaries and to optimize the sustainability of its results. Enhanced and more systematic synergies between UNDP and the SGP at the country level could facilitate this process. Examples include priority selection of innovative projects, varied scales of financing for business-oriented initiatives, and the broader adoption of SGP small grant projects into UNDP programming.</p>	<p>experiences with micro-credits in a number of SGP Country Programmes and to explore modalities to further promote sustainable livelihoods through i.e. greater collaboration with local micro-financing entities; and to support and accompany the creation of micro, small and medium enterprises at the local and community level. <i>The Secretariat will also explore options to expand SGP Dialogue Platforms towards a greater engagement of the private sector to leverage its potential to support sustainability at the local level and to provide opportunities for local communities to engage in policy dialogues with national and local governments.</i> The collaborative work and findings of these efforts is expected inform the GEF SGP Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8 and to serve as a broader SGP guiding framework for future GEF replenishment periods.</p> <p><i>From UNDP:</i> With respect to broader adoption of innovations tested under the SGP projects into UNDP programming, many SGP country programmes will continue to strengthen linkages with UNDP accelerator labs and regional innovation teams to scale up innovation and experimentation.</p>		<p>sector and business-oriented approaches in alignment with the GEF's Private Sector Engagement Strategy and building on the UNDP SGP guidance note on Private Sector Engagement. SGP 2.0 implementation arrangements also includes a Microfinancing Initiative to address the lack of adequate financial solutions for most vulnerable populations to climate change and environmental threats.</p>	<p>Private Sector Engagement as a SGP 2.0 guiding principle, and the microfinancing initiative is noted. The GEF IEO will continue to monitor actions for this recommendation.</p>	<p>In addition, the SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements earmarked \$10 million for a Microfinance Initiative financing window. This initiative, along with the CSO Challenge Program is expected to be launched in the second semester of 2024.</p>	<p>website). The IEO will continue to monitor actions for this recommendation.</p>

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	<p>To support business-oriented approaches in country programmes and projects, SGP is developing a private sector guidance note as part of its resource mobilization and partnership strategy (2020-2024), with an aim to enhance private sector engagement and adoption of relevant business models, including supporting small and medium-scale enterprises and exploring use of different financing scales and modalities, through the SGP country programmes.</p>					
<p>Recommendation 9:</p> <p>(to the GEF). The GEF Secretariat should apply the explicit, accepted accounting standards that are applied to the rest of the GEF portfolio when assessing SGP management costs. The appropriateness of the level of management expenditures should be a factor of the level of management activities that are required. Programmatic activities related to CSO capacity-building, monitoring, knowledge, technical assistance and communication should not be considered part of the</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09, DP/2021/23)</p> <p><i>From the GEF:</i> The Secretariat fully agrees, with this Evaluation, that the calculation of SGP's management costs should not extend to services to CSOs and costs for activities related to CSO capacity-building, monitoring, knowledge, technical assistance and communication.</p> <p>...</p> <p>The Secretariat has in the past tracked the proportion using the methodology as defined and calculated in the Joint IEO-UNDP SGP evaluation of 2008. This proportion remains a valuable marker of SGP operations. As per the recommendation, <i>the Secretariat commits to continuing this conversation with UNDP in the</i></p>	<p>GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>SGP 2.0 Implementation arrangements as approved by the GEF council (see https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/EN_GEF.C.63.06.Rev_.01_GEF%20Small%20Grants%20Programme%20Implementation%20Arrangements.pdf) incorporates renewed cost efficiency and reporting protocols that will align SGP fee structures and reporting measures with standards applied to other GEF Projects and programs. SGP 2.0 also includes a cap for non-grant budget items to achieve an overall grant ratio of 72%,</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The inclusion of new cost efficiency measures and reporting protocols in the SGP 2.0 implementation arrangements is acknowledged. The GEF IEO will continue to track the setting of benchmarks for programmatic costs for the next replenishment.</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has (i) incorporated the renewed cost efficiency and reporting protocols in the review of SGP projects as approved by the GEF council (see https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/EN_GEF.C.63.06.Rev_.01_GEF%20Small%20Grants%20Programme%20Implementation%20Arrangements.pdf); (ii) included further specifications and reporting requirements in the SGP 2.0 operational guidelines; and (iii) requesting information that will allow the Secretariat to monitor and report through the PIR, MTR and TE of each SGP global projects. In addition, the GEF Secretariat is looking to capture lessons</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat's incorporation of the renewed cost efficiency and reporting protocols in the review of SGP projects, new specifications in the 2.0 Operational Guidelines (soon to be posted on GEF website), and request for further monitoring information is acknowledged. The GEF IEO will continue to track the setting of benchmarks for programmatic costs for the next replenishment and the development of a long-term SGP vision.</p>

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<p>management cost even if they are expenditures incurred by UNDP and UNOPS in their capacity as implementing agency and executing agency. Further discussion on this matter between the GEF and the UNDP should take place on the basis of clarification as to the future vision of the SGP. The next GEF replenishment may wish to consider setting benchmarks for programmatic costs in relation to the demands placed on and resources provided to the SGP.</p>	<p><i>context of formulating the longer-term vision of the SGP (see recommendation 1).</i></p> <p>...</p> <p><i>The Secretariat will consult and work with UNDP to, as part of setting the long-term SGP vision, make sure that SGP program resources flowing directly to CSOs are carefully defined in terms of terminology, methodologies and resources. The Secretariat will seek to align with IEO's recommendation that the next replenishment should consider setting benchmarks for programmatic costs.</i> We also propose that the next replenishment considers setting a proportion of the total SGP financing to flow to CSOs in the context of the overall resource envelope and strategy of the SGP and the GEF-8 GEF SGP Implementation Arrangements to be presented at the 62nd Council. The collaborative conclusion of this effort is expected to inform the GEF SGP Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8 and to serve as a broader SGP guiding framework for future GEF replenishment periods and for project approval.</p>		<p>including measures to improving cost efficiency and reporting to maximize the proportion of SGP financing ultimately reaching CSOs and local communities.</p>		<p>learned from this process to inform SGP in future replenishments.</p>	

4. GEF Support to Innovation – Findings and Lessons ([GEF/E/C.60/02](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

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<p>Recommendation 1: Since many innovations involve risks, the GEF Secretariat should continuously monitor the risk across the GEF portfolio. The GEF Council, together with the GEF Secretariat and STAP, should, based on such assessment, identify an acceptable risk tolerance level for the GEF portfolio. This risk tolerance level should be clearly communicated to the Agencies along with clarity on defining an innovative project and the criteria for selection of innovative projects.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>To address this recommendation, <i>the Secretariat will seek guidance from both STAP and the GEF Council so as to examine the tradeoffs of risk versus innovation in the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations, with an aim to establishing a clear baseline for risk acceptance in GEF-8 programming and to a risk assessment in the ongoing projects and programs in the GEF portfolio.</i> The Secretariat sees this as the essential first step that can then guide the subsequent steps as identified by this recommendation. In addition to the valued findings of this Evaluation, the Secretariat would also like to highlight a recent STAP document on this topic entitled “Innovation and the GEF”2 - it is therefore envisaged that STAP will be particularly valuable on this recommendation, and the Secretariat plans to work closely with them in this regard.</p>	<p>GEF-8 replenishment , by June 2022</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p> <p>This analysis of risk has been pushed to the December council meeting due to many other competing demands. It will also be informed by the presentation and discussion surrounding the GBFF presented at June council.</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p> <p>Acknowledged</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>A Risk Appetite and Framework was drafted by the Secretariat and approved by Council in Feb 2024. Agencies have been briefed on implementation and relevant GEF templates have been updated accordingly.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The risk appetite statement and framework approved by the GEF Council in February 2024 sets out expectations about risk preferences across the GEF portfolio, including a high-risk appetite for innovation supporting transformational change. However, moving toward a higher risk profile requires a stronger risk management and support structure. According to the new GEF IEO Risk Evaluation, the increase of the risk appetite not only on paper but on the ground requires an in-depth consultation within the GEF and implementing agencies, greater clarity on the practical application, and instruments to support agencies to manage high-risk projects successfully.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 2: The GEF should continue to explore and partner with innovation support programs that may mobilize larger sources of risk capital, and should explicitly encourage adaptive, flexible management of innovative interventions. This could include a separate funding window for innovative projects, as well as adaptive management and flexible funding, such as a contingency component.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p><i>The GEF will address this recommendation during the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations by exploring with replenishment participants the possibilities for new funding modalities and funding windows that can provide the flexibility that is desired for increasing innovation within the GEF portfolio. We will also explore a dialogue with risk capital entities which may be attracted to invest in GEF projects if flexible and responsible funding modalities can be found.</i></p> <p>These steps will build upon ongoing GEF engagements with innovation investments such as the Non-Grants Instruments (NGI), and will incorporate learnings from these as well as from other experiences such as the "Challenge Program" of the LDCF Trust Fund.</p>	<p>GEF-8 replenishment , by June 2022</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The GEF-8 replenishment created a new Innovation Window in response to this recommendation. This new window will be developed in the later part of 2023 to be launched in early 2024. Innovation has also been reinforced in all project modalities, including the IPs which are being prioritized for the June and December Work Programs as well as in the NGI funding window for which there is an on-going call for proposals.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the new Innovation Window and reinforcement of innovation across project modalities.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The Innovation Window will be opened for proposals through a competitive process. The Call for Proposals for the GEF-8 Innovation window has been drafted and is currently with the STAP Secretariat for their input. As soon as the Call is finalized, it will be issued in the coming months, with the intention of the first set of projects for the Innovations window to come to the December 2024 Council. This is intended to generate a cohort of innovative projects that will help inform and advance GEF-8 priorities. A report on the process and selected cohort of projects will be prepared for Council.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO notes the GEF Secretariat's response and will continue monitoring progress of this action.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: The GEF must require monitoring, mid-term reviews, evaluation, and knowledge sharing in all innovative projects,</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>Firstly, as recommended by the Knowledge Management evaluation, the Secretariat is in the process of developing a</p>	<p>Not specified</p>	<p>Rating: Negligible</p> <p>This function will be reinforced in the TORs of project managers and on those funding modalities specifically aimed at</p>	<p>Rating: Negligible</p> <p>The GEF IEO agrees with the GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>A new Division for Integration and Knowledge is now operational as part of the new GEF Secretariat reorganization. This Division will oversee implementation</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The progress in establishing the new division and hiring knowledge management specialists are positive steps.</p>

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<p>regardless of project size. Regular monitoring and mid-term reviews should be required for innovative projects of all sizes, to allow for learning and adapting as needed in time, and lessons should be captured and shared widely to understand factors underpinning success or failure, prior to scaling up or replication.</p>	<p>partnership-wide KM strategy, the implementation of which will enhance the harnessing and dissemination of lessons on multiple dimensions of GEF projects, including innovation. Secondly, as recommended by the Medium-Size Projects evaluation, the MSP modality will continue to be used for developing innovative projects in particular, and that relevant lessons will be provided from the monitoring of those projects. Finally, with an eye to the continued improvement of the GEF Portal to serve the expanding needs of the GEF partnership, <i>the Secretariat can consider several portal enhancements that can facilitate enhanced learning related to innovative projects through the development of specific fields and tags for relevant data capture.</i></p>		<p>innovation. This will also be facilitated by the GEFSEC restructuring that is underway.</p>		<p>of the Council approved KM and Learning strategy, including the development of an implementation plan, capacity and expertise, processes, and systems necessary to advance knowledge exchange and sharing across the GEF partnership. Experienced knowledge management specialists will be added to this team in 2024 as part of the GEF's ongoing staffing-up exercise.</p>	<p>Specific actions to ensure knowledge sharing in and from innovative projects of all sizes are still limited.</p>

5. Evaluation of the Country Support Programme ([GEF/E/C.60/03](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

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<p>Recommendation 1: Build on current efforts to collaborate with other global environmental funds. To help countries to respond better to the commitments of countries vis-à-vis the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements that the GEF is supporting along with other global funds, CSP management should build further on past efforts to collaborate on readiness activities with other funds. Overall, the management of the CSP should continue to monitor developments to identify where substantive opportunities for collaboration can be established beyond the current efforts."</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>The Secretariat has already been taking steps towards closer collaboration with other funds and will intensify these efforts in response to this recommendation. The GEF CEO has stated as one of his goals a broad relation of complementarity with related funds, in particular the Green Climate Fund (GCF). To this end, a parallel document is being presented for discussion and consideration at the current 60th Council meeting that describes the agreement reached between the GEF and GCF Secretariats and sets the overarching framework for deeper cooperation between the two funds. Within this framework, <i>the CSP will explore options to enhance collaboration in a manner that most effectively build capacities of OFPs and other stakeholders to access GEF resources and to learn about GEF policies and guidelines. Any progress will be reflected in the annual joint progress report that will be submitted to both the GEF</i></p>	<p>On annual basis</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>Conversations have been held with other funds. Nevertheless, the very strong differences in timing, composition of Constituencies, focal points and strategies, policies and procedures, make this recommendation very challenging to apply in practice. In addition, we are just starting activities under the GEF-8 CES strategy which leads to additional differences.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges that the GEFSEC has taken actions to try to circumvent the challenges to coordinate an effective collaboration with other institutions. Negotiations continue to make possible the collaboration among agencies. The IEO expects that future negotiations lead to a full collaborative effort among agencies.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The Secretariat continues to take steps towards closer collaboration with other funds. This is embodied through the Long-Term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence and Collaboration between the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility, on which annual updates are provided to Council. The GEF Secretariat has also engaged in several collaborative efforts with the 4 climate funds (GEF, GCF, CIF and AF) such as a joint statement issued at COP-28 in December 2023 and the co-hosting of a Pavilion among the 4 funds at COP-28. A detailed action plan is under development to enhance access and impact along specific dimensions. The GEF Secretariat is also embarking on collaborative efforts with the Conservation Trust Funds across the LAC and Africa. Finally, a 4 day workshop was held in April at the GEF offices to advance the common plan to be presented to GF council in June 2024.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat embarked in a series of activities with other funds, joining efforts to promote the topics related to Climate Finance, challenges in BD and learning programs aimed to the countries in the South.</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
	<p>Council and the GCF Board. The experiences and lessons from this initiative as it develops, can serve as guidance for possible collaborations with other global environmental funds as appropriate and relevant.</p>					
<p>Recommendation 3: Strengthen technical expertise in the CSP team and monitoring and reporting systems. CSP management should improve the program's dedicated technical capabilities and its ability to provide more localized support, to meet the high demands placed on the CSP team across countries and regions. In light of the insufficient program data management and reporting, CSP management should also put in place results-based data management, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems to track the use of resources, as well as activities, outcomes, and impacts. These systems should provide the basis for more systematic and comprehensive reporting at each GEF cycle to both GEF</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>As discussed in response to recommendation [2] above, the Secretariat is in the process of developing a comprehensive program strategy for the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations. Resulting from the scope of this strategy, <i>the Secretariat will also elaborate on any further technical team skill gaps to meet the high demands for more localized support that has been identified by the Evaluation. In response to this recommendation, this strategy will elaborate a logical framework, and this framework will also include proposed monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems for the program.</i></p>	<p>GEF-8 replenishment , by June 2022</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>A comprehensive Country Engagement Strategy (CES) was developed during the GEF-replenishment negotiations under the guidance of the GEF-8 replenishment participants. This provided the strategic framework to deliver an expanded and coordinated approach to the GEF's effort to empower countries in the ownership of their portfolios, and in turn, maximize the impact of GEF resources through a coordinated approach. Subsequently, a detailed package of GEF-8 Implementation Arrangements for the CES was presented to the 63rd council in December 2022 that identified thematic areas, related activities, and underlying budget needs: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/EN_GEF.C.63.05_Country%20Engagement%20Strategy%20I</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The GEF is currently under an internal restructuring and the findings will provide, a clear picture of the different skills and in-house capacities that will allow an effective implementation of the CES</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat is in the process of operationalizing the GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy (CES), which builds upon and supersedes the Country Support Program. As a result, all recommendations of the CSP evaluation will now be realized through the Country Engagement Strategy. A report on implementation of the GEF-8 CES was provided to the 66th GEF Council in February 2024, including details on how the financial resources are being utilized. The Secretariat continues to implement the GEF-8 CES and closely monitor its various budget lines. In parallel, the GEF Secretariat is in the middle of its internal restructuring exercise, where the CES strategy is being implemented through the work of several Divisions including the Programming Division and the General Management Division. The GEF Secretariat is in the process of staffing-up and several of the new positions will directly contribute to the CES.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat has organized a series of expanded constituency workshops and other activities, in an in person and virtual format, as planned in the Country Engagement Strategy (CES). However, the fully implementation of the CES has not advanced as quickly as expected, with only a handful of regional activities during FY24.</p>

