

Consultation DRAFT: Version 2017-09-18

**53rd GEF Council Meeting
November 28 - 30, 2017
Washington, D.C.**

Agenda Item **XX**

GEF Policy on Gender Equality

Draft Sept 2017

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Introduction

1. This cover note to the proposed Policy attached in Annex I – *Policy on Gender Equality* - aims to provide the background for updating the GEF's Policy on Gender Mainstreaming (SD/PL/02)¹, and outline key changes in the GEF's approach on gender mainstreaming and policy requirements. It also includes information on the next steps toward implementing the Policy.
2. The Gender Equality Action Plan (GEF/C.47/09)² that was developed to support implementation of the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming obligated the Secretariat to review and – if needed – update the Policy before FY18. The decision to develop a new GEF Policy on Gender Equality follows portfolio analyses undertaken by the Secretariat, as part of the implementation of GEAP, that suggest variable and inconsistent gender mainstreaming practices and results across the GEF portfolio. It also responds to the GEF IEO *Evaluation on Gender Mainstreaming in the GEF* (GEF/ME/C.52/inf.09)³ recommendation that the GEF should revise its Policy to better align with best practices and human rights-based approaches, and to provide more guidance on the responsibilities of the GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat.
3. The decision is also based on a recognition of the strategic opportunity to enter the GEF-7 replenishment period with an updated approach to gender equality that better reflects (i) the recent mandates on gender in the multilateral environmental agreements for which the GEF serves as the financial mechanism, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals mandating gender-responsive approaches and actions; and (ii) the GEF's ambition to more effectively and strategically address intersections between gender and the environment in its programs and projects and enhance key gender outcomes in support of the GEF's mandate to protect the global environment.
4. This cover note and the proposed Policy have been developed through a consultative process with a working group including representatives of the GEF Council and Agencies, and the GEF Gender Partnership comprising gender focal points from GEF Agencies, Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) Secretariats, civil society, and expert organizations. Consultations have also included other environmental finance providers e.g., the Green Climate Fund, the Climate Investment Fund and the Adaptation Fund.

¹ GEF/: SD/PL/02, Policy on Gender Mainstreaming:

www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/Gender_Mainstreaming_Policy.pdf

² GEF/C.47/09, GEF Gender Equality Action Plan:

https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF_GenderEquality_CRA_lo-res_0.pdf

³ GEF/ME/C.52/inf.09, GEF IEO Evaluation on Gender Mainstreaming in the GEF (GEF/ME/C.52/inf.09):

<https://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/files/gender-study-2017.pdf>

Background

5. Equality for women and girls is a strategic and operational imperative for the GEF because the principal drivers of the deterioration of the global environment are closely intertwined with gender inequality and social exclusion. As a result, efforts to combat environmental degradation and those to address gender inequality can be mutually supportive. This is reflected in commitments across the MEAs that the GEF serves, as well as in Agenda 2030, which recognizes gender equality and women's empowerment as a sustainable development goal in its own right, as well as a catalyst for reaching other goals.
6. The GEF efforts to address gender equality have been guided by several GEF policies and strategies. These include (i) the Policy on Public Involvement in GEF Projects (SD/PL/01)⁴; (ii) the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming⁵ that was approved in the context of the GEF's accreditation pilot with the objective of setting minimum standards on gender mainstreaming that existing GEF Agencies and accreditation applicants would need to meet; (iii) the GEF 2020 Strategy⁶, that commits the GEF to focus on the drivers of environmental degradation and identifies gender mainstreaming as a core GEF operational principle; and (iv) the GEF Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP).⁷
7. The GEAP was developed to advance the GEF's gender mainstreaming approach and includes activities in the areas of project and program support, capacity development, knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation. It has been implemented through the GEF Gender Partnership including Agencies, MEA secretariats, the CSO network and the GEF Secretariat. This work has, among things, resulted in:
 - a. Strengthened monitoring and reporting on gender, including regular portfolio reviews and reporting on progress against the GEF-6 core gender equality indicators, as well as the implementation of GEAP;
 - b. Improved capacity and processes to mainstream gender in GEF projects and programs; and
 - c. Enhanced collaboration, knowledge sharing and learning on gender across GEF Agencies, MEA Secretariats and other partners.

