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**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE INCLUSIVE GEF ASSEMBLY CHALLENGE PROGRAM
UNDER
THE SPECIAL CLIMATE CHANGE FUND (SCCF)
AND
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FUND (LDCF)**

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Inclusive GEF Assembly Challenge Program (henceforth referred to as “The Program”) was presented at the 33rd Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) / Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) Council meeting on December 2, 2022 based on the Information Document *Inclusive GEF Assembly Challenge Program*.¹ The LDCF/SCCF Council welcomed the initiative in the lead up to the Seventh GEF Assembly and expressed their appreciation and support.²
2. Council members were provided with a progress report at the 35th Council Meeting on February 8, 2024, summarizing the objectives of the Program, information about the launch event at the Seventh GEF Assembly in Vancouver, analysis of the submissions and information about the winning initiatives.³ In total, 23 initiatives were selected as winners by a selection committee comprised of various actors across the GEF Partnership (Annex 1).
3. The aim of the Inclusive GEF Assembly Challenge Program is to recognize and support the vital role being played by community based and civil society organizations in delivering inclusive adaptation and environmental benefits for people and ecosystems; and advance whole-of-society approaches by providing resources and knowledge to scale up their initiatives.
4. The Program builds on the successful Challenge Program for Adaptation Innovation supported by the LDCF and SCCF. It consists of a three-pronged approach to meet its objective: 1) Global recognition of civil society organization’s work, most notably at the Seventh GEF Assembly; 2) implementation support of up to \$100,000 per initiative; and 3) the creation of a partnership, knowledge creation and peer-learning platform by UNIDO, the implementation agency of the program.⁴
5. Organizations that submitted selected initiatives were invited to attend the Seventh GEF Assembly in Vancouver, Canada, which took place from August 22 to 26, 2023, and were recognized during a high-level event with the participation of the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) at Global Affairs Canada, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) Chair, Council Member for the Caribbean constituency, and the GEF CEO and Chairperson. The event was webcasted, which enabled all winners to engage virtually.
6. This information document presents an update on progress to date of the Program, most notably the progress by the implementing agency, UNIDO, which is aiding in the delivery of the objectives of the Challenge Program by consolidating all 23 initiatives into two Medium-sized Projects (MSPs), one under the SCCF and another under the LDCF.

¹ GEF, 2022, [Inclusive GEF Assembly Challenge Program](#), GEF/LDCF.SCCF.33/Inf.04.

² GEF, 2022, [Highlights of the Council's discussions](#), GEF/LDCF.SCCF.33/Highlights.

³ GEF 2024, [Progress Report on the Inclusive GEF Assembly Challenge Program under the SCCF and LDCF](#), GEF/LDCF.SCCF.35/Inf.04.

⁴ *Ibid.*

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS UPDATE

7. The GEF Agency for the two MSPs which support the selected initiatives in receiving their grant amount and connect them through a global platform has been developed by UNIDO. The LDCF MSP provides resources to support initiatives that are in the least developed countries (LDCs) and the SCCF initiative supports non-LDC based initiatives. The LDCF MSP covers Haiti, Kiribati, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, and a global initiative, while the SCCF MSP would support activities in Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Bolivia, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Nigeria, Kenya, Tunisia, Peru, Mexico, Thailand, and a global initiative.

8. Both MSPs would jointly support the global platform and knowledge exchange component bring all the initiatives under one platform. The MSPs were developed by UNIDO in close coordination and participation of all the proponents of the winning initiatives.

9. A requirement for formulation of these MSPs was submission of letters of endorsements from the GEF Operational Focal Points (OFPs) of the respective countries. These letters were received from all the countries except for India and Kiribati. To move forward on the approval process and to ensure compliance with GEF Policies, the MSPs submitted by UNIDO at this point does not include the two countries without the OFP endorsement letters. They will be added later in these projects as minor amendments once the OFP endorsement letters are obtained.

NEXT STEPS

10. As on June 3, 2024, the SCCF-funded MSP has been technically cleared and circulated to the LDCF/SCCF Council for a four-week review as per the GEF policy on MSPs and then will be approved by the GEF CEO. The LDCF-funded MSP is in advanced stages of technical clearance and will be circulated to the Council for the four-week review upon technical clearance. In the next fiscal year, the GEF Secretariat will closely engage in the program, especially in the global platform and knowledge component to strengthen capacity of the winning initiatives and learn from the project to inform future GEF investments focusing on inclusion and strategic engagement of civil society organizations in meeting GEF's vision.

