GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

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TOWARDS GREATER DURABILITY OF GEF INVESTMENTS

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed document GEF/C.57/08, *Towards Greater Durability of GEF Investments*, welcomes the analysis carried out by the Secretariat and agrees with the conclusions and next steps.

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INTRODUCTION

1. At the 56th Council in June 2019, both the GEF and the STAP prepared papers to contribute to the advancement of the durability / sustainability discussion: GEF/C.56/Inf.08, *Further Work on the Sustainability of GEF Projects and Programs,*[1] and GEF/STAP/C.56/Inf.04, *Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment.*[2]

2. Following the discussions of these papers, the 56th Council requested the Secretariat to present, for Council consideration at its 57th meeting in the Fall of 2019, a summary of key factors that influence the sustainability of GEF projects and programs, and how such factors are taken into account and may be strengthened in current GEF operations.[3] The Secretariat and the STAP also confirmed their commitment to closely coordinate, continue the dialogue with the Agencies, and come up with a set of actions to enhance sustainability and durability of GEF projects and programs.[4]

3. This paper responds to those requests and commitments. The analysis is reflective of a continue and active engagement of the Secretariat with and amongst STAP and the Agencies.

KEY FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE DURABILITY IN GEF PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

4. In the last two years, there has been considerable discussion and analyses amongst GEF stakeholders on the factors that influence sustainability and durability. The IEO's OPS-6[5] reported that country context, the quality of implementation and the quality of execution influence sustainability ratings. The IEO's APR 2017[6] suggested that likelihood of outcome sustainability at project completion is influenced by the following factors: quality of project preparation, country context, support from the government, the quality of implementation and execution, and materialization of co-financing. Both reports, however, did not recommend specific measures to enhance sustainability.

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[1] GEF/C.56/Inf.08, Further Work on the Sustainability of GEF Projects and Programs, http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.56.Inf_.08_Further%20Work%20on%20the%20Sustainability%20of%20GEF%20Projects%20and%20Programs_3.pdf

[2] GEF/STAP/C.56/Inf.04, *Achieving more enduring outcomes from GEF investment,* https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.STAP_.C.56.Inf_.04_Achieving%20more%20enduring%20outcomes%20from%20GEF%20investment_0.pdf

[3] *Joint Summary of the Chairs, 56th Council*, http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.56_Joint_Summary_of_the_Chairs_0.pdf

[4] *Highlights, 56th Council*, http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.56_Highlights_0.pdf

[5] GEF/ME/C.53/Inf.01, *Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS6)*, http://www.gefieo.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/files/ops6-report_1.pdf

[6] GEF/ME/C.54/Inf.02, *Annual Performance Report 2017*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GE.ME_C.54.Inf_.02_Annual_Performance_Report_2017_0.pdf

5. At its 55th Council meeting in December 2018, the Secretariat presented work[7] that explored the available evaluative evidence on the sustainability of GEF projects and programs, considered the associated limitations and areas for further analysis, and identified challenges and opportunities to enhancing sustainability going forward.

6. In its 56th Council paper,[1] the Secretariat reviewed an overview of definitions, approaches, performance, and lessons learned on sustainability across the GEF Partnership. The review suggests a reasonable degree of convergence in terms of how Agencies define and assess the sustainability of their projects. With some variation reflecting Agencies' business models as well as sector and regional differences, the factors behind Agencies' performance on sustainability identified overlapped to a significant extent with the findings of IEO's APR 2017.

7. Based on the extensive peer-reviewed literature on achieving project outcomes and impact, as well as earlier STAP analyses on integration,[8] STAP's analysis for the 56th Council conducted a systematic review of success factors focused specifically on durability.[2] Three interrelated factors emerge: (1) building stakeholder trust and motivation, (2) ensuring the endurance of capacity and financing, and (3) building resilience in outcomes through adaptability and transformability. These factors are widely seen as indicators of the durability of the outcome processes that underpin enduring impacts. It is instructive to note that the findings of this analysis were also in overall alignment with the IEO's previous findings.

8. A further avenue of engagement of the Secretariat with the wider partnership on the topic of durability has been the GEF Extended Constituency Workshops (ECWs). Discussions on durability have taken place with government representatives and operational focal points (OFPs) at the ECWs including the one in the Caribbean (May 2019)[9] and Pacific (July 2019)[10] regions. These independent discussions largely converged around the following factors: engagement and design with key and broad stakeholders including different ministries, local communities and private sectors, country ownership and alignment with national planning processes, co-financing, capacity building, project monitoring, and sharing project results and lessons learned amongst different stakeholders.

9. As a part of the twice-yearly Agency retreat in October 2019, the Secretariat together with STAP facilitated a cross-agency discussion on the securing of more enduring outcomes from GEF investments. Broad factors to result from these discussions include due diligence in project design, the promotion of inclusive decision making with multiple stakeholders, country ownership, the consideration of gender, the integration of safeguard measures, collaboration with the private sector, strong monitoring throughout the project life cycle, and learning and management through portfolio oversight.

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[7] GEF/C.55/Inf.14, *Measures to Enhance the Sustainability of GEF Projects and Programs*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.55.Inf_.14_Sustainability.pdf
[8] GEF/STAP/C.54/Inf.03, *Integration: to solve complex environmental problems*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/STAP%20Report%20on%20integration.PDF
[9] More detailed information available at https://www.thegef.org/events/st-lucia-ecw-2019
[10] More detailed information available at https://www.thegef.org/events/fiji-ecw-2019

A FRAMEWORK FOR DURABILITY DESIGN

10. The previous analyses and discussions show general convergence with the three factors proposed by STAP in the last Council.[2] This paper therefore proposes an overall framework for durability design that incorporates all previous work and has STAP's analysis at its foundation.

11. That analysis yielded three interrelated factors of enduring outcomes: (1) building stakeholder trust and motivation, (2) ensuring the endurance of capacity and financing, and (3) building resilience in outcomes.[11] Building on this analysis, STAP and the Secretariat have worked together to come up with a series of actionable design and implementation elements on durability. These elements are centred around four main, interconnected themes: (1) theory of change, (2) multi-stakeholder processes, (3) stakeholder involvement and (4) adaptive learning.

