



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

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**GEF-8 COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. For the past three decades, the GEF has worked on delivering Global Environmental Benefits. To fulfill its mandate, the GEF relies on a partnership model that places recipient countries front and center, by empowering and supporting them to achieve higher impact with GEF resources. Over the past decade, the role of the GEF Secretariat in supporting and empowering countries has helped strengthen opportunities for countries to harness synergies and efficiently use GEF resources to ensure that investments are closely aligned with the Programming Strategies adopted by the Council at the beginning of each replenishment cycle.

2. To further maximize the impact of GEF resources, the GEF-8 programming strategy has focused on complementing focal area investment with integrated programming as a mean to advance systems transformation. This approach will help countries achieve lasting, sustainable, and impactful outcomes for people and the planet. This calls for a renewed approach to country engagement that combines upstream dialogues with capacity building and knowledge management.

3. The GEF-8 Country Engagement Strategy will focus on comprehensively working with countries to:

- Ensure maximum impact of the collective use of GEF resources
- Facilitate inclusive and sustained engagement with a wide range of stakeholders in recipient countries, including GEF Focal Points, relevant ministries, Convention Focal Points, executing agencies, civil society organizations, research institutions, the private sector and other interested groups¹,
- Ensure and facilitate coordination of country activities with regional and global scale actions where appropriate, and
- Develop and share best practices to maximize knowledge-sharing, learning, innovations, and scaling up of impact.

II. OBJECTIVE

4. The objective of the Country Engagement Strategy is to ensure that the sum of GEF investments through country projects and programs delivers the most efficient and impactful outcomes and Global Environmental Benefits. This is done through a coordinated, expanded, and comprehensive approach to support and empower countries to develop portfolios that maximize the impact of GEF resources. Its strategic priorities are:

¹ Stakeholders are defined as an individual or group that has an interest in the outcome of a GEF-financed activity or is likely to be affected by it, and include relevant ministries, GEF focal points, convention focal points, executing agencies, local governments, and locally-affected people, national and local civil society organizations, community-based organizations, Indigenous Peoples organizations, women's groups, private sector companies, farmers, and research institutions, as defined in the [Guidelines on the Implementation of the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement](#). GEF/C.55/Inf.08, November 2018

- Socialize and roll-out the GEF-8 Strategies to countries and associated stakeholders to ensure that all have common understanding of the GEF-8 goals, outcomes, and proposed results in terms of delivering Global Environmental Benefits
- Help to build understanding on the needs for policy coherence in GEF recipient countries to support and increase the impact of GEF-funded projects and programs
- Enhance the capacity of recipient countries to make informed and impactful strategic decisions on the use of GEF resources, and
- Improve the long-term sustainability of the outcomes and impacts of the use of GEF resources.

5. The CES objectives² are:

1. Coordinate and facilitate an inclusive and sustained engagement and common understanding on the GEF-8 Strategies and the GEF Partnership with a wide range of stakeholders in recipient countries, including GEF Focal Points, Convention Focal Points, relevant ministries, civil society organizations, GEF Agencies, research institutions, private sector and other interested groups.
2. Engage with countries on strategic and technical assessments of their proposed GEF-8 portfolios for investment to maximize the impact and synergy of those investments within the larger GEF portfolio and complement investments by other environmental funds where relevant.
3. Enhance synergies with ongoing projects and programs where relevant, to maximize the impact of the country's GEF portfolio.
4. Continuously support and assist countries to enhance coordination among stakeholders.
5. Develop and share best practices to maximize knowledge-sharing, learning, innovations, and scaling up of impact.

6. The CES is organized around three coordinated and interconnected implementation components (Figure 1). While each component has distinctive features, their complementarity is essential to achieving the CES objectives.

² A Theory of Change will be developed to guide this strategy.

