



GEF/C.67/08  
June 3, 2024

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67<sup>th</sup> GEF Council Meeting  
June 17 – 18, 2024  
Washington DC, USA

**MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO  
THE IEO EVALUATION OF THE  
GLOBAL WILDLIFE PROGRAM  
MAY 2024**

**RECOMMENDED COUNCIL DECISION**

The Council, having considered documents GEF/E/C.67/02, *Evaluation of the Global Wildlife Program*, and GEF/C.67/08, *the Management Response*, takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

## INTRODUCTION

The GEF Secretariat welcomes the report, and is in overall agreement with its findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The GEF Secretariat welcomes the findings that the Global Wildlife Program (GWP) has grown and evolved both *“thematically and geographically to address the global complexity of illegal wildlife trade (IWT),”* and other drivers of wildlife loss. The Secretariat also welcomes the observations that *“the multifaceted approach reflected in the GEF-8 design of the WCD-IP<sup>1</sup> reflects a growing recognition of the interconnected challenges in wildlife conservation,”* such as ongoing efforts and innovations to address consumer demand, including the mainstreaming and application of innovative behavior change and social science methodologies to be mainstreamed throughout the GEF-8 wildlife program.

Furthermore, the GEF Secretariat is pleased that the Evaluation highlights the progress GWP has made in supporting coordination knowledge exchange, and learning among national child projects, stakeholders, and partners. The Evaluation notes that GWP global coordination project continues to develop knowledge products and guidance materials while providing essential technical support and training on critical topics that align with its thematic focus and national child project priorities. It has also improved collaboration and mainstreaming of wildlife with customs, police, and the judiciary. The Program has adapted and addressed challenges by implementing practical solutions.

Finally, the Secretariat values that the Evaluation highlights the creative and timely adaptive management, resilience, and responsiveness of the GWP global coordination and national child projects to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The human health, economic and logistical impacts of this global shock were felt throughout the GWP partnership, and the GEF-8 WCD IP design reflects the interconnectedness of human-wildlife-ecosystem health, the need for increased diversification of livelihoods, and the important role of the global coordination project as a flexible and durable platform to connect and support country projects for increased and sustained impact. These strengths are not only demonstrated through the consistent satisfactory ratings of GWP national child projects and continued contribution and achievement to GEF core indicator targets but also in the constant innovation, strong and prolific network, and leadership of GWP globally.

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<sup>1</sup> The GWP evolved into a new Wildlife Conservation for Development Integrated Program (WCD IP) in GEF-8, which embodies the integrated approach programming principles and financing modality. However, use of GWP brand and governance arrangement for WCD IP, including WB as lead GEF Agency will ensure consistency and clarify of links with the GEF-6 and GEF-7 programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** *The GEF should explore avenues to bolster support for GWP child projects that prioritize enhanced cross-border collaboration on Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT). This could be achieved by encouraging countries to exchange data and evidence, engage in cross-border wildlife monitoring, and coordinate joint initiatives with other countries.*

The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.

The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that the GWP has supported significant cross-border/transboundary action via the global coordination project (GCP) to date. The GWP GCP was designed to support critical transboundary, regional or global activities needed to address drivers of wildlife loss, including through the knowledge exchange, technical assistance and partnership outcomes of the global coordination project.

The GWP global coordination project has made significant gains in this area through targeted support from the coordination project that facilitates exchange and collaboration across countries, including:

- Regional and cross-regional workshops on strengthening legal and criminal justice frameworks to combat wildlife crime in 2017<sup>2</sup> and 2018<sup>3</sup> delivered with the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products.
- A targeted workshop on lessons learned in combating illegal wildlife trade for GEF-6 projects in 2022.<sup>4</sup>
- A 2022 virtual knowledge exchange and guidance note<sup>5</sup> on enhancing inter-agency coordination on wildlife law enforcement, which emphasized the importance of national and transboundary law enforcement collaboration.
- A 2023 virtual knowledge exchange for countries on conservation technology including documentation of lessons, good practices and available tools including to manage and share data to facilitate cross-border wildlife management.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Africa-Asia Pacific Symposium on Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Wildlife Crime  
<https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/wildlife/Africa-AsiaPac-Wildlife-law-symposium-REPORT-FINAL-SHARE.PDF>

