



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

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Virtual Meeting

Agenda Item 09

**MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO: EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC ON GEF ACTIVITIES**

Recommended Council Decision:

The Council, having considered documents GEF/E/C.63/02, *Evaluation of the Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on GEF Activities*, and GEF/C.63/14, *the Management Response*, takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Secretariat welcomes the report on *“Evaluation of the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on GEF Activities”* and appreciates the overall approach to assessing the GEF’s efforts and progress in addressing and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on GEF operations, projects, and programs. The Secretariat recognizes the comprehensive work behind this report that clearly documents the strategy used by the GEF partnership to assess the impact of COVID-19, develop measures to mitigate those impacts, adapt to the new post-COVID reality of GEF work, and take advantage of opportunities created by the Pandemic.
2. The Secretariat greatly values the report’s findings and recommendations and has already moved to “mainstream” many of the mitigation actions and strategies to address COVID-19 as part of GEF projects and programs into our project design and review processes.
3. This management responses focuses specifically on the recommendations of this report and articulates strategies for addressing them going forward.

RECOMMENDATION 1

4. *The GEF Secretariat should provide guidance and assist GEF Agencies in incorporating important features associated with systems thinking, resilience, and adaptive management in all project proposals.*
5. The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.
6. The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that it has already been working to redesign the logical structure and narrative of all GEF Projects and Programs along these lines. This work has been undertaken in collaboration with STAP, and new PIF templates have been released for GEF-8 with a new “project description” section that is fully aligned with this recommendation. These templates have been used in the work program currently under discussion at the 63rd Council. Further templates for all funding modalities are under development and will be released soon. The Secretariat is also in the process of preparing some technical training sessions in collaboration with STAP. This will enable agencies to be fully briefed and fluent in the new logic and template structure. It is envisaged that these trainings will be rolled out in early 2023 and in advance of the preparation of the work program to the 64th GEF Council. Finally, the Secretariat will also place this topic of systems thinking, resilience and adaptive management on the agenda of the next Agency Retreat in 2023.

RECOMMENDATION 2

7. *The GEF Agencies should ensure that GEF projects include a broad suite of livelihood options and support diverse income-generating activities. GEF projects should diversify strategies and actions for risk mitigation and build the resilience of local communities to various shocks.*

8. The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.

9. The GEF is also working on strengthening the link between risk and project outcomes in the project narrative. This is being done by incorporating “scenarios” thinking in the project description phase so as to assess the different possible future scenarios that can have an impact on the strategies being adopted in a project and the outcomes being delivered. This “scenarios” building also assesses how robust the difference actions and strategies in a project are to possible risks and perturbations that can be identified. This is also part of the STAP-led training described above that will be rolled out in early 2023.

RECOMMENDATION 3

10. The GEF Agencies should strengthen remote supervision by using a variety of appropriate tools and methods such as rapid surveys, satellite data, and GIS-based technology for timely response and adaptive management. M&E in a pandemic or similar difficult situation is challenging, and these tools and methods can help identify areas which require priority attention, as well as being useful in planning and monitoring activities over time.

11. The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.

12. The GEF agencies have adapted to COVID-19 in the past years in part by incorporating some of the measures included in the recommendation. Agencies will be encouraged to do so even more, and in ways that can improve efficiencies and streamline data gathering for adaptive management. The GEF Secretariat will work on this with Agencies as part of the upstream consultations that take place on project proposals, where relevant, and these elements will also be reflected in the Secretariat reviews. The Secretariat will undertake these actions in early 2023 so that these elements can be more strongly integrated into the work programs of the 64th Council and subsequently.

CONCLUSION

13. The IEO report on COVID-19 brings forth some important findings and recommendations for the GEF Partnership. As recognized in the report, COVID-19 has been and continues to be an important issue for the GEF to take into account in our projects and programs. The mitigation measures already adopted by the partnership have allowed the GEF to continue to operate during the Pandemic, as well as adapt to the new reality of project preparation and implementation. We have also now streamlined many of these measures into both the GEF “processes” and the project and program “content” as described above. Finally, the last 2 years of living in a COVID-19 world have been fully factored into the GEF-8 Strategy with a framework that focuses on Healthy Planet Healthy People. We are confident that many of our programs and focal area strategies will address future pandemic risks, but also help avoid other socio-environmental disasters.

14. Additionally, in the context of the MAR Review,¹ its recommendations,² and its associated management response³ that are under parallel discussion at this 63rd GEF Council, the GEF Secretariat welcomes the explicit identification of two of these recommendations towards the GEF Agencies. Though timing of the receipt of this final evaluation did not allow for consultation with Agencies on this recommendation in the preparation of this management response, the Secretariat underscores its commitment to do so in any future recommendations that are explicitly targeted to Agencies, as discussed in the MAR management response.

15. The Secretariat will track progress on the implementation of each of these recommendations and report to Council as needed, including through the IEO's standard Management Action Record.

¹ GEF/E/C.63/01, Review of the GEF Management Action Record (MAR), https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-11/EN_GEF_E_C63_01_GEFIEO_review_of_the_Management_Action_Record_Final.pdf

² Ibid.

³ GEF/C.63/13, *Management Response to: Review of the GEF Management Action Record*