



GEF/C.70/Inf.07
November 18, 2025

70th GEF Council Meeting
December 15-19, 2025
Virtual Meeting

**PROGRESS REPORT
ON ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY
AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PROGRESS AND RESULTS	5
<i>Quality at Entry</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Quality at Implementation</i>	<i>7</i>
HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRESS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES	12
SECRETARIAT’S ACTIONS TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY	17
<i>Technical support to strengthen reflections of gender perspectives in GEF policy, programming and Conventions reports</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Capacity-building and awareness-raising to broaden understanding of gender mainstreaming and advance women’s empowerment in projects and programs.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Enhancing collaboration and partnerships to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment</i>	<i>20</i>
CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD	22

INTRODUCTION

1. The GEF Policy on Gender Equality (hereafter the Policy), approved by the 53rd GEF Council, introduced a set of principles and requirements to mainstream gender in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of GEF programs and projects. The thrust of the Policy was towards a gender-responsive or “do good” approach. The Policy further requested the Secretariat to track and report annually to the Council on progress in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in GEF programs and projects, and on the Secretariat’s contributions towards these goals.

2. This report follows the structure of the previous year’s reports. It updates on the progress in integrating gender perspectives at the project design stage and features good practice examples on gender mainstreaming and innovations empowering women at the frontline of environmental stewardship. It presents key lessons learned in the implementation of selected projects as reported in terminal evaluations. The report also highlights the work undertaken by the Secretariat to support the implementation of the Policy and promote women’s empowerment and gender equality with GEF partners. The concluding section outlines a way forward for the GEF Secretariat as it continues to lead in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the realization of global environmental benefits.

3. The findings of this report corroborate those of the earlier reports.¹ All projects reviewed for this reporting period complied with the Policy, and in addition, integrated actions in project components to address gender inequalities and empower women. This was realized in part with the GEF Secretariat’s rigorous review of projects and programs to ensure compliance, as well as regular engagement with the gender leads of GEF implementing agencies through the GEF Gender Partnership.

4. The good practice examples and reports submitted showed evidence of how mainstreaming gender ensures better outcomes for women and the communities, and in advancing gender-responsive environmental policies and actions on the ground. The key messages that stood out from the examples and reports include:

- ✓ **Projects must be intentional in the consideration of gender equality** from the outset, and have in place a gender strategy, action plan, expertise and resources to implement gender-related activities.

¹ 1st Progress Report: GEF/C.56/Inf.03 is available [here](#); 2nd Progress Report: GEF/C.58/Inf.05 is available [here](#); 3rd Progress Report: GEF/C.60/Inf.09 is available [here](#); 4th Progress Report: GEF/C.63/Inf.07 is available [here](#); 5th Progress Report: GEF/C.66/Inf.07 is available [here](#); 6th Progress Report: GEF/C.68/Inf.07 is available [here](#).

- ✓ **Projects that successfully implemented their gender-specific objectives had enabling mechanisms** such as gender-responsive management standard, guidance note or guidelines on how to incorporate gender, and capacity development plan on gender mainstreaming for project staff and executing partners.
- ✓ Develop a project-specific **gender action plan** to facilitate the **integration of women's empowerment and gender equality measures into project components**.
- ✓ **Gender-responsive measures should go beyond the participation metrics and include targeted financial resources, stronger social safeguards, and deeper engagement with traditional leadership** to address systemic barriers to women's meaningful and equal participation in the household and in the community. **Projects should focus on strengthening women's economic resilience through more structured market linkages, improved access to credit, and continued capacity-building** including on financial literacy and leadership roles for women in natural resource governance.
- ✓ **Project interventions should be linked to a broader national gender strategy** to ensure sustainability.

5. **In the coming year**, the GEF Secretariat's efforts to promote gender equality in its projects and operations will be supported by the following actions:

- *Provision of technical support to integrate gender perspectives in GEF policy and mainstream gender in programs.* The GEF Secretariat will continue to support the strengthening of gender equality considerations through the provision of technical support to policy development or revision, and in the process of the development of GEF-9 results management framework to capture results in advancing women's empowerment. The Secretariat will gather qualitative and quantitative evidence on contribution to social, economic and environmental benefits of incorporating substantive gender equality and social inclusion approaches in GEF projects.
- *Building capacity and raise awareness on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment.* The GEF Secretariat will organize dedicated learning and capacity-building sessions for GEF staff on the substantive integration of gender equality in GEF projects. Through the GEF Gender Partnership (GGP) Community of Practice (CoP) on Gender Equality Integration in GEF-8 IPs and select impact programs, the GEF Secretariat will lead in convening meetings and capacity-building workshop or awareness-raising session of the GGP CoP on Gender Equality Integration at the sidelines of GEF-organized meetings, including the IP Global Workshop and the 8th GEF Assembly.

- *Enhancing collaboration and partnerships to advance gender equality and social inclusion.* The GEF Secretariat will continue to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment through partnerships and enhanced collaboration with networks including the GEF Gender Partnership, the UN Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), women’s caucuses and gender networks of the Conventions, the Women Land Rights Initiative, gender teams of the Conventions that the GEF serves, and gender leads of other multilateral climate funds. The Secretariat will collaborate with these partners through joint events, thematic discussions, joint research and publication, and joint communications pieces. The GEF Gender Partnership has a planned workshop on the sidelines of the 8th GEF Assembly. The Secretariat will support commemoration events including the International Year of Women Farmers (2026) led by FAO.
- *Connecting with projects and stakeholders on the ground.* The GEF Secretariat will engage with women project beneficiaries during GEF’s Expanded Constituency Workshops and in field trips organized at these ECWs. Dialogue with project teams and women engaged in the projects are key inputs to GEF’s compilation of best practices and lessons learned on empowering women and promoting gender equality in GEF projects. As an innovative GEF-funded project focused on promoting women’s leadership, the Secretariat will closely engage with the implementing and executing agencies in the regional convenings of the Women Ocean Guardians project and related stakeholder consultations.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

Quality at Entry

6. The analysis of progress on gender equality in projects and programs at the Project Information Form (PIF) stage considered under the work program June 2025 and December 2025, as well as those that have been submitted for CEO Endorsement/Approval for the period November 2024 to October 2025 continues to demonstrate good compliance with the principles and requirements set out in the Policy. Gender dimensions were reflected in the projects reviewed, with indicative plans to carry out gender analyses and develop gender action plans. Projects that have reached CEO Endorsement/Approval have integrated gender perspectives in the project components and outputs, as informed by gender analyses conducted. Gender Action Plans accompanied the submission, together with results framework that included gender-sensitive indicators aligned with the Gender Action Plans.

7. The substantive consideration of gender perspectives in the PIFs underpins the meaningful integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment in CEO

Endorsement/Approval documents. The Secretariat reviews the integration of gender dimensions in project design with the view to ensuring compliance with the Policy and GEF guidance. The Secretariat ensures that the PIF incorporates findings from the gender analysis in the project description and in the project components and commits to ensuring that gender indicators developed in the gender action plan will be integrated into the project's results framework and will be monitored and reported on. The Secretariat's review also ensures that women, women's groups and gender experts are engaged meaningfully in the development of plans, policies and related actions to achieve the environmental objectives of the project, and that they are represented in boards, steering committees and related decision-making bodies. Project components aimed at providing socio-economic benefits should benefit women equally.

8. At the CEO Endorsement/Approval stage, projects should have undertaken a detailed gender analysis, developed a gender action plan and a gender-responsive results framework that includes gender-sensitive indicators. Projects are also asked to specify whether the project addresses inequalities observed in any of the three domains: participation in natural resources governance; socio-economic benefits; and access to natural resources.

9. For the period November 2024 to October 2025, 261 projects were reviewed.² All projects included gender-sensitive indicators in their Results Frameworks. 99.6 percent included measures to improve women's participation and decision-making in natural resource governance; 91.6 percent targeted socio-economic benefits and services for women, and 62.8 percent aimed to promote more equitable access to and control over natural resources.³

10. The gender analyses considered gender inequalities observed in the communities where the projects are going to be implemented, for example, legal or cultural constraints to women's participation, access to and ownership of resources, and receipt and control of economic benefits. The gender analysis informs the development of a project's gender action plan and the specific project outcomes, outputs and activities.

11. Projects' gender action plans or gender strategy included specific actions to address how the identified gender inequalities would be addressed through ensuring women's access to financial resources or providing dedicated support for women and women-led enterprises, ensuring that women, women's groups and gender experts are included in decision-making bodies or governance mechanisms, holding regular awareness-raising, dedicated training and

² These do not include Enabling Activities (EA) and Capacity-Building Initiative for Transparency projects (CBIT).

³ The percentage for equitable access to and control over natural resources appears low in comparison to the other measures as ninety-four projects marked this as not applicable (NA). 3 reported no contribution in this area.

capacity-enhancement for project stakeholders. Gender action plans also included information on the development and dissemination of gender-sensitive knowledge products or publications that integrate gender mainstreaming best practices. Increasingly, gender action plans include gender-sensitive indicators and are budgeted. Reporting on gender action plans were also integrated in the M&E component of the projects.

12. Project interventions to advance gender equality at the institutional and governance levels include support for national financing facilities and private-sector partners to ensure that women are able to access finance and grants dedicated to women-led initiatives, and piloting blended-finance models that strengthen women's participation in technology transfer and green value chains. Project beneficiaries of capacity-building support ensure 50-50 women and men participation, with some quotas reserved for women leadership positions in decision-making bodies. Projects facilitated women's meaningful engagements by understanding and accommodating community dynamics, such as engaging men and other community leaders as well, being flexible with the time of the day where meetings are held and providing childcare services in consideration of women's household roles, addressing women's safety and sanitation needs in project sites, among others.

13. Overall, the CEO Endorsement/Approval documents showed marked improvements in the reflection of gender equality considerations. This could be attributed to the GEF Secretariat's consistent application of the GEF Policy on Gender Equality and diligent review of projects from a gender perspective. The GEF Secretariat's regular and continued interaction with GEF Agencies, including through the GEF Gender Partnership, was a contributing factor. In addition, GEF Agencies have adopted more rigorous and ambitious corporate gender equality strategy, with some having gender markers or scorecards. Finally, the Conventions that the GEF serves have gender action plans, incorporate gender perspectives in their thematic discussions, and provide gender-specific mandates for agencies and the GEF to respond to.

Quality at Implementation

14. To get a better understanding of gender-related results of projects during implementation or at a project's completion, a review of selected gender reports from GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects for the period October 16, 2024 to October 15, 2025 was undertaken. A summary of good practices and lessons learned on the gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment aspects of some of the projects are presented below.

- The project *Securing the Future of Peru's Natural Protected Areas* (ID 9374) underscored in its terminal evaluation the importance of strengthening the capacity and understanding of

the main executing agency on gender mainstreaming in the project's activities and having a gender-responsive management standard and instruments. Employing adaptive management, the project, which was developed before the GEF updated its Gender Equality Policy (2017), had to introduce changes to its Gender Action Plan and gender approach throughout the project's life cycle. The evaluation underscored among its notable results putting in place gender-responsive financial mechanisms and the institutionalization of the gender approach in the management of the NPAs. These management plans have become a reference for future initiatives in other protected areas, promoting the participation of women and strengthening their roles. The development of specific protocols that integrated the gender perspective into the demarcation process allowed for greater involvement of women in these key territorial management activities.

- The project *Tashkent Accelerating Investments in Low-Emission Vehicles (TAILEV)* (ID 10282), in its MTR highlighted that the project's inclusive and gender-sensitive approach including the recruitment of female bus drivers and enforcing a gender-sensitive design of the electric bus infrastructure, broke traditional gender roles and fostered equity within the transport workforce. Complementary efforts that ensured the implementation of gender-specific actions included drafting a Gender Strategy for 2024-2027, appointing a full-time Gender and Safeguards Officer, and organizing regular gender mainstreaming training for project staff. A missed opportunity that was flagged in the MTR was leveraging the expertise within gender-specific bodies of the Ministry of Transport of Uzbekistan, in particular, the Gender Committee and Consultative Group. The project MTR noted that enhanced collaboration with the MoT Gender Committee and Consultative Group could have enhanced the outcomes and impact of the project's gender-specific interventions.
- Gender equality considerations were embedded in the design of the *Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)* (ID 10755), as the project acknowledged that the scope of work of the TNFD provides ample opportunities to effectively integrate women in senior positions in financial institutions - the primary target audience for the TNFD. To achieve the desired gender equality goals, the project developed a Gender Action Plan that specified actions for every component of the TNFD, and with Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) indicators that allowed for tracking of results. Most of the actions aimed at equal participation of women and men in the TNFD Secretariat team, participating partners, and external stakeholders, to ensure that the outputs and actions of the TNFD (e.g., overall framework, tools, and outreach materials) proactively considered gender equality. Implementation progress on gender were included in the project's six-month and yearly progress reports. With 94 percent of the gender-specific targets met in year 1, the

project updated the Gender Action Plan that allowed the development of knowledge products to assist organizations in the gender-responsive application of the TNFD framework. In year 2, 100 percent of the gender-specific targets have been implemented. The project's value-added included designing a TNFD platform that enabled the collection of sex-disaggregated data for the framework users or website users. In an analysis of gender-related data throughout the project and in events, the project noted that gender balance was achieved, with some instances where there were more women than men participating in events.

- The *Integrated Management of Peatland Landscapes in Indonesia (IMPLI)* (ID 9239, MTR) provided a good example of adaptive management to realize better results on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment objectives. At design, the project set a target of 40 percent women beneficiaries. Gender-specific measures included involving at least 40 percent of women in small business enterprises, agricultural demonstration plots and community consultations. At the institutional level, women occupied 55 percent of decision-making positions in the National Project Management Office (PMO), as well as at the district level, underscoring the project's commitment to promoting women's leadership. Despite the positive actions taken, women's actual engagement in community planning, decision-making, and livelihood activities remained low. Assessments of benefit-sharing arrangements revealed unequal distribution, with 80 percent of direct benefits from community working plans received by men, compared to only 20 percent by women. The project attributed the gap in advancing the implementation of the project's gender-specific actions to the absence of gender and social inclusion specialists for the project. To ensure that the project's gender-specific goals are achieved, the project would engage gender specialists and designate gender focal points to undertake a gender analysis and formulate a comprehensive gender strategy and action plan that would identify initiatives across all project components to enhance women's participation in community planning, decision-making, and livelihood activities. Incorporating gender indicators into the monitoring and Project Implementation Report (PIR) was seen as essential for assessing progress and making informed adjustments to reach the project's gender-specific targets.
- The project *Transitioning to an urban green economy and delivering global environmental benefits*, (ID 10467 (MTR)) engaged women's organizations, gender experts, community group leaders, and representatives of women machineries at the national and municipal levels, and related government institutions at the outset, ensuring that the gender analysis captured all perspectives and is context- and project-specific. The Gender Action plan was then developed, with key gender aspects integrated into the project document and the

project results framework. The implementing agency categorized the project as Gen2: project that creates enabling conditions for gender transformation, with actions that ensured the equal representation and participation of women in decision-making processes, creation of new employment opportunities for women, and related training programs and knowledge management activities. During implementation, the project updated the Gender Action Plan twice to adapt to the challenges it encountered in the field and allowed for the adequate reflection of gender equality and women's empowerment in all components of the project. Among the updates included adjusting the indicator relating to hectares restored replacing the initial "number of ha identified by OFIM for landscape management tools" with "number of ha in the hands of women where landscape management tools are being used", to better track gender aspects. Another transformative aspect of the project is effecting changes at the legislative and regulatory level. The project team worked with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Environment and Energy to develop a "subsidy for poor women" to access public transport.

15. **Key points from the MTR and TE reports** include the following:

- ✓ Substantive **integration of gender perspectives** must be **intentional, systematic** and be done at the earliest stages of the project design. Projects reported adopting a pro-active approach, getting the support of the project team and having a detailed plan and resources to embed gender perspectives throughout the project cycle.
- ✓ Meaningful and representative **stakeholder engagement** is **key to developing a gender analysis** that reflects all perspectives and is context- and project-specific. One project highlighted the engagement of women's organizations, gender experts, community group leaders, and representatives of women machineries at the national and municipal levels, and related government institutions at the outset, which allowed the project to gather key information to develop a project-specific gender analysis.
- ✓ Developing a project-specific **gender action plan** facilitated the **integration of women's empowerment and gender equality measures into project components**. Gender aspects were embedded in all relevant outputs, included in the project results framework and were reported regularly.
- ✓ Projects reported some **enabling mechanisms** that ensured the successful implementation of the gender actions plans. These included having a gender-responsive management standard and gender implementation strategy, developing a guidance note or guidelines on how to incorporate gender and strengthening the capacity and understanding of the main

executing agency on gender mainstreaming in the project's activities through webinars, thematic clinics or trainings and dedicated technical support.

- ✓ Projects underscored the importance of appointing a **full-time Gender and Safeguards Officer**. This should be supported by regular project staff training and awareness-raising on the project's gender equality and women's empowerment aspects and monthly check-ins with project staff on implementation of the gender action plan and other gender-related measures.
- ✓ **Employing adaptive management** allowed projects to introduce changes to the Gender Action Plan and gender approach. One project reported that having met 94 percent of its implementation progress on gender in year 1 allowed for inclusion of additional activities such as the development of gender-specific knowledge products that would support project beneficiary organizations to implement gender-responsive financing framework.
- ✓ Some projects reported that having **affirmative actions** were necessary to break traditional gender roles, including the employment of women in formal occupations that were customarily occupied by men. Other key interventions highlighted as impactful included requiring women's representation and leadership in the governance and decision-making bodies of the project and in committees established by the projects. Having targeted interventions to facilitate women's access to financial mechanisms, ownership of land and other productive assets and being attentive to their language and mobility needs were also emphasized.

16. A number of concrete recommendations from the lessons and gaps highlighted in the reports reviewed are presented below, as inputs to the development of strategies, approaches, templates, guidance, and policy, by the Secretariat, in cooperation with Implementing Agencies.

- ✓ **Engage a gender specialist or a social inclusion specialist** in the early stages of the project's phase, and assign a dedicated staff or team responsible for ensuring that the project's gender-specific actions and goals are implemented, monitored and reported on. The gender or social inclusion specialist will provide technical advice, training and other capacity-building support to project teams and executing partners. The gender and social inclusion specialist will be responsible for the incorporation of gender indicators in the project results framework to facilitate the monitoring of progress and to make informed adjustments to reach the project's gender-specific targets.
- ✓ **Ensure and/or enhance coordination with gender experts of the implementing agencies as well as executing agencies.** In the absence of plans or mechanisms to connect with these

relevant gender experts built into the project design, some projects reported missing opportunities to tap on expertise within gender-specific bodies in technical and scientific ministries or gender committees/women's machineries, which could have enhanced the outcomes and impact of the project's gender-specific interventions, and ensured their sustainability beyond the project's term.

- ✓ **Gender-responsive measures should go beyond the participation metrics and include targeted financial resources, stronger social safeguards, and deeper engagement with traditional leadership** to address systemic barriers to women's meaningful and equal participation in the household and in the community. **Projects should focus on strengthening women's economic resilience through more structured market linkages, improved access to credit, and continued capacity-building** including on financial literacy and leadership roles for women in natural resource governance.
- ✓ To ensure that the project's gender-specific measures and gains in empowering women are sustained in the longer term, **projects should address socio-cultural barriers and norms** that hinder women's engagement and contributions to the project. The measures introduced by the project **should be linked or integrated into a broader and nationwide gender strategy**, with adequate resources and institutional support. Projects would benefit from adopting human rights-based approaches that capture the needs of historically marginalized groups. This would encompass a **whole-of-society approach** with implications for the sustainability of future interventions.
- ✓ The **absence of sex-disaggregated data and other reliable baselines** was mentioned as a limiting factor in determining the project's women empowerment or gender equality targets and the project's reflection of gender equality measures in project activities. To address this gap, the project had to complement desk reviews with a series of community consultations and the engagement of local experts.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRESS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

17. The GEF Partnership has continued to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in compliance and support for GEF's policy and programming requirements. The examples provided below demonstrate implementing agencies' and the GEF Gender Partnership's complementary efforts in ensuring substantive consideration of gender equality and women's leadership in GEF-funded projects.

- ***Financing the Women Ocean Guardians project: Empowering Women for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Large Marine Ecosystems***

18. Women are frontline stewards of coasts and seas, yet their leadership has long been overlooked. Building on the 2024 Coastal Women Leaders' Exchange led by Wildlife Conservation Society and Conservation International and supported by the GEF, [2] the Women Ocean Guardians Initiative (WOGI) was created to raise visibility for the need to address the nexus of gender equality and ocean sustainability to close a critical gap in ocean governance: the limited participation of coastal women in decisions shaping marine conservation, sustainable use, and climate resilience.

19. The Women Ocean Guardians project aligns with GEF's ambition to empower women, realize socio-economic as well as broader and sustainable environmental benefits. **The project is an innovation that seeks to enhance Large Marine Ecosystem conservation through gender-responsive ocean governance**^[1].

20. The project applies six interlinked levers: policy development, capacity building, network establishment, sustainable livelihoods, finance access, and knowledge management. Five components operationalize this approach: (i) developing and piloting gender-transformative policy tools and assessment frameworks; (ii) establishing three regional WOG hubs (Latin America and the Caribbean, South Indian Ocean and Asia and the Pacific) and a pledge-based partnership platform; (iii) implementing gender-responsive marine livelihood pilots; (iv) producing knowledge products and engaging IW:LEARN; and (v) adaptive learning through robust M&E.

21. The project directly supports regional Strategic Action Programs and existing governance mechanisms including the Caribbean Biodiversity Corridor, Nairobi Convention, and PEMSEA platforms. Expected results include improved management of approximately 203,079 hectares of MPAs/OECMs, **directly benefiting 3,560 people (65 percent women) and demonstrating replicable models for gender-responsive ocean governance across transboundary marine systems.**

22. Alongside the development of the project, the WOGI is continuing to broaden engagement, visibility and buy-in. Since the WOGI's launch at the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, the initiative has secured the endorsement of five governments (Costa Rica, UK, Grenada, Germany, Dominican Republic), convened leaders from 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries to issue a Call to Action, and secured financial support from the GEF and the Oak Foundation. **WOGI's future plans include organizing women leaders convenings in Africa and Asia-Pacific, mobilize funds from a broader range of partners, strengthen women's self-organization, and advance gender-responsive commitments under the CBD, UNFCCC, and SDGs.**

➤ **Advancing gender equality considerations in the Umbrella Programme to Support NBSAP Update and the 7th National Reports**

23. Complying with GEF Gender Equality Policy requirements, UNDP, as the program lead, is working to ensure that gender equality and women's rights considerations are integrated in National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) updates, reporting, and biodiversity finance planning. Each of the 69 countries UNDP supports has **allocated funds towards gender mainstreaming** and are **accessing a variety of capacity building support** and knowledge sharing activities. **Over 20 countries have received tailored one-on-one support on gender integration and mainstreaming** which included on-demand review of NBSAPs, national biodiversity targets, gender plan of actions, and gender analyses for alignment with the KMGBF package of decisions, including the Gender Plan of Action and Targets 22 and 23. **More than 60 biodiversity practitioners and decision-makers that work for environmental ministries have exchanged knowledge and good practices** in a peer-to-peer meeting.

24. Among the good practices shared included: the importance of **ensuring the representation and engagement of women-led organizations and civil society in NBSAP revision processes** to inform equitable and inclusive national-level action, developing a unique national target on gender equality, holding dedicated sessions on gender in all stakeholder consultation meetings, and considering women's schedules and potential care responsibilities when determining stakeholder engagement modalities.

25. Some country-specific highlights include: **Tunisia** conducted a comprehensive gender analysis that engaged gender experts and women's associations and groups to identify inequalities in regulatory, strategic, and institutional frameworks and the specific needs of women. Based on the analysis, Tunisia developed a National Gender Action aligned with the CBD Gender Action Plan and other national and international commitments. Each strategic area of the NBSAP is supported by gender-responsive objectives, targets, indicators, and a dedicated budget. Tunisia's **progress in gender-responsive budgeting is a key lever** for the effective operationalization and long-term sustainability of the action plan. **Jordan's** integrated approach aimed to advance gender equality in biodiversity planning and implementation across multilateral environmental agreements. Jordan's National Biodiversity Task Force composed of 52 percent women. The Task Force conducts targeted consultations with women's groups as part of its broader stakeholder engagement strategy, ensuring that women's voices are systematically integrated. A dedicated national biodiversity target on gender has been established, committing to mainstream gender perspectives across all biodiversity initiatives, support capacity-building, and institute mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating gender-related impacts.

26. By putting women at the center, **Indonesia** is showing how inclusive participation strengthens biodiversity policy and ensures that local voices shape national reporting commitments. The technical team preparing the Seventh National Report, comprise 74 percent women, who are leading in coordinating data, analysis, and drafting. At the national level, inclusive consultations comprising numerous women leaders from NGOs, customary law and local communities, and youth networks, not only join discussions but also actively share their knowledge and best practices. To strengthen this effort, a dedicated gender consultant is engaged to formulate a gender report and compile best practices for inclusion in Seventh National Report.

➤ ***Establishing the GEF Gender Partnership Community of Practice among gender leads of the GEF-8 Integrated Programs and other GEF impact programs as a platform for knowledge building and learning***

27. The GEF Gender Partnership Community of Practice among the gender leads of the GEF-8 IPs, convened by the GEF Senior Gender Specialist, is an important platform for knowledge exchange. The **Community of Practice** meeting in October 2025 shared the following **best practices** that helped ensure the integration of gender perspective in the IPs. First, *intentionality and commitment*: Substantive gender mainstreaming and the integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment into the program must be built into the project design or be included from the start of the project cycle process. Webinars, dedicated clinics or bilateral meetings, and preparation of policy briefs on gender mainstreaming were among the actions taken. Integrated Program teams engaged the GEF Gender lead from the start, securing better buy-in of all partners, raising awareness and enhanced understanding on GEF’s policy and requirements on advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in programs and projects.

28. Closely related to the first is to *have a clear understanding and plan, with specific actions, on how to operationalize gender mainstreaming* objectives in the project and throughout its life cycle. The IP leads underscored the need to get a common understanding among team members and all those involved in the project that gender mainstreaming is not a “check-the-box-exercise”. It means *weaving in gender equality and women’s empowerment actions/interventions into the project components, results framework, M&E plans*, as well as in project team members’ TORs. To systematically capture best practices and lessons learned, IP leads stressed the need to develop program-level key performance indicators (KPIs) and embed reporting on gender results and impacts under M&E. Earlier impact programs shared the good practice of facilitating a regular meeting of M&E and gender specialists.

29. Third, it is important to have *dedicated financial resources, gender expert and targeted capacity-building activities* to implement the program's gender equality and women's empowerment objectives. Examples of these support include: appointment of a full-time or part-time Gender Focal Point for the Program and for each child project; having budgeted Gender Action Plans to carry out activities such as capacity development workshops; organizing country project gender clinics or dedicated technical support on integration of gender equality in projects; creation of Communities of Practice or Working Group on gender or gender+ (e.g., gender and youth); funding to research on data, indicators, methodologies (e.g., study on gender and land degradation (Blue and Green Islands); gender indicators and drought (DSL-IP). Several IPs emphasized the importance of bringing visibility or sharing the lessons and successes of local/community gains on women's empowerment to others through funding women beneficiaries to attend key meetings and Conferences. Some IPs shared that funding for these women beneficiaries participation are included in the project's budget. *Adaptive management* was used by impact programs which, at mid-term noted that country projects were at different phases in terms of their implementation of their gender action plans, with some more advanced and successful compared to others. The MTR was an opportunity to share experiences, lessons learned and challenges, and to identify country project needs and make the necessary adjustments to achieve the program's gender-specific results and the full implementation of the project gender action plans.

30. The Community of Practice also shared some **common constraints and challenges** encountered while promoting gender equality and women's empowerment including: i) Lack of expertise on the intersection of gender and specific environment-related thematic areas, as well as difficulty in identifying local expertise; ii) Lack of gender-specific data and tools on certain thematic areas (for example, value-chain on rice and maize); iii) Some country projects are not aligned with the program's ambition – e.g., in terms of target beneficiaries because of fear of resistance, or low ambition of the country team; iv) Lack of appreciation or will to translate the Gender Action Plan's ambition into the project document's outputs and activities.

➤ ***Enhancing knowledge and understanding of gender mainstreaming through guidelines, indicators and portfolio review***

31. Learning from project partners' feedback and years of project review and evaluation (MTR/TE), members of the GEF Gender Partnership have developed guidelines on gender mainstreaming, gender indicators specific to the project or programs, and conducted project portfolio review for better reflection of social inclusion in projects.

32. **IW:Learn** is preparing a *How to Integrate Gender Equality in GEF International Waters Projects* as a complement to the forthcoming *Revised TDA/SAP Methodology (2026)*.⁴ The Guide responds to the growing need for practical, sector-specific guidance on integrating gender in the design, implementation, and monitoring of gender-responsive interventions in IW projects. The Guide will help promote, in a systematic manner, a gender-responsive, inclusive and sustainable management of shared water systems. **FAO** is reviewing 50 projects from GEF 6-8 replenishment cycles as key sources of information, data and evidence for its future efforts at advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment. The study’s findings will also inform the development of a guidance note for better integration of social inclusion in GEF-funded projects, and will feed into the guidelines for people-centered approach in FCV context.

33. On tools and indicators, in the context of the feedback from the mid-term review of the Dryland Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (DSL-IP), **IUCN** developed some gender-sensitive indicators to better measure gender-specific results in the DSL-IP child projects. The indicators go beyond just measuring participation. It offers indicators that would allow capturing transformative change across access to resources, agency, policy/legal instruments, and social norms (including care and discrimination), over time. The emphasis is to move beyond sex-disaggregated beneficiary counts to indicators that capture changes in power dynamics and social inclusion. **IFAD-GTM** (gender-transformative mechanism) is promoting the use of composite indices like Pro-WEAI (measuring women’s empowerment in agriculture) and the Resilience Design and Monitoring Tool (RDMT) to assess gender and climate outcomes. RDMT enables project-specific risk assessment and tracks adoption and resilience outcomes at the household level, with gender-disaggregated analysis.

SECRETARIAT’S ACTIONS TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY

34. For the period November 2024 to October 2025, the GEF Secretariat has led or collaborated with the GEF Partnership to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in GEF policies, projects and operations. The key actions that are presented in this report are highlights of the GEF Secretariat’s work and are not exhaustive. The actions are grouped under the following headings:

- i) Technical support to strengthen the reflection of gender perspectives in GEF policy, programming and Convention reports

⁴TDA/SAP - transboundary diagnostic and strategic action programme

- ii) Capacity-building and awareness-raising to broaden understanding of gender mainstreaming and advance women's empowerment in projects and programs
- iii) Enhancing collaboration and partnerships to advance gender equality

Technical support to strengthen reflections of gender perspectives in GEF policy, programming and Conventions reports

35. The GEF Secretariat's technical inputs to the project review process at the concept and CEO endorsement/approval stages has resulted in substantive improvements in the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in programs and projects. Complementing the provision of detailed comments to projects and programs, the GEF Gender Specialist also provide on-demand inputs and advice to project teams and project managers (internal and external) on strategic ways of reflecting gender equality considerations in projects. A dedicated learning event on gender mainstreaming and gender integration in GEF projects for GEF staff and project managers was held during this reporting period. Good practice examples in integrating gender perspectives in projects representing GEF's focal areas were presented. The learning event encouraged discussions and sharing of challenges and best practices in addressing gender inequalities in GEF projects among program managers and the GEF Gender Specialist. The GEF Partnerships team also led the framing and the organization of the discussions on gender equality and social inclusion during GEF's Technical Advisory Group meeting for GEF-9. Substantive inputs to better capture gender equality and social inclusion in GEF policy and programming fed into developing the key messages submitted as inputs to the GEF-9 replenishment process. The Gender Specialist also provided technical inputs to policy documents and the GEF-9 results management framework discussions and contributed to the preparation of gender-specific sections of GEF reports including reports to the Conventions.

Capacity-building and awareness-raising to broaden understanding of gender mainstreaming and advance women's empowerment in projects and programs

36. During the reporting period, the GEF Secretariat participated in, organized, or co-organized workshops, Conference side-events, webinars, bilateral meetings, and served as expert in GEF-hosted meetings and constituency workshops to build or broaden understanding of and raise visibility for GEF's gender equality policy and approaches. Among these events include (illustrative, not exhaustive):

- *GEF Secretariat participation in events at the CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD Conference of the Parties held in November and December 2024 to raise awareness of GEF's gender equality policy and requirements and broaden understanding of GEF's initiatives and actions directed*

towards facilitating access to GEF finance and engagements of communities, women, youth and IPLCs in GEF projects. The GEF Secretariat also shared examples of projects that provide direct support to or are focused on stakeholders such as women, youth, IPLCs (e.g., Women Ocean Guardians Initiative, Fonseca Youth Leadership, Inclusive Conservation Initiative, Small Grants Program).

- *International Workshop on Water and Gender*, Pisa, January 28-31, 2025. GEF Secretariat provided a keynote address on Gender Equal Funding. The Secretariat shared GEF’s policy requirements, ambition and advances in promoting women’s empowerment in GEF programming. The GEF Secretariat acknowledged the importance of partnerships such as the Multi-stakeholder Coalition for water and gender in convening experts and resources to build data, evidence and promising practices on the nexus of gender and water, which remain limited and underexplored.
- *The GEF Secretariat participated in capacity-building webinars: i) Rooted Power: A story circle centering women’s rural leadership for a climate-resilient future*, June 19, 2025, organized by IFAD-GTM. GEF Secretariat ensured the Secretariat’s commitment to support GEF implementing agencies’ efforts to promote transformational change through addressing systemic gender inequalities in GEF-funded projects and programs; ii) *“Why and How to Address Gender Issues in NBSAPs and 7th National Reports”*, August and September 2025, organized by the CBD Secretariat, UNDP, UNEP, and the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership. The two-session series amplified recognition of the value of integrating gender into national conservation and biodiversity goals and targets, aligning the NBSAPs and the KMGBF, and provided practical guidance to integrate gender equality into NBSAP and 7th National Report. The GEF Secretariat acknowledged the implementing agencies’ critical actions to accompany countries in the “how-to” of capturing gender considerations in their NBSAPs and national reports.
- *GEF Secretariat-organized Expanded Constituency Workshops* for Central Africa (May 2025) and West Africa (September 2025). The ECWs bring representatives of civil society organizations representing voices of women, youth, IPLCs at different levels in a multi-stakeholder dialogue with government representatives. The ECWs’ focus on whole-of-society approach allowed for substantive discussion and sharing of experiences on GEF projects’ actions and interventions to promote women’s empowerment and inclusion of key stakeholders. Women beneficiaries of projects were given space at the ECW sessions to showcase how GEF projects incorporated their needs from the projects’ design stage, and how the projects are benefitting them and enhancing their leadership in delivering global

environmental benefits. Projects that were visited as part of the ECW Field Trip showcased the projects' contributions to women's empowerment and advancing gender equality. In the Central Africa ECW field visits⁵, the GEF Secretariat, and the ECW participants heard from women beneficiaries of the women gardens that received support from the GEF projects, such as the installation of solar powered boreholes, irrigation infrastructure (water tank and water distribution system) and technical support for sustainable farming practices (training and capacity-building on limited-till farming, biological pest control, crop mixes, etc.).

- Field visits and personal interaction with project beneficiaries, especially women, gives validity and affirmation to the GEF's strict application of its gender policy and adherence to the gender requirements in project design. Women project beneficiaries, represented by the leaders of women cooperatives or collective, were appreciative of how GEF's support to the women gardens improved the status and condition of women in their household and in the community. With women gaining additional source of income and food for their family, and their leadership roles in their collective (as President and Treasurer, most notably), the women increased their confidence, expanded their savings, broadened their understanding of sustainability and conservation, earning them the respect of their families and community. The installation of solar-powered water tanks also improved sanitation services and reduced women's and girls' time fetching water in remote and risky sites, allowing girls to attend school, and women, to enjoy some additional time for self-care and rest.

Enhancing collaboration and partnerships to advance gender equality and women's empowerment

37. While the GEF Gender Partnership remains the main platform for engagements to amplify advocacy for gender equality and advance gender mainstreaming in GEF's work, policy and knowledge building efforts, collaboration with the climate funds' gender leads, and with the United Nations Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) have also been priority partnership for the GEF. To ensure alignment of GEF's actions with developments on gender in the Conventions/MEAs that the GEF serves, the GEF Secretariat remains active and engages regularly with Women's Caucuses and Gender Networks represented in these

⁵ GEF-funded projects visited in The Gambia for the Central Africa ECW: *Climate Smart Rural Wash Development Project*, with co-financing from the African Development Bank; *Resilience of Organization for Transformative smallholder Agriculture Project (ROOTS)*, implementing agency - IFAD; executing agency - National Environment Agency of The Gambia; *Landscape Planning and Restoration to Improve Ecosystem Services, and Livelihoods, Expand and Effectively Manage Protected Areas*, implementing agency – UNEP; executing agency - National Environment Agency of The Gambia.

Conventions/MEAs, as well as with conservation and women’s organizations actively involved in the implementation of the gender-related mandates of the Conventions.

38. The GEF Gender Partnership’s annual hybrid meeting held on the sidelines of the GEF June Council meeting (2025), was an opportunity for GGP members to share updates on key initiatives and exchange on priority areas for consideration by the GGP in the coming year. Members shared how they are operationalizing the Whole-of-Society approach in GEF programming. FAO’s people-centered framework and gender-transformative approaches (integrated into FAO’s strategic framework), challenge structural inequalities and empower women and girls in agri-food systems. WWF’s inclusive conservation vision focuses on human rights, agency, and leadership of marginalized groups, including women and indigenous peoples. It uses an “Inclusive Conservation Marker” tool to track and enhance inclusivity in projects. The Community of Practice among the gender leads of the GEF-8 Integrated Programs shared the following planned deliverables: best practices and lessons learned on: gender-indicators, monitoring and reporting on gender results, conducting gender analysis and developing Gender Action Plans; and dissemination of KPs. The GEF Secretariat supported these deliverables, emphasizing the need to look at GEF 5-7 impact programs, take stock of the key findings and benchmark these against identified best practices.

39. GEF Secretariat continued to leverage opportunities to enhance collaboration with the other climate funds – Adaptation Fund, Climate Investment Funds, Green Climate Fund to advance the MCF’s harmonization and coherence agenda. During the reporting period, the GEF Secretariat contributed to the mapping of the climate funds’ policies and requirements on gender equality and social inclusion and participated in the UNFCCC-led capacity-building workshop for the National Gender and Climate Change Focal Points (COP 29 and margins of the Africa Climate Summit). The sessions were held to enhance the understanding of climate negotiators and gender focal points on access to climate finance in support of advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in climate programming and capacity-building. These capacity building activities also serve as two-way learning opportunity where the climate funds share the funds’ policies and existing initiatives on promoting access to finance, and at the same time, get feedback from or have a dialogue with gender focal points and other climate actors (government and non-government, and implementing agencies) on their experiences on the ground and challenges in accessing climate finance from the funds.

40. With strong commitment to recognize and enhance women’s leadership in coastal and marine conservation management, Conservation International and Wildlife Conservation Society worked closely with the GEF Secretariat in developing a GEF-funded project to advance the goals

of the Women Ocean Guardians Initiative. This project was built on earlier partnership among champions promoting women’s leadership and gender issues in the context of the development of the KM-GBFF under the Convention on Biological Diversity. This women leadership-focused project is an innovation and plans for its expansion are already in place. Government and non-government support for the initiative is increasing. The GEF Secretariat will continue to be actively engaged, bringing GEF’s gender and inclusion expertise in the development of this project and will also support its roll out in other regions beyond the LAC.

41. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), which gathers representatives from over 70 UN departments, specialized agencies, funds and programs, remains a key partner for the GEF Secretariat and a key resource for expertise, best practice examples, most recent developments, methodologies, approaches, tools on gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, intersectional and human rights approaches. It is also an important forum for the GEF Secretariat to raise visibility of GEF’s contributions to advancing gender equality in environmental projects and programs, with three out of the seven projects featured in the *UN-IANWGE Compendium: 30 years after Beijing, promising practices on gender mainstreaming under Critical Area 11: Women and the Environment*.⁶ GEF Secretariat, together with UNDP and UNRISD, leads the Working Group on gender equality and the environment, with GGP members FAO, UNIDO, UNEP and IFAD as WG members. The WG is a platform to facilitate the exchange of information and expertise among IANWGE members on UN agencies’ work and actions on the nexus of gender and the environment. The GEF Gender Specialist has also benefited from the pilot Training for Trainers on gender mainstreaming conducted by UN Women. This further strengthens the GEF Secretariat’s capacity to lead the GGP’s work and broaden the understanding and expertise of GEF program managers and staff on gender mainstreaming in GEF projects.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

42. The report presented gains in advancing gender equality at the GEF, as demonstrated in the substantive reflection of gender equality actions in GEF projects at design stage, as well as

⁶The selected projects’ women’s empowerment aspects are: *Building climate resilience of urban systems through ecosystem-based adaptation empowering women and enhancing community resilience to climate change; Coastal fisheries initiative enhancing women’s roles through skills development and market access in Latin America’s coastal communities; Empowering women in e-waste management reducing toxic exposure for women and children in e-waste recycling*. Link: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/04/ianwge-compendium-30-years-after-beijing-promising-practices-on-gender-mainstreaming-in-support-of-the-beijing-platform-for-actions-12-critical-areas-of-concern>

gains in terms of gender-specific results as reported in project mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations.

43. A review of mid-term review and terminal evaluations submitted during the reporting period, reaffirmed the importance of the project or program team's commitment to and being intentional in integrating gender equality into the entire project cycle – from design to implementation, monitoring and reporting, and evaluation. Like the past reports, undertaking a detailed sector-specific gender analysis and genuine stakeholder engagement at the project's early phases ensured the development of context-specific project interventions to address gender inequalities. Two recommendations that stood out from the reports are the importance of having a dedicated gender equality or social inclusion specialist for the project, and providing enabling support such as guidance, checklist, capacity-building and training on the integration of gender dimensions in the project.

44. The GEF Secretariat has stepped up its work and efforts to strengthen the reflection of gender perspectives and promote women's empowerment and leadership in GEF projects and operations. For the period November 2024 to October 2025, the GEF Secretariat has consistently reviewed projects with a goal to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. The Secretariat worked closely with GEF PMs and with the gender leads of the implementing agencies through the GEF Gender Partnership. The GEF Secretariat led or collaborated with partners in capacity-building and awareness-raising activities to broaden understanding of gender equality, women's empowerment in GEF projects, as well as on gender-responsive finance. The GEF Secretariat expanded its partnership and strengthened collaboration with existing partners, including the GEF Gender Partnership, UN IANWGE, the multilateral climate funds' and the Convention Secretariats' gender leads. The GEF Secretariat took advantage of opportunities to raise visibility for and awareness of GEF's gender equality policy and approaches in global processes and meetings, including the Conference of the Parties of the multilateral conventions that the GEF serves. A key achievement and innovation this year is the funding of a project focused on recognizing and enhancing women's leadership in marine and coastal management.

45. In the coming year, guided by the GEF-9 policy and programming directions and GEF's whole-of society approach, the GEF Secretariat, working with GEF Secretariat leadership and program managers, the GGP and relevant partners and executing agencies, including governments and women's organizations will seek to further advance women's empowerment and gender equality in GEF's policy, programming and partnerships.

46. The priority areas of work, to be aligned with GEF-9 implementation, are outlined below:

- i) Technical support to strengthen the reflection of gender perspectives in GEF policy, programming and Convention reports
 - ii) Capacity-building and awareness-raising to broaden understanding of gender mainstreaming and advance women's empowerment in projects and programs
 - iii) Enhancing collaboration and partnerships to advance gender equality
 - iv) Connecting with projects and stakeholders on the ground
- *Technical support to GEF program managers and to GEF implementing and executing agencies in the substantive integration of gender perspectives in GEF policy and programming*

47. The GEF Secretariat will continue to support the Policy team on aspects related to gender equality and social inclusion, and in developing GEF-9 indicators to capture results in advancing women's empowerment. The Secretariat will review GEF projects and gather qualitative and quantitative evidence on contribution to social, economic and environmental benefits of incorporating substantive gender equality and social inclusion approaches in GEF projects. This review will also capture how involving women as active partners in GEF projects ensures the sustainability of the activities or interventions led by women or women's collectives.

48. Upstream technical support to implementing and executing agencies on gender mainstreaming in projects and programs will continue, upon request, and through the GEF Gender Partnership.

- *Capacity-building and awareness-raising to broaden understanding of gender mainstreaming and advance women's empowerment in projects and programs*

49. The GEF Secretariat will organize dedicated learning and capacity-building sessions for GEF staff and continue bilateral discussions with staff upon request. The Secretariat will actively engage with the GEF Gender Partnership, the gender teams and focal points of the Conventions that the GEF serves, and women's groups and gender advocates in the Conventions processes as expert speaker in webinars, side-events and meetings, and in capacity-building workshops and training on gender mainstreaming (concepts, tools, methodologies, indicators) in GEF projects and programs.

50. Through the GEF Gender Partnership Community of Practice (CoP) on Gender Equality Integration in GEF-8 IPs and select impact programs, the GEF Secretariat will lead in convening meetings and capacity-building workshop or awareness-raising session of the GGP CoP on Gender Equality Integration at the sidelines of GEF-organized meetings, including the IP Global Workshop and the 8th GEF Assembly.

➤ *Enhancing collaboration and partnerships to advance gender equality and social inclusion*

51. The GEF Secretariat will continue to advance the goal of gender equality, women's empowerment and social inclusion through partnerships and enhanced collaboration with networks including the GEF Gender Partnership, the UN Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), women's caucuses and gender networks of the Conventions/MEAs, the Women Land Rights Initiative, gender teams of the Conventions that the GEF serves, and gender leads of other multilateral climate funds

52. The Secretariat will collaborate with these partners through joint events, thematic discussions, workshops, joint research and publication, joint communications pieces, among others, to share GEF's perspectives and take advantage of opportunities from these partners in advancing gender equality and social inclusion. The GEF Gender Partnership will have its annual hybrid workshop on the sidelines of the 8th GEF Assembly. The MCFs are planning a joint workshop to advance the implementation of the Joint Workplan's action areas on gender and social inclusion, expected to be delivered in 2026. The Secretariat will support commemoration events including the International Year of Women Farmers (2026) led by FAO.

➤ *Connecting with projects and stakeholders on the ground*

53. The GEF Secretariat will be more intentional in planning engagements with women project beneficiaries during GEF's Expanded Constituency Workshops and the in the field trips organized at these ECWs. Dialogue with project teams and women engaged in the projects are key sources of information and personal experiences as inputs to GEF's compilation of best practices and lessons learned on empowering women and promoting gender equality in GEF projects. This information is useful evidence of good practices and challenges, and are key inputs for updating policies, for reports and communications pieces.

54. As an innovative GEF-funded project focused on promoting women's leadership, the Secretariat will closely engage with the implementing and executing agencies in the regional convenings of the Women Ocean Guardians project and related stakeholder consultations.

55. As the convener of the GEF Gender Partnership CoP on Gender Equality Integration in GEF-8 IPs and other impact programs, the Secretariat will identify opportunities to join learning missions organized by implementing agencies or GEF IP program managers to learn about developments on gender mainstreaming and promoting women's empowerment in the IPs. These connections and learnings are inputs to the compilation of evidence on interventions and measures that best advance women's empowerment, as well as lessons learned in terms of

ensuring the implementation of gender-specific measures, and the gender action plan of the project.