<sup>3</sup> Symposium on Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Wildlife Crime in Central and West Africa  
[https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27728/Abidjan\\_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27728/Abidjan_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>4</sup> Lesson Learning at the Global Wildlife Program National Project Level  
<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/7fe01ad69ea9c08909e4e1edfeaf33c9-0320072023/original/Lesson-Learning-at-the-Global-Wildlife-Program-GWP-National-Project-Level-31072023-web.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Lessons Learned and Good Practices in Strengthening Inter-agency Coordination to Combat Wildlife Trafficking  
<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/47814ad612e922e8ac8bad0d2f49b852-0320052022/original/gwp-inter-agency-coordination-report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Lessons Learned in Conservation Technology – Data Collection, Processing, and Management  
<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/66b559520056090b442cbdda427fe06c-0320072023/original/GWP-GUIDANCE-NOTE-Conservation-Technology-REPORT-Sept-18th.pdf>

- Thematic discussions on strengthening transboundary and cross-border cooperation at multiple webinars and GWP annual conferences, and facilitation of joint initiatives between GWP participating countries via quarterly regional coordination calls.

The GEF Secretariat would like to point to the fact that the GEF is country demand driven. This means that the GEF Secretariat responds to the stated needs and priorities of GEF recipient countries within the bounds of the relevant GEF Programming Directions. Therefore, the extent to which the GEF can provide support to countries for transboundary cooperation within the GWP and other STAR-funded focal areas is determined by the interest, uptake, and actions of participating recipient countries.

Nonetheless, in response to this recommendation, the GEF Secretariat in partnership with the GWP lead agency will continue to seek both immediate and longer-term opportunities to further support cross-border collaboration to counter IWT, including through:

- The recently launched GWP project twinning program,<sup>7</sup> to support and facilitate cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange through activities such as a GWP-supported study tour, training workshop, staff exchange, and mentorship. This includes an explicit selection criterion on transboundary and international cooperation.
- A virtual knowledge exchange is being planned to share lessons from anti-poaching efforts, including transboundary wildlife monitoring and joint surveillance and operations.
- An ongoing partnership with the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), including support to maximize GWP country engagement in regional and cross-regional activities, for example inter-regional enforcement meetings, and knowledge exchange with Wildlife Enforcement Networks. In addition, GWP is facilitating discussions between GEF-8 WCD IP PPG teams and ICCWC partners on priorities for counter wildlife trafficking, including transboundary and international collaboration.
- The development of a detailed technical assistance package for GEF-8 WCD IP in consultation with participating countries. The selection criteria to prioritize coordination project activities includes: *areas important to facilitate transboundary and international cooperation, e.g., law enforcement coordination across supply chains; coordination on demand reduction.*

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<sup>7</sup> GWP Twinning Program Instructions and Guidelines, May 2024.

**Recommendation 2:** *The results frameworks and indicators selected in the child projects should be aligned with the program framework document to demonstrate overall program-level effectiveness and additionality. This requires clearly defining roles and responsibilities among the implementing agencies, the GEFSEC, and the lead agency, as well as aligning the global and child project timelines.*

Overall, the GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this recommendation. Noting that this recommendation has three somewhat distinct parts, the GEF secretariat has varying levels of agreement with each component: a.) alignment between the results framework and indicators at the program and project levels (agree); b.) clearly defined roles and responsibilities (agree); and c.) aligning global and child project timelines (partially agree).

*a.) Alignment between the results framework and indicators at the program and project levels:*

The GEF Secretariat agrees with this part of the recommendation.

Since program inception in GEF-6, the GWP has pursued and achieved alignment between the results framework and indicators at the program (PFD) and child project levels by using the GEF core indicators. All GWP child projects across all phases are required to report at the level of the GEF core indicators. The GEF core indicators were designed to capture effectiveness and additionality of GEF investments explicitly and specifically and continue to do so.