Figure 1: The CES Implementation Components



III. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

7. The CES will be implemented by the Secretariat, through the following activities:

1. Upstream Programming Support. Providing technical and strategic support to the GEF stakeholders and recipient countries with the objective to establish a common understanding of the GEF-8 Strategies and commitment to delivering on Global Environmental Benefits. This will be achieved through the following activities:

a) Upstream Technical and National Dialogues

Strategic and technical meetings (as part of National Dialogues, stand-alone meetings, and complementary meetings with government agencies and stakeholders) will be held to present the GEF-8 Programming Directions, the Integrated Programs, and the Focal Areas Strategies in a more direct way with individual countries. High-level dialogues with country officials will help establish a common understanding of the goals of the GEF-8 Strategies and the many opportunities for countries to develop and participate in projects and programs that best fit their commitments towards MEAs, and their national priorities on environmental issues of relevance to the GEF.

This support will help recipient countries receive strategic guidance from GEF technical staff and enable them to initiate a process of strategic portfolio development. These high-level dialogues are followed by more in-depth technical sessions on individual topics (specific IPs, other programs, etc.). The result of these dialogues is a common understanding of the country's high-level priorities for GEF-8 and its role within the delivery of the GEF-8 Results Framework.

An important component of this support is the National Dialogues where all relevant national stakeholders in a country are convened to jointly discuss and decide the programming of GEF resources and the prioritization of projects as

well as the most appropriate strategies and policies to enhance the use of GEF resources.

Frequency: Upstream Technical Support and National Dialogues are organized based on countries' demands conveyed by OFPs; the Secretariat anticipates organizing 50 such events in GEF-8.

b) Regional GEF-8 Roll-Out Workshops:

As a first step to socialize the GEF-8 Programming Directions, there is a need to reach as many countries as possible at the beginning of the replenishment cycle. This will require large-scale wholesaling of our engagement with countries as one entry point to the rolling-out of GEF-8. Regional GEF-8 Roll-out Workshops will be organized to reach as many countries as possible during the first 12-18 months of the replenishment cycle. These workshops will provide Participants with a high-level view and understanding of the GEF-8 Architecture and Strategy, and opportunities for more detailed break-out sessions on individual topics such as IPs, Global Programs, NGI, etc. These events will be held in each of the GEF regions and span several days to ensure sufficient time for high quality technical interactions and well as training of participants in the “how to” of GEF-8. The workshops will obviously complement the Upstream Programming Support events described here. Finally, we will explore the placement of GEF facilitators in specific regions to better serve the countries and OFPs with more real-time interactions and support.

Frequency: Regional GEF-8 Roll-Out Workshops will be “front-loaded” in GEF-8 and we anticipate holding 5 in the first 18 months.

c) Project Design Review and Support:

Following the high-level strategic and technical engagements described above, and after a common understanding of a country's high-level priorities have been established, GEF technical staff will continue providing technical support during portfolio development, project design, and project review to enhance the quality of projects at entry and ensure the strongest country portfolio that advances the GEF-8 Results Framework. This technical support will also include reviews of entire GEF country portfolios to maximize synergies with past investments, build on lessons learned and project results, and increase the overall impact of the GEF resources over time. These interactions are both held during technical missions to selected countries as well as through follow-up virtual dialogue. The main criteria used for guiding this portfolio assessment support include the delivery of GEBs, the scale of impact of projects and programs, the leveraging of private sector engagement, the need to focus on an integrated approach to environmental issues, among others. This project design review and support

function will result in country portfolio that best match the national priorities with the need to deliver collectively on the GEF-8 Results Framework.

Frequency: Project Design Review and Support is an on-going effort and will be provided to all countries that wish this level of support.

- 2. The Country Support Program (CSP).** Providing support and building the capacity of GEF Focal Points, Council Members, Convention Focal Points, civil society organizations, private sector and other interested stakeholders; as well as enhancing inclusive dialogue and improving coordination among stakeholders are the goals of the Country Support Program (CSP). A series of activities will be implemented by the CSP in GEF-8, including:

- a) Direct Support to GEF Focal Points.** This is demand-driven and includes support and training on portfolio management, data and information support, and onboarding. Enhanced national coordination will also be encouraged, to include Convention Focal Points, through the promotion of National Steering Committees.

Frequency: The Secretariat will continue providing support to GEF Focal Points throughout the GEF-8 cycle.