⁴ http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Public_Involvement_Policy-2012.pdf

⁵ GEF/: SD/PL/02, Policy on Gender Mainstreaming:

www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/Gender_Mainstreaming_Policy.pdf

⁶ GEF/C.46/10, GEF2020 – Strategy for the GEF

https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/GEF.C.46.10_GEF2020_-_Strategy_for_the_GEF_May_15_2014.pdf)

⁷ GEF/C.47/09, GEF Gender Equality Action Plan:

https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF_GenderEquality_CRA_lo-res_0.pdf

Progress and Limitations

8. As a result of the GEF's increased attention to gender, analyses suggest improvements in portfolio-level performance. The recent IEO's *Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the GEF*⁸ revealed, for example, that gender consideration in project documentation rose from 56.5 percent to almost 98 percent. The IEO evaluation further revealed a dramatic reduction of 'gender blind' projects from 64% before the GEF policy on gender mainstreaming was introduced, to 1.3% in OPS6, and a nearly sixfold increase in the number of projects rated gender aware. Analysis of only GEF-6 projects shows improvements of gender performance at entry. As of April 2017 (to be updated in October), 67% of new GEF-6 projects had undertaken a gender analysis at the design stage, compared with a baseline of 18%. Half of these projects included specific activities targeting women, and 71% of new projects included sex-disaggregated information and indicators compared to a baseline of 57%. Beyond project design, analyses of Mid-term reviews and Terminal evaluations further suggest increasing attention to gender in project monitoring and reporting.
9. While portfolio analyses suggest progress in terms of the degree to which gender is considered in the design of GEF projects and programs, the GEF's approach to gender has so far resulted in modest improvements in terms the number and share of projects that can be considered 'gender mainstreamed', i.e. that assesses the implications for women and men of any planned action.⁹ The findings suggest insufficient attention to or reporting on gender analyses prior to CEO endorsement and modest improvement in completed projects compared to the GEF IEO OPS5 baseline in terms of projects rated gender aware. They further reveal that the inclusion of gender indicators in project results frameworks remains highly variable across GEF projects, and that many projects still do not systematically report on activities, progress and results on gender equality in their Mid-term reviews and Terminal evaluations.
10. The above findings and the experience implementing GEAP suggest (i) the need to codify and strengthen the GEF's policy and guidelines on gender; (ii) the importance to move towards a more gender-responsive approach in project design and implementation, and (iii) the need to better capture progress on and outputs of actions that address gender equality, and key gender outcomes as set out by the project, such as access to and control over natural resources, access to benefits and services, as well as participation in planning and decision-making processes related to the environment.

Overview of the Proposed Policy

11. Drawing on the experiences implementing GEAP and the recommendations of the IEO Evaluation, the proposed new Policy on Gender Equality introduces a shift from gender

⁸ GEF/ME/C.52/Inf.09

⁹ GEF/ME/C.52/inf.09, GEF IEO Evaluation on Gender Mainstreaming in the GEF:
<https://www.gefio.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/files/gender-study-2017.pdf>

mainstreaming alone to an emphasis on positive outcomes in line with a gender-responsive framework and approach, including specific principles encouraging GEF-financed projects and programs to move from a gender-aware –“do no harm” approach - to one that’s seeks to advance targeted measures to reduce gender-related inequalities and support empowerment of women where possible.

12. The proposed new Policy introduces provisions that aim to clarify existing GEF requirements and give formal recognition to best practices. Specifically, the Policy:
 - a. Provides clarity on GEF’s approach to gender equality by formalizing and making requirements more explicit for addressing gender equality in GEF projects and programs; and
 - b. Introduces clearer responsibilities in terms of accountability, capacity development, learning and knowledge management.

Implementation Considerations

13. Following Councils’ approval of the Policy, the Secretariat will update project templates and develop guidelines in consultation with the GEF Agencies and the GEF Gender Partnership, that will include additional guidance and explanatory information to support the implementation of the Policy. The Secretariat will post the Guidelines on its website after CEO approval and will notify the Council and other stakeholders.
14. A strategy and new time-bound action plan on gender will be developed, in consultations with Agencies and the GEF Gender Partnership, to support the operationalization of the proposed Policy and set a clear direction for the GEF’s continued efforts to promote gender equality as well as the empowerment of women and girls in the context of its mandate to protect the global environment.
15. The Secretariat will continue efforts to strengthen competencies among the secretariat staff to support the implementation of this Policy.