12. **Theory of Change**. Resilient, transformational and enduring project outcomes that adapt to both predictable and unforeseen changes of circumstance can come through the development of a Theory of Change (ToC).[12] This should be done in both initial project/program design as well as through regular review during implementation to allow for flexibility in learning and adaptability to changing circumstances in both the short-term and long-term. The ToC should include the identification of drivers, desired outcomes, barriers and enablers, phased withdrawal, and a necessary and sufficient set of responses to these scenarios.

13. **Multi-Stakeholder Processes**. Much of the logic in the STAP framework is centred around stakeholders.[13] At the design level, this requires various multistakeholder processes – regular stakeholder mapping and institutional analyses to better inform engagement, continuous and equitable engagement of key stakeholders, and the engagement with cross/domain actors that are important for scaling in particular. These engagements should allow for flexibility, and should be responsive to changes in form and membership over time.

[11] From these three indicators flowed eight interrelated recommendations on how durability can be more explicitly considered in project outcomes and impacts: (1) the articulation of an explicit risk appetite, (2) the application of systems thinking, (3) the development of a clear rationale and robust theory of change, (4) the choice of innovations, (5) an analysis of the barriers to, and enablers of, scaling and transformation, (6) the maximization of global environmental benefits, (7) the development of multi-stakeholder platforms, and (8) the establishment of a monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) process.

[12] STAP's upcoming primer on the Theory of Change will further assist the GEF as it continues to deepen its Theory of Change actions and requirements in both design and implementation stages.

[13] STAP is preparing advice on types of multi-stakeholder processes for different purposes and in different contexts. To this end, STAP's recently concluded workshop on Multi Stakeholder Platforms examined (i) **evidence** regarding the role of multi-stakeholder dialogue in influencing transformation in social-ecological systems, particularly at the global and regional scale, (ii) what **lessons** can be derived from past experiences regarding strategies to build and sustain such multi-stakeholder dialogue processes, and (iii) what **implications** this may have for future GEF programming.

14. **Stakeholder Involvement**. Ensuring the endurance of capacity and financing can be linked to the design action of stakeholder involvement. [14] Projects and programs must explicitly support diverse and adaptive stakeholder involvement. There should be a connection with local culture, knowledge and institutions. Together with the engagement with core stakeholders, there must be an active domeonstration planned and ongoing benefits to both these stakeholders as well as the wider audience. Appropriate capacity building should take place at individual/community/institutional levels, encompassing leadership, diversity, local institutions, local knowledge and local culture.

15. **Adaptive Learning**. A key feature of building resilience into project outcomes, and for scaling up, is the ability to adapt, communicate and learn through changing circumstances, including after project completion. This can be facilitated by effective Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) processes, including explicit knowledge management plans that build databases, track indicators, and disseminate lessons learned across stakeholders. Adaptive Learning is also intricately linked to ToC design, where the early articulation of potential changes in circumstances will better allow for the adoption of necessary adaptive measures.

MEASURES TOWARDS IMPROVING DURABILITY OF GEF PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

16. The four durability actions discussed above can be interwoven into the life cycle of every GEF project and program through a series of underlying programming choices, policies, strategies and actions. The Secretariat has put in place many elements that address these durability actions; this is a work-in-progress, and we continue to be dedicated to this task, with further improvements to come. Many of these actions are being addressed by current GEF policy strategies, in particular through the critical choices that have been made through the GEF-6 cycle and GEF-7 cycles. These include, *inter alia*, a greater focus on programmatic approaches and integrated programming, as well as a series of policies and strategies aimed at strengthening implementation and oversight. It is therefore useful to examine these recent strides through the lens of the durability framework described above. It is instructive to note that the IEO conclusions on sustainability were based on projects that concluded implementation several years ago and therefore were not subject to these principles.

17. At the core of all GEF activities, impacts and outcomes is its direction of programming, the elements of which are increasingly speaking to the durability design and implementation elements discussed in the framework above. In line with the GEF 2020 Strategy,[15] the GEF has been increasingly moving in the direction of large-scale, integrated programs that follow a drivers-based approach to reversing the course of environmental degradation.[16] In particular,

[14] The linkages between stakeholder involvement and sustainability were also discussed at the last UNCCD COP in a session at the GEF Day entitled "Sustainability: transformation through effective and sustainable stakeholder involvement in programmatic approaches".

[15] GEF 2020: Strategy for the GEF, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF-2020Strategies-March2015_CRA_WEB_2.pdf

[16] GEF/C.54/19/Rev.03, *Summary of Negotiations of the Seventh Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund,* https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.54.19.Rev_.03_Replenishment.pdf

the GEF-6 Integrated Approach Pilots (IAPs) and the GEF-7 Impact Programs (IPs) are designed to help countries pursue holistic and integrated approaches to push transformational change in the key economic systems. The discussion below on the four durability actions contains respective examples of some of these programs, and Box 1 contains a holistic discussion that interlinks all four dimensions in one such program – the Amazon Sustainable Landscapes.

18. While our concerted efforts to promote durability have begun through such programmatic approaches, there is a need to mainstream these principles across the GEF portfolio, and we will continue to actively engage in efforts in this regard. At the level of GEF-7 focal area objectives, durability has been explicitly considered, and as GEF-7 continues implementation, we will remain vigilant on these principles.[16] It is also notable that, while recent GEF-7 strategies explicitly address sustainability, best practice examples of the integration of durability principles into project implementation can be found in the current active portfolio of pre-GEF-7 projects. Annex 1 gives an overview of two such projects.

Theory of Change

19. A significant step towards project sustainability has to start with a robust Theory of Change (ToC). According to STAP, more effective and durable projects include ToCs that have been informed through a rationale that explicitly identifies causal pathways from the initial intervention all the way to the solution(s) being sought, along with their interrelationships. Such a ToC can only be ably constructed (and modified over time) by having teams working together towards a shared understanding of an intervention and agreement on the way forward. This dynamic, in turn, helps to build needed engagement and ownership with partners and stakeholders, which will prove essential for durability and scaling. ToCs are also suitable communication vehicles to describe the aims of a project beyond the immediate audience and stakeholders as well as to highlight the processes leading to desired change. Finally, ToCs guide data collection and enable teams to learn as the evidence base accumulates throughout project implementation, so that course adjustments can be made, including preparing the intervention for its post-implementation phase.