ANNEX 1

Summary of Initiatives Selected as Part of the Inclusive GEF Assembly Challenge Program

Organization	Objectives	Country
Adoptacoastline	<p>Title: Women and Girls Coastal Stewardship and Wellness Initiative.</p> <p>Goal: To partner with four women and girl specific sports, youth, or community groups to adopt a coastline to steward for one year in Antigua and Barbuda and expand into neighboring territories St Kitts and Nevis, Grenada and the Grenadines.</p>	Antigua and Barbuda
Belize Wildlife & Referral Clinic (BWRC)	<p>Title: Wildlife Ambassador Program – One Health Awareness, Wildlife Conflict and Crime Prevention and Mitigation with Wildlife Emergency Response.</p> <p>Goal: To reduce risk of zoonosis while mitigating & preventing biodiversity loss from Human Wildlife Conflict & Illegal Wildlife Traffic through improved awareness, training and engagement with communities, governments, and other stakeholders.</p>	Belize
Green Hope Foundation	<p>Title: Providing water security to indigenous communities in the Pacific islands of Kiribati using innovative clean technology.</p> <p>Goal: to provide water security to the Indigenous communities in Kiribati, through the implementation of innovative and easily scalable clean technology solutions, through inclusive on-the-ground actions, thereby improving their socio-economic conditions.</p>	Kiribati
Fondation pour la Protection de la Biodiversité Marine (FoProBiM)	<p>Title: Implementation of Nature-based Solutions for the rehabilitation, improved management, and protection of Marine Protected Areas in Haiti.</p> <p>Goal: Within a year of implementation through NbS by local communities, advance the protection and management of coastal and marine natural resources, and the economic resilience of coastal communities to deal with climate change issues.</p>	Haiti
Hand2Earth Inc (non-profit)	<p>Title: Vetiver Systems Technology Applications for Food Security through Sustainable Recovery and Natural Hazard risk management of farmlands occupied by Indigenous peoples in St. Vincent’s Red and Orange Zones.</p> <p>Goal: Improve the livelihoods of rural farmers through farmland soil regeneration by engendering environmental and community resilience, restoration of agro-ecological heritage, climate</p>	St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Organization	Objectives	Country
	change mitigation and sustainable recovery and protection of farmlands from the impact of natural disasters in St Vincent’s indigenous communities.	
The Kenyan Youth Biodiversity Network (KYBN)	<p>Title: Mangroves and Inland Wetlands Restoration to advance Regional Climate Adaptation and Resilience [via regional cooperation to advance] implementation Target 8 of the CBD Kunming-Montreal Framework.</p> <p>Goal: Promote climate adaptation and resilience at community level in six African countries through enhanced utilization of mangrove ecosystems and terrestrial wetlands as natural solutions to climate change. Local CSOs are to work closely with respective governments to ensure the role of mangrove ecosystems and wetlands as natural carbon sinks, and as strategic investments, is underlined in revised National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (NBSAPs) and implementation plans, to help meet the 2030 global climate target and Target 8 of the Kunming-Montreal Framework.</p>	Africa
The Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA)	<p>Title: Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project - Urban Greening Component #FreetownTheTreeTownCampaign</p> <p>Goal: To increase the capital city’s green space and vegetation cover with the planting of Indigenous trees and shrubs, as nature-based solutions to tackle environmental degradation in Freetown, through partnerships with local communities, and using innovative, disruptive, low-cost digital technology for tree-tracking, and creating green jobs, especially for women and youth.</p>	Sierra Leone
JADD MADAGASCAR (Jeunes Actifs pour le Développement Durable or Actives Young for Sustainable Development Madagascar)	<p>Title: Promoting inclusive led approaches to Nature-based Solutions Initiatives within the territories and areas conserved by local communities in Madagascar.</p> <p>Goal: Engage and empower young people, women and people with disabilities from local communities through the promotion of local actions focused on NbS approaches to preserve ecosystems and strengthen resilience. Promoting entrepreneurship, advocacy, partnerships with universities/CSOs to carry out research.</p>	Madagascar
Base Net	<p>Title: Promoting Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Energy (Pro-CCASE) in Juba and Magwi Counties South Sudan.</p> <p>Goal: Advance gender-responsive climate change adaptation and resilience among vulnerable rural and marginalised groups supporting food, income and energy security - via increase</p>	South Sudan

