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Practical Steps to Improve Coordination and Workflow in the GEF Partnership

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Background

1. The Council, in its 54th meeting in June 2018, endorsed the Policy Recommendations of the participants to the seventh replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-7), including a recommendation for the Secretariat to develop “*fit-for-purpose*” business standards “*to improve coordination and workflow*” between the Agencies and the Secretariat, with the aim of “*improving overall accountability, transparency, and efficiency.*” The date for completion is Fall 2018.
2. The recommendation arose out of a recognition that there are a number of practical challenges in coordination and workflow, and corresponding opportunities to address them. These have been discussed and identified in various settings, including the following:
 - a. Dialogues with countries and stakeholders held during National Dialogues, Constituency meetings and Expanded Constituency Workshops under the GEF’s Country Support Program, convened by the Secretariat
 - b. Periodic meetings and retreats of the Secretariat and GEF Agencies
 - c. The analysis and findings of the OPS-6 prepared by IEO¹
 - d. Ongoing dialogue and experience as part of regular GEF programming and operations

¹ OPS-6, section on Partnership Engagement: Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations of Independent Evaluations

3. These dialogues, assessments and experience highlight the need for the workflow to function smoothly across the three main partners in this workflow: GEF Agencies, the Secretariat, and Participant Countries (especially Recipient Countries). The text below summarizes the challenges that have been identified, and practical actions to improve coordination and workflow, with a focus on these three main partners.
4. The text does not set out any new rules or mandatory requirements. Rather, it is focused on practical issues and approaches to achieve the common purpose, in line with existing policies and procedures and other actions already taken toward this same end.

Actions to build understanding about the GEF and the GEF-7 Agenda

5. Experience has shown that there are several challenges relating to the flow of information among the main GEF Partners. Key partners and stakeholders² at times lack an understanding of what the GEF is about, and its programming and policy agenda. They also may not fully understand their own role and responsibilities, or even have misunderstandings of what is expected.
6. One important example is misunderstanding of the role of GEF Operational Focal Points (OFPs), and the interaction between OFPs, Agencies and the Secretariat. OFPs are the main contact point and representative of governments for a wide range of the GEF's work.³ They are responsible to coordinate within their government as part of this work, and to engage directly with Agencies and other stakeholders in the design, preparation and implementation of GEF-funded projects in their countries. They also play a key role on behalf of the governments in aligning GEF's work and country environmental strategies and objectives.
7. OFPs do not, however, always have a full understanding of their role. In addition, they express that their agency counterparts often leave them out of key dialogue relevant to their responsibilities, or provide incorrect or inconsistent messages. And the GEF Secretariat is unable to be present at every conversation. These are challenges for coordination and workflow both for broader strategic dialogue and engagement (this section) and during the core work of project design, preparation and implementation (following section).
8. Other common misunderstandings relate to requirements and expectations under key GEF policies, such as co-financing, project processing, stakeholder engagement and

² These partners and stakeholders include: officials in governments (OFPs, officials from Ministries other than Environment Ministries); new staff in the Agencies; project beneficiaries; and members of civil society, whether in or outside the GEF CSO Network.

³ Some countries designate both an OFP and a Political Focal Point (PFP). The latter is normally at a "political" level within the government, as a means to reinforce engagement with GEF at the relevant levels.

gender equality. There are often questions on how the three main partners move projects to completion, and on rights and responsibilities associated with GEF funding. The challenges are especially high for governments and their OFPs, who can be farther removed from broader strategic dialogue and updates in programming and policy work.

9. These issues can hamper the efficient, effective and timely processing of GEF projects, and the ability to achieve the mission and mandate.
10. The Secretariat together with other partners currently take many actions to address these challenges and build understanding about the GEF and the GEF-7 agenda.⁴ In addition, it is inevitable that there will be a learning curve especially for newcomers during this process. Nevertheless, it is recognized that certain practical steps can be taken to reinforce these efforts in support of improved coordination and workflow. These include the following:
 - a. **Information sharing through the CSP and GEF website:** The Secretariat will continue the practice of GEF-5 and GEF-6 of sharing easy-to-understand information about the GEF-7 programming and policy agenda in meetings and dialogues under the GEF [Country Support Program](#), and on the GEF external website at www.thegef.org. This includes information on core programming strategies and both policy and operational requirements (including on procurement and fiduciary practices, stakeholder engagement, gender equality, and many others) to help ensure a transparent, efficient and effective workflow in line with policy and best practice. Time will be allocated during the Expanded Constituency Workshops for OFPs to share their experiences, challenges and to discuss opportunities for improved engagement.
 - b. **A new App to easily share information and build understanding:** The Secretariat also will develop an easy-to-use “App” that highlights key features of the GEF and the GEF-7 agenda, including key policies and guidelines, and help make it available to all interested partners and users.⁵
 - c. **Information sharing via the GEF’s Knowledge Management initiatives:** The Secretariat and partners will continue to foster learning and information sharing as part of the GEF’s Knowledge Management/Sharing agenda for GEF-7, including:

⁴ These include: comprehensive and up-to-date information on the GEF website; extensive dialogues and capacity-building initiatives to build understanding about the GEF and support programming and operations under the GEF Country Support Program; web-streaming the GEF Assembly and Council meetings; and clear lines of correspondence and communication among partners, among others.

⁵ This is under development, building on an App used for the GEF-6 Assembly.

e-learning courses⁶; the “Ask Kaleo” feature of the GEF website⁷; and “knowledge days” during Expanded Constituency Workshops.⁸

- d. **Reaching out to partners and stakeholders outside the “inner-circle”:**
Working with OFPs, implementing and executing partners should give attention to sharing information about the GEF with government officials in relevant ministries (e.g., agriculture, finance, etc.), and other stakeholders, including in the private sector, who do not always have ready access to such information. The Secretariat will invite them to relevant CSP meetings in support of these efforts. These efforts will put a focus on practical information needed for partners to engage effectively, e.g., the exact role and duties of OFPs (see below).