- b) Country-level engagement on policy and operational issues.**

This includes the following:

- Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs) aimed at keeping GEF Focal Points, Convention Focal Points, GEF Agencies and other key stakeholders up to date with GEF policies and procedures. Site visits and Knowledge days will be organized at each ECWs. In addition, a session will be dedicated to CSO mentoring (details included below).

Frequency: The Secretariat will organize 12 in-person ECWs a year covering each regional constituency, starting in 2023.

- Stakeholder Empowerment Series (SEs), virtual workshops that bring together different countries focusing on specific interests of countries involved in operational, policy and thematic areas. Stakeholders from different regions will be brought together enabling them to share good practices and lessons learned across countries and constituencies.

Frequency: the SEs were launched during the pandemic and will continue to bring together countries from different regions at each workshop and up to three per year will be delivered.

- Thematic Workshops provide in-person targeted training in technical thematic and operational areas and promote South-South knowledge-

sharing and exchange. To better respond to countries' needs, issues for these will be sought in close consultation with OFPs and countries stakeholders. In addition, the specific needs of projects or programs, policies, procedures of interest to a country or a group of countries will also be addressed.

Frequency: The Secretariat will organize at least three annual Thematic Workshops a year, to be held in-person or virtual, as appropriate, at the request of OFPs, GEF Secretariat or Agency staff.

- c) **Introduction Seminars** to provide training and relevant information for an enhanced understanding of the GEF, its policies and operations to new Agency staff, OFPs, selected stakeholders as well as new Convention Secretariat staff.

Frequency: The Secretariat will organize two annual virtual Introduction Seminars a year, and one virtual annual onboarding Introduction Seminar tailored to specific stakeholders.

- d) **Constituency Meetings** to enable Council Members and Alternates within a constituency to discuss and define common positions before a Council meeting, consider the execution of projects and handle constituency governance issues.

Frequency: The Secretariat will organize up to two annual Constituency Meetings per constituency, at the request of countries. Virtual Constituency Meetings can also be organized, in case a constituency requests additional meetings to discuss specific issues of interest.

- e) **Pre-Council Meetings of Recipient Council Members** to allow Council Members and Alternates to discuss issues of interest on the Council agenda, exchange views, and develop common positions before a Council meeting.

Frequency: At the request of recipient constituencies, the Secretariat will organize up to two annual in-person meetings prior to each Council Meeting, and virtually at any time during the year, as necessary.

- f) **Community of Practice Platform** to enable GEF Operational and Political Focal Points to share experiences, best practices and learn from each other. The Knowledge and Collaboration Platform (KCP) for GEF Focal Points is being developed jointly by the Knowledge and Learning Team and the CSP Team and is described below.

- g) **Building the execution capacity of stakeholders**, a tailored approach to capacity building, targeting:

- National executing agencies. The CSP is partnering with the Organization of American States to roll-out a pilot program in Latin America. Targeted capacity building will create opportunities for top-down policies converging with bottom-up experiences of national executing agencies, focusing on building their capacity to improve GEF portfolio results, enhancing portfolio management and promoting South-South twinning exchanges and peer-to-peer learning.

Frequency: The Secretariat will launch the pilot in Latin America in 2022, and gradually expand the activity to other regions, as appropriate.

- CSOs, to build their capacity to partner in GEF projects. CSOs which have gained experience and lessons in the execution of GEF projects will be convened to mentor and train interested CSOs. The transfer of knowledge, experience and lessons from CSOs mentors will encourage and promote new and additional partnerships in projects.

Frequency: The Secretariat will organize at least one virtual annual seminar for interested CSOs and 11 in-person annual sessions prior to ECWs.

- h) Tailoring and enhancing outreach products**, to provide additional information products and tools aimed at GEF Focal Points, Council Members and other interested stakeholders.

Frequency: The Secretariat will produce quarterly articles for the GEF newsletter, as a contribution to the work led by the GEF's Communications Team, and quarterly news articles for GEF Focal Points.

- 3. Knowledge Exchange and Learning.** Knowledge exchange is a critical tool for the improvement of the quality and impact of GEF projects as well as for the sustainability of GEF interventions. South-South knowledge-sharing and exchange will be promoted as an essential element to strengthen partnerships among stakeholders in recipient countries. GEF Focal Points will be at the center of knowledge exchange and learning to further empower them through the exchange of best practices, lessons learned and challenges in project design and execution, sustainability, co-financing, integrated programming, among other issues.

A GEF-wide Knowledge and Learning Strategy is currently being developed in response to the IEO Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the GEF³ and aims to enhance knowledge capture, exchange and learning amongst all GEF Partners and Stakeholders, including recipient countries. The Strategy will be presented at the 63rd Council meeting in December 2022 for review and approval. This partnership-wide Strategy will include priority actions targeting recipient countries and it will

³ [Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the GEF \(2020\)](#) – GEF/E/C.59/04, December 2020

identify key Knowledge Exchange and Learning activities to be implemented as part of the CES in addition to those that are already underway. Once the Council approves the GEF Knowledge and Learning Strategy, new activities targeting recipient countries will be incorporated in CES implementation and budget, as appropriate.

Currently, the following corporate Knowledge Exchange and Learning activities implemented by the Secretariat are of relevance to recipient countries and can be included as part of knowledge and learning initiatives under the CES:

- a) **GEF Knowledge Days and Fairs:** These in-person peer-to-peer learning events are organized as part of Expanded Constituency Workshops in different regions and include site-visits to GEF investments.
- b) **Community of Practice and Knowledge and Collaboration Platform (KCP)** for South-South exchange: This is an interactive platform developed to facilitate and support knowledge exchange, learning and collaboration among GEF Focal Points in recipient countries. Currently, Focal Points from seven pilot countries from different regions are participating in the design and implementation of the pilot and if successful, the KCP will be expanded to serve all GEF Focal Points globally. Tailored content is also being produced on issues that will help Focal Points in their responsibilities.

The KCP will be launched in 2022 with seven pilot countries –Cote d’Ivoire, Fiji, Liberia, Maldives, Peru, Philippines and Turkey.

- c) **GEF Kaleo:** GEF Kaleo is an online knowledge sharing system powered by machine learning and it is accessible 24/7. It provides a “question and answer” platform to service GEF-related knowledge needs of GEF partners and stakeholders across the globe, including those in recipient countries.
- d) **GEF Academy:** This is a GEF-wide learning initiative that provides virtual and in-prson curriculum of courses and learning events designed to enhance the capacity of GEF partners and stakeholders, including those in recipient countries, to engage with the GEF and to deliver global environmental benefits through GEF funded initiatives.
- e) **GEF Art of Knowledge Exchange:** This a package of tools, guides and workshops for ehancing knowledge exchange at the national, regional, and global levels. It was produced to meet demand from GEF recipient countries for capacity building on knowledge exchange and learning, as well as in-country knowledge exchange workshops around GEF-related issues. The tools and guides are available virtually, highlighting case studies and examples of successful knowledge exchange embedded in GEF projects, as well as lessons

learned from implementing these initiatives for enhanced global environmental impact.

- f) **GEF Good Practice Briefs:** These briefs showcase highlights of GEF investments that align with GEF Strategies, Policies and Programming Directions, providing lessons, examples and inspiration for scale-up and further GEF investments. Featured projects are selected by the GEF Secretariat from a pool of nominations by GEF Agencies, taking into consideration approaches used to generate multiple global environmental benefits and co-benefits, and to achieve clear results and/or sustainability.

- g) **GEF-funded Knowledge Platforms:** Various GEF investments to date, including IAPs in GEF-6 and IPs in GEF-7, have created knowledge and collaboration platforms that facilitate knowledge exchange around key topics such as international waters, sustainable cities, commodity supply chains, etc. as a way to capture and share relevant data, good practice and lessons across the Partnership, including recipient countries.

IV. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 8. The CES is expected to deliver the following outcomes:
 - Improved Strategic Alignment of GEF Priorities for Higher Overall Impact
 - Enhanced Country Ownership and Empowerment
 - Fulfillment of the GEF Visibility Policy
 - Improved Country Portfolio Development
 - Improved National Policy Development
 - Increased Coordination at the Country Level with Other Funds⁴

⁴ [Long-term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence and Collaboration between the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility](#), GEF/C.60/08, May 2021