In addition to the use of aligned core indicators, the GWP has been striving to go beyond these metrics of effectiveness and additionality to measure project results and impacts across the diversity of GWP projects. This is a much higher bar and a more challenging task on which the GWP lead agency in collaboration with the child projects are actively working. For example, in GEF-6 GWP implemented a tracking tool that includes a set of indicators for measuring progress in addressing poaching, trafficking and demand, for which national child projects are requested to report to the Lead Agency at baseline, mid-term review, and terminal evaluation. The Lead Agency continues to request and expects GEF GWP Implementing Agencies to report on this tracking tool, and acknowledges the challenges encountered by some projects to meet this higher bar. In addition, GWP results across GEF-6 and GEF-7 phases are aggregated by the Lead Agency from child project PIRs and reported annually in comprehensive GWP progress reports.<sup>8</sup>

In GEF-8, the WCD IP has developed a fully integrated Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system which ensures alignment of child project results frameworks to the program results framework, incorporating the lessons learned from GEF-6 and GEF-7. Detailed guidance<sup>9</sup> has been provided to PPG teams on program M&E requirements, the common GWP-required indicators across the different technical themes, and the development of child project results frameworks and indicators to ensure adequate alignment. Furthermore, the GEF-8 WCD IP has a defined task

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<sup>8</sup> For example, see the 2022 GWP progress report <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/ce01bee8927119f57819e10673e329f7-0320072023/original/GWP-Annual-Report-2022.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Guidance for national project alignment to the GWP GEF-8 M&E framework, April 2024.

team on M&E and is not only setting the standards for tracking results and impact but is, simultaneously building capacity and co-ownership of tracking results with child projects.

The new system will be launched via the GEF-8 WCD IP child projects, fully integrating program guidance into project results frameworks to be included in the final CEO endorsement by August 2025.

*b.) Clearly defined roles and responsibilities:*

The GEF Secretariat agrees with this part of the recommendation.

The GEF Secretariat notes that the GEF Project and Program Cycle Policy<sup>10</sup> depicts in detail the roles and responsibilities among implementing agencies, the GEFSEC, and the lead agency in the context of Programs. The GWP GEF-8 M&E framework guidance will therefore be updated to reference this document and clarify roles and responsibilities by September 2024.

*c.) Aligning global and child project timelines:*

The GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this part of the recommendation.

GEF programs are made up of a set of child projects under a PFD (GWP included). The design of each child project is based on the priorities, commitment needs and context of the country (as is the case of GWP's country child projects), including the life of project end date/timeframe. Although GEF Council approves the PFD and child projects as a package, the timelines can differ at any number of stages including the initiation of PPG, CEO endorsement, project inception and during implementation. Therefore, it is natural and expected that the timeline of projects can shift due context and partner-specific factors that may regularly occur. In addition, significant global shocks and force majeure (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) can cause unexpected changes in timelines.

The GEF Secretariat notes the apparent misalignment in life-of-project timeframes between the GWP Global Coordination Project and country child projects in GEF-6 (for example, Annex A). The GEF Secretariat would like to point to the fact that the GEF-6 coordination project was intentionally started well ahead of most national child projects so that it could establish a functional GWP knowledge exchange platform to support country projects as they came online. This was a proactive rapid establishment of the coordination project that was essential for effective operation of the program.

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<sup>10</sup> GEF/C.59/Inf.03, Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy, [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN\\_GEF\\_C.59\\_Inf.03\\_Guidelines%20on%20the%20Project%20and%20Program%20Cycle%20Policy.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF_C.59_Inf.03_Guidelines%20on%20the%20Project%20and%20Program%20Cycle%20Policy.pdf) July 20, 2020.

The GEF Secretariat further notes that this difference in timeframe was reduced in GEF-7 due to several changes to the project cycle policy approved by GEF Council<sup>11</sup> including a shortening of the project PPG phase by six months, as well as an Agency fee disbursement structure and timeline that incentivizes faster disbursement action by GEF Agencies. Furthermore, the GEF Secretariat recalls that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in delays in project start-up and inception, thereby offsetting the project timelines in both GEF-6 and GEF-7 as reflected in Annex A of the evaluation.