20. The ToC of the Global Wildlife Program (GWP)[17] is based on the concept that taking appropriate actions along the value chain of illegally traded wildlife, from country- to transit-, to destination-states, will result in the improved governance of natural resources, the reduction in poaching, and the improvement of the health of wildlife populations. A fundamental premise of this theory is that the enhancement of the management of conservation areas and wildlife population must result in local communities deriving appropriate direct and indirect benefits. It is imperative that the communities that live in and around conservation areas receive appropriate benefits for coexisting with wildlife so they become true stewards of the land and its natural resources. For them, wildlife must be an asset and not a liability. Improvements in conservation and the management of wildlife will attract additional investments by the private sector that will enhance the financial and economic value of the natural assets. Several lessons have been drawn from the use of this ToC. It is necessary to invest financial and technical

[17] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/web-documents/10200_PFD_Wildlife_PFD.pdf

resources along all the steps of the value chain. Investments on law enforcement only will be insufficient without strong judiciary to penalize offenders and without behavioral change and the reduction in the demand for illegally trade wildlife and wildlife products. Not having a ToC that oversees the large picture in the illegal wildlife trade would have resulted in not addressing all necessary interventions, making the rest of the activities unusable.

21. For the GEF 6 Sustainable Cities Integrated Approach Pilot (SC-IAP), a theory of change was critical as the program aimed to move away from sectoral solution based approach to adopt integrated evidence based urban planning as the entry point to address systemic environmental degradation drivers and support transformational change in cities. The theory of change enabled the program to establish the causal link between integrated urban planning, institutional capacity, knowledge and pilot infrastructure investments to address urban sustainability challenges linked with climate change, biodiversity and land degradation. The theory of change was useful in defining the focus and faciliating interaction between the two program tracks – the Global Platform for Sustainable Cities and the country projects. The GEF-7 Sustainable Cities Impact Program (SCIP) benefitted well from the SC-IAP's Theory of Change as it aimed to strengthen the integrated approach further for systemic impacts. The theory of change of the SC-IAP provided useful lessons to the impact program to develop a more robust theory of change, ensuring that integrated urban planning is fundamental to city level projects and the global platform on sustainable cities complements the integrated investments in cities with value added knowledge and technical support by mobilizing right resources, partners and expertise to catalyze transformational change for urban sustainability. It is expected that the SCIP's theory of change which emphasizes urban planning, governance, finance and knowledge exchange will enable the countries and cities to focus systematically not only on environmental degradation drivers such as urban sprawl, but also urban growth drivers such as densification, and innovation in sustainable technology and business solutions.

22. The Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR) IP[18] theory of change reflects the program's ambition to assist countries pursue comprehensive and system-wide approaches to underpin the transformation of food and land use systems. The ToC was developed to address practical knowledge gaps required to improve sustainability at the landscape level, national and subnational governance gaps, and to help tackle the underlying drivers of degradation generated by demand and financing across the supply chain. Promotion of sustainable practices and more responsible value chains addresses drivers related to agricultural expansion, poor land management practices, misaligned policies, and value chains with weak standards for assessing sustainability. Development of comprehensive land use plans that are a basis of integrated land management addresses drivers of forest loss and environmental degradation that stem from poor governance and planning, weak coordination and collaboration, and a failure to include key stakeholders in multi-stakeholder planning processes. Leveraged investments that link private and public financing will help fill the gap between available resources from the program and what is required to implement integrated management across landscapes and for this to be scaled. Execution of the ToC will help countries meet the growing

[18] http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/web-documents/10201_IP_FOLUR_PFD.pdf

demand for increased crop and livestock production, while minimizing the risk of further expansion of farmland into important forests and ecosystems, erosion of genetic diversity, overexploitation of land and water resources, overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and inefficient agricultural practices that lead to greenhouse gas emissions and food loss and waste.

Multi-Stakeholder Processes

23. Enduring transformational change will require consideration of new stakeholders, new partnerships, and multi-stakeholder platforms.[2] The building of multi-stakeholder processes, platforms and coalitions are increasingly seen as essential to (i) create and strengthen the functional multi-stakeholder platform, (ii) engender and sustain collaboration and (iii) build coalitions for change. The recent programmatic approaches of the GEF are particularly strong example of the principles of multi-stakeholder processes, in particular through the building of global knowledge platforms and partnerships.

24. The FOLUR IP brings together an unparalleled suite of partners that have demonstrated the ability to address these types of issues and to move to global solutions. FAO, the GEF Good Growth Partnership (GGP), Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU), Global Landscape Forum (GLF) and their member organizations, among other multi-stakeholder consortia, bring to this IP critical experience, lessons and networks to bridge knowledge gaps. These core partners are also networks of organizations that can help FOLUR to reach more institutions in more countries, more private sector players, thus globalizing the reach of the improvements innovations that are being applied. The Global Platform will be coordinating with and working through other multi-stakeholder initiatives and international agencies as needed based on their comparative advantage and expertise in relation to the challenges that FOLUR and the country projects face. The Program will tap into existing platforms and coalitions to create opportunities to feed innovations in policy and practice from the country projects into the regional and global bodies working on key issues, and to transfer knowledge from these bodies to the country projects. Additional stakeholders and potential partners of FOLUR include the range of organizations and institutions working on sustainable landscapes, food systems and commodity value chains.

25. Under the GEF-6 Sustainable Cities Integrated Approach Pilot program, the GEF supported the creation of the Global Platform on Sustainable Cities (GPSC) which is a multi-stakeholder partnership and knowledge platform that promotes integrated solutions and provides cutting-edge support to cities seeking to improve their urban sustainability. The GPSC focuses on connecting stakeholders and has become a global convening space fostering collaboration between cities, urban practitioners, global networks of cities and local governments, and financial institutions. Under the GEF-7 Sustainable Cities Impact Program, the platform will be strengthened further to bring new partners and stakeholders including private sector and other global platforms to trigger change both a local city level and the global policy discourse on urban sustainability. By utilizing the power of partnership, rich knowledge repository and global events, the platform is building capacity of cities globally in adopting

innovative sustainability solutions and influencing city leaders to advance the advance global urban sustainability agenda.[19]

26. The GEF-6 Food Security IAP[20] explicitly recognizes the role of multi-stakeholder frameworks in sustainability and resilience. A specific component is devoted to establish and harness institutional frameworks to promote management of natural capital and ecosystem services in agriculture and food value chains at national, sub-regional and regional level. This requires cooperation among all stakeholders to build and strengthen institutions, social norms and regulations, and to develop systems of sharing responsibilities and benefits. This will be achieved through support to multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together different sectors and stakeholders in the environment, agriculture and food security space to promote policy integration and enhance sharing of experiences and knowledge, which is expected to lead to more supportive policies and incentives for smallholder agriculture.

