

63rd GEF Council Meeting
November 28 - December 02, 2022
Virtual Meeting

Agenda Item 05

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

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed GEF/C.63/05, *Country Engagement Strategy Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8*, approves the proposal for the Secretariat to execute the Country Engagement Strategy according to the procedures contained therein.

- i. The Country Engagement Strategy will include the following elements, funded by the GEF Trust Fund, with a total of US\$27 million, to be allocated for each activity as specified below:
 - a) Upstream Technical Dialogues & National Dialogues: US\$ 2.1million
 - b) GEF Workshops and GEF Introduction Seminars: US\$ 12.0 million
 - c) GEF Constituency Meetings: US\$ 4 million
 - d) Building execution capacity of stakeholders: US\$ 1.1 million
 - e) Financial Support to GEF Operational Focal Points: US\$ 5.8 million
 - f) Knowledge Exchange and Learning: US\$ 2 million
- ii. The Council approves a set aside US\$27 million in GEF Trust Fund resources for use by the Secretariat to fund these activities.
- iii. The Council also approves the addition of the following activities under the expanded scope of CES and directs the GEF Secretariat to finance such activities from the previously approved funding cycles for CSP. As such, no new funding is requested for the below mentioned activities:
 - a) Gustavo Fonseca Youth Conservation Leadership Program: US\$ 10 million
 - b) Site visits for Council Members: US\$ 1.2 million
 - c) Support for Country Delegations and Relevant Stakeholders to Attend COPs to the Conventions and Related Meetings: US\$ 2 million

Table of Contents

Background	1
I. Implementation Arrangements	1
II. Additional Activities	3

BACKGROUND

1. The Country Engagement Strategy approved in the GEF-8 replenishment package builds on the past three decades of GEF's work focused on empowering and supporting countries to achieve higher impact with GEF resources. It combines the activities of the very successful Country Support Program (CSP) with upstream engagement with countries.
2. In GEF-7, the CSP activities approved by the Council had to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted its capacity to hold in-person meetings. In addition, the CSP had some savings from previous cycles generated by the fact that some of the activities that were dependent on country request were not in fact requested by the Focal Points. This generated a level of savings that this document proposes to use for additional activities, as described in Section II below.

I. Implementation Arrangements

3. The Country Engagement Strategy (CES) provides the strategic framework to deliver an expanded and coordinated approach to the GEF's effort to empower countries in the ownership of their portfolios, and in turn, maximize the impact of GEF resources through a coordinated approach.
4. The CES will be implemented by the Secretariat, through the following coordinated, complementary, and interconnected activities:
5. **Upstream Technical Dialogues** will provide technical and strategic support to GEF stakeholders and recipient countries with the objective to establish a common understanding of the GEF-8 Strategies and commitment to delivering Global Environmental Benefits. This will be achieved through strategic and technical meetings with countries to present the GEF-8 Programming Directions, the Integrated Programs, and the Focal Areas Strategies in a more direct way. When planning these dialogues, GEF technical staff will work in close consultation with countries and the Operational Focal Points' offices.
6. 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.
7. **National Dialogues** will convene all relevant national stakeholders in a country to jointly discuss and decide the programming of GEF resources and to promote policy coherence within each country. These National Dialogues on programming will complement the Upstream Technical Dialogues, as necessary.
8. In addition, targeted National Dialogues throughout the cycle focusing on specific issues of interest to the country. Dialogues can be organized on various issues, such as on policy coherence to promote the integration of global environment concepts into national strategy

and policy formulation, on strengthening collaboration with civil society or on increasing the engagement of the private sector.

9. National Dialogues will be available to all recipient countries, at the request of the Operational Focal Point. The Secretariat anticipate organizing 50 National Dialogues in GEF-8.

10. **GEF Workshops** will include Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs), Stakeholder Empowerment Series (SEs) and Thematic Workshops. These workshops will be held in person or virtually, as appropriate. The Secretariat will organize: 11 in-person ECWs a year, inviting GEF Focal Points, Convention Focal Points and civil society representatives; at least three virtual SEs a year to allow stakeholders from different time zones to participate; and up to 15 Thematic Workshops, to be held in-person or virtually, as appropriate, at the request of Operational Focal Points, GEF Secretariat or Agency staff.

11. **Introduction Seminars** will provide training and relevant information for an enhanced understanding of the GEF, its policies and operations to new Agency staff, Operational Focal Points, selected stakeholders as well as new Convention Secretariat staff. The Secretariat will organize two virtual Introduction Seminars a year.

12. **Constituency Meetings** will continue to be the main tool for Council Members and Alternates within a constituency to prepare for decision making at the GEF Council. Each constituency may request two meetings per calendar year, to be held before the Council meetings. The Secretariat will organize up to two annual in-person Constituency Meetings, at the request of Council Members. Virtual Constituency Meetings can also be organized, in case a constituency requests additional meetings to discuss specific issues of interest.