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management and the GEF Council.			<p>mplementation%20Arrangements-CG_0.pdf</p> <p>The Secretariat is already in the process of implementing the GEF-8 CES along these lines.</p> <p>The Secretariat is currently working on a monitoring, evaluation, and reporting system for the CES. The Secretariat is also in the process of an internal restructuring exercise which, among other things, will identify across the Secretariat the relevant needs of all teams in terms of skills and capacities.</p>			

6. Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach to Address the Drivers of Environmental Degradation ([GEF/E/C.60/04/Rev.01](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 1: To make the ongoing efforts in aggregate program-level reporting effective, the GEF Secretariat must clarify program-level reporting requirements for Lead Agencies. The value-added potential of integrated programming is there but must be measured. Program-level monitoring and reporting requirements must be better codified in project cycle practices. Global and regional coordination projects should not be required to report on global environment benefits in all cases. Some relevant intermediate results linked to the program theory of change—not just global environment benefits—should be aggregable across child projects</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>To address the recommendation, <i>the Secretariat will consider that the following requirements are codified in the guidelines specifically for the integrated programs:</i></p> <p>a) Coordination child projects to be designed alongside the Program Framework Document to ensure that program priorities including theory of change, results framework, and governance mechanisms are well established at the time of PFD submission for Work Program inclusion and Council approval,</p> <p>b) Coordination child projects to be exempt from direct contributions to core indicator targets and instead focus primarily on aggregating results across child projects under the program,</p> <p>c) Country / thematic child projects approved as a cohort under integrated programs to follow as close as possible similar timelines to CEO endorsement, and milestones</p>	<p>Not specified</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The GEF Project Cycle Guidelines on programs will reflect these requirements that are now being applied to the GEF-8 Integrated Programs.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Most of the requirements indicated in the GEF Secretariat response to this recommendation are contained in Annex 1: Roles and Responsibilities of Lead Agencies, GEF-8 Integrated Programs Lead Agency Terms of Reference and Selection Process (GEF/C.62/05/Rev.01). It would be good that these requirements are also integrated in a revised version of the GEF Project Cycle Guidelines, as indicated in the GEF Secretariat response.</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The Project Cycle Guideline includes a focus on the Programmatic Approach, which is the modality used for integrated programs. Hence most of the important aspects identified in the Annex are embedded within the guidelines. These will be further developed and improved as we continue to learn from the programs.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>GEF Secretariat's response is acknowledged. It would be good that these requirements are also integrated in a revised version of the GEF Project Cycle Guidelines on programs, as indicated in the GEF Secretariat's response last year.</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
	for monitoring and reporting during implementation.					

7. Evaluation of GEF Engagement with Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises ([GEF/E/C.60/05](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 1: MSMEs vary in their capacities and constraints and GEF support should appropriately address the context-specific needs, barriers, and economic viability in projects involving the private sector. GEF engagement with MSMEs may not only or necessarily be through increasing their access to financing, but by introducing low-cost, context-appropriate practices and technologies they can easily adopt, and by facilitating regulations and administrative reforms required to access resources. Increasing access to financing is appropriate where a minimum level of resources already exists, and the higher amount of investment is needed to generate a higher magnitude of global environmental benefits. Partnering with local, established organizations may provide long-term support that increases the likelihood of</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>In implementing Recommendation [1], the Agencies could consider how the private sector actors themselves can play a key role by introducing low-cost, context-appropriate practices and technologies that can be easily adopted and through the provision of additional financial resources.</p> <p><i>This could be undertaken through consultations and leverage key private sector networks and platforms that include MSMEs. Technologies in ICT and digital applications could also be employed to facilitate MSME engagement and will be a topic for the GEFs informal digital working group and as key component of private sector engagement in GEF-8.</i></p>	<p>GEF-8</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>This evaluation has proven very useful in developing strategies to support private sector engagement.</p> <p>The findings of the evaluation are strongly aligned to GEF's private sector strategy and underscores the importance of working with the private sector to generate a higher magnitude of GEBs.</p> <p>Working through the GEF partnership during the GEF-8 cycle the findings have helped shape the GEF's approach to working with the private sector, recognizing that the private sector's contribution extends beyond merely financing and into new models of doing business and the adoption of new technologies.</p> <p>A key finding is that the most successful partnerships with the private sector at the MSME level engage at least three types of private sector actor. This helps in the development of plans to engagement private sector at the country level and supports the platform and value chain approaches advocated by the GEF Sec in its strategy.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat does not specifically report on progress in the use of ICT to facilitate MSME engagement, or on how Agencies are engaging private sector actors to play a key role in providing low-cost, context-appropriate practices and technologies. However, the regional private sector workshops that have led to an increased understanding of a full value chain approach indicate some progress in this direction.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Throughout the reporting period the general findings of the evaluation report have been circulated have been promoted and included in the discussions for project design.</p> <p>There has been most interest in the development and incorporation of low-cost, context appropriate practices and technologies has been in those IPs in which smallholders, medium enterprises and small business are engaged in larger global value chains. These IPs include the Blue and Green Islands, the Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution, Food Systems, Eliminating Chemicals from Hazardous Supply Chains and Sustainable Cities.</p> <p>In each case, new business models, practices and initiatives that are specifically targeting the MSME sector are being incorporated into project designs. Such examples include re-use and refill systems for small scale businesses and local entrepreneurs, localized and technology appropriate aquaculture operations, sustainable grazing methods for fiber production</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The increased focus on systems (e.g. value chain approach, circular economy) and more integrated roles for the private sector in the GEF-8 Programming indicate greater attention to implementing pilots that engage MSMEs in their particular contexts. The outcomes of this more MSME-conscious approach can be tracked to see if MSMEs are indeed adopting--and contributing to more global environmental benefits--through these context-specific, low-cost technologies.</p>

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global environmental benefits being sustained, mainstreamed and/or scaled up.			<p>In particular, the private sector workshops, held as part of numerous regional dialogues, used these findings to help build an understanding of what GEF actually means when referencing the private sector (not just large corporations) and that approaches that adopt a full value chain approach are most successful.</p> <p>The evaluation also reinforces the taxonomy of the private sector, giving consistency to the GEF's reporting across the organization.</p>		<p>and small scale growing of sustainable materials in textile use.</p> <p>The focus on value chain approaches and the requirements of larger business to be accountable for their supply chain impacts (scope III emissions) has placed a strong emphasis on developing context specific resources for SMEs and the larger private sector entities are making strong efforts to build supply chain resilience post covid by investing upstream into such practices and technologies.</p> <p>In such cases, the policies, incentives and approaches that are needed to make these resources available are being incorporated into the relevant components of the project design and will be the subject of stakeholder consultations during the design process.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2: In addition to tracking environmental outcomes, GEF projects should design for and monitor social and economic benefits that engage the private sector, including MSMEs.</p>	<p>Partially Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>In the context of the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations, the GEF Secretariat has started work on the identification of new metrics that can help assess the contribution to improving the well-being of the people across the portfolio. This includes identifying metrics detailing the</p>	GEF-8	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The GEF Sec has been working with stakeholder to better account for the broader range of benefits that can be generated from working with the MSME sector and that overcoming social and economic challenges is key to the successful engagement of the MSME sector and the long-term adoption of new approaches or tech adoption.</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p> <p>The regional private sector workshops (mentioned above) indicate stakeholder engagement within specific contexts, but the GEFSec has not shared other concrete, systematic ways to ensure "sufficient assessment of the context as inputs to project</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The GEF approach is to design for nature at the center of human well-being and to generate multiple global and local environmental and societal benefits. Placing nature at the center of the GEF strategy under a "one health" approach (human and planetary health) builds in positive</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>Since GEF-7, the GEF has been giving more attention to socioeconomic benefits/ human well-being as part of its approach alongside securing</p>

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	<p>socioeconomic characteristics of these beneficiaries. They could relate to aspects such as livelihoods, jobs, and health – and to this end, the GEF Secretariat appreciates the information contained in “Table 9, Social and economic benefits” intended to be generated by MSME projects and extent of achievement of the MSME Evaluation as a practical example list of co-benefits that can be used as a platform for the further articulation of the socio-economic results framework for GEF-8. As outlined in paragraph 5, this evaluation discusses the fact that “previous evaluations have noted that social and economic benefits can address constraints and serve as an incentive for these MSMEs to adopt and sustain environment-friendly sustainable technologies or practices, eventually allowing environmental benefits to be scaled up”. However, this needs to be accompanied by careful consideration during the project planning and design phase in order to ensure that social and environmental benefits do not become the primary outcomes sought from the project.</p>		<p>GEF projects aim to design for these broader social and environmental benefits with this understanding as part of the delivery of the GEBs.</p> <p>Consistently tracking social and economic benefits across the projects is a challenge at the MSME level with limited information, availability and the resources needed to access the data.</p>	<p>design taking into account MSMEs”.</p> <p>While tracking consistent indicators may pose challenges at the portfolio level, many GEF initiatives miss the opportunity to track and report on these benefits as part of their results framework at the project level. An opportunity also exists for the GEF partnership to track simple yet relevant indicators at the portfolio level.</p>	<p>social and economic outcomes at the design stage.</p> <p>The engagement of large businesses, MNCs and the finance sector has helped to ensure that broader SDG goals and targets related to social and economic benefits are included in their project engagement.</p> <p>While the quantification of environmental benefits remains the focus, new metrics and a socio-economic result framework for GEF-8 is under development.</p> <p>The GEF now reports annually on gender specific private sector metrics to account for the scale and diversity of women's private sector enterprises that support livelihoods and gender equity goals and targets.</p>	<p>global environmental benefits. While this has not yet translated to indicators at the corporate level, the inclusion of gender-specific metrics for GEF-supported private sector activities is progress in this direction.</p>

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	Relatedly, in considering the implementation of Recommendation [2], the GEF Secretariat agrees with Conclusion 3 (d) that private sector engagement is influenced by several project design characteristics, the quality of project preparation, and the project management teams' and partners' relevant technical expertise. To this end, <i>the GEF Secretariat will continue to work with Agencies to ensure high quality project preparation, both in general and on this dimension. This will involve consulting a wide range of stakeholders including the broader private sector, and conducting sufficient assessment of the context as inputs to project design taking into account MSMEs.</i>					

8. Evaluation of Institutional Policies and Engagement of the GEF ([GEF/E/C.60/06](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
Recommendation 1: The Secretariat should prepare an overarching narrative for the three policies under the	Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09) While we agree on the merits of tracking inclusion at the project	GEF-8 replenishment, by June 2022	Rating: Substantial GEF-8 Policy Recommendations	Rating: Medium IEO acknowledges the Inclusion Agenda presented in	Rating: High The Gap Analysis was completed and presented to Council for information in June	Rating: Substantial The IEO acknowledges the Gap Analysis and

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<p>banner of “inclusion”, make explicit the complementarities across the policies, their contribution to the GEF program, and their tie-in to the GEF project cycle. As the policies progress through implementation, the Secretariat should build capability to track inclusion at a project level in a way that allows GEF to analyze policy impact at a portfolio level.</p>	<p>level, we will need to explore how and where the Secretariat can effectively “build capability” for this as the Secretariat does not have an implementation role at the project level. The Secretariat concurs with the IEO, however, that the GEF should move toward a framework to better “analyze policy impact at a portfolio level” and we commit to working with the Agencies on this during GEF-8. <i>The Secretariat expects that early commitments and approaches to move in this direction will be included in the GEF-8 replenishment documents.</i></p>		<p>included a commitment to prepare a gap analysis related to inclusion, to include also disabilities, and LGBTQ+. This is work is underway, for presentation to December 2023 Council.</p>	<p>GEF-8 Policy Recommendations, and the plans to undertake a gap analysis. The IEO will review the gap analysis when it is made available. The GEF has not indicated how it will analyze policy impact at a portfolio level.</p>	<p>2023. Subsequent deliberation by Council in Feb 2024 resulted in a Council request to confirm a timeline for policy/guideline adjustments, if any. This will be presented to the June 2024 Council.</p>	<p>notes the focus on the following stakeholder groups that historically have received less attention: youth as changemakers; child protection; persons with disabilities and sexual and gender minorities. The IEO also notes the plans to confirm whether policy/guideline adjustments are necessary and will monitor these plans.</p> <p>The IEO notes that the GEF has not indicated how it will analyze policy impact at a portfolio level.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: The Secretariat should develop a knowledge sharing effort that leverages expertise within the Partnership to highlight approaches for addressing safeguards implementation issues related to the updated ESS policy. Related to the IEO's evaluation on Knowledge Management, the Secretariat should incorporate: a) inclusion</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>Considering the emerging experiences and expertise within the GEF Agencies, <i>the Secretariat will explore cost-effective ways to take advantage of its position as knowledge broker, utilizing existing platforms such as the Country Support Program, GEF Agency Retreats, virtual courses and learning events to leverage existing knowledge and facilitate learning across Agencies and the</i></p>	<p>on annual basis</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Progress reporting is ongoing, and the Knowledge and Learning Strategy is under development.</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p> <p>The annual progress report describes indicative plans to explore increasing the GEF's role in targeting knowledge sharing but does not provide any concrete actions.</p> <p>The IEO will review the forthcoming knowledge and learning strategy for inclusion practice content and information on environmental</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The KM and Learning Strategy has been Council approved and is now under implementation phase. With the new Division for Integration and Knowledge operational, GEF Secretariat is now well-positioned to strengthen capacity and expertise, processes, and systems necessary to advance knowledge exchange and sharing across the GEF partnership.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO notes that the KM and Learning Strategy's objective 2: 'Increase knowledge flows through platforms' indicates that it will hold regional events on programming and policy. Beyond this reference to an event on policy, there is no specific mention of content related to</p>