Organization	Objectives	Country
	seedlings, cooking stoves, advocacy capacity building, beekeeping, among others.	
U-recycle Initiative Africa	<p>Title: PlasticWize Fellowship by U-recycle Initiative Africa (Scale Up).</p> <p>Goal: Scale up fellowship - a transformative leadership development programme tackling marine plastic pollution by empowering young women to lead and influence behavior change across tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The PlasticWize Fellowship multifaceted structure comprises over ten strategies geared towards tackling plastic pollution holistically.</p>	Nigeria
Justdiggitt	<p>Title: Restoring Rangelands in Kenya’s Southern Rift Valley.</p> <p>Goal: Collaborate with Maasai communities and the South Rift Association of Land Owners (SORALO) to restore degraded rangelands. Through water harvesting interventions, women-led grass seed banks (GSBs), good governance and community engagement, the project aims to enhance ecosystem resilience, improve livelihoods, and conserve biodiversity in the region.</p>	Kenya
Kesho Trust (KT)	<p>Title and Goal: Increase acceptance and use of Indigenous Maasai traditional knowledge towards management of community land and resources for enhanced resilience to climate change in the Ngorongoro and Kilindi Districts, northern Tanzania.</p>	Tanzania
The Rutu Foundation	<p>Title: “Pass it on!” Initiative. The Indigenous-Led Education Global Network as Catalyst of Community Resilience and Youth Empowerment Towards Climate Adaptive Natural Resources Management.</p> <p>Goal: Boost local knowledge transfer through networking, a small grants fund and youth fellowships by enabling traditional knowledge/sharing, donor engagement and small grants, Indigenous fellowships, among others.</p>	Global (Philippines, Thailand, Kenya, Uganda, India, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru and Ecuador)
Les Amis de CAPTE Tunisie (LACT)	<p>Title: Scaling up the C6 Initiative Corridor Carob tree CAPTE Carbone Climate Change A Nature based Solutions and agriculture climate change Initiative.</p> <p>Goal: Improve the resilience and strengthen the adaptation of Tunisia's agricultural sector to climate change by introducing</p>	Tunisia

Organization	Objectives	Country
	and promoting agroforestry cultivation of the carob tree and deploying NbS.	
CELCCAR	Title and Goal: Climate adaptive management and beekeeping management in agroforestry systems of coffee production to provide additional income to peasant communities led by women in the municipality of Caranavi.	Bolivia
Humy	Title: Community-based reforestation in the Andes Mountains of Colombia with the Pasto Indigenous communities in Nariño, through an innovative and replicable model. Goal: Reforest and limit the anthropic pressure on the alto-andine forests in order to preserve the páramos ecosystem and the water resource, with the Pasto Indigenous communities.	Colombia
Forever Costa Rica (FCR)	Title: Rural youth, entrepreneurship and climate-smart conservation in La Cruz, Costa Rica. Goal: Build a rural network of green and blue youth entrepreneurs (ages 17-25) in La Cruz. The network will focus on strengthening entrepreneurial skills of 30 young adults to create climate smart business ventures that sustainably use ecosystem-based services around marine and terrestrial protected areas.	Costa Rica
AIDER	Title and Goal: Alliance for Indigenous forests in the Peruvian Amazon "Nii Kaniti": inclusive cooperation for indigenous communities' empowerment for sustainable forest management. Nii Kaniti means "Forest and Development" in Indigenous languages.	Peru
FOREVER LUNG Foundation	Title and Goal: Socioeconomic and organizational strengthening of Tagua-collecting communities in Ecuador for the conservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity associated with these species. [Particular focus also given to interventions that are] gender sensitive and tap into ancestral knowledge.	Ecuador
Grupo Ecológico Sierra Gorda	Title: Querétaro Low Emissions Seal, a strategy for landscape regeneration. Goal: Consolidate the Querétaro Low Emissions model, which demonstrates that there are opportunities beyond markets by generating a sub-national financing mechanism that allows	Mexico

Organization	Objectives	Country
	valuing forest and soil services in favor of landowners using a Local Protocol.	
Songkhla Community Foundation (SCF)	<p>Title: Citizen science for community empowerment, climate adaptation and locally led environmental monitoring in coastal zones.</p> <p>Goal: Empower coastal communities, particularly women, youth, and vulnerable groups, to play a critical role in knowledge co-production, driving community-based climate adaptation and locally led management of coastal ecosystems and environments, and by adopting co-developed citizen science methodology and platform to promote bottom-up decision-making and planning processes.</p>	Thailand
South Asian Forum for Environment (SAFE)	<p>Title: AFLOAT HEAL: Float-farming for Horticultural Entrepreneurship and Adaptive Livelihood.</p> <p>Goal: Naturalize hydroponic float-farming and integrated aquaculture as an adaptive, climate-resilient agricultural contrivance for coastal vulnerable communities of South Asia that find themselves in climate-poverty trap. The objective is to move towards sustainable livelihood, food and nutrition security and inclusive growth. The initiative leverages carbon benefits from circularity, renewable energy intervention and regenerative farming practices.</p>	India and Bangladesh
Shan Shui Conservation Center (SSCC) is	<p>Title: Prototyping Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in China.</p> <p>Goal: Establish a system for recognising, reporting, and supporting OECMs implemented by non-state actors in China, contributing to the global target of having 30% of the world's land and ocean area protected by 2030, while promoting transparency, accountability, and sustainable management practices.</p>	China