Stakeholder Involvement

27. A related but distinct element to multi-stakeholder platforms and processes, stakeholder involvement is critical to the success of GEF-financed projects and forms the basis for much of the durability design and implementation actions discussed above.[2] Stakeholder involvement can improve project performance, impact and therefore durability by enhancing country ownership and accountability, addressing the social and economic needs of affected people, building partnerships among agencies and stakeholders, and harnessing the skills, experiences and knowledge of a wide range of stakeholders. In order to guide these interactions, the GEF continues to update its policies and strategies, and intensify its targeted outreach activities, in order to better engage with key stakeholders.[21] In particular, the strengthening of *Country Ownership*, its enhanced engagement with *Civil Society*, *Indigenous Peoples* and the *Private Sector*, and the integration of *Gender Mainstreaming*, will by definition have a positive impact on durability in line with the framework above.

28. A key factor in ensuring the endurance of capacity and finance is *Country Ownership* and the acknowledgement of the country as a main stakeholder. The GEF continues to place countries at the centre of programming decisions, and facilitates a series of principles and activities that enhance country ownership, support and capacity. The GEF's Country Support Program (CSP) is the major outreach vehicle for the GEF, and empowers country stakeholders in their ownership of GEF programming through a suite of activities that promote learning and dialogue among different GEF stakeholder groups, with the country representatives at the core. In addition, to further empower country stakeholders in their ownership of GEF programming,

[19] As an example, the recent global meeting of the GPSC at Sao Paulo resulted in a Sao Paulo Statement on Urban Sustainability which gathered support from 26 cities from developing and developed world. https://www.thegpsc.org/events/3rd-gpsc-global-meeting

[20] http://www.thegef.org/news/gef-funded-program-resilient-food-security-targets-smallholder-farmers-12-african-countries

[21] The commitment to stakeholder engagement in GEF operations was reaffirmed with Council's approval of the GEF's Policy on Stakeholder Engagement in November 2017.

the Secretariat has prepared guidance that elaborates the roles and responsibilities of the various entities in the GEF Partnership, with particular reference to the crucial role of the Operational Focal Points in the work of the GEF.[22]

29. Since its inception, the GEF has recognized that effective C*ivil Society Engagement* is key to achieving the GEF's mission. Civil society organizations (CSOs) working in GEF programs and projects both enhance country ownership and leverage valuable partnerships and resources. In addition to their role at the country, program, and project levels, CSOs contribute to the formulation of policies and strategies and provide a valuable voice to the Council deliberations and Replenishment processes. The Updated Vision for engaging civil society with the GEF approved by Council in 2017[23] includes an updated set of objectives and principles to provide an overall guide to this engagement. Other recent GEF Policies (such as stakeholder engagement, gender equality, and environmental and social safeguards) all reinforce the need for meaningful participation of civil society in GEF's financed-activities.

30. Community participation in the making and applying of rules and land allocations is critical for success of the objectives of the FOLUR IP. Many rural communities are disenfranchised or marginalized while decisions are made at regional or national level. Individual farming households or communities of them may lack full authorization, rights or tenure to manage the land and resources around them. This increases uncertainty and undermines the incentive to take long term investment decisions. Local people often are not provided with opportunities and incentives to directly engage, manage, and benefit from the natural resources in their local environment. This can exacerbate pressure on natural resources, spread unsustainable and illegal practices and create conflict among different land / resource users, leading to negative consequences on both livelihoods and biodiversity.

31. The GEF has been working in partnership with *Indigenous Peoples* since its inception in 1991, and was one of the first international financial institutions to develop an independent policy to engage with civil society, including indigenous peoples. In recent years, the GEF has enhanced its partnership with indigenous peoples in various ways. The Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples has been adopted.[24] The GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards (which includes a

[22] GEF/C.55/Inf.09, *Practical Steps to Improve Coordination and Workflow in the GEF Partnership*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/Practical%20Steps%20to%20Improve%20Coordination%20and%20Workflow%20in%20the%20GEF%20Partnership_0.pdf

[23] GEF/C.53/10/Rev.01, *Updated Vision to Enhance Civil Society Engagement with the GEF*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.53.10.Rev_.01_CSO_Vision_0.pdf

[24] GEF/C.42/Inf.03/Rev.1, *Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/C.42.Inf_.03.Rev_.1_Principles_and_Guideline_for_Engagement_with_Indigenous_Peoples.Sept_10%2C_2012_4.pdf

minimum standard dedicated to indigenous peoples) has been developed.[25]. And the GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) has been established[26], whose members include indigenous peoples and others, and provides useful guidance and partnership to the GEF Secretariat.

32. Several of the GEF-7 IPs have been designed with the recognition of indigenous peoples as the central stakeholder. For example, a critical component of the GEF-7 Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (CBSL IP)[27] directly aims to address the impact of unsustainable natural resource use by local communities and private sector on marginalized groups. The proposed strategy includes empowerment of forest dependent people, strengthening of indigenous and local community rights and tenure, and improvement of the sustainability of subsistence use. The CBSL IP will promote value chain approaches on non-timber forest products and support non-extractive uses and labelled products when viable alternatives exist. Given the role of women in conservation and sustainable use of forest resources, activities that could benefit women will be prioritized.

33. Directly connected to stakeholder engagement and therefore to the principles of durability is the incorporation of *Gender Mainstreaming* into GEF projects and programs. At its 53rd GEF Council Meeting in November 2017, the GEF adopted a new Policy on Gender Equality[28] which introduced new principles and requirements to mainstream gender in the design, implementation, and evaluation of GEF programs and projects. In the FOLUR IP, women potentially represent a large share of both the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the of the program, particularly around support towards improved natural resources management. Mainstreaming gender considerations in landscape development approaches will be key to achieving global environmental benefits and meet the challenge of reducing deforestation. For example, improving women's income diversification and levels through targeted FOLUR actions that move them 'up the value chain' in cocoa, coffee, and food staples, or through improved access to restoration activities and related benefits, will greatly enhance the impact of the program.