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practice content; b) Environment and Social Safeguards implementation topics within the scope of the Secretariat's forthcoming KM strategy.	<p>GEF Partnership more broadly. The Secretariat will also explore opportunities to highlight the importance of this area of work in the forthcoming Knowledge and Learning Strategy being developed in response to the earlier IEO Evaluation on Knowledge Management.</p> <p>Progress on this effort will be reported in the Secretariat's annual Progress Report on the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards.</p>			and social safeguards implementation topics.		<p>inclusion or ESS policy implementation specifically.</p> <p>IEO will monitor implementation of the KM strategy to assess whether the two content areas recommended by the evaluation are covered in KM activities.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: The Secretariat should a) reset the GEF's relationship with the CSO Network with clarity on roles and responsibilities, and b) recalibrate the IPAG mechanism for increased strategic impact. In both instances, the Secretariat should draw upon the growing body of knowledge on civil society outreach practices, the opportunities inherent in the policies to promote inclusion, and the strategic directions indicated for GEF-8.</p>	<p>Partially Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>The Secretariat strongly believes in the importance of civil society engagement as an important lever for delivering global environmental benefits. It concurs with the IEO's findings on the need for a greater clarity on roles and responsibilities between the Secretariat and the CSO Network. The Secretariat, however, would like to highlight that the current relationship is guided, at the strategic level, by the "Updated Vision to Enhance Civil Society Engagement with the GEF"7 based on the results of an ad hoc working group of interested Council Members. The Secretariat proposes to develop</p>	62nd GEF Council meeting, June 2022	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Considering the findings of IEO evaluation, the GEF Secretariat has worked with the CSO network to engage an external consultant to facilitate a process to support a process to strengthen and modernize the operation and work of the GEF CSO Network and relationship with the GEF partnership (see also https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/EN_GEF_C.63_Inf.15_Evolving%20Context%20of%20Civil%20Society%20E</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the review of CSO engagement in MEAs and comparable organizations carried out by the GEF as a first step prior to developing detailed guidelines to accompany the Updated Vision.</p> <p>The IEO will continue to monitor progress on the development of guidelines.</p> <p>IEO acknowledges the activities supporting continued engagement with IPAG, the role of IPAG in the Inclusive Conservation</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>In this reporting period, the GEF Secretariat has continued to work with the CSO Network and the external consultant to support the Network's interest to address shortcomings identified in the IEO evaluation and opportunities to modernize their operation. In the fall of 2023, there were some positive steps to implement a plan of action based on the findings and recommendations of the consultancy. It should be noted, however, that the CSO Network elections of a new chair and regional focal points that commenced in the end of 2023, resulted in a serious setback due to complaints and allegations of irregularities. In the meanwhile, the GEF Secretariat has continued efforts to engage civil society, including at the GEF-7 Assembly and Partnership Forum, as well as through</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>IEO notes the ongoing engagement with the CSO Network, and the steps toward a plan of action. It also notes the CSO Network elections and subsequent changes in leadership.</p> <p>IEO will continue to monitor progress toward the recommendations of this evaluation, including creation of guidelines that provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the CSO Network.</p>

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	<p><i>more detailed guidelines within the approach defined by the vision statement, working with representatives of the GEF CSO network and the broader GEF partnership to formulate greater clarity on the GEF's engagement with civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities moving forward and reporting to Council on the outcome. The Secretariat proposes, as a first step, to carry out a review of similar organizations' civil society outreach practices, in consultation with the GEF CSO Network and the broader GEF Partnership, and present the findings of this analysis and early recommendations to the GEF Council for their consideration at the 62nd Council meeting.</i> The Secretariat greatly values the role of the IPAG as a key actor in the GEF Partnership and welcomes the IEO's many positive findings in this regard.</p> <p>...</p> <p>In response to this recommendation, <i>the Secretariat commits to a continued engagement with the IPAG in both higher-level strategic GEF-8 programming dimensions and in specific projects and programs</i></p>		<p>ngagement%20in%20Multilateral%20Environmental%20Agreements%20and%20Comparable%20Organizations_0.pdf</p> <p>The Secretariat continues to work closely with the IPAG convening multiple virtual meetings over the past year. IPAG directed the development and design of the Inclusive Conservation Initiative and continues to receive updates and provide input. Discussions with the IPAG also took place during the GEF-8 replenishment process to inform various documents including the programming directions as a whole and the GEF-8 Inclusive Conservation Initiative specifically which is a part of the approved GEF-8 programming strategy. Under the detailed guidance of IPAG, the process to select new members as begun with the GEF Assembly as the opportunity to transition membership and define</p>	<p>Initiative, and the plan to select new members.</p>	<p>Extended Constituency Meetings and other events.</p>	

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	<p><i>as most relevant, and including regular engagement with the CEO.</i> The Secretariat would like to highlight that discussions on potential changes in IPAG modalities and membership composition had in fact started in 2019. However, the inability to conduct face-to-face meetings due to the pandemic has considerably slowed this process, particularly with respect to changes in membership structure.</p> <p>In response to this recommendation, <i>the Secretariat will restart the discussions within these constraints, with the future directions of IPAG to be guided in detail by the IPAG itself. The Secretariat will also enhance its monitoring of engagement with indigenous peoples: as part of the keyword taxonomy in the Portal, every project and program can be tagged as including indigenous peoples which makes it convenient to identify relevant projects</i> (though it should be noted that differing definitions of indigenous peoples and local communities by national governments can complicate such tracking).</p>		<p>goals and activities for the future. Finally, engagement with IPLCs and IPAG for the GEF Assembly has begun to ensure significant roles and visibility of IPLCs.</p>			

9. Results Based Management – Evaluations of the Agency Self-Evaluation Systems and the GEF Portal ([GEF/E/C.60/07](#)), June 2021 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Agency Self Evaluation – Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat and Agencies should strengthen use of mid-term reviews for learning and adaptive management. The evaluation shows that despite their potential, mid-term reviews are conducted in a limited number of instances and the guidance on mid-term reviews is inadequate. The Secretariat should provide more guidance to the Agencies on conduct of the mid-term reviews, should share good practice examples, and should track timely conduct and submission of mid-term reviews. The Agencies should conduct the mid-term reviews for GEF-supported projects, as mandated by the GEF Monitoring Policy (2019).</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>The Secretariat agrees to strengthen the use of mid-term review for learning and to promote a flexible and more adaptive project management approach by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthening guidance. In collaboration with Agencies, the Secretariat will reinforce guidance on MTRs and highlight good practices existing across Agencies, with a focus on adaptive and proactive management (2022). This will support increased focus on problem solving, course correction, project turnaround and learning. ■ Implementing a more efficient MTR review process. The Secretariat will set out a plan to strengthen its oversight of projects under implementation and improve the quality and role of MTRs, view a view to enhance learning and adaptive management (2022). ■ Better tracking MTR submission. The Monitoring Report will continue to track the timely delivery of MTRs as an integral part of the Portfolio 	<p>2022</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The implementation of GEF Secretariat’s commitment to strengthen guidance on MTR, implement a more efficient MTR review process and better track the submission of MTRs is overall <i>Substantial</i>. Progress includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Strengthening guidance</u> (Substantial). GEFSEC developed the outline of a report documenting good practices in conducting MTRs structured around 12 categories of good practices. This outline benefited from comments provided by Agencies and IEO, and feedback during the March 2022 Agency Retreat. - <u>Implement a more efficient MTR review process</u> (High). The secretariat is continuously strengthening its review of MTRs. Findings from this enhanced review fed into the analysis of the 2022 Monitoring Report’s section on “Environmental Progress Made by GEF Financing” (GEF/C.63/03). In addition, a review of a sample of MTRs during each fiscal year is taking place with a particular focus on ensuring a comprehensive uptake of Core Indicators and update on co-financing materialized. - <u>Better tracking MTR submission</u> (High). GEF-8 Replenishment negotiations led to elevate the 	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The GEF IEO agrees with the Management’s assessment of the progress made in strengthening guidance, making MTR review process more efficient, and tracking of MTR submission. The Management is giving more prominence to tracking of timely conduct of MTR through its monitoring report. For example, the 2022 Monitoring Report devoted several paragraph to this topic. However, there are still gaps in preparation and submission of mid-term reviews.</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>In addition to actions described in 2023, the Secretariat has undertaken proactive follow-up with Agencies on MTRs and other reporting products. This includes annual letters and proactive follow-up meetings with Agencies to discuss. The most recent such exercise concluded in March 2024.</p> <p>In addition, the GEF started systematically reviewing all MTRs submitted each fiscal year, starting in fiscal 2023. This is done with a view to ensure an accurate and comprehensive capture of progress in achieving results and disbursing co-financing.</p> <p>Finally, the disbursement of the remaining portion of Agency fee triggered by MTR submission (GEF/C.55/04/Rev.01) helps ensure Agencies submit MTRs systematically and in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO is in agreement that several steps have been taken to ensure that mid-term reviews are prepared and submitted to the GEF. However, there are substantial gaps in submission of MTRs. Of the GEF-6 and GEF-7 full size projects for which an MTR should be available, it is not available for at least one out of five projects.</p>

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	<p>Scorecard it introduced for the first time in the 2020 Monitoring Report (2021 and ongoing).</p>		<p>tracking of MTR submission as a standard indicator monitored under the Tier 2 of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework focused on Operational Performance (EN_GEF_C.62.Inf_.12.Rev_.01) and reported on yearly in the Monitoring Report. This indicator tracks the Time from CEO endorsement to mid-term review submission below 4 years. In addition, and with a view to deliver on its GEF-8 commitment (recommendation III.6.a in GEF/R.08/32), the GEF Secretariat included in its inaugural bilateral communication with Agencies in December 2022 the list of FSPs over 2.5 years old so as to incentivize the timely conduct of MTRs. These efforts already led Agencies to submit a significant number of overdue MTRs that had yet to be shared with GEFSEC.</p>			
<p>Agency Self Evaluation – Recommendation 2:</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat, in collaboration with other partners, should strengthen learning through the systems that it manages, support for cross-Agency exchanges, and incentives for candor. The Secretariat needs to play a greater role in facilitating</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>The Secretariat fully supports the recommendation to continue strengthen learning through systems, coordinate knowledge exchanges across the Partnership and invite more realism in project reporting. This will take place within the context of annual monitoring and reporting efforts, as well as via the Knowledge</p>	<p>2022, on annual basis</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>Progress in strengthening learning through systems, coordinating knowledge exchange across the Partnership, and inviting more realism in project reporting is <i>High</i>, as evident through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Better capture of lessons learned (High)</u>. The Portal module allowing Agencies to enter lessons learned at MTR and TE stages along systematic categories is effective since 2021. In 	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The progress in strengthening learning is acknowledged. The repository of lessons learned had over 1800 lessons listed. The March 2023 Agency Retreat dealt with topics such as streamlining of the project cycle, improving the review process, guidelines on</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>In addition to continuous progress as per the 2023 update, the GEF has also moved from mainly quantitative reporting in the Monitoring Report toward a more qualitative and analytical approach in the 2022 and 2023 editions of this report. This includes sharing good project practices in achieving results along the five environmental areas that make the</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The progress made in different areas including improved reporting on co-financing is noted. However, Agency performance benchmarking is however receiving</p>

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<p>learning across the GEF Partnership. Inter-Agency meetings and extended constituency workshops may be used to strengthen peer exchange on self-evaluation–related topics such as use of theory of change, and design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation plans. Similarly, enhancement of search and analysis capabilities of the Portal may be useful in strengthening learning across the Partnership. The Secretariat may also need to rope in Agencies, GEF IEO, and/or the STAP, based on the specific knowledge management challenge that needs to be addressed. For example, GEF Agencies that have experimented with incentives to enhance candor may be encouraged to share their experiences; similarly, the STAP may be drawn upon for use of theory of change, and GEF IEO on guidance on mid-term reviews.</p>	<p>Management Strategy currently under development and through the following specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better capture of lessons learned. The Portal module used to upload MTRs and TEs will provide fields to enter lessons learned along a series of operational and environmental categories (2021). The Secretariat will establish an online repository of lessons learned from projects through the Portal as the lessons become available (2022). ■ Knowledge sharing among Agencies. The Secretariat will convene agencies to a periodic series of events on the nuts and bolts of operational effectiveness. Topics will relate to enhancing reporting practices and efforts to harmonize candor (2022). Separately, the Country Support Program will continue to roll out South-South Exchanges and relevant constituency-specific events. The Secretariat will work in collaboration with the broader GEF Partnership on these events. 		<p>2022, the Portal launched a repository of these lessons learned, which is updated in real time and made available to Agencies. As of March 2023, this repository included over 1700 lessons learned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Knowledge sharing among Agencies (High)</u>. GEFSEC is holding regular discussions on the nuts and bolts of operational effectiveness. This includes exchanges and presentations of good practices on MTRs (March 2022), budget practices (May 2022) and MTRs and operational quality, speed, and efficiency (November 2022). Discussions on MTRs included an emphasis on ensuring candid, realistic, and action-oriented MTRs. The entire agenda of the March 2023 Agency Retreat is dedicated to operational effectiveness. With GEF-8 now under implementation, the Country Support Program also resumed South-South activities, such as through the presentation of the OFP from Philippines in the Introduction Seminar (February 2023) and structured discussions on operational design and implementation in Expanded Constituency Workshops (Mozambique, March 2023). 	<p>budget, co-financing, etc. Only one Expanded Constituency Workshop has been conducted so far. Overall, the substantial progress has been made in implementation of the action plan. However, more progress needs to be made in implementation of planned actions.</p>	<p>Tier 1 of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework, and along operational performance areas that speak to adaptive management. Analyses linked to project proactivity help for example shed led on the minor amendments that help course correct and lead to project turnaround—all elements contributing to sharing good practices and lessons learned. The same aspects are discussed now routinely during annual bilateral exchanges with Agencies on portfolio progress and challenges.</p>	<p>less attention than it should.</p>
<p>GEF Portal – Recommendation 1:</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p>	<p>GEF-8 ongoing</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p>	<p>Rating: High</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p>