13. **Pre-Council Meetings of Recipient Council Members** will continue supporting Council Members and Alternates to discuss issues of interest on the Council agenda, exchange views, and develop common positions before a Council meeting. 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. These do not require specific funding as they will be held at the time of Council meetings or virtually.

14. **Building the execution capacity of stakeholders**, including **National Executing Agencies** to improve GEF portfolio results, enhance portfolio management and promote South-South twinning exchanges and peer-to-peer learning; and **Civil Society Organizations** to build their capacity to partner in GEF projects through the transfer of knowledge, experiences and lessons from CSOs which have gained experience in the execution of GEF projects.

15. **Financial Support to GEF Operational Focal Points** will enable them to effectively oversee and monitor their GEF portfolio. Access to these dedicated funds is optional and flexible.

16. **Knowledge Exchange and Learning.** A GEF-wide Knowledge and Learning Strategy is currently being developed in response to the IEO Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the

GEF¹ and aims to enhance knowledge capture, exchange and learning amongst all GEF Partners and Stakeholders, including recipient countries.

II. Additional Activities

17. To further enhance the scope of the CES, the Secretariat proposes to include the following activities under the Country Engagement Strategy in GEF-8:

18. The **Gustavo Fonseca Youth Conservation Leadership Program**. As part of this legacy, Gustavo Fonseca always focused on building the capacity and empowering the Youth in the conservation movement since he felt that the next generations were critical in determining how the gains of today would be secured and expanded. The Secretariat is proposing a Program that will focus on ensuring a pipeline of young professionals in developing countries that have access to the resources for completing their formal training, have resources to keep them active in the field and remain in the conservation sector, and finally get exposed to the International Events and Fora that bridge the science-policy nexus. The Program will include the following elements:

- (a) **Youth Conservation Fellowships** –Graduate and Post-Graduate fellowships will be awarded to young promising conservationists from developing countries to ensure that the next generation of professionals is trained and ready to engage and occupy decision-making positions in key areas and sectors. These will include both in-country fellowships as well as fellowships for post-Graduate work in a different country. Research work can be linked to GEF projects and programs, there can be co-supervision of some aspect of the research by senior GEF staff, and there can also be the possibility of a small internship at the GEF Secretariat headquarters during the program.
- (b) **Youth Grants for Biodiversity Field Action** –Small grants will be awarded to young professionals that are already working in the conservation field to foster field work on biodiversity conservation. Too often, the lack of resources is a limiting factor as to whether a young professional remains engaged in the conservation world or moves onto other economic sectors. The small grant have proven critical in this regard and will be aimed at early career professionals.
- (c) **Awards for Youth Leadership Participation in International Conservation Events** – Participation of Youth in Global International Conservation Events is often difficult but is a critical breeding ground for gaining exposure and experience in discussions and decision-making fora that will affect the next generations in the future. For this reason, it is important to promote the participation of Youth Leaders in all kinds of Global and International events and have an active presence and exposure to these discussions. The program will award grants for Youth Leaders to such events, covering travel, stipends, and a small grant to support their presence and any follow-

¹ [Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the GEF \(2020\)](#) – GEF/E/C.59/04, December 2020

up that would be important to ensure continued involvement of these young leaders after the events are done.

(d) Youth Global Conservation Symposium –Getting Youth to interact among themselves and learn from different perspectives and experiences can have lasting and sustained impacts on professional trajectories of the young as well as represent critical breeding ground for continued professional development. The opportunities for Youth to interact together are limited and for this reason, the program will organize and fund a GEF Youth Global Conservation Symposium every 2 years hosted by the GEF in Washington DC to bring together the top leaders and discuss key current topics. Seasoned professionals from a variety of sectors will also be invited to act as resource people and also serve as potential mentors for these young leaders.

19. **Field Visit Program for Council Members.** GEF Council Members and Alternates will benefit from a personal in-depth knowledge and understanding of activities, results, and stakeholders of GEF projects. To this end, the Secretariat will organize and lead two to three annual field visits with participation of Developed and Developing countries' Council Members and Alternates. Visits will be organized to all types of projects and programs and showcase successes as well as challenges.

20. **Support for Country Delegations and Relevant Stakeholders to Attend COPs to the Conventions** which the GEF serves as financial mechanism and related meetings. A reduction in the support for country delegations to participate in the Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the Conventions which the GEF serves as financial mechanism has led to an increase in requests from developing countries for the GEF to provide such support, compensating for this reduction. Without the GEF's support, a number of countries will not be able to participate in the negotiations in defense of their national interests.