34. Gender dimensions are considered as critical to the success of the Global Wildlife Program. In many rural areas, women are less likely than men to participate in decision making processes and domestic duties restrict their involvement in training and capacity building opportunities. The Program is ensuring women's active participation in the project decision making bodies by promoting female membership in committees and including leadership training activities that target women as well as men involved in implementing each project. Additionally, the Global Project has earmarked a gender budget line for specific activities that

[25] GEF/C.55/07/Rev.01, *Updated Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.55.07.Rev_.01_ES_Safeguards.pdf
[26] https://www.thegef.org/content/indigenous-peoples-advisory-group
[27] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/web-documents/10208_IP_SFM_Congo_PFD.pdf
[28] GEF/C.53/04*, Policy on Gender Equality*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.53.04_Gender_Policy.pdf

directly provide socio-economic benefits to women and youths. These include national GWP project investments in tourism-related job opportunities for women. The GWP is monitoring outcomes and impacts of these gender-responsive socio-economic activities and changes in governance of resources by women by including gender-disaggregated performance indicators. Another key gender gap relates to unequal access to and control over natural resources, particularly insecure land tenure. The program and some national projects will conduct analytical work targeted at guiding investments that strengthen women's access to, management of, and control over benefits from natural resources. Gender analysis will be conducted for each national project and the results of this analysis will inform gender-targeted actions/activities to be included in project design and implementation. The program will align with the Policy on Environment and Social Safeguards of the GEF[25] as well as the WBG as they ensure vulnerable groups such as women are not put at risk by project activities and that they additionally contribute to closing gender gaps of relevance to the national community.

35. The GEF continues to expand its *Private Sector Engagement*. In the pursuit of durability, the private sector emerges as a key stakeholder; in particular, strong public-private partnerships can outlive GEF funding to create the enabling environment for durable project outcomes. The development of projects and programs that identify particular roles for the private sector continues to be encouraged. A Private Sector Advisory Group (PSAG) has been formed[29] to leverage expertise and experience outside the immediate GEF Partnership, with the goal of supporting the formulation of a new GEF private sector engagement strategy currently under development.[30] The GEF has also expanded its data capture and monitoring of private sector engagement, which will facilitate analyses to help strengthen and deepen this engagement.

36. The FOLUR Impact Program will engage the private sector in areas related to: strengthening corporate governance and sourcing policies; targeting sourcing policies on regions and countries that are putting in place interventions to improve land management; increasing commitments for zero deforestation and sustainability standards in supply chains for both direct and indirect suppliers and; including gender and equity aspects in purchasing / sourcing policies and in engagements with producer organizations and cooperatives, etc. The partners will also engage where feasible to encourage and leverage additional financing and investment by private sector actors.

37. While intensifying through the development and operationalization of the GEF-7 Impact Programs, the GEF's engagement with the private sector is not new. The Global Wildlife Program[17] is engaged with private sector companies. For instance, the tourism industry is expanding nature-based tourism operations and wildlife-based economy value chains to generate revenue and sustainable livelihood opportunities that reduce conflicts between communities and wildlife. National projects will also engage the extractive, forestry and agriculture sectors to mainstream wildlife conservation into their planning and operations. This

[29] Private Sector Advisory Group (PSAG) Composition. https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.56.Inf_.05_Private%20Sector%20Advisory%20Group%20%28PSAG%29%20Composition.pdf

[30] Private Sector Engagement Strategy, forthcoming

will result in the strengthening of the management of forest concessions surrounding PAs and wildlife conservation objectives for the wider landscapes and invest in value chain development for select non-timber forests products with the vision of opening domestic and international markets.

Adaptive Learning

38. In conjunction with the theory of change, adaptive learning in reference to durability involves effective Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and knowledge management that not only exists (and adapts) during the project/program but also extends across and beyond scale. Adaptive learning is particularly linked to project implementation, which is an essential element to durability. To this end, the GEF has adopted a series of policies and strategies that, beyond project design elements, support project implementation and therefore durability – *Monitoring and Reporting*, *Co-Financing*, *Environmental and Social Safeguards*, and *Knowledge Management*. We remain committed to working with Partner Agencies to improve and strengthen our efforts in these dimensions.

39. The GEF continues to improve its *Monitoring and Reporting* frameworks. Since June 2018, a streamlined results architecture for GEF-7[31] now focuses on fewer, more relevant indicators underpinned by clear definitions and guidelines.[32] In December 2018, a series of policy measures were introduced that are aimed at creating incentives for the acceleration of project preparation, implementation, and financial closure, and improving compliance with and timeliness of core reporting requirements.[33] In June 2019 a new Monitoring Policy[34] was introduced that establishes an updated framework for the rigorous and consistent monitoring and reporting of GEF-financed activities throughout the project and program life cycles. In addition, the Secretariat will continue to investigate ways to enhance pro-active operational oversight throughout the project life cycle; a more systematic and timely Mid-Term Review, for example, would enable Agencies and their executing partners to better address the risks that could affect the durability of outcomes beyond project completion.

40. Another aspect to adaptive learning in the context of durability is financial sustainability. In this, a key element is materialized *Co-Financing*. Interestingly, the IEO's work identified Co-Financing as a factor relevant to durability, where a relationship was found between materialized co-financing and sustainability ratings.[6] The GEF is in the process of placing stronger emphasis on the monitoring and reporting of co-financing throughout the project cycle

[31] GEF/C.54/11/Rev.02, *Updated Results Architecture for GEF-7*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.54.11.Rev_.02_Results.pdf
[32] ME/GN/02, *Guidelines on Core Indicators and Sub-Indicators*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Results_Guidelines.pdf
[33] GEF/C.55/04/Rev.01, *Policy Measures to Enhance Operational Efficiency, Accountability and Transparency*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.55.04.Rev_.01_Operational_Efficiency.pdf
[34] GEF/C.56/03/Rev.01, *Policy on Monitoring*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.56.03.Rev_.01_Policy_on_Monitoring.pdf

through the updated Co-Financing Policy[35] and associated Co-Financing Guidelines.[36] Together with the GEF Portal, which will enable a more systematic capture of implementation data, these measures amount to a stronger incentive for partners to ensure that co-financing commitments are materialized.

41. Durability / sustainability has many dimensions. In the context of adaptive learning, the dimensions of environmental and social sustainability are explicitly addressed by the GEF's Policy on *Environmental and Social Safeguards*,**Error! Bookmark not defined.** thereby e nhancing the environmental and social outcomes of the GEF's projects and programs. In addition to this Policy, the GEF's approach to identifying and addressing relevant Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts is supported by the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement,[37] the Policy on Gender Equality[28], and the Minimum Fiduciary Standards for GEF Partner Agencies.[38]

42. As a key element of adaptive learning and therefore of durability, the GEF continues to make progress in its *knowledge management*. We are committed to expanding our efforts towards the meaningful extraction of knowledge, learning and lessons across the GEF Portfolio.[39] Parallel policies, strategies and initiatives being implemented in GEF-7 and discussed above also support broader efforts to enhance knowledge sharing and learning across the GEF Partnership and beyond. Beyond design, the GEF-7 Impact Programs themselves include important investments in global knowledge platforms for learning and knowledge-sharing. These platforms will provide us with valuable experiences and lessons from which we can learn, and that can be applied to knowledge design in other programs and projects across the GEF portfolio.

43. The Sustainable Cities IAP pilot has put a significant emphasis on knowledge management and adaptive learning through the GPSC and also the country projects. GPSC has developed a number of knowledge products in terms of guides, best practices, frameworks and manuals catering to needs of various stakeholders on specific thematic areas. The resources form basis of capacity building activities, working group discussions and also to engage with wider set of stakeholders. The GPSC website has been developed as an interactive source for accessing this knowledge and all resources are open access for cities globally.[40] At country level

[35] GEF/C.54/10/Rev.01, *Updated Co-Financing Policy*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.54.10.Rev_.01_Co-Financing_Policy.pdf
[36] FI/GN/01, *Guidelines on Co-Financing*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Cofinancing_Guidelines.pdf
[37] GEF/C.53/05/Rev.01, *Policy on Stakeholder Engagement*, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.53.05.Rev_.01_Stakeholder_Policy_4.pdf
[38] Updated Policy on Minimum Fiduciary Standards, forthcoming.
[39] GEF Pilot Good Practice Briefs, forthcoming.
[40] https://www.thegpsc.org/knowledge-products

also knowledge management systems have been developed and institutionalized.[41, 42] In the GEF 7 IP, the cities program aims to strengthen the knowledge management further by creating state-of-art knowledge products and ensuring stronger connection between country projects and the global platform for mutual, continuous and adaptive learning for developing effective sustainability solutions.

44. The Global Wildlife Program has a robust Knowledge Management Platform (KMP) serving the interests and needs of the 29 participating countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This KMP is highly effective in delivering technical assistance thanks to the efforts of the World Bank (lead agency of the GWP), the GEF Agencies, the members of the Program Steering Committees and a roster of nearly 200 experts. The GWP is running various initiatives and delivers several products aim at addressing Illegal Wildlife Trade and Supporting Wildlife Economies. These include virtual- and in-person events on themes of common interests, the Communities of Practice on Wildlife-based Tourism and Human Wildlife Conflict, Analytical studies and reports, and several communication tools including newsletters, videos and infographics. The KMP is now recognized as an important and reliable source of information and support for those in the field.

45. The DSL Impact Program is a particularly interesting case of the integration of adaptive learning principles at design stage, as it takes demographic processes and transboundary migration into account when discussing sustainability of impact. The global programmatic approach will allow the threats affecting environmental values and sustainability in the drylands of the 11 target countries to be considered from a global viewpoint, including distant and transboundary drivers, and addressed accordingly. Of particular relevance in the context of drylands are distant and transboundary factors affecting demographic processes, with implications for natural resource management. Transboundary migration may be motivated both by "push" factors including natural resource degradation and conflict, and "pull" factors including perceived economic opportunities and land availability: in the countries where the "push" factors operate, emigration may result in rural depopulation, especially of economically more active sectors of the population, which may in turn lead to labor shortages and thereby affect the viability of resource management strategies, as well as weakening traditional natural resource governance structures . In "pull" countries, influxes of new inhabitants may place unsustainable pressures on dryland resources, or place strains on existing governance structures.

[41] For example in Brazil, a knowledge platform and sustainable cities innovation observatory have been created: https://citinova.org.br/plataforma-do-conhecimento/ and https://citinova.org.br/projeto-citinova-lanca-plataforma-programa-cidades-sustentaveis-e-observatorio-de-inovacao-para-cidades-sustentaveis/

[42] For example, the China Transit Oriented Development (TOD) platform: The IAP project will support the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development to create a national TOD platform for sharing data and best practices on TOD for these cities and beyond. See https://www.thegpsc.org/tod/transit-oriented-development-knowledge-products and https://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/tod-with-chinese-characteristics-localization-as-the-rule-rather-than-the-exception

BOX 1: THE AMAZON SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES PROGRAM

GEF involvement in the Amazon began with traditional conservation investments focused on building institutional capacity and financial sustainability to help individual Amazonian countries manage national systems of protected areas. As this capacity became established, GEF's investment strategy branched out to support sustainable management of production landscapes outside of the formal protected area estate. GEF concluded that in order to ensure ecosystem connectivity and socio-ecological resilience in the Amazon, it was necessary to manage landscapes in more integrated ways where protected areas and production areas were part of a land-use mosaic that supported sustainable economic development and ecosystem integrity at the same time. This focus has not been strictly terrestrial in nature but has also included the management of shared transboundary freshwater ecosystems. This kind of adaptive learning at the strategic level is a central characteristic of GEF's investment strategy in the Amazon and is embedded in the implementation strategy of the current Amazon Sustainable Landscapes Program.

The first phase of the GEF Amazon Sustainable Landscapes Program (ASL-1) currently under implementation exemplifies this evolution towards integrated programming that more explicitly addresses the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. ASL-1 aims to protect globally significant biodiversity and implement policies to foster sustainable land use and restoration of native vegetation cover. The ASL Program and each of its projects is built upon a Theory of Change which posits that, **if**: (a) an adequate area of the Amazon is conserved under various regimes (protected areas and indigenous lands); (b) agriculture, degraded, and forest lands are managed sustainably, restored and with zero illegal deforestation tolerance; (c) national policies and strategies are supporting sustainable development that minimizes deforestation and loss of ecosystem services; and (d) capacity of and regional cooperation between key players is improved, **then**, the protection of biodiversity and the integrity of ecosystem services of the Amazon region can be achieved.

The Program comprises four national projects executed by Brazil, Colombia, and Peru and a regional coordinating project. The ASL-2 Programexpands to include Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana and Suriname along with the original three countries.

The ASL-1 Program approach is distinguished by fostering regional collaboration and cooperation, knowledge management, and adaptive learning within and between project investments. At the individual national project level, each GEF investment dedicates resources to technical capacity building and knowledge management within the project and external to the project. Thus, this includes collaborating and learning from other country experiences and incorporating that learning into project implementation strategies given that each participating country has expertise in elements of the overall implementation strategy that other countries do not yet hold. The approach is further bolstered by the Amazon Coordination Technical Assistance regional project which facilitates exchange of technical and practical knowledge and experiences among project executors and their associated partners in the three countries to accelerate positive changes from the interventions.

The implicit strategy of the regional project is a bottom up approach that links national initiatives through programmatic learning to build a harmonized and common vision for the Amazon region which is expressed through project implementaiton strategies that are cross-fertilized by each other through shared experiences and technical exchanges. In addition, the regional project fosters the identification and development of collaborative responses to shared transboundary management challenges in the Amazon. For example, GEF is currently developing a project investment in the Putumayo Içá River Basin that will implement priority elements identified in the Strategic Action Program: Regional Strategy for Integrated Water Resources Managment in the Amazon Basin which was developed through GEF support.

Adaptive learning is central to the ASL-1 Program as exemplified in activities currently underway: (i) a comparative study of conservation agreement programs in the Amazon which will help guide the design and implementation of these programs in the participating countries; (ii) a deforestation control in Brazil case study which reviews the history of deforestation efforts over the past decades with the aim of extracting lessons to be applied in similar efforts in the participating countries and region-wide ; and (iii) analysis of Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) mechanisms to support long term financial sustainability of conservation areas for diffusion in the participating countries of ASL-1 and ASL-2.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

46. The durability of GEF outcomes is a crucial discussion for GEF stakeholders. There has been much analysis on this in the past two years, which seem to converge on the analysis presented by STAP in the 56th Council.[2] This paper therefore presented an extended version of the STAP framework and assesses the GEF's current standing based on these principles. Most of the critically strategic programming and policy steps taken by the Secretariat for its Seventh Replenishment Phase (GEF-7) of 2018-2022 speak precisely to these principles.

47. While many of the recent policy and programming directions address the elements of durability, the Secretariat will continue to explore further improvements along this path. The Secretariat, together with Agencies, is committed to exploring ways of strengthening and enhancing the dimensions of durability as discussed in this paper. Due to the level of integration, size and scale, best practices are particularly evidenced through recent GEF programs through which these durability principles are being strategically designed and implemented. As these programs progress, the Secretariat will continue to learn lessons along all four dimensions so that they can be be applied /enhanced across all other GEF programming modalities. These include, among other actions: a greater integration of adaptive theories of change into both design and implementation; soliciting more targeted stakeholder engagements throughout the project cycle stages; strengthening country ownership through our Country Support Program; and an enhancement of knowledge sharing and learning throughout the GEF Partnership. Finally, the Secretariat looks forward to forthcoming STAP products, including those on theories of change and multi-stakeholder platforms, that will continue to enable us to put durability at the center of our strategic positioning.

ANNEX 1: DURABILITY PRINCIPLES IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

1. While GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects and programs are yet in early stages, there are many examples of earlier GEF projects and programs that have also integrated and implemented the four key durability elements discussed in this paper. Here two examples are presented – a GEF-6 program, and a GEF-5 project – that have successfully integrated these durability elements in their design and implementation.

- **Family Farming Development Program (GEF ID 9136, IFAD, Niger, GEF-6)**

2. Family farming is highly vulnerable to environmental degradation in Niger, and climate change has further amplified that vulnerability. Applying integrated naturals resources management and land restoration approach to improve food security, enhance resilience, adapt and mitigat climate change and conserve biodiversity, the Family Farming Development Programme (ProDAF) is tackling the main drivers of environmental degradation together with the most vulnerable family farmers in Niger. ProDAF is an integral part of the GEF-6 Integrated Approach Pilot on Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa,or IAP-Food Security[43].

3. **Theory of Change.** The program was designed and achieved to address both long-term (climate change impacts on production potential) and short-term (food and nutrition security) impacts. Climate change impacts on production potential are related to the fertility, soil quality, and water availability of family farms in Niger. Wind and water erosion is also leading to siltation of watersheds, deforestation, loss of animal and vegetal biodiversity, and declining groundwater level in the regions. These threats are also resulting from land tenure pressures exacerbated by high population densities, widespread unsustainable land and natural resources management practices, and increasing conflicts over natural resources. The program adaptively addresses these issues through knowledge sharing and learning across the regions.

4. **Multi-Stakeholder Processes.** The program is executed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, which works closely with the High Commission for the Nigeriens Feed Nigeriens Initiative (HCi3N). In addition to the agriculture and food related institutions, the program also collaborated with major stakeholders related to water, irrigations, environmental issues and local small businesses including the Regional Directorate of the Environment, Water User Associations, local authorities (communes), Public Building and Works, regional and departmental services for waterworks, specialized service providers, and the Regional Agriculture Chambers. This engagement of major stakeholders in the program promoted synergy of action across different stakeholders.

5. **Stakeholder Involvement.** Strong engagement of beneficiaries, the most vulnerable family farmers in the regions, is an important element of the program's durability. The approach adopted for assisted natural regeneration and land rehabilitation practices allowed the poorest to participate in the activities and to get the most out of them, improving the

[43] http://www.resilientfoodsystems.co/

quality of their land and increasing in yields with locally appropriate simple techniques. These direct benefits to the most vulnerable family farmers are important incentives for them to actively engage in the program.

6. Capacity building for both family farmers and local and national governments is another important feature of the program. For smallholder farmers, training of sustainable land management practices and climate resilient farming techniques were provided through farmer's school in the villages. With the capacity building for local and national governments, national policy on sustainable land management started fully implementing on the ground and mainstreaming into the Niger's Economic and Social Development Plan 2017-2021.

7. **Adaptive Learning.** Building on a successful series of IFAD and GEF projects[44], the program scaled up sustainable and resilient family farming in Niger's most productive, but most affected regions in terms of wind and water erosion. Knowledge sharing and exchange platforms on sustainable land management practices and ascertaining land tenure among both family farmers and local governments were key to scaling up the project in other regions. As a result of the program, the Platforms for Dialogue on Sustainable Land Management were established both at the national and regional levels. Niger's successful practices are now shared beyond the country, as an integrated approach to address land degration, water, GHG emission and biodiversity loss (for instance, at the recent UNCCD COP14 in India). In addition, strong partnerships with local research institutions were useful to improve scientific monitoring and impact evaluation.

8. In the mid-term review, the project achieved the following global environmental benefits as well as direct benefits for local communities:

- 10,491 ha (50% of the total target) of degraded land recovered upstream from the watersheds,
- 75,065 ha (39% of the total target) of land is regenerated,
- 39% resurgence rate of woody and herbaceous plant species that had disappeared,
- Reduction of GHG emission, currently estimated at -6.3 tCO_2eq per hectare per year for biomass, and -5.3 tCO_2eq per hectare per year for soil,
- Increase in agricultural production up to 3 times higher yields through the adoption of sustainable land management best practices, and
- Increase in household income to XOF 70,000 (approximately USD 117) per year through the sale of products and by-products.

- **Conservation of Coastal Watersheds to Achieve Multiple Global Environmental Benefits in the Context of Changing Environments (GEF ID 4792, World Bank, Mexico, GEF-5)**

[44] https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/project/id/1100001221/country/niger; https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/project/id/1100001625/country/niger

9. This project promotes integrated environmental management of coastal watersheds to conserve biodiversity, contribute to climate change mitigation, and enhance sustainable land use in the Gulf of Mexico and Gulf of California, where impacts from climate change are significant and habitats of globally significant biodiversity are provided.

10. **Theory of Change.** National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change (INECC) has developed Integrated Watershed Action Plans in six watersheds with comprehensive technical data that define priority sites to invest in defined activities that will maintain ecosystem services. Biodiversity, deforestation and community water monitoring systems [utilizing the Global Water Watch methodology] are in place in the following watersheds: Tuxpan, Antigua, Jamapa, Huazuntlán, Temoloapa and Usumacinta basins. This decision-making support tool with comprehensive technical data will be applicable to other areas.

11. **Multi-Stakeholder Processes.** Inter-ministerial coordination starting from the project design stage was critical to achieving sustainable land management at the watershed level. The project have been designed and implmented collaboration with three federal agencies: the National Commission for Protected Areas (CONANP) strengthened the consolidation of protected areas, the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) led watershed management through a Payment for Ecosystem Services scheme, and INECC facilitated participatory development of the Integrated Watershed Action Plans. A private institution, the Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature (FMCN), worked on agroforestry sub-projects with local communities in watersheds. With each agency's technical expertise, the project established the Technical Project Committee to coordinate actions with the aim of reducing negative externalities (e.g., inappropriate land use practices that lead to deforestation and unwarranted GHGs emissions) while maximizing synergies and multiple benefits from the same landscape.

12. **Stakeholder Involvement.** Local communities were actively engaged in the project through sub-projects which were designed, organized and supervised by local organizations. This helped to build trust and ownership of the project. The project identified and approved 29 sub-projects for sustainable land management and improvement of local livelihood proposed by local organizations, such as honey production, sustainable cattle ranching, pepper production, and adventure tourism. Throughout implementation of the sub-projects, interests and commitments of local communities to conserve their natural resources were strengthened. Further more, the local residents started recognizing the value of ecosystem services provided by the basins, and the importance of conserving riparian areas and maintaining the connectivity of well-preserved natural areas. As a result, local communities were actively engaged in both the sub-projects and in project monitoring activities. This monitoring data fed into the development of the Integrated Watershed Action Plans.

13. The regional coordination unit also invested significant effort in selecting, training, and accompanying the community organizations to implement the sub-projects with local communities, and this investment was considered instrumental in the project's success. In total, 1,669 workshops, in which 16,173 people participated (6,585 women and 9,588 men) including 20% of indigenous peoples, were held in four years to strengthen local capacities.

14. **Adaptive Learning.** Civil society organizations together with community members across the six watersheds monitored water quality and quantity following the Global Water Watch methodology. The civil society organizations adopted the monitoring methodologies into their core practice. The information generated and analyzed through the monitoring systems has informed the Integrated Watershed Action Plans for each watershed to strengthen local institutions and promote adaptive management.

15. With strong contributions of community-based monitoring, the CONANP team together with civil society organizations periodically gathered biodiversity data. This data and information were incorporated into the database on the National System for Biodiversity Monitoring, which is a product of five-year collaboration between National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO), CONANP, CONAFOR and FMCN.

16. With clear benefits for both the environment and human wellbeing, this new integrated approach gained the attention of the national government and other municipalities. The Mexican government has now widely disseminated lessons learned from this innovative watershed level approach to other local governments. This model of landscape conservation will be shared nationally with the aim of scaling up the experience and approach in the other watersheds.

17. Key global environment benefits and direct benefits to local communities at the end of the project include the following:

- 1,748,204.73 ha of protected areas were consolidated, surpassing the end-target projection (1,100,000.00 ha) and achieving 158% of results.
- 10 protected area showed an improvement in their management effectiveness according to the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool for protected areas Tracking Tools (METT).
- US$ 28.6 million has been raised for permanent endowment fund for protected areas (achieved 100% of the end-target)
- 35,784 ha of watersheds include Payment for Ecosystem Services as part of their management strategies, and agro-ecosystem and sustainable forest management sub-projects in accordance with Integrate Watershed Action Plans (IWAPs), surpassing the end-target of 18,696 ha and achieving 191% of results.
- 5.53 MtCO2 were avoided/sequestered across the relevant watersheds, surpassing the original end target 4.015 MtCO2 and achieving 137% of results.
- 6 Integrated Watershed Action Plans (IWAPs) were finalized achieving its outcome target.
- 6 local governments have incorporated better land management practices.