12. To further support understanding about the GEF and the GEF-7 agenda, Annex 1 provides a checklist of key policies and related documents that guide the overall work of the Partnership. In addition, the [Summary of the GEF-7 Replenishment Negotiations](#) endorsed by GEF Council in June 2018 contains the blueprint for the GEF-7 Programming and Policy Agenda to be supported by the GEF.⁹ Among other information, it provides operational guidance to countries, agencies and stakeholders for the roll-out of the GEF-7 programming directions, including the new GEF-7 Impact Programs (IPs).¹⁰ It includes an overview of the GEF-7 programming architecture, and describes programming directions and modalities, including for integrated approaches across focal areas. This information is an important reference point in support of clarity and transparency in GEF programming work.

Cooperation in project development and implementation

- 13.** Another key challenge is to ensure that the partnership efficiently tracks and communicates about progress *during project development and implementation*. The GEF has many systems in place to do this, including the new GEF Portal for submitting and reviewing project proposals, at meetings of the Council, periodic tele-conferences between the Secretariat and GEF Agencies, posting information on the website, and monitoring and reporting requirements during project implementation.
- 14.** Nevertheless, several issues have been identified, particularly in relation to communications and contacts between implementing and executing partners and OFPs or other government officials at the national level.

⁶ See section on Knowledge and Learning on the GEF website, [here](#).

⁷ *Ibid.*, the link to Kaleo is [here](#)

⁸ See www.thegef.org, and the link to the Country Support Program, [here](#).

⁹ See the “Operational Guidance for GEF-7 Roll-Out for IPs” set out in the Replenishment package.

¹⁰ See pp. 147 – 150. The Replenishment document also contains a section on criteria and interventions in the major new Impact Program on Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (pp. 101-104).

15. OFPs have reported that they often feel disengaged from project development after handing over an endorsement letter to the GEF Agency. In addition, Agencies often require an endorsement letter to be provided before accepting to work on a project idea, which creates both difficulties and pressures on the OFP. Some OFPs, especially from small island countries, have commented that agencies are not often present in their country and so they have no one with whom to communicate directly. In many cases OFPs find they can only work with Agencies that are represented in the country as this allows permanent communication and joint work.
16. OFPs have also expressed concern that the “details” or “fine print” of project proposals contain certain fees or other elements that result in the country getting less money than they thought they would. OFPs have commented that consultants provided by Agencies to develop projects sometimes have no knowledge of the country and its needs or that they neglect project development of small sized projects. This is detrimental both to good projects and to country needs and ownership.
17. The following practical steps should be taken at the national level to address these issues and challenges:
 - a. **National Steering Committees:** Where feasible within a country, one good practice is for OFPs to convene and lead a National Steering Committee for GEF-related work. This can help to reinforce the role of OFPs and enhance the voice of governments in GEF projects and programs. Depending on the national context, the Steering Committee may be composed of GEF Focal Points, relevant line ministries, regional and local government representatives. Other potential partners may be civil society representatives, academia and private sector. It thus provides a forum to coordinate, discuss and, as appropriate, approve GEF-related matters.
 - b. **Meetings with GEF Agencies:** Successful OFPs convene regular meetings with the representatives of GEF Agencies to receive updates and information and to follow up on GEF projects in the country.
 - c. **National Dialogues:** National Dialogues are a good practice. They provide an inclusive means for early dialogue, and an opportunity to engage partners and stakeholders in decision-making and create shared understanding and expectations at the time of programming resources available through the GEF. They also serve as a vehicle for discussing, validating and disseminating national environmental policies and regulations. These dialogues should be promoted in a manner that leads to broad participation of stakeholders and that allows GEF related work to be addressed in an integrated manner with other related national initiatives and activities.

- d. **Constituency Meetings – flagging issues and problems:** These provide another good opportunity to discuss needs and priorities for engagement with the GEF. One good practice has been for each country to present its entire GEF portfolio and flag any problems that it faces, for follow-up action and improvement in the future. Agencies are often invited to attend this portion of the meeting.

18. In support of these efforts, Box 1 below provides a summary of the Role of OFPs, as representatives of governments, in GEF's work. For all the reasons indicated above, it is essential for all partners, including Agencies and the Secretariat, to understand and respect this role. A more detailed listing of this role is set out in Annex 3.

Box 1 – Roles of OFPs

General Responsibilities:

- **Serve as the main contact of the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies and national stakeholders with respect to country environmental strategies and objectives, GEF project information and country GEF project reports.**
- **Consult with CSO and other key stakeholders in country on GEF matters as well as provide information on GEF activities, including project implementation, results and impacts.**
- **Convene and lead a National Steering Committee for GEF-related work as feasible and appropriate to the national situation.**
- **Raise awareness in country on GEF.**
- **Support mainstreaming of GEF objectives in national policy frameworks.**
- **Follow projects and participate in all stages throughout the project cycle.**
- **Serve as a reference and support on GEF issues for all stakeholders and project proponents.**

Country Support Program Responsibilities:

- **Convene a broad range of stakeholders and organize National Dialogues with the support of the GEF Secretariat.**
- **Actively participate in Expanded Constituency Workshops and in Constituency Meetings.**

Operational Responsibilities:

- **Represent the government to support and ensure country ownership in the GEF's work. To this end, work and coordinate with line ministries and stakeholders in choosing projects and programs, as well as the GEF Implementing Agency for each project.¹¹**
- **Take a decision on endorsing projects¹² before the Agencies submit the Project Identification Form (PIF) to the GEF Secretariat.**

¹¹ "The Agency will prepare a project concept at the request of and in consultation with relevant country institutions and other relevant partners" - GEF/OP/PL/01 – *Project and Program Cycle Policy*.

https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Project_Program_Cycle_Policy_OPPL01.pdf

¹² In almost all circumstances, the PIF submission must be accompanied by a corresponding Letter of Endorsement (LoE) from the OFP – *Ibid*.