Based on previous experience, the benefits of global coordination support, including capacity strengthening and networking among others, are cumulative and sustained beyond the time of the global coordination project. The GWP has demonstrated that this core alliance initiated and supported by the global coordination project is strong and is likely to sustain impact beyond the life of the investment.

Going forward in GEF-8, the timing of the submission of the global coordination project will be aligned as far as possible to the submission of the national child projects. This will be further facilitated by the continuation of the GWP with the same Lead Agency across the GEF-6 and GEF-7 cycles, as the program knowledge exchange and coordination functions are already operational and engaging the new GEF-8 WCD IP child projects.

**Recommendation 3:** *To further strengthen knowledge management in the GWP, the GEF Secretariat should support a knowledge management platform which systematizes the collection and sharing of knowledge across the program phases. This would ensure continuity in knowledge management even when there are changes in program management. Additionally, the coordination grant component and the child projects should be better aligned in timing.*

The GEF agrees with this recommendation.

This recommendation has two distinct parts: a.) GEF Secretariat support to a KM platform; and b.) Coordination grant and child project timing alignment. We have previously addressed the alignment of timing under the GEF management response to Recommendation 2 above, and thus will focus here on the first part of the recommendation regarding a KM platform.

In June 2023, the GEF Council approved the Global Environment Facility Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (GEF/C64/07).<sup>12</sup> This strategy guides and promotes a more systematic approach to how the GEF harnesses its knowledge resources, establish an appropriate system to management of the resources, and facilitate learning across the partnership. It is therefore framed around three main objectives: i) embedding cutting-edge knowledge into investments to generate public goods in line with GEF mandate and enhance the role of knowledge management

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<sup>11</sup> 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](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.55.04.Rev_.01_Operational_Efficiency.pdf) December 20, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> GEF/C.64/07, GEF Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning, [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-06/EN\\_GEF\\_C.64\\_07\\_GEF%20Strategy%20for%20Knowledge%20Management%20and%20Learning.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-06/EN_GEF_C.64_07_GEF%20Strategy%20for%20Knowledge%20Management%20and%20Learning.pdf) May 31, 2023.



in projects and programs, ii) increase knowledge flows through platforms through partnership and communities of practice; and iii) create and enable the environment for learning and capacity building for greater exchange of knowledge and collaboration across the partnership.

The GWP knowledge management platform established under the GEF-6 global coordination project, and enhanced in subsequent GEF phases, continues to deploy an innovative and evolving calendar of technical assistance and exchange events and activities to strengthen cooperation and learning across the GWP network, as well as ensuring systemization of collection and sharing of knowledge across successive GEF phases and with other integrated programs working on similar technical themes.

Going forward, the GEF Secretariat, through both the new KM strategy as well as through the internal GEF Secretariat restructuring which places a greater emphasis on the knowledge management created by integrated approaches, will increase the interoperability of IP platforms for enhancing knowledge sharing and fostering a learning environment between programs and across GEF-phases. By systematizing the collection and sharing of knowledge across program phases, the GEF Secretariat can ensure continuity and reduce knowledge loss during program management transition; facilitate access to lessons learned, best practices, and expertise to larger audiences; encourage collaboration and knowledge exchange among stakeholders; and support informed decision-making and improve program effectiveness.

**Recommendation 4:** *Conducting comprehensive risk assessments during the design phase, with regular updates throughout the project lifecycle, is essential for the effective and sustainable implementation of the Program. Emphasis should be placed on monitoring risks related to climate change, conflict, fragility, pandemics, unsustainable tourism, and human rights violations.*

The GEF agrees with this recommendation.

The GEF Secretariat takes a multifaceted approach to understanding, managing and reporting on risk at the portfolio, program, project and activity level, both through social and environmental safeguards and through the provisions laid out in the new GEF Risk Appetite and framework.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the GEF's appetite for risk (substantial for context risk; high for innovation risk; and moderate for execution risk) reflects its unique mandate, intentional support to innovative approaches, exposure to a range of challenging situations, and objective to address the drivers of environmental degradation. It also translates the demand from countries and commitment of the GEF to provide support in higher risk contexts.<sup>14</sup>