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<p>The GEF Secretariat should strengthen its process to address user feedback on the Portal. The evaluation found that the Portal team has been readily available to address user needs. But the present process for addressing user feedback needs to be strengthened so that it fully meets user needs. The strengthened process should enable direct feedback through the Portal along with the options that are presently available. It should also record user feedback/complaints, require a response within a committed time frame, and track progress towards resolution.</p>	<p>Building on the IEO recommendation, the Portal Team in the Secretariat and WB ITS will: (i) develop an enhanced framework to ensure full responsiveness to each user group, and to rapidly assess whether an individual issue rises to a system-level need; (ii) provide more frequent regular updates in suitable formats to different users on the Portal features and functionalities, including updates to align to changes in underlying policies and operational modalities; and (iii) offer additional training and capacity support for full use of the GEF Portal by different user groups both through existing platforms such as the Country Support Program events and Agency Retreats, and also through dedicated outreach as needed. Through these actions, the GEF Secretariat is confident that the system's proficiency will be continuously developed, and its capabilities will be used in full support of all members of the GEF Partnership.</p>		<p>Item (i) - the Portal Team in the Secretariat meets bi-weekly with WB ITS to review all individual user issues that arise (recorded by ITS), track trends, and where needed identify system-level adjustments to minimize issues in the future; and the ITS team is available in real-time to resolve any issues that arise.</p> <p>Item (ii) the Secretariat is providing regular updates to the different Portal users (group-wide communications, focused sessions, and discussions), including explanations/trainings of new features and the significant update in templates for to simplify and align to GEF-8. <i>Item (iii)</i> – additional training and capacity support is underway and being integrated in the updated GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy, including at the recent Intro Seminar and upcoming ECWs – along with open invitations for additional training on request during these (and other) sessions</p>	<p>The Management's assessment is acknowledged. The trainings provided in the ECWs, and introduction Seminars do familiarize GEF partners and staff with GEF Portal. Validation of the management's assessment requires a more through examination. Therefore, the progress in implementation of planned actions is not rated.</p>	<p>The Portal Team in the Secretariat has been maintaining regular weekly meetings with WB ITS in addition to real time connection, interaction and clarification for ITS programming team whenever needs arise.</p> <p>The Operations Team in the Secretariat has provided several trainings/clinics specifically for projects and IPs submissions through Portal for Agencies. The team, together with ITS, are highly responsive to any questions from both Agencies and countries with regards to project submission, especially on country STAR utilization and balances, as well as the budget ceilings of the GEF-8 resource allocation framework. ITS keeps a record of all requests received from different users, as well as the rate of responses: every single request has always been addressed.</p>	<p>The GEF IEO notes the progress made by the GEF Portal team in improving responsiveness. The Portal team could improve the reporting system to make it more accessible and specific for a group of users. The Portal team has also been providing training on different aspects of GEF Portal.</p>
<p>GEF Portal – Recommendation 2:</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/E/C.60/09)</p> <p>Building on the IEO recommendation, the Portal</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>Item (i) - the Portal Team is integrating discussion and consultation of the Portal</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p> <p>Reported progress is acknowledged. Validation of</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Given the increasing and competing demands for new features that are the</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The progress in developing the</p>

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<p>GEF Management should develop and implement a time bound plan to speed up the development of the Portal. The users of the GEF Portal perceive that despite significant progress, the development of Portal has continued for long. For some, especially Agencies, this perceived delay in completion of the development phase is a source of frustration and it may be causing some inefficiencies across the GEF Partnership. Several gaps need to be addressed and it may be more cost effective to address them sooner rather than later. The GEF Management should assess how best it may speed up the process and implement its plan.</p>	<p>Team in the Secretariat will: <i>(i) consult with users on still-pending features or system needs, including opportunities to further harness the potential of the system; (ii) continue to conduct regular reviews of all implementation targets with GEF management and WB ITS to update and strengthen the timeline for remaining deliverables in the Portal project; and (iii) provide regular updates to users on progress in completing these deliverables, and any issues that might arise.</i></p>		<p>and its further development into regular Partnership meetings (Agency Retreats, Intro Seminars, ECWs/CES meetings, internal discussions with core partners), and seeking inputs from all users; Item (ii) – meetings are ongoing with WBITS to track progress per specific tasks and timelines agreed each FY, aligned to discussions within GEF management, user consultations and identified system needs. Item (iii) – regular updates on progress in tasks and further system development are being provided through the formats indicated above.</p>	<p>the management's assessment requires an in-depth examination.</p>	<p>result of Council decisions, new automations and new workflows emerge. This is the reason why Portal is a dynamic tool that never stops its development. The Portal Team has been maintaining and closely tracking a detailed list of GEF Deliverables, which are prioritized by the Secretariat according to the business needs. . For example, the operationalization of the GBFF required ITS to work on several fronts to operationalize it on time so the proposals could be submitted.. Regular communications, announcements, briefing and training sessions help keeping Agencies and countries informed.</p>	<p>Portal to meet the evolving need of the GEF Partnership is noted. The Portal team has also provided training across the partnership regularly and at request. However, Secretariat response does not address the process elements that are now in place to facilitate user feedback and rules to address it in a timebound manner.</p>

10. 2021 Program Evaluation of the Special Climate Change Fund ([GEF/LDCF.SCCF.31/E/01](#)), December 2021 GEF Council Meeting

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<p>Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should acknowledge the semidormant state of the SCCF and—together with the key and emerging donors and stakeholders—develop a proactive action plan to revitalize the fund. Removing windows SCCF-C and SCCF-D, which are evidently unattractive to donors, targeting support under window SCCF-A towards non-LDCs— particularly SIDS—and refocusing the fund toward technology transfer and innovation in adaptation in non-LDCs in window SCCF-B is the only way forward. In doing so, the Secretariat should actively articulate and communicate the SCCF’s niche and brand its focused and distinctive roles in the climate finance architecture. In the short term, and despite the preference of traditional donors to focus on few, larger funds, the existence of funds such as the SCCF could remain a proven and practical alternative for donors to diversify their funding, or an opportunity</p>	<p>Partially agreed (GEF/LDCF.SCCF.31/05)</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat agrees with the report’s recommendation that “the Secretariat should actively articulate and communicate the SCCF’s niche and brand its focused and distinctive roles in the climate finance architecture” and would like to point out it has been actively doing so. In consultation with donors to the LDCF and SCCF, the GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF and Operational Improvements July 2018 to June 20221 outlined a clear role for the SCCF, including the two aspects subsequently captured in this recommendation. <i>The Secretariat will continue to further sharpen the focus for SCCF-A and SCCF-B, along the lines recommended in the Evaluation and currently detailed in the draft GEF Programming Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for the LDCF and the SCCF and Operational Improvements July 2022 to June 2026, hereafter referred to as draft LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy.</i></p> <p>The GEF Secretariat has already taken several actions consistent with the recommendation of this evaluation: (a) The draft LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy proposes a focus for SCCF windows A and B that is aligned with the Evaluation’s recommendation and were discussed in the first consultation meeting on the draft Strategy held on October 19, 2021.SCCF-A is well-placed to serve the needs of the many highly vulnerable, non-LDC SIDS, that are not able to access adaptation support from the LDCF and which need to</p>	<p>GEF-8</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The GEF has been making strong progress in following up on the IEO recommendations, including a clear articulation of the niche and value add of the SCCF in the climate finance landscape, laid out in the programming strategy for the LDCF and SCCF for the 2022-2026 period.</p> <p>a) The GEF has focused support under window SCCF-A on support for non-LDC SIDS. In conjunction, the GEF has been supporting regional workshops to build capacity of non-LDC SIDS to program SCCF-A resources effectively. These measures have resulted in robust adaptation concepts from these countries, with a total of \$26 million approved for adaptation concepts presented under the SCCF-A window at the 34th and 35th LDCF/SCCF Council Meetings.</p> <p>The SCCF-B window is focused on technology transfer, innovation and private sector engagement, as recommended by the IEO, and a 3rd Call for the Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation issued on April 5, 2024.</p> <p>b) A senior level specialist has been hired to further visibility and outreach of the LDCF and SCCF, under the dedicated program on Communications and Visibility Enhancement included in the LDCF/SCCF Strategy for the 2022-2026 period. Functions will include outreach to donors, visibility events and written products.</p> <p>c) The GEF has held pledging events for the LDCF and SCCF at UNFCCC COP 27 and COP 28, resulting</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges that the Secretariat has sharpened the focus of the SCCF-A and SCCF-B windows in the LDCF/SCCF programming strategy, employed a senior specialist dedicated to the visibility and outreach of the LDCF/SCCF, liaised with donors that resulted in increased pledges to the SCCF, and the LDCF/SCCF programming strategy with financing scenarios has been endorsed by the Council and is being implemented.</p> <p>This recommendation will be graduated.</p>

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<p>for new and emerging or smaller donor countries in climate finance.</p>	<p>compete with other developing countries for funds from other sources of climate finance. The GEF Secretariat also agrees that SCCF-B is well-placed to support innovation and technology transfer for adaptation. In addition, the GEF believes SCCF-B can include a focus on private sector engagement in adaptation.</p> <p>(b) The GEF Secretariat has included a dedicated program on Communications and Visibility Enhancement in the draft LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy.</p> <p>(c) The GEF Secretariat will continue to liaise with donors about the opportunity of the SCCF as an avenue to meet responsibilities and climate financing commitments for achieving the Paris Agreement objectives, including the agreement at UNFCCC COP26 to at least double climate change adaptation finance for developing countries.</p> <p>(d) The draft LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy explicitly lays out options on the future of the SCCF. This is consistent with the recognition in the evaluation that it is critical to clarify the financing, and therefore operational future, of the SCCF.</p> <p>While the recommendation states that the GEF “should acknowledge the semidormant state of the SCCF”, the Secretariat would like to highlight that it has been reporting to the Council on a regular basis regarding the resource-constrained status of the SCCF, and has proposed options for optimization of the SCCF in the draft LDCF/SCCF Programming Strategy. The Secretariat would also like to point out that the term “semidormant” can lead to the misinterpretation that the Fund has unofficially stopped operating. In fact, there continues to be</p>		<p>in donor pledges for the SCCF, including from new donors.</p> <p>d) The programming strategy for the LDCF and SCCF for the 2022-2026 period, which included financing scenarios for the SCCF, has been endorsed by the GEF Council and is under implementation.</p>	

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	<p>an active SCCF portfolio, including project approvals from GEF-7, with regular monitoring and reporting, annual work plan and administrative budget, Trustee engagement, continued programming, and active communications, despite the obvious resource constraints.</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat does not join the report’s recommendation that “Removing windows SCCF-C and SCCF-D... is the only way forward”. Such an action by the Secretariat is not possible in absence of a decision by the UNFCCC COP. Further, while SCCF-C and SCCF-D have not been resourced, the GEF Secretariat has not received indication that the mere existence of these windows affects the willingness of donors to fund the SCCF-A and SCCF-B windows, nor did their existence preclude donors from contributing to windows A and B prior to 2015.</p> <p>The Evaluation overlooks relevant information on certain issues, including the following: (a) With regard to statements relating to branding, visibility and communications on the SCCF, significant progress has been made on communication of impacts advanced by SCCF-supported projects. In fiscal year 2021, the number of page views on the GEF website containing “SCCF”, “LDCF”, “adaptation”, or any combination of these terms, totaled 51,290, with “SCCF” being the most common of these terms used by viewers. Additionally, 89 different media stories featured the SCCF in fiscal year 2021, which on a per project basis is many times higher than for any other GEF-managed Trust Fund. (b) With regard to the preselection process of the Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation</p>			

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	<p>and the Evaluation’s assertion that it has been cumbersome for the Secretariat, the Secretariat wishes to point out the brief and flexible nature of three-page pre-concepts to this Challenge Program is in fact efficient for both submitters and the Secretariat. This pre-concept submission process enables proponents to invest minimal time before gaining feedback on potential for success, while enabling the Secretariat to seek and identify high potential ideas based on established criteria in a much more quickly than is the case with the usual GEF process.</p> <p>(c) With regard to the statement that “The small size of SCCF projects and the limited scale of overall funding is a reason that makes the SCCF unattractive to donors,” it is not clear how the GEF Secretariat is recommended to take action. It is the lack of funding that is responsible for the limited scale of overall funding and consequently small size of SCCF projects. SCCF projects were comparable in size to LDCF projects when the SCCF was not facing resource constraints. Some donors have also conveyed appreciation for fact that the SCCF is able to achieve high impact with relatively modest project size. No COP 26 or previous guidance has identified these issues as barriers to support the SCCF.</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat would also like to recognize the broader climate finance context within which the SCCF has been severely underfunded in recent years. The Secretariat notes the guidance from UNFCCC COP26 to the GEF, which “... welcomes the work undertaken by the Global Environment Facility during its reporting period (1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021), including with regard to: (a) Approval of the climate change</p>			

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	<p>projects and programmes approved during the reporting period under ... the Special Climate Change Fund.", and "... encourages additional voluntary financial contributions to ... the Special Climate Change fund to support adaptation and technology transfer."</p>			

11. Evaluation of GEF support to Sustainable Forest Management ([GEF/E/C.62/02](#)), June 2022 GEF Council Meeting

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<p>Recommendation 1: Enhance GEF's SFM strategy to include all elements necessary for a comprehensive, clearly articulated and visible long-term vision and strategy for SFM. The GEF's SFM strategy has evolved and promoted the integration of focal areas in MFA as a starting point, and after GEF-5 & GEF-6 shifted from a scattered approach to funding projects to a consolidated approach in critical biomes. The GEF should now bring these elements together in a more comprehensive, clearly articulated, and long-term strategy for SFM going forward. This strategy should include: (a). a clear articulation of the SFM vision, approach, alignment with the conventions' objectives, priority areas, and geographical focus (b). SFM-specific theory of change (c). guidance on definitions of terms</p>	<p>Partially Agreed (GEF/C.62/14/Rev.01)</p> <p>While the GEF Programming Directions do include all the elements of GEF SFM strategy, the Secretariat takes note of the findings and conclusions of the IEO evaluation and agrees with the importance of the visibility of its SFM strategy. To enhance this visibility, the Secretariat proposes to elaborate a strategy document to be widely shared. This document will present all the various aspects of GEF's cross-cutting SFM approach including inter alia the five points listed in recommendation 1. The Secretariat is confident that this would enable the GEF partnership to continue to enhance its SFM strategy and SFM interventions responding to Conventions guidance and countries priorities in GEF-8 and beyond.</p>	<p>GEF-8</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>A SFM strategy meeting was convened by the CEO with the entire SFM team in October 2022. Based on the meeting, the SFM team prepared an outline for a comprehensive vision and strategy paper, which is currently being circulated internally for further inputs and comments, with a view to finalize the draft by the time of the GEF assembly.</p> <p>In parallel, based on the ongoing work by the SFM team on the vision paper, the COMMS team published a feature story: "How the GEF is driving up global investments in forest" on February 28, 2023 (https://www.thegef.org/newsroom/feature-stories/how-gef-driving-global-investment-forests) in context with the CEO's participation in the One Forest Summit in Gabon, March 1-2, 2023.</p> <p>In order to further enhance the visibility of GEF's SFM program in GEF-8, the Secretariat proposed a new Joint Initiative within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) titled "Strengthening the conservation of primary forests through enhanced partnerships and coordination of support". The initiative aims at</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the GEF Sec's work on its SFM vision and strategy paper and related developments. The IEO will continue to monitor the progress of this activity and looks forward to be released at the time of GEF Assembly.</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat finalized the GEF vision and strategy paper, now titled GEF's strategy on forests. GEF's vision is that forests are preserved, managed, and restored globally generating global environmental benefits in response to the urgent climate, biodiversity, and land degradation crises, while empowering indigenous peoples and local communities. The strategy focuses on strengthening the conservation of tropical primary forests worldwide through increased awareness among governments and donor decision-makers and stakeholders of their importance in combatting climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation.</p> <p>The paper is planned to be released at the occasion of the UNFF 19, held in New York City from May 6 – 10.</p> <p>As part of a Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) Joint Initiative, the MSP project "Strengthening Conservation of Primary Forests through Partnership Enhancement and Coordination of Support" has been circulated to GEF Council on April 8, 2024 for comments before it will be CEO approved. The objective of this project is to strengthen the conservation of tropical primary</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the GEF Sec's work on its SFM vision and strategy paper titled "GEF's strategy on forests" that was released at the UNFF. The IEO also notes the MSP with the CPF focused on the primary forests.</p>