Annex I Proposed GEF Policy on Gender Equality

Introduction

1. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an international partnership predicated on the delivery of global environmental benefits. The GEF's ability to effectively generate these benefits and catalyze the transformative change needed to protect the global environment and promote sustainable development is underpinned by efforts to address inequality and promote women's empowerment.
2. Changes in the environment have different impacts on women and men. Women and girls, especially in least developed countries, are often disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. This is a result of gender-discriminatory cultural norms, unequal access to land, water and productive assets, and unequal decision-making power. While women face unique barriers, they are increasingly recognized as agents of change who make valuable contributions to the environment.
3. It is in recognition of this that this Policy understands that a gender-responsive approach – i.e., one that identifies gender differences, promotes shared power, control of resources, decision-making, and empowers women and girls – is integral to the GEF's ability to achieve and sustain global environmental benefits.

Application

4. This Policy applies to the Council, the Secretariat, all GEF Partner Agencies (hereafter referred to as "Agencies"), and to all GEF-financed activities¹⁰.

Purpose

5. This Policy sets out the guiding principles and mandatory requirements for addressing gender considerations across the GEF's governance and operations with a view to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the context of the GEF's efforts to protect the global environment and promote sustainable development.

¹⁰ Including activities funded through all GEF-managed trust funds, unless decided otherwise by the LDCF/SCCF Council in response to guidance from the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Definitions

CEO Approval means the approval of a fully developed medium-sized project or enabling activity by the GEF CEO.

CEO Endorsement means the endorsement of a fully developed full-sized project by the GEF CEO.

Enabling Activity means a project for the preparation of a plan, strategy or report to fulfill commitments under a Convention.

GEF Agency means an institution eligible to request and receive GEF resources directly from the GEF Trustee on behalf of an eligible recipient for the design and implementation of GEF-financed projects.

GEF Gender Partnership means the GEF Inter-Agency Working Group that includes gender focal points from Agencies, Secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, civil society, as well as other environmental finance providers and expert organizations, serving as a platform for consultations and a community of practice on gender and the environment.

Gender means the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable.

Gender analysis means a critical examination of how differences in gender norms, roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights affect men, women, girls and boys in a certain situation or context. Gender analysis examines the relationships between females and males and their access to and control of resources and the constraints they face relative to each other.

Gender equality means the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female

Gender-responsive approach means that the particular needs, priorities, and relationships between men and women are recognized and that measures are taken so that both genders proportionately can participate in and benefit from an intervention.

Program Framework Document means the document that sets forth the concept of a program that is proposed for GEF financing.

Project Identification Form means the applicable document that sets forth the concept of a full-sized project or medium-sized project that is requesting GEF financing.

Stakeholder means an individual or group that has an interest in the outcome of a GEF-financed activity or is likely to be affected by it.

Stakeholder engagement means a process involving stakeholder identification and analysis, planning of stakeholder engagement, disclosure of information, consultation and participation, addressing grievances, and on-going reporting to stakeholders

Women's empowerment means an expansion of agency throughout women's lives, especially via participation and decision-making, including differential or pro-active support to increase: (i) women's sense of self-worth; (ii) women's right to have and determine choices; (iii) women's right to have access to opportunities and resources; (iv) women's right to have power to control their own lives both within and outside the home; and (v) women's ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally¹¹.

¹¹ UNFPA

Goal

6. The goal of this Policy is to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in support of the GEF's mandate to protect the global environment and promote sustainable development.

Guiding Principles

7. The following principles will guide efforts promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in GEF governance and operations:
- a. Promote gender equality and women's empowerment in accordance with the decisions on gender in the multilateral environmental agreements for which the GEF serves, and in recognition of related international and national commitments to gender equality and human rights.
 - b. Ensure that GEF-financed activities do not exacerbate existing gender-based inequalities, or discriminate against individuals or groups based on their background, age, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion.
 - c. Employ a gender-responsive approach to stakeholder engagement to ensure that the different knowledge, needs and interests of women and men are addressed, women's voice and agency are reflected in decision-making, and that consultations with women's organizations are supported at all scales.
 - d. Apply a gender-responsive approach throughout the GEF project cycle to ensure that women and men have equal opportunities to participate in, contribute to and benefit from GEF-financed activities, resources and services.
 - e. Advance targeted measures to reduce gender gaps and support women's empowerment, when possible, in order to help achieve and sustain global environmental benefits, including women's equal access to environmental assets; economic empowerment and decision-making.

Policy Requirements

8. The Policy introduces mandatory requirements in four key areas: (A) GEF-financed activities; (B) governance and accountability; (C) learning and capacity development; and (D) Agency policies, procedures and capabilities.

A. GEF-financed activities

10. In Program Framework Documents and Project Identification Forms submitted for Work Program entry or CEO Approval, Agencies will provide indicative information on gender dimensions relevant to the proposed activity, and how these will be addressed.