The GEF Secretariat has moved forward rapidly to apply the new GEF Risk Appetite and framework<sup>15</sup>, and has revised project templates to reflect this requirement for all projects (including all GEF-8 integrated program child projects), including a comprehensive risk assessment during the design phase (PPG) and identification of residual risks, i.e., after mitigation

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<sup>13</sup> GEF/C.66/13 GEF Risk Appetite [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-01/EN\\_GEF.C.66.13\\_GEF\\_Risk\\_Appetite.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-01/EN_GEF.C.66.13_GEF_Risk_Appetite.pdf), January 4, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

measures. For each risk category (for example, context, innovation, execution), Agencies provide a summary of risks identified, planned mitigation activities, and a risk rating on a four-point scale: Low, Moderate, Substantial, and High. As GEF Agencies report on risks at PIF stage, the GEF Secretariat engages with Agencies on risk assessments and ratings provided as part of regular project and program reviews. At Mid Term Review (MTR) GEF Agencies revise/update risks identified as needed, including mitigation measures. These are then aggregated and reported to the GEF Council at Work Program stage<sup>16</sup>, and then in the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR).

The GEF Policy on Social and Environmental Safeguards<sup>17</sup> was approved by the GEF Council in December 2018, and sets out the GEF's approach to anticipating, and then avoiding, preventing, minimizing, mitigating, managing, offsetting or compensating adverse impacts that GEF-financed projects and programs may have on people or the environment throughout the project or program cycle, thereby enhancing the environmental and social outcomes. The Policy states nine minimum requirements for the Agencies to identify and manage environmental and social risks and impacts in GEF-financed projects and programs. It requires all Agencies to have necessary policies, procedures, systems and capabilities in place to ensure that these nine minimum standards are met at all levels of project and program implementation, including by executing partners.

The Policy specifies that, based on Agencies' environmental and social screening and risk classification procedures and systems, Agencies document and report on environmental and social risk and potential impacts associated with the proposed project any associated measures to address such risks and impacts throughout the GEF project cycle; including during the following phases: Project Identification (PIF Preparation); Project Preparation (CEO Endorsement/Approval); Project Implementation (MTR), and Completion (TE). The Policy further calls on the Secretariat to report, annually, to the Council on the type and level of the risks and impacts identified in GEF projects and programs, and the management of these risks and impacts during project implementation and at project completion.

At the programmatic level, the GWP Global Coordination Project tracks the risk ratings for each of the child projects and reports on them in annual GWP progress reports. Each GWP child project adheres to the GEF Policy on Social Environmental Safeguards and accordingly, all applicable GEF Implementing Agency SES procedures.

In alignment with this recommendation, the GEF Secretariat, in coordination with GWP GEF Agencies, will continue to adhere to both the GEF Social and Environment Safeguards policy and guidelines and apply the new Risk Appetite Framework in GEF-8. A detailed GEF-8 WCD-IP PPG guidebook includes specific guidance to project teams on assessment of social and environmental risks linked to field-based wildlife conservation and IWT projects and will be updated as needed.

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<sup>16</sup> The Work Program Cover Note to this 67<sup>th</sup> Council in fact gives the first explicit risk analysis of the projects and programs under consideration: GEF/C.67/03, Work Program for GEF Trust Fund, <https://www.thegef.org/council-meeting-documents/gef-c-67-03>

<sup>17</sup> SD/PL/03, GEF Social and Environmental Safeguards Policy [http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/gef\\_environmental\\_social\\_safeguards\\_policy.pdf](http://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/gef_environmental_social_safeguards_policy.pdf), June 13, 2019.

Furthermore, the global coordination project will convene a virtual coordination meeting during the PPG phase, to exchange information and share lessons from earlier GWP projects. In addition, the GWP global coordination project will continue to incorporate Social and Environmental risk management into its knowledge exchange and technical assistance activities, and report annually on risk management in annual GWP progress reports.

The next GWP annual progress report, including risk management, is expected by July 2024. The coordinated approach on risk identification and management being taken for GEF-8 will be reflected in national child projects by August 2025.

## **CONCLUSION**

The GEF Secretariat will track progress on the implementation of each of these recommendations reporting to Council as needed through existing reports, as well as through the IEO's standard Management Action Record.