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<p>(d). clear criteria for inclusion in the GEF SFM portfolio; and</p> <p>(e). guidance on indicators and monitoring results both for the intermediate and longer term, including for environmental, socio-economic, and policy dimensions of SFM.</p>			<p>supporting UNFF in producing primary forest related information to their members in view of better considering primary forest issues in their investment and reporting processes and promoting importance and role of primary forests in the global forest policy agenda. The Joint Initiative was approved by the CPF on February 24, 2023.</p>		<p>forests worldwide through increased awareness among government and donor decision-makers and stakeholders of their importance in combatting climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation, leading to increased supportive funding and investments.</p>	

12. Study on Climate Risk, Adaptation, and Resilience in the GEF Trust Fund ([GEF/E/C.62/03](#)), June 2022 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 1: Develop guidance on climate risk mitigation measures.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.62/13/Rev.01)</p> <p>As paragraph 1 of the study mentions, "Climate risk screening (CRS) was mandated for all projects in GEF-7, with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) releasing CRS guidelines and the GEF Secretariat launching a successful GEF Agency training and collaboration event." The Secretariat would also like to point to the GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy¹, mentioned in paragraph 28 of the study, which states that "Short- and long-term risks posed by climate change and other natural hazards are considered systematically in the screening, assessment and planning processes described in paragraphs 4.a.–g. above, based on established methodologies, and significant risks and potential impacts are addressed throughout the design and implementation of projects and programs." <i>The Secretariat will continue to apply this Policy to its projects and programs, as well as to mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations, and to report annually to Council on its progress.</i></p> <p>As the 2019 STAP guidance on climate risk screening sets out, Agencies are to outline in project documents if</p>	<p>GEF-8, on annual basis</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The requirement for GEF Agencies to conduct climate risk screening (CRS) on all GEF projects, which is established by the GEF ESS Policy and supported by the existing 2019 STAP guidance on CRS, is an ongoing activity and the GEF Secretariat continues to verify that Agencies meet such requirement in line with the 2019 STAP guidance.</p> <p>It can further be noted that GEF-8 PIF, PFD and CEO endorsement templates now include tables assessing the risk to project implementation and ultimate outcomes along a series of systematic risk categories, of which "Climate" is one of them. This risk table also prompts Agencies to outline how Agencies aim to mitigate the risk with specific measures and provide a rating for this residual risk. This should further guide Agencies in providing a good analysis of both CRS and climate risk mitigation measures.</p> <p>With respect to the GEF Secretariat’s commitment to continue to facilitate, during GEF-8, the inter-Agency dialogue initiated during GEF-7 to enhance cross-pollination of best practices in climate risk-responsive project design, GEFSEC and Agencies have discussed the new risk table at the November 2022 Agency</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO notes the new risk table in GEF-8 design documents which includes a category entitled "climate" and the agenda item from the Nov 2022 Agency retreat on "ESS good practice and lessons."</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat elevated the requirement to provide a climate risk screening by introducing a dedicated risk category in the new risk table introduced in GEF-8 templates for projects and programs. Training events were provided to Agencies as these templates were first introduced. This focus on climate risk was further enhanced with the Council endorsement of the GEF Risk Appetite (GEF/C.66/13) which includes a dedicated risk category on Climate risk screening and was developed as part of a working group composed of representatives from Council, STAP and the GEF Secretariat. The description of the Climate risk category in Annex B of the Council document makes explicit mention of STAP’s foundational work on the matter as a reference and guiding source. The development of this Risk Appetite framework benefited from the sharing of climate risk screening practices and discussions with All Agencies to inform the work of the Working Group on the GEF Risk Appetite. Further to Council endorsement of the GEF Risk Appetite, bilateral meetings took place with each Agency to sensitize them on the requirements of the implementation of the new risk framework.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat’s continued efforts in applying the GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy, elevating the climate risk screening requirement, facilitating inter-Agency dialogue, and Council’s approval of the GEF Risk Appetite statement and framework. The GEF Secretariat is encouraged to report annually to Council on its progress.</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
	<p>"resilience practices and measures to address projected climate change and its impacts have been considered" and how they will be addressed. GEF Agencies, who are in charge of project design and close to the project stakeholders, are therefore best positioned to develop context-specific climate risk mitigation measures and adjust the project design to ensure that the variety of climate risks that a project can face are adequately factored in. <i>Going forward, the GEF Secretariat will continue facilitating inter-Agency dialogue during GEF-8 in order to enhance cross-pollination on best practices in climate risk-responsive project design of GEF operations.</i></p>		<p>Retreat and intends to table further discussions on the topic.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 2: Improve the monitoring of resilience in GEF projects, with attention to the context of each focal area.</p>	<p>Partially Agreed (GEF/C.62/13/Rev.01)</p> <p>Furthermore, the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations were clear in requesting the GEF Secretariat to work towards streamlining the GEF project cycle into a more comprehensive and integrated framework and to implement efficiency measures, in line with the IEO OPS-7 recommendations. The OPS-7 recommendations on administrative processes noted that "the preparation and approval of GEF projects can take many years, given the substantial requirements, processes, and procedures. To be more dynamic and transformative, the GEF will need to</p>	<p>GEF-8</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>GEF-8 Participants requested the GEF Secretariat to develop options, for consideration by Council at the latest at its 65th meeting in December 2023, to improve the capture of human and socio-economic well-being metrics as well as climate change adaptation co-benefits in the results monitoring and improve their consideration in the design of GEF-funded projects and programs to further support the achievement of Global Environmental Benefits.</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat is working to follow up on the request above from GEF</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges these ongoing efforts and will continue to monitor for finalization of mentioned socio-economic metrics, climate risk analysis case studies and climate risk mitigation portfolio analyses.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Agencies submit updates on climate risk screenings and related mitigation measures throughout the project lifecycle under the implementation of the GEF Risk Appetite, which requires to provide a climate risk assessment and an update on the design and implementation of mitigation measures at PIF, CEO endorsement and the Mid-Term Review milestones This information is provided directly through dedicated fields in the GEF Portal by Agencies, allowing in turn to conduct analyses focused on climate risk and resilience measures. This progress across projects</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges these ongoing efforts and will continue to monitor the next steps and the documentation of the process.</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2023	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2023	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
	<p>adjust these processes so funds can be accessed, and projects move toward implementation, more readily—particularly in the post-pandemic period”. <i>The GEF Secretariat’s Management Response to this recommendation indicated the clear commitment by the Secretariat to revisit, over the coming months, its suite of policies, procedures, operations, and guidelines to determine what adjustments need to be made to streamline the project cycle and increase efficiency. Therefore, rather than adding any new measures to monitor climate resilience benefits, the Secretariat will strengthen the use of the existing policy provisions in order to improve the monitoring of resilience in GEF projects, and within the context of the limitations articulated above. The Secretariat will work with GEF Agencies to identify ways to collect more granular information through the existing reporting systems on how climate risk mitigation measures are being incorporated in GEF project design and, when possible, indicating if any impact can be observed with respect to the influence that such mitigation measures may have had on the project outcomes.</i></p>		<p>Participants. Amongst the options to improve understanding of how climate risk analysis is improving project design and outcomes, the GEF Secretariat is considering actions such as working with Agencies to prepare case studies, or conduct a portfolio analysis over the course of GEF-8, to highlight lessons learned in the implementation of climate risk mitigation measures.</p>		<p>and programs will be documented in different ways, as per paragraphs 18 of the GEF Risk Appetite document: each Work Program submission to Council will include a descriptive summary analysis of the risk profile of that Work Program, and the GEF Monitoring Report will provide analyses on risk profile disaggregated by segments of the GEF portfolio.</p> <p>With regards to socio-economic metrics, it is also relevant to highlight the consideration by the GEF Council at its 66th session in February 2024, of the paper titled “Tracking and Measuring the Socio-Economic Co-Benefits of GEF Investments. The paper offers an overview of how socio-economic co-benefits are captured by the GEF and presents a way forward to improve their tracking. The paper was endorsed by the GEF Council and the Secretariat requested to proceed on the proposed next steps.</p>	

13. Review of the GEF Management Action Record (MAR) ([GEF/E/C.63/01](#)), December 2022 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 1: GEF management should ensure that the action plan included in its management response to GEF IEO recommendations lists specific actions with timelines where appropriate. GEF management should ensure that the management response to an evaluation clearly indicates the level of agreement with each recommendation. Where management fully or partially agrees with a recommendation, a clear articulation of timebound actions should be included in the management response which will make it possible to track progress on the implementation of follow-up actions and report on these to the Council. Where additional time is required by the GEFSEC to develop detailed action plans and timelines on certain evaluations, the Council may consider giving the GEF Secretariat time until the next Council meeting to present the details.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.63/13)</p> <p><i>Applicable immediately (and as evident in this management response), the GEF Secretariat will clearly state the level of agreement with each recommendation of IEO Evaluations as follows: “The GEF Secretariat agrees / partially agrees / rejects this recommendation.” Where there is full or partial agreement with the recommendation, and if the nature of the recommendation is appropriate to do so, the Secretariat will include into the management response a preliminary time frame for measures/actions, giving a suggested calendar time / year when these will begin and possibly a suggested calendar time / year by when the recommendation may be completely adopted. If the Secretariat is of the view that inclusion of a timeline is not appropriate to a particular recommendation, this will be explicitly discussed with the IEO in upstream consultations, and also explicitly articulated in the management response.</i> The Secretariat would like to emphasize any time frames introduced into management responses may be preliminary in nature. This is due to the fact that (i) timing can sometimes be influenced by factors beyond the Secretariat’s control, and that (ii) the implementation of the recommendations themselves may further inform the process. Therefore, all timelines should be treated with a certain degree of flexibility, and the Secretariat should retain the option to introduce adjustments to these timelines as needed. These adjustments can be reassessed together with the</p>	<p>Immediately</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat has fully and immediately internalized this recommendation. The MAR evaluation and the Secretariat’s management response was presented to the 63rd Council in December 2022. From the 64th Council in June 2023, all GEF Secretariat management responses have followed an internal template that has been developed, which states at the start of each recommendation response whether the GEF Secretariat agrees / partially agrees / does not agree with the recommendation, with the necessary explanations if one of the two latter categories is adopted. Time frames are also included where relevant, with the necessary caveats that such time-frames are preliminary in nature.</p> <p>The Secretariat continues to fully utilize its minimum 4-week window to prepare management responses after receipt of a final IEO report. Thus far, the Secretariat has been able to bring all management responses to the relevant council sessions without the need to postpone a response to a subsequent council due to lack of time. In this regard, the Secretariat appreciates the IEO’s continued timeliness of delivery of its final reports.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat has implemented key elements of its action plan. However, in many instances the time frame for implementation of the planned activities is not clear.</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
	<p>IEO as needed in the preparation of the yearly MARs. The Secretariat would like to highlight that, as the required commitments and levels of detail of the management responses increase, this needs to be simultaneously accompanied by an increased preparation time. Since the IEO Peer Review Report in June 2020 and the subsequent adoption of the revised process in June 2021, the Secretariat and the IEO have been engaged in constructive discussions on the lead-time available to the Secretariat for the preparation of these detailed management responses. To this end, the Secretariat greatly appreciates conclusion 5 of the Review which states that “...If a period of more than 8 weeks prior to presentation of an evaluation is required to develop a detailed action plan with timelines in response to an IEO evaluation, the Council might, in certain cases, consider allowing the presentation of the detailed action plan and timelines by the GEF Secretariat at the next Council meeting. The GEF Secretariat would still present a management response at the Council meeting in which the IEO evaluation is presented.” The Secretariat welcomes the implicit commitment of this conclusion that evaluations will be available to the Secretariat 4 weeks before the posting deadline for council documents (and therefore 8 weeks before presentation to Council) in order to facilitate timely preparation of the detailed management responses by the required posting date. The Secretariat also values the suggestion of this recommendation that, if needed, additional time can be given to the Secretariat to develop detailed action plans and timelines on certain evaluations. In the cases where that course of action becomes necessary, <i>the Secretariat will</i></p>			

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
	<p><i>present a more general management response at the Council meeting to which the IEO evaluation is presented, clearly explain the reasons that more time is needed for the required detailed action plans and timelines, and commit to the presentation of these outstanding items in the subsequent council meeting.</i></p>			
<p>Recommendation 2: The GEF should improve the MAR process and reporting through a more participatory approach involving GEF Agencies, where relevant, and develop a suitable platform for tracking the implementation of action plans. Where IEO recommendations are clearly directed towards GEF Agencies or other actors, GEF management should explore ways to incorporate Agencies' and/or others feedback and comments when preparing action plans to implement IEO recommendations and in assessing the implementation progress of follow-up actions. In this way, Agencies or other actors can respond to recommendations that are directed toward them and will be able to implement and track these recommendations. A suitable platform that centralizes the recording of recommendations, management responses, action plans, and follow-up will help streamline access and improve efficiency in monitoring the status of implementation.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.63/13)</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat welcomes the commitment by the IEO to clearly address its recommendations to the specific actors of the GEF Partnership and looks forward to this in all subsequent evaluations. Where recommendations are clearly directed towards GEF Agencies in particular, the Secretariat will explore ways to consult with the Agencies in order to incorporate their input in the preparation of the relevant management response, action plans and timelines. As this may add to the preparation time needed for the relevant management response, the Secretariat would again like to underscore the need for appropriate preparation time, as discussed in the earlier recommendation. The GEF Secretariat agrees that the MAR process would benefit from a more centralized approach. To this end, the Secretariat would like to highlight the improvements made in its own internal processes on IEO evaluations over the last two years. Since 2020, the GEF Secretariat has adopted a centralized and coordinated Secretariat-wide approach to IEO evaluations that has resulted more efficient, structured, and constructive engagements with the IEO and ultimately to a higher quality of management responses and evaluation uptake. The</p>	<p>GEF-8</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat has fully and immediately internalized the different facets of this recommendation.</p> <p>The MAR evaluation and the Secretariat's management response was presented to the 63rd Council in December 2022. From the 64th Council in June 2023, all GEF Secretariat management responses have followed an internal process which incorporates a consultation window with the relevant members of the GEF partnership, based on the IEO's statements in its recommendations as to whom the recommendations are targeted. This is reflected in the start of every management response to those recommendations, where the Secretariat explicitly states whom among the Partnership has been consulted in the response to the recommendation.</p> <p>As stated above, the Secretariat continues to fully utilize its minimum 4-week window to prepare management responses after receipt of a final IEO report. Thus far, the Secretariat has been able to bring all management responses to the relevant council sessions without the need to postpone a response to a subsequent council due to lack of time. In this regard, the Secretariat appreciates the IEO's continued timeliness of delivery of its final reports, particularly in cases when members of the wider Partnership need to be consulted, as these steps add to the time needed for the preparation of these management responses.</p> <p>Finally, the Secretariat has developed and rolled out an internal platform in Excel for centralizing all IEO recommendations and our actions as promised in our management responses. This platform</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The Office acknowledges the progress noted in the Secretariat's response, and will continue to monitor consultation with the Agencies in preparation of management response, where application.</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
	<p><i>Secretariat agrees that further improvements to this process can be made and is already working on further strengthening its internal process for the recording of recommendations, management responses, action plans, and follow-up, particularly in light of the many recommendations of the OPS-7 report and its related evaluations. The Secretariat wishes to emphasize, however, that while the recommendation references a “suitable platform” which can imply some new digital solution, this is not envisaged – rather, what is already underway is the deepening of the Secretariat’s centralized process which to date has demonstrated very positive and successful impacts on its engagements with IEO evaluations.</i></p>		<p>assesses and tracks the progress made on IEO recommendations. The platform is live and is kept up to date.</p>	

14. Evaluation of the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on GEF Activities ([GEF/E/C.63/02](#)), December 2022 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should provide guidance and assist GEF Agencies in incorporating important features associated with systems thinking, resilience, and adaptive management in all project proposals.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.63/14)</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that it has already been working to redesign the logical structure and narrative of all GEF Projects and Programs along these lines. This work has been undertaken in collaboration with STAP, and new PIF templates have been released for GEF-8 with a new “project description” section that is fully aligned with this recommendation. These templates have been used in the work program currently under discussion at the 63rd Council.</p> <p>Further templates for all funding modalities are under development and will be released soon. The Secretariat is also in the process of preparing some technical training sessions in collaboration with STAP. This will enable agencies to be fully briefed and fluent in the new logic and template structure. It is envisaged that these trainings will be rolled out in early 2023 and in advance of the preparation of the work program to the 64th GEF Council. Finally, the Secretariat will also place this topic of systems thinking, resilience and adaptive management on the agenda of the next Agency Retreat in 2023.</p>	<p>Early 2023 and Agency Retreat 2023</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>As soon as the pandemic started, the GEF issued a “guidance” document on project and program design features that should be looked at and incorporated in project and program design as needed and appropriate to mitigate and/or take advantage of opportunities created by the pandemic. Also, new GEF-8 templates introduced in the last 18 months also included better guidance and logic on project and program design supported by STAP reviews and inputs. These templates were also accompanied with training webinars led by STAP and the GEFSEC for agency technical staff to better design narratives with the respective required “pieces” of PIFs and better quality at entry of projects and programs. This training will continue in FY25 with new training sessions with STAP and all agencies.</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat's response to the recommendation. The issuance of guidance was a timely adaptation to global challenges. The introduction of new GEF-8 templates and the associated activities are also noted. The Secretariat's strategy addresses immediate needs that was triggered by the pandemic and also establishes a framework for integrating essential adaptive management practices into the GEF's project lifecycle. The IEO will continue to track the progress on this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: The GEF Agencies should ensure that GEF projects include a broad suite of livelihood options and support diverse income-generating activities. GEF projects should diversify strategies and actions for risk</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.63/14)</p> <p>The GEF is also working on strengthening the link between risk and project outcomes in the project narrative. This is being done by incorporating “scenarios” thinking in the project description phase so as to assess the different possible future scenarios that can have an</p>	<p>Early 2023</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>Socio-economic activities and co-benefits of projects and programs is an integral part of GEF investments. This is reinforced in project reviews as appropriate. This will be reinforced with the Results Based team work on defining the socio-economic co-benefits framework to apply as part of the RBM approach to all GEF investments.</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the progress. Validation of the management’s action requires an in-depth examination. The IEO will continue to track its progress.</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
mitigation and build the resilience of local communities to various shocks.	impact on the strategies being adopted in a project and the outcomes being delivered. This “scenarios” building also assesses how robust the difference actions and strategies in a project are to possible risks and perturbations that can be identified. <i>This is also part of the STAP-led training described above that will be rolled out in early 2023.</i>			
<p>Recommendation 3: The GEF Agencies should strengthen remote supervision by using a variety of appropriate tools and methods such as rapid surveys, satellite data, and GIS-based technology for timely response and adaptive management. M&E in a pandemic or similar difficult situation is challenging, and these tools and methods can help identify areas which require priority attention, as well as being useful in planning and monitoring activities over time.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.63/14)</p> <p>The GEF agencies have adapted to COVID-19 in the past years in part by incorporating some of the measures included in the recommendation. <i>Agencies will be encouraged to do so even more, and in ways that can improve efficiencies and streamline data gathering for adaptive management. The GEF Secretariat will work on this with Agencies as part of the upstream consultations that take place on project proposals, where relevant, and these elements will also be reflected in the Secretariat reviews. The Secretariat will undertake these actions in early 2023</i> so that these elements can be more strongly integrated into the work programs of the 64th Council and subsequently.</p>	Early 2023	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The Secretariat has been increasing its emphasis on promoting the use of adaptive management practices in projects and program monitoring, including through relying on GIS-based technology. This includes since 2023 tracking the geographic coordinates of project locations starting at CEO endorsement stage and adjusting them, as appropriate, during implementation in PIRs through dedicated entry fields in Portal. The data is then shared live on the GEF Geospatial Platform (thegef.org/maps), with an ability to overlay satellite imagery to visualize progress. In addition, GEF Agencies themselves have been at the forefront of relying on innovative and alternative monitoring systems, as was highlighted through key examples in Box 1 of the 2022 Monitoring Report titled “Technology is a critical enabler for monitoring biodiversity”. Finally, the GEF is tracking the extent to which projects conduct adaptive management during implementation through its Proactivity Index which has become a key part of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01). In fiscal 2023, 83 percent of projects captured by this metric indicated having taken a proactivity measure, up from 77 percent the year earlier.</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the GEF Secretariat’s response which calls for strengthening of remote supervision through advanced tools and methods such as rapid surveys, satellite data, and GIS-based technology. The introduction of GIS-based monitoring from the CEO endorsement stage and the ongoing adjustments during project implementation, as reported in the PIRs, demonstrates a significant advancement in project tracking. This approach is effectively integrated into the GEF Geospatial Platform, which can enhance transparency and real-time monitoring capabilities by allowing stakeholders to overlay satellite imagery and visualize project progress. Additionally, the GEF’s emphasis on using technology to enable effective monitoring, as illustrated in the 2022 Monitoring Report, aligns with the recommendation to employ innovative monitoring systems in challenging environments. The increase in projects reported through the Proactivity Index, which measures adaptive management practices, from 77 percent to 83 percent, suggests a positive trend in the application of these methodologies.</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
				However, the ongoing effectiveness of these tools in improving project outcomes and their ability to address priority areas during challenges such as pandemics, conflict and fragility will require continued evaluation. The use of the Proactivity Index within the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework should provide further insights into the practical benefits of these technological enhancements in project supervision and management.

15. Evaluation of The GEF's Approach and Interventions in Water Security ([GEF/E/C.64/01](#)), June 2023 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should ensure that aspects of water security that are key to each GEF focal area are represented in the results measurement framework and project and program design. Explicit language related to freshwater resources should be added to some of the focal area indicators in the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework to better highlight linkages with water security. This would encourage countries and Agencies to design projects across all focal areas that better consider the importance of water security and freshwater resources. Furthermore, design and theories of change for projects and programs with strong links with freshwater resources</p>	<p>Partially agreed (GEF/C.64/13)</p> <p>The GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework was agreed by Replenishment Participants for a period of four years and allows to ensure adequate targeting of water security benefits. It therefore cannot be changed during the ongoing GEF-8 programming cycle. Looking ahead, water security aspects will be considered within the context of guidelines to the use of Tier 1 Core and Sub-Indicators in the next iteration of the GEF Results Measurement Framework in GEF-9. This would be cognizant of the fact that standard indicators may not lend themselves well to tracking the multiple dimensions of water security that do not allow for cross-portfolio aggregation of data (including, for example, various forms of pollution). Going forward and already in GEF-8, regular project reviews of those projects and programs with strong links with freshwater resources will place an</p>	<p>GEF-9 replenishment and during GEF-8 project reviews</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p> <p>Rating: Not applicable Guidelines for the use of Core and Sub-indicators will be considered in the context of the development of the GEF-9 Results Management Framework.</p> <p>Rating: Medium Ensuring that water security in relevant projects is defined, measured, reported and part of their ToCs is an ongoing effort in project reviews.</p>	<p>Rating: Not rated</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the progress. Validation of the management's assessment requires an in-depth examination.</p>

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<p>should integrate elements of water security to help improve holistic integration of water security across GEF’s portfolio. Considerations could also be made to integrate water security as a cross cutting theme in relevant IPs.</p>	<p><i>emphasis on ensuring that elements of water security are featured adequately in their Theories of Change and Monitoring & Evaluation frameworks which include a detailed results framework. This includes using custom indicators for each project and clarifying how the logic of interventions enhances water security.</i> The Secretariat would like to point to several actions that have already been put in place to address water security beyond the International Waters Focal Area. Specifically, the LDCF-SCCF results framework already includes clear sub-indicators to capture water security related results. Furthermore, to address the impacts of water security on the project’s outcomes and vice versa, the GEF Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Policy, Minimum Standard 7 already includes explicit language to “promote the efficient use of water and where significant water consumption is involved adopt measures to avoid or reduce water use to avoid significant adverse impacts on communities, other water users, and the environment”. These aspects are therefore already a requirement for project preparation. The Secretariat is confident that the GEF will continue to progress positively on the inclusion on water security dimensions in its programming. <i>During GEF-8 project reviews the GEF Secretariat will emphasize that risks associated with water security are assessed and adequate mitigation measures are provided for projects and programs with strong links with freshwater resources.</i></p>		<p>Rating: Medium Ensuring that risks associated with water security are assessed and mitigation measures outlined is part of ongoing reviews.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2: The GEF Secretariat and Agencies should prioritize creation of sustainable financing mechanisms and other activities aiming to scale up</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.64/13)</p> <p>The GEF agrees with the recommendations that GEF projects should include mechanisms that increase the likelihood of sustaining and scaling-</p>	<p>End of GEF-8</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>IW:LEARN is in the process of organizing with partners to define the scope and process of the TDA-SAP update and will include a module to address guidance on sustainable finance.</p>	<p>Rating: Medium</p> <p>The IEO recognizes the GEF's action in response to this recommendation, which focuses on prioritizing the</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>interventions that successfully improve water security. Many GEF projects incorporate some factors into project implementation that encourage scaling up of water security activities, such as IW projects which develop water policy. However, more ambition for scaling up is needed to meet the water security needs of people and ecosystems. All projects that deal with water security should include sustainable financing and other activities to support scaling up efforts, including projects that improve water security at the community level. IW projects, in particular, should offer guidance that sustainable financing must be considered as part of the preparation for the SAP implementation phase of the TDA/SAP process. Activities could include creating novel and innovative financial mechanisms in watersheds or aquifer areas, enhancing existing mechanisms or partnering with the private sector and entities with expertise in financial inclusion. Addressing the issue of sustainable financing in the framework of the SAP implementation in various geographies of the world would also increase the likelihood of scaling up water security outcomes.</p>	<p>up water security benefits beyond the project's duration, including the creation or strengthening of innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms. This is considered in the GEF-8 programming directions and identified as a lever of change for Integrated Programs, therefore applying to the relevant projects that are addressing water security. The Secretariat would like to point to the fact that the scope of relevant and feasible sustainable finance depends on the country and regional circumstances especially in light of the fact that many GEF intervention take place in fragile and conflict affected locations. For GEF IW projects, in particular, the Secretariat would like to point out that many IW foundational projects that are preparing a Strategic Action Program (SAP) do include efforts to communicate the SAP adoption, via signature by at least one Minister from each country, to all relevant country and regional stakeholders and convene donor roundtables (preceded by bilateral dialogues with development partners) to leverage finance from a variety of finance sources. More recent projects have been more consistent in explicitly budgeting for such SAP development partner round tables and regular donor coordination meetings to maintain SAP finance and reporting to donors. Long-term financial mechanisms in IW projects so far have included the first ever blue bond (in the Seychelles), Payment for Ecosystems Services schemes, such as Water Funds, and other public private partnerships. To increase private sector engagement on the project level, the GEF is confident that the IW: LEARN network which has a designated objective to enhance private sector involvement in GEF IW projects will be able to accelerate engagement with and co-finance by</p>		<p>IW:LEARN is capturing efforts on private sector engagement across their activities and will deliver the experience note before the end of GEF-8. This is strongly supported and aligned with one of the objectives on private sector engagement in the IW:LEARN 5 prodoc. IW:LEARN will also report on capacity building efforts on financing transboundary cooperation at the end of GEF 8.</p>	<p>creation of sustainable financing mechanisms and scaling up interventions to improve water security. The IEO also notes the GEF's approach to integrating sustainable financing mechanisms within the GEF-8 programming directions and the GEF's efforts to increase private sector engagement through the IW: LEARN network. The IEO will continue to monitor the progress of these actions.</p>

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	<p>the private sector to reduce pressures on freshwater and marine ecosystems. The Secretariat would like to point out though that the investment needs outlined in most SAPs or basin management plans range from analytics and needed pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, to national policy and strategy reforms, to national or regional investment needs that are at the scale of requiring large national investments via national budgets and/or MDB or other engagements beyond what the GEF can finance on its own. The Secretariat further would like to highlight the already significant track record of the LDCF and SCCF which consistently has been a highly reliable financing mechanism for vulnerable countries to address water related adaptation priorities. Specifically, the LDCF financing recently has doubled for LDCs and there is a dedicated window for the SIDS for adaptation financing. Also, water is identified as a priority theme⁶. Finally, the GEF-8 strategy has indicated scaling up financing for adaptation as a top crosscutting priority in all the project including those in the water sector. Engagement with private sector has also been a priority for GEF-8 which builds on GEF-7 strategy. Going forward, <i>the GEF IW focal area will strengthen its TDA-SAP guidance toward ensuring sustainable financing is incorporated more consistently within project and program design related to Water Security. Furthermore, the GEF Secretariat will work with the agencies through the International Waters Learning Network (IW: LEARN) to deliver an IW: LEARN experience note based on the ongoing IW portfolio with regard to engagement with the private sector and to report on any capacity building efforts on financing transboundary cooperation at the end</i></p>			

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
	<i>of GEF 8.</i> The findings will inform GEF-9 programming including updates to the TDA – SAP process.			

16. Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation of the Lower Mekong River Basin Ecosystem ([GEF/E/C.64/02](#)), June 2023 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat’s assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO’s validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>Recommendation 1: The GEF should coordinate with partner LMRB countries, other multilaterals, bilaterals and regional bodies (e.g., MRC, ASEAN) on the strategic regional priorities of the MRC’s Basin Development Strategy. This could be achieved through various GEF projects and programs which have a coordination component.</p>	<p>Partially agreed (GEF/C.64/14)</p> <p>The GEF appreciates the benefits of aligning GEF resources with relevant strategic regional priorities, including MRC River Basin Development Strategy, to the extent that they relate to GEF strategy and country commitments under the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) for which the GEF serves as the financial mechanism. The GEF recognizes the role of governments in setting and owning regional priorities. The GEF further notes, therefore that the implementation of this recommendation will depend on the initiative and actions of GEF recipient countries who are outside of GEF Secretariat’s direct control given the country-driven nature of the GEF. Further, the Secretariat would like to highlight that while the mandate of the MRC per article 1 of the 1995 Agreement extends to cooperation across all fields of sustainable development across water and natural resources, and the scope of the MRC’s Basin Development Strategy aims at the integration across sectors beyond water, the reality in the lower Mekong still lags behind realizing the ambitions of an integrated systems approach to basin management. The MRC is no exception here to other transboundary basins and riparian countries eligible to receive funds by the GEF globally. The MRC’s Basin Development Strategy itself is adopted by the ministries responsible for water in each country and not by overarching national entities such as the ministry of planning or development. The Secretariat agrees with the IEO that such an integrated approach supported by MRC strategies is needed and well aligned with GEF-8 strategic directions that emphasize systems-level engagement and transformation. The Secretariat would like to point to several actions that have been initiated in past and ongoing GEF projects/programs on coordination and outreach with the LMRB, other multilaterals, bilateral and regional bodies (e.g.,</p>	<p>ECW held in Asia during During GEF-8</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>Key actions were taken over the last year in response to this IEO recommendation at the programmatic, regional and global levels. Given its decades of experience, the Mekong River Commission (MRC) is a close partner in GEF/IW:LEARN and other partner supported outreach and knowledge sharing events with other basin organizations. This includes for example a workshop session at the 2023 Stockholm Water Forum exchanging experiences across the MRC, the Danube Commission (ICPDR), the NBI, and the Orange-Senqu Commission on barriers and lessons of the implementation of Strategic Action/River Basin Management Plans.</p> <p>Beyond the innovative and cross-sectoral GEF IW supported Mekong Delta Aquifer project, the 66th GEF Council approved an intersectoral project “Enhancing transboundary fisheries management in the Lower Mekong Basin” which aims to counteract the decline of LMB fish stocks and taking an intersectoral angle across the impacts of the water-food-energy-environment connections and enhancing transboundary cooperation on fisheries management. This project will be executed on regional level by the MRC and at national level through relevant line ministries or the national Mekong Committee.</p> <p>Finally, during the Indo-Malay Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program (IP) design process, several regional stakeholders were involved in the consultations and especially the Technical Design Workshop in Bangkok, February 15-16, 2024: ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, Asian Forest Cooperation Organization, CIFOR-ICRAF Asia Bureau, Global Youth</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO notes that the GEFSEC has outlined the actions taken over the last year in response to IEO’s recommendations. These actions include collaboration with the Mekong River Commission on regional workshops and the initiation of projects like the Mekong Delta Aquifer project and the "Enhancing transboundary fisheries management in the Lower Mekong Basin" project. These developments signify a positive advancement toward addressing regional and global environmental challenges through comprehensive, cross-sectoral, and integrated management strategies.</p> <p>The GEF IEO will continue to monitor the progress.</p>

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	<p>MRC, ASEAN) on the strategic regional priorities of the MRC's Basin Development Strategy, including the first regional project of the GEF with the MRC (GEF ID 615) which aided the MRC and the countries to implement the Mekong agreement and develop procedures and protocols for cooperation on a number of issues across sectors and led to the development of the first Mekong Basin Utilization Plan as well as the ongoing Mekong Delta Aquifer project (GEF ID 10520) which is aligned with the Basin Strategy and works with the relevant MRC National Committees. Finally, we would like to highlight the current coordination of Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscape in Thailand (GEF ID 10268) project under GEF-7 FOLUR program, which indicates engagement with key policy drivers including the MRC and the ASEAN Agreement on Cooperation for Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin. International Waters projects will continue to cooperate with the MRC as the regional river basin organization in the lower Mekong. <i>In GEF-8 the GEF will encourage agencies, including through GEF project concept reviews, that relevant GEF supported projects in the LMB countries aim for consultations with the National Mekong Committees. Finally, the GEF secretariat can consider inclusion of relevant regional bodies in outreach events organized by the GEF Secretariat, that could include Extended Constituency Workshops (ECW) held in the region.</i> Although there is no specific timetable for this engagement given the macro-planning that will take place for these events, <i>we expect that there will be an ECW held in Asia during GEF-8 (2022-2026).</i></p>		<p>Biodiversity Network for Asia, RECOFTC, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), Technical Assistance Facility to the Green Team Europe Initiative in ASEAN, and Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) among others. Collaboration through a multi-stakeholder approach is a hallmark of the integrated programs and will continue in the Mekong region under this and other IPs.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2: To support longer term sustainability, the GEF Secretariat and Agencies should design and implement mechanisms for testing, replicating, and scaling up successful local outcomes and mainstream them at the national level. This would include dissemination of good practices and</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.64/14)</p> <p>The Secretariat agrees that sustainability is a vital design component of each GEF intervention, particularly in the context of multi-country investments and has undertaken work to identify ways to promote durability and sustainability of GEF investments (Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments, GEF/C.57/08) welcomed by Council in 2019 and further refined and discussed in 2021 with</p>	<p>During GEF-8</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>Key actions were taken over the last year at the strategy, programmatic and global levels that contribute to the implementation of this recommendation, specifically: The new GEF Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (GEF/c.65/03/Rev.01) was approved by the Council. Based on the new strategy, GEF will continue to bolster</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges that the GEFSEC has taken actionable steps over the last year in response to IEO's recommendation, aimed at enhancing long-term sustainability. This includes the adoption of the new GEF Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning and the integration of</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action	GEF Secretariat's assessment of progress in 2024	GEF IEO's validation of reported implementation progress in 2024
<p>working in close co-ordination with local, provincial and central governments to broaden and sustain the impacts of GEF investments.</p>	<p>Replenishment Participants (GEF-8 Policy Directions: The Enabling Environment for Transformation, GEF/R.08/14). These reports identified actionable design and implementation elements on durability and are centered around four main, interconnected themes: (1) theory of change, (2) multi-stakeholder processes, (3) stakeholder involvement and (4) adaptive learning. These elements are all now mainstreamed in GEF policy and guidelines and are explicitly addressed in the GEF-8 strategy, in GEF project design requirements and in the implementation of the GEF's Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (GEF/C.64/07). This will further increase the sustainability and durability of GEF investments, per the recommendations of this evaluation and the "continuation/likely continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has come to an end", as per IEO's definition of sustainability (GEF/ME/C.56/02/Rev.01). The Secretariat welcomes the recommendation to disseminate and scale-up good practices to broaden and sustain the impact of GEF investments. The Secretariat notes significant ongoing efforts to capture, produce and share lessons and good practices of GEF investments. This includes GEF IW: LEARN the GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network, which is active across all regions and working with a range of partner agencies supports the GEF International Waters portfolio in strengthening transboundary water management by collecting and sharing best practices and lessons learned, and enhancing awareness and capacities to apply innovative solutions to common problems across GEF International Waters projects and programs. Further, The Secretariat develops, in coordination with the Agencies and the OFPs, Good Practice Briefs which summarizes key aspects of successful GEF projects and lessons learned to promote South-South cooperation and regional/global collaboration. In coordination with the OFPs, executing agencies, local CSOs and NGOs, and beneficiaries, the Secretariat disseminates Good Practice Briefs through webinars, South-South exchange activities or field visit learning event as part of the</p>		<p>knowledge management and learning in every project and program the GEF invests in, from design through to implementation, with an emphasis on South-South exchange for maximum effect. South-South exchange among a network of partners and stakeholders will involve fostering dialogue, collaboration, and capacity-building among stakeholders for facilitating capture, transfer, uptake, and scale-up of lessons, expertise, and best practices, regionally including the Lower Mekong River Basin, through the integrated programs, new Country Engagement Strategy, and others.</p> <p>The GEF-8 templates for PFD, PIFs and CEO endorsement requests have specific requirements regarding sustainability in project design, theory of change, stakeholder engagement, and M&E Framework, including dedicated budgeting for project M&E. Further, these elements are currently being included and emphasized in the project preparation (PPG) guidance provided by Integrated Program (IP) lead agencies to support the development of high-quality child projects under the GEF-8 IPs. For example, the design of global platforms under the IPs, such as Wildlife Conservation for Development and regional coordination platforms under the Critical Forest Biome IP will share and promote lessons and best practices, including in participating Mekong Countries.</p>	<p>sustainability-focused requirements into project templates and guidelines under GEF-8. The IEO also notes measures to support the replication and scaling up of successful practices, particularly through South-South exchanges and the development of regional coordination platforms. While these efforts mark an initial progress towards strengthening sustainability in project designs and outcomes, the IEO will continue to monitor their implementation and impact.</p>

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	<p>GEF regional workshops, such as Expanded Constituency Meeting or Adaptation Workshop. Looking ahead, <i>the GEF will continue to pay special attention in the review of GEF projects (including those in the Lower Mekong River Basin) to sustainability elements in project design and where relevant in the project Theory of Change, and M&E framework. During GEF-8 the GEF Secretariat foresees organizing a knowledge event aiming to foster exchange of knowledge and lessons on how to design and implement mechanisms for testing, replicating, and scaling up successful local outcomes and mainstream them at the national level. This event could draw from examples in the Lower Mekong River Basin and beyond and could take the form of a Brown Bag Lunch, a session at an Agency Retreat or similar.</i></p>			
<p>Recommendation 3: The STAP, in consultation with the GEF, should provide technical advice on internationally agreed upon definitions and guidelines for implementation of ecosystem based conceptual approaches and management tools (e.g., EbA, EbM, NbS, R2RB), to support consistent understanding and implementation on the ground. Future GEF projects should include robust theories of change and indicators that measure the effectiveness of these conceptual approaches and management tools.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.64/14)</p> <p>STAP has provided technical advice and guidelines for the implementation of ecosystem-based conceptual approaches and management tools. For example, on natural capital approaches including a report commissioned from Stanford, on Nature-Based Solutions, and a Conceptual Framework for Governing and Managing Source-to-Sea Continuum. <i>STAP, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat, will consider what further advice might be needed. STAP is doing further work on how to strengthen project design and adaptive management, in addition to its Theory of Change Primer, and enabling elements for good project design.</i> The Secretariat notes, that in GEF-8 projects are required to be based on theory of change, operationalized through PIF and PFD templates and review sheets and is supported by periodic Agency training.</p>	<p>Not specified</p>	<p>Rating: High</p> <p>In response to this recommendation, the STAP, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat, prepared a paper titled: <i>A Summary of Definitions, Guidelines, and Tools on Ecosystem-Based Approaches for Watershed Management</i> (GEF/STAP/C.66/Inf.07), for the 66th Council meeting in February 2024. The paper provides advice on definitions, guidelines, and available tools on Ecosystem based adaptation and Ecosystem based management and was prepared in response to this recommendation. https://www.thegef.org/council-meeting-documents/gef-stap-c-66-inf-07</p>	<p>Rating: Substantial</p> <p>The IEO acknowledges the STAP's efforts, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat, to provide technical advice on internationally agreed upon definitions and guidelines for implementation of ecosystem based conceptual approaches and management tools through the preparation of the guidance document. Together with the guidance the recommendation also points to the need for robust theories of change and indicators for assessing the effectiveness of these approaches and tools. The IEO will continue to monitor the adoption and application of these guidelines in project design and implementation.</p>

Evaluations for which progress in implementation of Management’s action plan will be assessed beginning 2025

1. Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation: GEF Support to Drylands Countries ([GEF/E/C.66/01](#)), February 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action
<p>Recommendation 1: As the GEF prepares to design and implement an official policy coherence framework for GEF-8, the Secretariat should ensure that guidance to enhance policy coherence through GEF operations includes a focus on subnational and local levels. The most recent policy coherence documentation from the GEF Secretariat does not refer to these levels, although they are addressed in length in a STAP brief on the topic (STAP 2023b). This evaluation has demonstrated that even in contexts of decentralization, policy coherence at lower levels of governance remains elusive. As the GEF Secretariat develops guidance for and assesses policy coherence in GEF projects, it should give sufficient emphasis to supporting institutional coordination mechanisms and coherent implementation of policies at subnational and local levels. Improving resource use norms, sanctions, and bylaws at local levels can be an effective and realistically ambitious strategy to enhance policy coherence. Especially in drylands contexts, a greater reliance on phased, longer-term, and integrated approaches will also support effectiveness in enhancing policy coherence.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.66/14)</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation, with the understanding that its formal agenda on policy coherence has only recently begun in October 2023. <i>The initial focus is therefore intended to be at the national level, and based on those learnings the GEF Secretariat will work on how best to address governance at different levels of spatial scale.</i> Policy coherence is key to reducing the funds needed for nature financing, increasing and sustaining the impact of nature funding flows, aligning private and public investments to the international convention agreements, and increasing national and global environmental benefits. Policy coherence is being progressively mainstreamed in global dialogues as a critical mechanism in the achievement and sustainability of global environmental benefits. In recognition of the importance of this agenda and in response to a GEF-8 replenishment commitment, the GEF Secretariat brought to the 65th GEF Council in October 2023 a paper that presented for discussion several options to enhance policy coherence in GEF operations. This paper represented the first dedicated discussion on this topic by the GEF Council. It therefore focused, as intended, on a broad framework for policy coherence. Based upon the GEF Council’s approval of this document, the GEF Secretariat is now preparing an internal action plan in order to operationalize this framework. As part of this action plan, the GEF Secretariat is undertaking an extensive portfolio review of its completed and ongoing projects. This will highlight the projects that have a policy coherence dimension and yield examples, best practices and lessons on this agenda. This exercise will also identify the potential for the strengthening of policy coherence in a subset of active projects and programs that are in early stages of implementation. Simultaneously, policy coherence is being integrated into the design stage of GEF-8 programming, particularly in its integrated programming. The GEF Secretariat is considering the development of tools to track and assess progress on policy coherence, and the potential for the development of policy relevant indicators. Policy coherence is also a key component of the GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy (CES) which is currently being rolled out. As the GEF Secretariat advances on the different elements of its action plan in the coming years, STAP and other guidance and experiences on policy coherence will be taken into consideration. <i>Depending on the local contexts, addressing different levels of governance at the country level may have to be done in a phased approach at different levels of spatial scale, with a focus first on the broader, national level. To that end, at the level of national governance, successful transformations of policies and incentives require combined efforts at the Executive and Parliamentary Branches, and this is where the GEF Secretariat may place its initial focus.</i> At the same time, as recognized by the IEO’s OPS-7 Report, there can be enforcement challenges at any/all governance levels that are beyond the GEF’s reach and may accordingly limit impact in this sphere. <i>As part of its preparations for the GEF-9 replenishment, the GEF-Secretariat will undertake an internal stock take of its initial progress on the policy coherence agenda, including experiences and challenges at the country level. These learnings will inform the integration of policy coherence into the GEF-9 policy and programming strategies.</i></p>	<p>GEF-9 replenishment</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: The GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies should ensure that increased attention is devoted to the inclusion of land tenure security and conflict resolution for resource management within program and project designs and the underlying theories of change. Land tenure is especially weak in</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.66/14)</p> <p>The GEF-8 Programming Directions have introduced increased attention to this issue by promoting good, effective and participatory land and water governance, making specific reference to land tenure and water rights (ref. para 550) and by including the resolution of land tenure issues as an element of LD-objective 4: “Improve the enabling policy and institutional framework for LDN” (ref. para 553). As outlined in the GEF-8 programming directions, the application of FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security will be encouraged. Further, land tenure security and conflict resolution for resource</p>	<p>GEF-8</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action
<p>communally managed drylands, characterized by a relatively limited natural resource endowment. Yet local communities need tenure security to invest in the sustainable management of the ecosystems on which they depend. Tenure security can reduce resource conflicts, and also help address sustainability. Agencies should adequately describe the status of land tenure security and resource conflicts in assessing project and program context and include relevant elements in their theories of change (e.g., as assumptions or risks, and/or activities, outputs, or outcomes). Doing so would also help countries in responding to the UNCCD Decision 26/COP.14.</p>	<p>management is addressed as a cross-cutting issue in GEF programming and features prominently in the strategies and theories of change of the integrated programs, notably the programs on Ecosystem Restoration, and Critical Forest Biomes (ref. para 58 and 103). Further, the GEF agrees with the IEO that the recent UNCCD COP Decision 26/COP.14 on land tenure will provide an additional entry point for increasing attention to these issues, especially in drylands and countries affected by drought. GEF will work with its partner agencies to make continued efforts to foster leadership and political will to address land tenure through supporting capacity development and enhanced knowledge sharing learning, inclusion of all stakeholders, and provision of data and planning tools for informed decision making as part of its regional and global programming in GEF-8 and place special emphasis of bringing this topic into the context of dryland countries through its ongoing work in the GEF-7 DSL-IP, and potential future programs with a focus on drylands.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3: The GEF Secretariat and Agencies should ensure that equal consideration is given in project and program design to both fostering synergies and mitigating trade-offs between environment and socioeconomic development, with due attention to distributional impacts. GEF projects in drylands have not adequately considered trade-offs between environmental outcomes and socioeconomic development, despite the real potential for unmitigated trade-offs to result in reduced environmental outcomes and unintended negative consequences, including leakage. Trade-offs in pastoral areas should be given concerted attention given poorer performance in these landscapes in past GEF drylands projects, and project design should also carefully consider who will benefit depending on the solutions adopted.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.66/14)</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat has consulted with the GEF Agencies on the response to this recommendation. The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation, with the understanding that the mandate of the GEF is to generate global environmental benefits; therefore, the consideration of trade-offs will need to balance trade-offs in a way that maximizes environmental outcomes. Trade-offs between environment and socio-economic development and the potential for unmitigated trade-offs to result in reduced environmental outcomes and unintended negative consequences, including leakage, is a common issue in global efforts to achieve sustainable development and well described in the literature. The GEF Secretariat and its Agencies are fully aware of it and will continue its efforts to mitigate trade-offs, with due attention to distributional impacts. Specifically, the GEF-8 programming directions identify the mitigation of trade-offs as an important element of its nature-based solutions approach in several of its integrated programs, for example in the Ecosystem Restoration (ref. para 54), Blue and Green Islands (ref. para 169), Net-zero nature-positive accelerator (ref. para 239). Also, the Land Degradation Focal Area strategy employs the LDN concept and integrated land-use planning to promote synergies, manage trade-offs, and improve policy coherence across sectors and at all levels. GEF and its agencies will apply STAP's advisory document on nature-based solutions, which will enhance these efforts in the general programming, and specifically in future work in drylands, particularly in pastoral areas and rangelands. Further, balancing environmental and societal benefits at different scales from local to landscape, as well as in time, is part of efforts of the GEF and its Agencies to improve the projects and programs' theories of change and ways to monitors socio-economic and environmental cobenefits. These efforts are made in the context of STAPs advisory work on enhancing the application of theory of change concept, which is now consistently applied in GEF projects and programs at design stage.</p>	Not specified
<p>Recommendation 4: The GEF Secretariat should encourage Agencies to provide project-level monitoring data showing associated biophysical changes for relevant area-based core indicators. The relative lack of demonstrated changes in</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.66/14)</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat will work with its agencies to provide project level monitoring data that better show biophysical changes for relevant area-based core indicators. This recommendation will be addressed through adjusting the GEF's Results Based Measurement Framework and its related guidelines at the next opportunity, which will be the update of the GEF-9 Results Measurement Framework, likely by end of</p>	End of FY25 and FY26

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action
<p>environmental status through monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems was noted. When taken alongside geospatial analysis and field-level biophysical data observations that suggested more localized sustainable results than those indicated by results reported simply on the basis of hectarage, these findings raise questions about the adequacy of area-based global environmental benefits in drylands. In its results framework guidelines, the GEF Secretariat should encourage Agencies to provide available biophysical monitoring data (alongside already requested GIS files), to better substantiate the environmental benefits of improved management practices and restoration. The newly launched GEF Geospatial Platform as well as the LDN indicators that countries are adopting and sometimes integrating into their GEF project reporting provide a good basis for this effort.</p>	<p><i>FY26. The GEF Secretariat will also assess its portfolio of ongoing LDN projects to learn on how projects are applying LDN indicators and their alignment with national LDN targets and extract conclusions and lessons learned on ways of integrating them into GEF project reporting. This assessment will be done by the end of FY25.</i> Further, the newly launched GEF Geospatial Platform already includes ways to demonstrate changes in environmental status, for example by assessing drought severity at local level over time. <i>Depending on data availability and technical feasibility, further improvements may be possible, similar to recent additions to the platform by adding protected areas as polygons on the map.</i></p>	

2. Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF ([GEF/E/C.66/02](#)), February 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action
<p>Recommendation 1: The GEF Secretariat should ensure that co-design of projects with communities is possible under the suite of GEF policies and guidelines, for projects where community partnership is a critical element. The ongoing review of GEF policy and guidelines should be done in anticipation of the proposed “whole of society” approach in GEF-9, which emphasizes stakeholder engagement across different segments of society.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.66/15)</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat appreciates that this recommendation highlights the importance of recognizing communities as more than beneficiaries but rather as partners in the design and selection of activities. As highlighted by this recommendation, co-design could lead to more significant roles for communities within projects. The GEF Secretariat therefore agrees that CBAs could be further promoted in projects where community partnership is a critical element. Considering the renewed focus and attention to inclusion and the “whole of society” approach in GEF-8 and expectations to further develop this in GEF-9, <i>the substance of this recommendation will be considered in the lead up to the GEF-9 replenishment and the associated GEF-9 programming directions and policy agenda. The GEF Secretariat will also explore considerations for extending CBAs in the ongoing review of GEF policies and guidelines as appropriate.</i></p>	<p>GEF-8 and GEF-9 replenishment</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Building on earlier guidance, the GEF Secretariat, together with the GEF STAP, should provide more clarity and guidance on when and how CBAs can be used in GEF projects. This would include examples of results indicators observed in projects and appropriate guidance to facilitate the use of CBAs.</p>	<p>Partially agreed (GEF/C.66/15)</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat recognizes the important role played by communities in influencing environmental and socioeconomic outcomes and notes the findings in the Evaluation on challenges related to effective community involvement in project design beyond consultations. As such, the GEF Secretariat appreciates that there may be room for providing further clarity on when and how CBAs can be applied in project design and implementation of GEF financed activities. <i>The GEF Secretariat will seek further advice from STAP on opportunities to further promote the use of CBA in GEF projects and programs as appropriate. This may include considerations to prepare a best practice document with STAP and incorporating into GEF-9 thematic discussions. In addition, the GEF Secretariat will continue to expand the scale and scope of CBAs in relevant projects such as the GEF SGP and ICI in consultation with relevant GEF Implementing Agencies. Moreover, the GEF Secretariat will consider opportunities to promote the use of CBAs in GEF projects within the context of the Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning as well as the GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy,</i> intended to enable countries to maximize expected outcomes and to take ownership in design and implementation.</p>	<p>GEF-8 and GEF-9 replenishment</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: The GEF Secretariat should develop an approach for tracking of devolved responsibility and/or financial resources to the local level for GEF projects as appropriate. Such tracking could differentiate between resources allocated to national CSOs, IPLCs, women’s groups, etc. as relevant.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.66/15)</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat agrees that there is scope to further refine its approach to tracking devolved responsibility and/or financial resources in GEF projects. The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that some measurement of socio-economic co-benefits is already a part of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework. Over the years, successive revisions of the GEF’s results architecture have strengthened the GEF’s capacity to disaggregate data by sex, covering key environmental results areas where differentiated impact may take place on the well-being of girls and women. Details on how Agencies and countries should ensure projects track only direct beneficiaries through the related Core Indicator has also been strengthened in GEF Guidelines on the Implementation of the GEF-8 Results Measuring Framework. The GEF Geospatial Platform, launched in 2023, provides the geographic locations of beneficiary communities. In support of the GEF-8 “whole of society” and inclusion approaches, the GEF Secretariat has committed to working toward improving the tracking of socio-economic co-benefits. The GEF8 Replenishment Participants emphasized this focus through a policy recommendation to “improve the capture of human and socio-economic well-being metrics as well as climate change adaptation co-benefits in the results monitoring and improve their consideration in the design of GEF-funded projects and programs to further support the achievement of GEBs”. In line with this policy recommendation, <i>the GEF Secretariat has submitted a document for Council endorsement at its 66th Council Meeting entitled “Tracking and Measuring the Socioeconomic Co-</i></p>	<p>Not specified</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action
	<p><i>benefits of GEF Investments". This document outlines steps to improve the measurement of socio-economic co-benefits in results reporting and their consideration in the design of GEF-financed projects and programs. This may include opportunities to better capture and monitor the results of GEF financing for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), civil society, and youth. In addition, a possibility may be to further disaggregate indicators that include the number of beneficiary people as their unit of measurement by, for example IPLCs and youth. Simultaneously, the Secretariat will explore the feasibility of tracking financing supporting IPLCs, civil society and youths at the corporate level.</i></p>	

3. Learning from Challenges in GEF Projects ([GEF/E/C.66/03](#)), February 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action
<p>Recommendation 1: This report recommends that while the GEF Secretariat operationalizes the recently approved GEF Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy in consultation with members of the GEF partnership, it would be beneficial to reflect and apply the lessons/guiding principles relevant to the GEF, in the detailed action plans for knowledge and learning.</p>	<p>Agreed (GEF/C.66/16)</p> <p>As articulated in the table above, <i>the eight specific guiding principles</i> to which this recommendation refers are well aligned with several existing policies and processes in the GEF, and <i>will be further embodied as appropriate in specific action areas to be implemented under the KM&L strategy, in consultation with STAP and GEF agencies.</i></p>	<p>Not specified</p>

4. Evaluation of GEF Support to Climate Information and Early Warning Systems ([GEF/E/C.66/04](#)), February 2024 GEF Council Meeting

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management’s Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action
<p>Recommendation 1: GEF projects should shift their focus from solely providing early warning information to fostering early actions during disaster events. GEF projects ought to prioritize data usability and ensure that both national and local plans are in place. This involves establishing effective communication systems and providing the necessary knowledge of how to respond once the warning is issued. To overcome the “last mile” challenge, GEF projects must prioritize community engagement, capacity building, and the development of tailored communication strategies to address the specific needs and challenges of remote and vulnerable communities.</p>	<p>Partially agreed (GEF/C.66/17)</p> <p>Many of the adaptation actions supported by the LDCF and the SCCF aid communities in dealing with natural hazards, for example by supporting the ‘climate-proofing’ of key public infrastructure such as buildings, water supply and sanitation systems; establishing climate resilient storm shelters; and ‘safety at sea’ measures for vulnerable fisherfolk. Such measures can help communities better cope with climate extremes and hazards. However, the GEF does not directly support disaster risk management; therefore, activities that fall purely in the area of disaster risk management, such as evacuation and reconstruction, are outside the mandate for support provided by the GEF, LDCF and SCCF. <i>In alignment with the mandates of the LDCF and SCCF, the Secretariat will continue to seek opportunities to support early adaptation action in the face of climate variability and extremes, in conjunction with support for climate information and early warning systems.</i></p>	<p>Not specified</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: The GEF Secretariat, STAP, and GEF Agencies should continue aligning indicators with established good practices. It is advisable for GEF projects to adopt the most fitting indicators in line with WMO guidelines that are informed by international good practices, and lessons learned from past experiences. These indicators would effectively measure the success of CIEWS interventions, serve as a roadmap for future interventions and provide information to global results frameworks. Furthermore, for effective monitoring, it is suggested to set minimum standards for measuring and tracking CIEWS components at the project level. In alignment with the ongoing efforts to streamline and simplify the GEF results framework, this approach emphasizes repurposing existing indicators at the project level rather than introducing new ones. The overarching goal is to enhance the quality of measurement and</p>	<p>Partially agreed (GEF/C.66/17)</p> <p>While indicators for CIEWS do not align with the focal areas of the GEF Trust Fund, as part of its ongoing efforts to improve capture of socio-economic wellbeing and adaptation benefits, it will explore integrating best practices related to CIEWS indicators in the GEF Trust Fund. The results frameworks of the LDCF and SCCF, however, do include indicators for CIEWS. The Secretariat updates its LDCF/SCCF indicators every four years, as it launches the next adaptation programming strategy. The indicators are revised in accordance with best adaptation practice and in alignment, where possible, with the indicators of other climate funds, while adhering to the principle of streamlining the results framework in order to prevent overburdening of GEF Agencies and countries. <i>The GEF Secretariat will revisit, and may update, the LDCF/SCCF indicators that will accompany the adaptation programming strategy for the 2026-2030 period, including indicators for CIEWS.</i></p>	<p>Next adaptation programming strategy (2026-2030)</p>

GEF IEO Recommendations	Level of Management's Agreement, its response including specified actions	Time frame for action
tracking of the application of CIEWS components, ensuring that interventions are well-informed and impactful.		
<p>Recommendation 3: The GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies should continue to explore strategies to enhance the financial sustainability of CIEWS components. The significant costs associated with the operation and maintenance of CIEWS initiatives require a tailored approach to secure long-term financing to enable their continued success beyond the project's completion. Recognizing the complexities of engaging the private sector and acknowledging their potential role, particularly in LDCs, GEF projects are encouraged to support creating an enabling environment for the private sector in developing innovative adaptation solutions derived from CIEWS. This is especially important considering the multiple applications and increasing advantages that CIEWS offers to several sectors, including transportation, agriculture, tourism, finance, and insurance.</p>	<p>Partially agreed (GEF/C.66/17)</p> <p>The LDCF and SCCF projects which support CIEWS include strengthening of institutional capacity of meteorological agencies and mainstreaming their services with sectors such as agriculture. This has often led to robust government institutions which have been continuing to monitor and provide climate and weather data after project completion. Regarding the private sector, engagement has been primarily in the application and use of climate data in sectors where private sector actors are active. The GEF Secretariat is supporting countries in piloting innovative CIEWS based and private sector led adaptation solutions and creating enabling policy environments, including in the agriculture advisory and climate risk insurance sectors. <i>It will continue to identify more such opportunities for private sector engagement in CIEWS, including through the Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation.</i> As such, <i>the GEF Secretariat welcomes highlighting the importance of continuing to ensure that GEF support for CIEWS includes purposeful financial sustainability strategies to enable the medium and long-term functioning and use of the systems.</i></p>	Not specified