- **Work with the Agencies in the preparation of the Project Identification Form (PIF) to request funding from the GEF, and to help respond to comments from the GEF Secretariat made as part of the project review sheet, where needed.**
- **Use the GEF Portal (once enabled for OFPs) to track GEF projects and programs in the country, in addition to tracking in more detail through Agency systems.**
- **Be fully informed by Agencies and the GEF Secretariat on projects, their development and execution.**
- **Collaborate on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) at project, program, and portfolio levels.**
- **Ensure GEF visibility policy is respected.**

19. Supporting OFPs to carry out their role: It is important to take steps to ensure that OFPs have the information and knowledge needed to carry out this role. To this end:

- a. The Secretariat will seek to provide OFPs with access to the new GEF Portal,¹³ and training on how it works, to enhance their capacity to view status of their projects in real-time
- b. OFPs also should consider carefully the importance of the decision to sign-off on the Letter of Endorsement, and the process for internal coordination and engagement with implementing and executing partners relating to the project thereafter.

20. Actions by GEF Agencies: Implementing Agencies have duties and responsibilities at all stages of the project cycle, as set out in the GEF Instrument and a range of GEF Policies noted above. The list below sets out some recommended practical steps and actions to be taken by Agencies in support of improved coordination and workflow, in light of the challenges noted above and in the context of their role as implementing agencies and partners:

- a. **Engage with OFPs throughout the project cycle**, including when a project is under consideration (concept and design stage) and during project preparation and implementation. Some important practical steps by Agencies include:
 - Early dialogue on ideas and options for projects, in consideration of the above. Without OFP consent, no further actions should be taken.

¹³ The GEF Portal is the updated system used by the Secretariat to receive and review project proposals from GEF Agencies, and to track and report on data, information and results relating to the entire GEF project portfolio. It is aligned to the GEF-7 programming and policy agenda, and its technology provide higher capacity than before automatically to read and generate a wide range of data relating to GEF projects and programs.

- Ensure coherent communication with governments from headquarters and local offices.
- Dialogue and cooperation on the approach to stakeholder engagement and actions to implement other GEF policies and priorities (each stage of the project).
- Provide regular updates on status and milestones of the project, including: (i) submission of a proposed project to the GEF Secretariat; (ii) comments received from the Secretariat; (iii) inclusion or not in a work program for approval by Council; (iv) progress and issues in project preparation; (v) consideration and endorsement/approval by the CEO; and (vi) progress and issue during project implementation.
- During project implementation, and in line with GEF Policy: (i) engage with executing partners, OFPs and government in developing project implementation reports and recommendations, including any needed adjustments; (ii) provide these reports to the governments and OFPs; (iii) work with consultants who know the country and its needs.

- b. **Work with OFPs to engage other interested and relevant officials in governments during the full project cycle.** As noted above, the appropriate engagement of other officials and stakeholders is a key challenge for coordination and workflow, and important to successful projects and country ownership.
- c. **Plan ahead-of-time for the deadlines in project processing at all stages** (see GEF Policy on Project and Program Cycle and its Guidelines). Be proactive in addressing issues or delays that may arise, and keep relevant partners, including OFPs, well informed. Annex 2 to this document provides a *Quick Reference Sheet for GEF Agency Project Managers* on important steps to these ends.
- d. **Respect and comply with the Policy on GEF Visibility.** Be proactive in enhancing the visibility of GEF engagement in project and program activities.
- e. **Continue the open channels of engagement with the GEF Secretariat,** including through the actions coordinated by the Secretariat as set out in Box 2, below.

21. Actions by the GEF Secretariat: the GEF Secretariat performs many duties and services in support of the Partnership and its many partners, as set out in the Instrument (paragraph 21) and a wide range of GEF policies and other documents. As a key part of further efforts to improve coordination and workflow, several practical steps and actions are highlighted in Box 2, below:

Box 2 – Actions by the Secretariat

The Secretariat plays a key role in coordination, efficiency and transparency in the GEF workflow. Some key actions (many mentioned elsewhere in this document) are highlighted below:

- Convene meetings and dialogues of the GEF Country Support Program.
- Serve as a contact point to support GEF OFPs and other national stakeholders in their engagement with the partnership, and be proactive in support of this engagement
- Maintain and disseminate materials and information about how the GEF works, including through the GEF website and digital and other media
- Continue developing the GEF Portal to enhance efficiency, transparency and information about the GEF project portfolio.
- Meet the 10-day service standard to respond to project and program proposals submitted by GEF Agencies.
- Convene periodic tele-conferences and Retreats with Agencies to facilitate workflow and operations and foster other steps to maintain and support open channels of communication in support of improved workflow.
- Follow up with Agencies and other Partners to apply the guidance and criteria set out for new programming modalities, including Impact Programs and more integrated approaches, in the GEF-7 Programming Directions document (these may evolve in future replenishments).
- Coordinate and participate in other key meetings to bring the Partnership together and perform its work, including meetings of the GEF Council, meetings associated with Conferences of the Parties for the Conventions which GEF serves, Introductory workshops for new Agencies and OFPs, and others.
- Support the core work of knowledge sharing in the Partnership, as well as effective and efficient communications about the work, stories and results of the GEF.

Working efficiently in an expanded partnership

- 22.** In recent years, the GEF Partnership has expanded the number of GEF Agencies from 10 to 18. This has brought significant benefits and value to the partnership, as well as certain challenges in the workflow.
- 23.** At the national level, governments may face additional challenges in selecting agency partners, and in managing these relationships. Many difficulties can arise for the three main partners, and especially for governments and agencies, when there is competition among agencies to gain support for projects in the context of finite resources and STAR allocations.

24. There are also challenges in addressing disruptions that may occur during the course of project preparation and implementation, which can slow down or bring to a halt needed steps to keep the workflow moving forward. These issues are heightened where there is a high-level of turnover among relevant staff and stakeholders.
25. For the partnership as a whole, this puts a premium on developing efficient and complementary ways to work together in support of the mandate and mission. The following practical steps can be taken in this regard:
- a. **Visually understandable information on the GEF project cycle:** The Secretariat will provide easy-to-follow information and illustrations of the GEF governance structure, project cycle and workflow, including through the website, GEF publications (e.g., the GEF from A to Z), videos (e.g., stories on GEF projects and programs), and e-learning materials.
 - b. **Harnessing the new GEF Portal:** The Secretariat will harness the technology of the new GEF Portal to generate an improved monitoring and information system about the work and progress of the project portfolio and its results; and transfer this dashboard information to the GEF website to assist the partnership
 - c. **Building capacity of newcomers, communicating best practices:** The Secretariat will continue to utilize the CSP for this purpose.
 - d. **Key partners working together to address slowdowns or disruptions:** In cases where projects may face delays or disruption due to unanticipated or external factors, it may be important for all three partners (the GEF Agency, the Focal Points, and the Secretariat) to meet together to help ensure that needed attention is being given to address and resolve concerns, as appropriate to the situation.
 - e. **Additional information on the institutional characteristics implementing agencies.** As requested by the Participants to the Replenishment, the Secretariat has prepared an information paper to assist governments in particular to understand better the institutional characteristics of the Agencies that comprise the current GEF Partnership. This may be a useful reference to governments and their OFPs in selecting agencies as partners for GEF-funded projects. The paper is [here].
 - f. **Practical steps - spreading the word:** The Secretariat and partners will present these standards (and practical steps) during CSP meetings, Agency retreats and introductory sessions for newcomers, etc., as part of the means to build shared understanding and capacity

Raising awareness of GEF funding in an activity; strategic communication

26. Another challenge arises from the fact that there often is a lack of information available to local stakeholders and beneficiaries to let them know that GEF funding is involved to support a particular project or activity. Visits to project sites have often shown, for example, that interested people and stakeholders are not aware that the GEF is providing support for the activities funded by the project.
27. This is not just an issue of building awareness of and support for the work of the GEF. Having this information is critical for stakeholders and affected people and communities to understand their rights and opportunities to engage with a project, and to help it become better and stronger.
28. The following practical steps should be taken to address these concerns:
 - a. **Build awareness of GEF involvement:** Implementing and executing partners of a project should respect and enforce the obligation to clearly indicate that the GEF is involved in a project in project-related materials made available in-country, as well as on their respective websites and in stakeholder engagement initiatives relating to the project. This is already a requirement under the Visibility Policy approved by Council,¹⁴ but further action is needed to achieve it. The Secretariat can reinforce these efforts through information on its website and other communication channels, but it is key that such information is built into the project-related materials and activities on location.
 - b. **Rights of GEF Stakeholders:** Implementing and executing partners should also be available to engage in dialogue with relevant stakeholders – including government officials and authorities – to provide further information on the rights and responsibilities of stakeholders in the activities and projects supported by the GEF. Annex 1 highlights key policies relevant to this engagement, including the policies on Stakeholder Engagement, Gender Equality and Minimum Environmental and Social Safeguards. The Guidelines to these policies, at www.thegef.org, Documents, Policies and Guidelines, provide additional guidance to support their implementation. These set out important rights and opportunities for engagement and are essential foundations of the Partnership.
 - c. **Strategic communication in support of Project objectives:** The design and eventual implementation of projects and programs should identify opportunities, where relevant, to include outreach and strategic communication to project stakeholders and beneficiaries to build awareness of the rationale behind project activities, and both the knowledge and momentum for actions to achieve

¹⁴ [insert reference to Visibility Policy approved by Council]

successful outcomes and results. This should be targeted to interested and affected stakeholders and other involved partners. These actions can support more efficient workflow by building support and greater ownership for project activities, along with better results.

Conclusions

- 29.** This document identifies practical actions to improve coordination and workflow in the GEF Partnership, with a focus on three main partners in this workflow: Participating Governments (especially Recipient Countries), GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat. The document will be further distributed and discussed in meetings and workshops of the Partnership, to support its implementation as important benchmarks for ongoing work.

Annex 1 – GEF Policies, Guidelines and Strategic Priorities – Reference List

The GEF works operates under its official charter, the GEF Instrument, and a range of policies, guidelines and priorities established by the GEF Council. These are linked and described on the GEF website [here]. Some key highlights are below:

- **Instrument Establishing the Restructured GEF** – the basic charter of the Partnership, setting out Basic Provisions, Governance and Structure, Principles of Decision-Making, Relationship and Cooperation with the Conventions, Cooperation with Other Bodies, Operational Modalities, Reporting and other Provisions.
- **GEF-7 Programming Strategy and Policy Recommendations** – the blueprint for programming and policy work in the GEF-7 cycle, beginning July 1, 2018
- **GEF 2020 Strategy** – the broad Strategic Priorities, Positioning and Core Operational Principles of the GEF, adopted in 2014 and laying the groundwork for the recently negotiated GEF-7 agenda
- **Agency Fee Policy** – rules governing fees given to agencies for their work as implementing agencies for GEF projects and programs
- **Co-Financing Policy** – rules and requirements relating to funding from sources other than GEF for projects and programs
- **Communication and Visibility Policy** – requirements to build visibility of GEF, communicate about its work, use its logo, keep its brand identity strong, and let partners know GEF funding is involved in activities and initiatives
- **Comparative Advantage of GEF Agencies** – setting out a proposed typology for the roles and comparative advantages of GEF agencies in relation to their preparation and management of GEF Projects (note: the partnership has expanded since development of this paper in 2007)
- **Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy** – states principles and other provisions that apply to GEF-funded operations, as well as criteria and minimum requirements for environmental and social safeguard systems that all GEF Partner Agencies must meet. Also sets out the basic provisions of the GEF [Conflict Resolution System](#). An updated Policy is for Council Review in December 2018.
- **Fiduciary Standards** – establishes minimum fiduciary standards that all GEF Agencies must meet to implement and/or execute GEF projects, based on recognized international practices. Standards address, *inter alia*, independence, transparency, monitoring and response, fiduciary responsibility, and value-for-money.
- **GEF IEO Monitoring and Evaluation Policy** – provides norms and standards for the GEF Secretariat and GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). It contains minimum requirements for monitoring and evaluation for GEF project design, application of M&E at the project level, and project evaluation.
- **Gender Equality Policy** - sets out the guiding principles and mandatory requirements for mainstreaming gender across the GEF's governance and operations with a view to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in support of the GEF's mandate to achieve global environmental benefits.

- **Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples** – reaffirms principles in GEF safeguards policy and provides additional clarity and guidance to strengthen GEF’s engagement with Indigenous Peoples in full respect for their rights.
- **Knowledge Management Action Plans and Initiatives** – coordinated effort of the Secretariat in partnership with Agencies and other stakeholders to capture, share and learn from experience and best practices in the Partnership, to inform future project work and policy dialogue.
- **Non-Grant Instruments Policy** – establishes the objectives for use of non-grant instruments, defines them for purposes of the GEF, and sets forth general principles and approaches for their use in GEF-financed projects.
- **Project and Program Cycle Policy** – sets out the rules governing the cycles for GEF-financed projects and programs, including the modalities, requirements and approval procedures for Full-Sized Projects (FSPs), Medium-Sized Projects (MSPs), Enabling Activities, Programs (and their child projects); implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and set-asides, commitments and transfer of funds.
- **Project Cancellation Policy** - sets out the principles, rules, and procedures to cancel or suspend projects or uncommitted funds approved as part of GEF program
- **Results Framework Guidelines** – introduce a simplified results framework to capture, monitor and report on the global environmental results of GEF projects and programs, with eleven core indicators and 30 sub-indicators. Contains technical definitions and methodological guidance for each.
- **Stakeholder Engagement Policy** - sets out the core principles and mandatory requirements for Stakeholder Engagement in GEF governance and operations, with a view to promoting transparency, accountability, integrity, effective participation and inclusion.
- **System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) Policy and Guidelines** - set out the key features and rules governing the application of STAR, a performance-based framework for the allocation of resources from the GEF Trust Fund to countries over a Replenishment Period. STAR aims to allocate resources to countries in a transparent and consistent manner based on global environmental priorities and country capacity, policies and practices relevant to the successful implementation of GEF projects and programs.

GEF Agency Project Managers

(a reference sheet)

Dear Project Manager: Congratulations! Now that you have secured GEF funds for your project please keep in mind that the project team will need to comply with (among other things) the following:

Communications

- ☐ **Comply with the GEF Visibility Policy:** All communications material that will be produced for or about a GEF funded project/program needs to acknowledge the role of the GEF, display the GEF logo, and when possible link back to <https://www.thegef.org> website. Communication material includes but is not limited to the following:
 - ☐ Digital products (project website, social media, presentations, multimedia);
 - ☐ News articles, press releases, publications, reports, knowledge products, blogs, etc.;
 - ☐ Promotional material (Banners, plaques, signs, folders, booths, gadgets);
 - ☐ Official project documents;
 - ☐ For more information check <https://www.thegef.org/documents/communication-and-visibility>
- ☐ **Share your communication products and plans with the GEF Secretariat :** We love receiving good content about our projects but it's so much easier when we know what you are planning with some notice! Ask your Comms specialists to liaise with the GEF Comms team. All the material we receive will be published on the GEF website and promoted on our channels.
- ☐ **Social Media:** Share, share, and share! But don't forget to tag us @theGEF.
- ☐ **I have other ideas or doubts:** Whenever in doubt or to propose new initiatives, contact us!
 - ☐ Robert Bisset, Head of Communications, rbisset@thegef.org;
 - ☐ Christian Hofer, Sr. Communications Officer, chofer@thegef.org;
 - ☐ Alua Kennedy, Social Media and Marketing, asatybaldina@thegef.org;
 - ☐ Olivier Besson, Program Assistant, obesson@thegef.org;

Operations – Project Deadlines and the GEF-7 Policy Agenda

- ☐ **Comply with GEF Policy and Guidelines on Project and Program Cycle:** Please be proactive in helping to move projects forward, in line with Policy deadlines to complete project preparation, implementation and closure. We need to work collectively to move projects ahead faster!
- ☐ **Comply with new GEF-7 Policies on Stakeholder Engagement and Gender Equality:** As noted in Annex 1, these new policies have key requirements that need to be met in the development, preparation and implementation of GEF-funded projects. They are core elements to achieving the mission and getting better results.

- ☐ **Implement the GEF-7 Priority on Knowledge Management (KM):** At PIF stage, GEF project proposals need to outline a KM approach to be further developed if the project is approved for the next stage. As indicated in the GEF Portal, seven key questions to consider are: (i) is there an overview of existing lessons and best practice that inform the project concept? (ii) are there plans to learn from relevant projects, programs, initiatives & evaluations? (iii) are there proposed processes to capture, assess and document info, lessons, best practice & expertise generated during implementation? (iv) are there proposed tools and methods for knowledge exchange, learning & collaboration (at both program and project levels if a PFD)? (v) are there proposed knowledge outputs to be produced and shared with stakeholders (at both program and project levels if a PFD)? (vi) is there a discussion on how knowledge and learning will contribute to overall project/program impact and sustainability? and (vii) are there plans for strategic communications?
- ☐ **For questions or additional information on any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact:**
 - ☐ Roland Sundstrom, Coordinator for GEF Policy, ksundstrom@thegef.org
 - ☐ Henry Salazar, Coordinator for Operations, ksundstrom@thegef.org
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Results

- ☐ **New Core Indicators for GEF-7:** thanks to the successful GEF-7 replenishment negotiations, the GEF now uses a new set of indicators to capture, track and report on the results of GEF-funded projects. This is reflected in the new Results Framework Guidelines noted in Annex 1. The corporate portfolio-level targets for each of these indicators is [here].
- ☐ **Entering results in the GEF Portal:** As reflected in the new GEF Portal, Agencies need to enter anticipated target results at the stages of PIF and (updated) CEO Endorsement, and then actual results at the time of the Mid-Term Review and Terminal Evaluation. The Secretariat is
- ☐ **Upcoming new Dashboard:** The Secretariat is working to develop an updated automated dashboard that is fed from the information in the new GEF Portal. As results are entered into the system, this new dashboard will provide a state-of-the-art means to display and keep track of our collective results in the Partnership.
- ☐ **The reason for our work:** The ultimate reason for our efforts to improve coordination and workflow, and deliver our mandates, is to get the best and strongest possible results for the global environment. The GEF-7 replenishment package put a laser-like focus on results, and we all need to as well in each aspect of our work for the partnership.
- ☐ **For questions or additional information, please do not hesitate to contact:**
 - ☐ Sonja Sabita Teelucksingh, GEF Results Team, steelucksingh@thegef.org
 - ☐ Peter Lallas, GEF Portal, plallas@thegef.org

Reporting and Project Implementation

- ☐ **Need to complete the Implementation Modules in the new GEF Portal:** The new GEF Portal contains entry fields that you must complete during of project implementation. These fields are aligned to the GEF Programming and Policy Agenda and requirements, and capture most of the information that was previously required for the GEF Annual Performance Monitoring Report (APMR) You must also upload the reports, including all Project Implementation Reports, the Mid-Term Review, and the Terminal Evaluation.
- ☐ **Comply with GEF IEO Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, and GEF Project and Program Cycle Policy:** These two policies contain more specific requirements for reporting and other actions during project implementation. Please be sure to have them close at hand.
- ☐ **For questions or additional information, please do not hesitate to contact:**
 - ☐ Omid Parhizkar, GEF Team on Monitoring and Performance, oparhizkar@thegef.org
 - ☐ Henry Salazar, Coordinator for Operations, hsalazar@thegef.org

Annex 3 – Role and Responsibilities of GEF Focal Points

Role and responsibilities of GEF Focal Points

The GEF is country-driven; therefore, GEF Focal Points play a critical role in the coordination of GEF matters at country level. These focal points work as a team to ensure that the views and interests of country they work for are adequately represented and considered in all the activities and projects of the GEF. They serve as the main counterpart for the GEF Secretariat, the Implementing Agencies, and all stakeholders.

There are two types of GEF Focal Points: Political (PFP) and Operational (OFP). All the GEF member countries have Focal Points. A country can choose to nominate the same individual to be both the political and the operational focal point, although the widespread practice is to have different officials performing these roles. They may be in the same line ministry or in different ministries of the Government.

In general, recipient countries have PFPs and OFPs, while developed countries only have PFPs because they do not have projects in their territories. Nevertheless, several developed countries have designated as OFPs those officials that follow GEF issues together with the PFP.

Many PFPs and OFPs have also been designated as Council Members or Alternate Council Members for their Constituencies.

Political Focal Points

Political Focal Points are concerned primarily with issues related to GEF governance and policies, and the relations between member countries, the GEF Council, and the GEF Assembly. PFPs work together with and provide political support to OFPs within their country's administrations.

Specific responsibilities of Political Focal Points (with further development below):

- Stay abreast of GEF governance matters, informing interested parties, including convention focal points, about GEF policies, governance issues, and related activities.
- Serve as liaisons on GEF governance matters within their countries, with the GEF Constituencies to which their countries belong, and with the GEF Council Members representing their respective Constituencies.
- Communicate the views of their governments, as well as give comments and suggestions on the GEF's existing or proposed policies to the GEF Secretariat.
- Actively participate in Expanded Constituency Workshops and Constituency Meetings.

Operational Focal Points

Operational Focal Points are concerned primarily with issues related to projects and the programming of the resources available through the GEF, including the focal areas with STAR allocations (CC, DB, LD), focal areas without STAR allocations (IW, C&W) and enabling activities.

OFPs ensure country ownership, working with line ministries and stakeholders, by setting priorities and choosing projects and programs, as well as the GEF Implementing Agency they will work with on each project. The use of GEF resources is the responsibility of the country and the OFP is the official who exercises that responsibility.

Specific responsibilities of Political Focal Points (with further development below):

General Responsibilities:

- Serve as the main contact of the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies and national stakeholders with respect to country environmental strategies and objectives, GEF project information and country GEF project reports.
- Consult with CSO and other key stakeholders in country on GEF matters as well as provide information on GEF activities, including project implementation, results and impacts.
- Convene a broad range of stakeholders and organize National Dialogues with the support of the GEF Secretariat.
- Raise awareness in country on GEF.
- Support mainstreaming of GEF objectives in national policy frameworks.
- Follow projects and participate in all stages throughout the project cycle.
- Serve as a reference and support on GEF issues for all stakeholders and project proponents.

Country Support Program Responsibilities:

- Request and organize National Dialogues.
- Actively participate in Expanded Constituency Workshops and Constituency Meetings.

Operational Responsibilities:

- Represent the government to support and ensure country ownership in the GEF's work. To this end, work and coordinate with line ministries and stakeholders in choosing projects and programs, as well as the GEF Implementing Agency for each project.
- Take a decision on endorsing projects before the Agencies submit the Project Identification Form (PIF) to the GEF Secretariat.
- Work with the Agencies in the preparation of the Project Identification Form (PIF) to request funding from the GEF, and to help respond to comments from the GEF Secretariat made as part of the project review sheet, where needed.

- Use the GEF Portal (once enabled for OFPs) to track GEF projects and programs in the country, in addition to tracking in more detail through Agency systems.
- Be fully informed by Agencies and the GEF Secretariat on projects, their development and execution.
- Collaborate on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) at project, program, and portfolio levels.
- Ensure GEF visibility policy is respected.

Roles explained

Political Focal Points

Stay abreast of GEF governance matters, informing interested parties, including convention focal points, about GEF policies, governance issues, and related activities.

The original focal points of the GEF were all political in nature as they had, in most cases, been the negotiators of the restructuring of the GEF. Their role continues to be relevant as they are usually well versed especially on Governance issues and Convention negotiations. Negotiations at the Convention CoPs are very important as they provide guidance to the GEF. Therefore, keeping close contact with the delegates to the CoPs is essential for a coordinated and consistent position of each country in the GEF and the related fora.

Serve as liaisons on GEF governance matters within their countries, with the GEF Constituencies to which their countries belong, and with the GEF Council Members representing their respective Constituencies.

Following from the previous point, there are times when the Governance issues, in particular the designation of a Council Member and Alternate Council Member for the Constituency, must be considered. In this context it must be recalled that these positions on the Council are selected on a personal basis because these persons represent the full Constituency and not only their own country.

Communicate the views of their governments, as well as give comments and suggestions on the GEF's existing or proposed policies to the GEF Secretariat.

The GEF Council approves and amends policies regularly at the Council Meetings. While this task is shared with the OFP, the PFP can provide insights and also serve as the conduit to communicate the country's views to the Secretariat.

Actively participate in Expanded Constituency Workshops and Constituency Meetings.

PFPs and OFPs are invited and supported to participate in the GEF Constituency Meetings and the Expanded Constituency Workshops. Constituency Meetings primarily discuss the documents to be considered at the upcoming Council and serve to provide the Council Member and

Alternate with the views and guidance needed to represent the interests of all members of the Constituency at the Council meeting.

ECWs provide capacity development on GEF and related issues, as well as an opportunity for team building as GEF focal points are joined by Convention Focal Points and Civil Society representatives from each country. The understanding and collaboration developed during the ECWs carries over into the work back home, even beyond the GEF issues themselves.

Operational Focal Points

General Responsibilities

Serve as the main contact of the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies and national stakeholders with respect to country environmental strategies and objectives, GEF project information and country GEF project reports.

OFPs serve as the main contact for the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies and other stakeholders. They keep all parties involved in the project constantly updated to ensure that information is received by the right person. This assures that they are aware of the status of projects, including details about project implementation, results and impacts.

Consult with CSO and other key stakeholders in country on GEF matters as well as provide information on GEF activities, including project implementation, results and impacts.

OFPs are the in-country facilitator contact point for consultations with national partners (including CSOs) and other relevant stakeholders on GEF operational matters. Hence, they should ensure that they are well up to date and versed on all projects. They should ensure that views of all parties are taken into account when decisions are being taken.

Convene and lead a National Steering Committee for GEF-related work as feasible and appropriate to the national situation.

The most successful OFPs are those that have the institutional support of a National Steering Committee (or its equivalent) where the main line ministries involved in GEF projects are represented. This allows for regular consultation and information sharing. It also provides for coherence and consistency in decision making. This OFPs have the necessary support and consensus around the decisions they take.

Raise awareness in country on GEF.

GEF projects are implemented by the Implementing Agencies and executed by, in most cases, national agencies. Thus, the GEF contribution is most often not known or recognized.

OFPs are expected to highlight, in every possible instance (speeches, events, presentations, project launchings etc.), the role and contribution of the GEF to the achievement of national

priorities, to the financing and realization of GEF funded projects and to the country's compliance with its obligations under the Conventions.

Support mainstreaming of GEF objectives in national policy frameworks.

OFPs should ensure that their project initiatives are aligned with GEF policies and strategies. OFPs must guarantee that these initiatives are consistent with their own national strategies/plans and that they contribute to fulfilling their commitments under the relevant multilateral environmental agreements, as applicable.

Follow projects and participate in all stages throughout the project cycle.

OFPs have the right and the obligation to be informed and involved in projects throughout the life of the projects. This involves being informed and consulted whenever necessary and certainly at the main milestones of a project. To this effect they should have good coordination with the executing partners, especially other line ministries; they should have the support of GEF Agencies and of the GEF Secretariat.

OFPs should be members of project steering committees.

OFPs should receive early copies and be provided an opportunity to comment on annual Project Information Reports (PIR), Mid Term Evaluations (MTR), Terminal Evaluations (TE) and financial reports.

Serve as a reference and support on GEF issues for all stakeholders and project proponents.

OFPs are expected to be open to all consultations by any national stakeholder. They should respond to all queries and proposals coming from any source.

Country Support Programme Activities

Convene a broad range of stakeholders and organize National Dialogues with the support of the GEF Secretariat.

The National Dialogues serve multiple purposes. Early in the replenishment cycle, they enable countries to conduct a broad consultation process, including government line ministries and agencies, involved in national GEF activities, to set priorities for GEF resource programming as well as discussing specific project ideas.

In addition, and at any time, these National Dialogues provide targeted and flexible support for the country's government ministries and agencies, NGOs, communities, academic and research institutions, the private sector, as well as its partners and donors to share information, experiences and concerns. They can also serve to validate and disseminate policies, regulations and priorities.

For these National Dialogues OFPs should:

- Request the Dialogue to the Secretariat.
- Prepare a draft agenda, share and discuss it with a wide variety of partners at national and international level.
- Create a list of participants.
- Work with the Secretariat to organize the logistics.
- Coordinate with the GEF Secretariat and liaise with GEF Agency country offices to organize optional project site visits.
- Invite GEF Agencies to participate
- At the end of the Dialogue, should discuss and agree on follow-up activities.
- Submit a brief report on the results of the dialogue.

Actively participate in Expanded Constituency Workshops and Constituency Meetings

Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECW)

The objective of the ECW is to keep the GEF national focal points, convention focal points and civil society, abreast of GEF strategies, policies and procedures and to encourage coordination. These meetings will also allow interaction with staff from the GEF Secretariat (including technical staff) and the GEF Agencies to discuss priority issues, review policies and procedures, and share lessons and experiences from the development and implementation of GEF projects and their integration within national policy frameworks. The planning, organization, and execution of the ECWs are the responsibility of the GEF Secretariat team.

It is expected that OFPs will contribute ideas that would help develop a suitable agenda that will directly address the needs and requests of focal points. It is also expected for participants to play an active role during the workshop discussions.

Constituency Meetings

The objective of a Constituency Meeting is to enable the Council Members and Alternates of recipient countries to meet with their constituency partners to discuss matters of common interest, especially Council documents and draft decisions, and to define constituency positions for Council meetings.

These meetings also provide an opportunity to review country and constituency coordination issues, to enhance communication and outreach efforts, to decide upon constituency governance issues, such as the order in which countries will assume Council Member and Alternate seats (rotation agreements) and discuss implementation of GEF projects and share lessons learned.

Constituency Meetings will be organized at the request of the Council Member. A quorum of 70% representation of countries is required. GEF Secretariat will support the logistics of the meeting. Only the GEF Political and Operational focal points of the Constituency's member countries will receive GEF financing.

Operational Responsibilities

Represent the government to support and ensure country ownership in the GEF's work. To this end, work and coordinate with line ministries and stakeholders in choosing projects and programs, as well as the GEF Implementing Agency for each project

OFPs are responsible for ensuring country ownership. To this effect they decide which project ideas will be pursued. They choose the Implementing Agency that will assist them in preparation and submission of the project to the GEF Secretariat.

To this effect they work with relevant line ministries and stakeholders. The best practice in this regard is to use the GEF National Steering Committee as mentioned above.

Take a decision on endorsing projects before the Agencies submit the Project Identification Form (PIF) to the GEF Secretariat.

Once the PIF is prepared to their satisfaction, the OFPs sign a letter of endorsement that will accompany the submission made by the Agency. These letters serve to confirm that GEF project proposals are consistent with country priorities and with the commitments they made under the global environment conventions. The project cannot be considered and reviewed by the GEF Secretariat without this endorsement. It is expected that when a PIF is endorsed, the project idea has been widely discussed with the appropriate stakeholders.

OFPs are under no obligation to sign a letter of endorsement until they are satisfied with the Project Information Form (PIF) that will be submitted.

OFPs are under no obligation to provide these letters in advance, nor are they required to guarantee a project or a full portfolio to any particular Agency. OFPs should not be subject to undue pressure in this regard.

OFPs should ensure that their superiors are well informed of this process to ensure consistency in the approach.

The issue of co-financing is often a source of misunderstanding. The concept is presented in GEF Council documents. The aspirational level of 7 to 1 mentioned in the replenishment documents does not apply to individual projects or countries. It applies only to the whole GEF portfolio for the full replenishment period. Each project's co-financing will be evaluated by the GEF Secretariat on a case by case basis. Agencies are required to help countries to identify sources of co-financing.

Whenever, questions, concerns or difference of views exist, the OFPs should seek advice, clarification and guidance from the GEF Secretariat.

Work with the Agencies in the preparation of the Project Identification Form (PIF) to request funding from the GEF, and to help respond to comments from the GEF Secretariat made as part of the project review sheet, where needed.

Once the decision is taken, the OFP should work closely with the Implementing Agency in preparation of the PIF. This can be done by assigning a country official to work closely with the Agency staff member preparing the document.

The GEF Secretariat reviews the PIF and sends review sheets, often, requesting additional information or clarification. The Secretariat should make those review sheets available to OFPs who, in turn, should work with the Agencies to reply promptly to any comments or requests. Many times the information requested can only come from the country and the OFP is responsible for helping to obtain that information.

Use the GEF Portal (once enabled for OFPs) to track GEF projects and programs in the country, in addition to tracking in more detail through Agency systems.

The newly created GEF Portal provides a user-friendly on-line interface to allow direct entry and review and approval of projects and programs proposed for funding by the GEF. The Portal is designed to enable improved operational efficiency, better data quality, enhanced implementation of GEF Policies, and better capture of results data. It will also enhance transparency and public access to data and documents through the GEF website. In the near future, OFPs will have access to the Portal to be able to follow the evolution of their projects and to see all related documents.

OFPs should use this tool (once enabled for them) to access documents and follow the process. GEF Secretariat can provide support as required.

Be fully informed by Agencies and the GEF Secretariat on projects, their development and execution.

OFPs have the right to be fully informed on GEF projects at any time by the GEF Secretariat, the Implementing Agencies and the Executing Agencies. No information can be denied; with only exception of private sector proprietary information, as appropriate.

Collaborate on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) at project, program, and portfolio levels

In line with the GEF operational principles and the increased GEF emphasis on country ownership, OFPs have an active role in M&E activities.

In this respect, OFPs will be fully consulted and informed by the GEF Agencies and the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) about the planning, execution, and results of any evaluation performed in the country. Staff members of the relevant government institutions will be expected to assist with the evaluations by responding promptly and fully to the IEO's

requests for information relating to GEF projects, portfolios, and policies as well as sharing relevant experiences.

In addition, OFPs are responsible for following up with the evaluation recommendations related to GEF matters. The OFP also plays a key role in consulting with and keeping all national stakeholders informed on, and involved in the plans, implementation, and results of country-related GEF M&E activities, as may be required.

Upon specific request, the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Agencies and the GEF IEO will endeavor to provide support to OFPs on M&E activities.

Ensure GEF visibility policy is respected

The visibility of the GEF contributions to a country's environmental objectives is vital to ensure that the GEF is known, recognized and funded. Therefore, the Council adopted a decision on Enhancing the Visibility of the GEF contained in Document GEF/C.40/08. Operational Focal Points are expected to know the content of this decision, to promote its implementation and to inform the GEF Secretariat when it is not being respected so that the Secretariat may take appropriate action.