11. At or prior to CEO Endorsement/ Approval, Agencies will provide:

- a. a gender analysis or equivalent social assessment that identifies and describes any gender differences, gaps, and associated risks that may be relevant to the proposed activity;
- b. any corresponding, gender-responsive measures to address such differences, gaps and risks, including any targeted measures to improve women's equal access to environmental assets, economic empowerment and decision-making; and
- c. if gender-responsive measures are not deemed necessary, a justification for why that is the case.

12. Where a GEF-financed activity is expected to contribute to gender equality or empowerment of women and girls, Agencies will, at CEO Endorsement/ Approval, include gender indicators and targets in the results framework to monitor outputs and gender outcomes.

13. Agencies will oversee the implementation of gender-responsive interventions as documented at CEO Endorsement/ Approval, and provide information on progress and key gender outcomes in their annual project implementation reports, mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations.

14. In its review of Program Framework Documents, Project Identification Forms, and Requests for CEO Endorsement/ Approval, the Secretariat will assess whether adequate documentation and provisions on gender equality have been presented as per paragraphs 10 – 12.

15. The Secretariat will update and maintain project templates, in consultation with Agencies, to support the implementation of this Policy.

B. Governance and accountability

16. The Secretariat will track and report annually to the Council on portfolio-level progress and key gender outcome areas including sex-disaggregated information on direct beneficiaries.

17. The Secretariat will promote a gender-responsive approach in other GEF-financed activities, such as national and regional outreach activities executed by the Secretariat, and in the development of GEF policies, guidelines, strategies and communication and knowledge products.

18. The Secretariat will develop and disseminate guidelines and action plans, in consultation with Agencies, the GEF Gender Partnership and other relevant stakeholders and expert organizations, to support the implementation of this Policy.

C. Learning and capacity development

19. The Secretariat and Agencies will use collaborative platforms, such as the GEF Gender Partnership, to generate and share knowledge on good practice, methodologies and lessons learned on advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in furtherance of this Policy, and in the context of the GEF's mandate to protect the global environment and promote sustainable development.

20. The Secretariat, in collaboration with Agencies, will leverage national and regional outreach and capacity development events and activities to raise awareness, build capacity, and share knowledge on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls related to the GEF's areas of work.

D. Agency policies, procedures and capabilities

21. Agencies will put in place and maintain the policies, procedures and capabilities required to ensure that:

- a. activities implemented by the Agency do not exacerbate existing gender-related inequalities;
- b. women and men have equal opportunities to participate in the identification, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities implemented by the Agency, and to benefit equally from such activities;
- c. gender analyses, social assessments or the equivalent are systematically applied to assess and address differences between women and men in terms of risks, impacts and benefits of Agency activities with a view to informing gender-responsive design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- d. gender dimensions, including sex-disaggregated indicators, and, where relevant, gender-specific indicators, are incorporated in monitoring, evaluation and reporting of Agency activities.

22. Agencies will demonstrate compliance with the requirements set out in Paragraph 22 of this Policy. The Secretariat will facilitate an assessment of Agencies' compliance with those requirements, for Council's review and decision.

23. If an Agency does not meet the requirements set out in Paragraph 22, the Agency, in consultation with the Secretariat, will develop a concrete, time-bound action plan to achieve compliance. The Secretariat, on behalf of the Agency, will submit the action plan for review and approval by the Council. Unless the Council decides otherwise, the Agency may continue to seek GEF financing while it implements the time-bound action plan.

24. Once an Agency has been found to meet the requirements set out in Paragraph 22, the Agency and the Secretariat will carry out periodic reporting and monitoring of compliance using the modalities set out in the *Policy on Monitoring Agencies' Compliance* (GEF/C.51/08/Rev.01).

Effectiveness

25. The Policy will come into effect upon adoption by the Council, and will remain in effect until amended or superseded by the Council.

Review of the Policy

26. The Council will decide on the review and revision of this Policy, taking into account, *inter alia*, evaluative evidence, implementation experience, and evolving best practice on gender mainstreaming and results.

GEF Policies

- *Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards* (OP/PL/01)
- *Minimum Fiduciary Standards for GEF Partner Agencies* (GA/PL/02)
- *Monitoring Agencies' Compliance* (GEF/C.51/08/Rev.01)
- *Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*
- *Project and Program Cycle* (OP/PL/01)

Guidelines

- *Application of Environmental and Social Safeguard Standards* (SD/GN/03)
- *Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy* (GEF/C.52/Inf.06)
- *Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples*