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Agenda Item 07

TRACKING AND MEASURING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CO-BENEFITS OF GEF INVESTMENTS

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having considered document GEF/C.66/12, *Tracking and Measuring the Socio-economic Co-benefits of GEF Investments*, endorses the outlined approach and requests the GEF Secretariat to proceed on the proposed next steps.

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INTRODUCTION

1. **Under the Healthy Planet, Healthy People framework, the GEF adopted in GEF-8 both whole of society and inclusive approaches, and committed to work toward improving the tracking of socio-economic co-benefits.** The GEF sets as one of the five action areas of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework (RMF) for the GEF Trust Fund the objective of “better measuring co-benefits improving human well-being”¹. GEF-8 Replenishment Participants emphasized this focus by endorsing a policy recommendation to “improve the capture of human and socio-economic well-being metrics as well as climate change adaptation co-benefits in the results monitoring and improve their consideration in the design of GEF-funded projects and programs to further support the achievement of Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs)”².”

2. **This document presents how GEF financing supports socio-economic co-benefits and outlines steps to improve their tracking.** As a response to the GEF-8 policy recommendation, the purpose of this paper is to identify steps to improve the measurement of socio-economic co-benefits in results reporting and their consideration in the design of GEF-financed projects and programs. It is informed by a review of active projects, as well as evaluative and scientific advisory work. An analysis of corporate results frameworks and M&E practices in GEF Agencies, climate funds and GEF-managed trust funds provides supportive evidence to identify next steps for the GEF.

3. **This paper identifies pathways to improve the tracking of results indicators pertaining to socio-economic as well as climate change adaptation co-benefits.** This paper lays the foundation to: i. Demonstrate the dependence of human well-being on a sound and healthy global environment, and contribution of the people to its achievement; ii. Foster discussion on how socio-economic and climate change adaptation co-benefits help generate more, better and lasting GEBs; and iii. Learn from the co-benefits associated to GEF investments to guide new programming.

4. **This paper explores metrics tracked in GEF-funded investments and by Agencies, as a way to guide further measurement of socio-economic co-benefits in the GEF’s portfolio.** It reviews practices across agencies, climate funds, GEF-managed trust funds, and in the active GEF portfolio. This exercise benefited from engagement across the GEF Secretariat, a consultative meeting with STAP, and is informed by evaluative work from the GEF IEO. The exercise also considered how and where existing good practices could apply in the context of GEF investments, whether across the portfolio or for specific projects or programs only. This exercise also explored results areas that pertain to socio-economic co-benefits that arose also as adaptation co-benefits, making for more resilient ecosystems. This includes considering metrics covering improved livelihoods, increased income, reinforced gender equality, enhanced knowledge, healthier people, engaged communities, strengthened capacity, and inclusion.

5. **Findings from this analysis will inform the forthcoming development of the GEF-9 Results Management Framework of the GEF Trust Fund, including in its interactions with the broader family of GEF-managed trust funds.** Protecting the planet from environmental degradation requires action on strategic fronts and through select channels. Altogether, the GEF family of trust funds helps generate environmental results in distinct areas. The mutually reinforcing action of GEF-managed trust funds takes place in instances where for example resources from the LDCF trust fund and the GEF trust fund serve the same project objective. This may involve climate change adaptation benefits generated by the LDCF and SCCF—the two GEF-managed entities mandated to address climate adaptation—, and GEBs generated by the GEF Trust Fund. Reporting on the Rio Markers also indicates GEF Trust Fund financing supporting Climate Change Adaptation as a secondary objective, such as in the context of land restoration investments which help make ecosystems more climate resilient.

6. **The GEF has a unique mandate to deliver Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs), resulting in several instances in the delivery of associated ancillary socio-economic co-benefits.** The GEF Instrument captures this core focus on protecting the global environment, while underlining the importance of ensuring programs and projects are based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development¹.

7. **The measurement of socio-economic benefits is already a part of the GEF Trust Fund's results architecture, which primarily aims at tracking environmental outcomes.** Results reporting and management at the GEF emphasizes the importance of measuring progress against targets for GEBs, while monitoring socio-economic results areas. The GEF-8 RMF includes a set of ten Core Indicators for which results targets have been set and are monitored and reported at every Work Program. Over the years, successive revisions of the GEF's results architecture have also strengthened the GEF's capacity to disaggregate data by sex. It started systematically in GEF-7 with the inclusion of a Core Indicators tracking the direct beneficiaries of GEF investments. In GEF-8, five indicators tracking direct beneficiaries in the RMF are disaggregated by sex, covering key environmental results areas where differentiated impact may take place on the well-being of girls and women. Details on how Agencies and countries should ensure projects track only direct beneficiaries through the related Core Indicator have also been strengthened in guidelines (GEF/C.62/Inf.12/Rev.01). Separately, the geographic location of benefiting communities is also made available through the GEF Geospatial Platform².

8. **The opportunity exists at the design stage for projects and programs to identify and incorporate socio-economic benefits in the pursuit of environmental outcomes.** A dedicated section to socio-economic co-benefits allows to conceptualize what co-benefits will be achieved in the CEO endorsement/approval request project template. This aspect is further outlined in the

¹ GEF, *Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility*, 2019.

² More information on the GEF Geospatial Platform is available at: thegef.org/maps

theory of change of each project and program, and in related results frameworks. Unlike GEBs, socio-economic co-benefits are context specific and often require custom indicators.

9. **Evaluative evidence and scientific and technical advisory work point to the fact that many GEF projects and programs deliver and track socio-economic results.** For example, of the projects supporting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises with socio-economic co-benefits, 60 percent intended to improve access to financing and 44 percent aimed to increase income and jobs³.

10. **Identifying additional metrics should be consistent with the GEF's ongoing streamlining agenda, keeping reporting efforts manageable and commensurate with good practices.** Progress in this area should be done in alignment with ongoing streamlining efforts. This involves limiting additional reporting efforts passed on to Agencies and countries through the addition of new standard indicators. Already, the GEF is routinely monitoring about 40 indicators and reporting progress twice a year in its Corporate Scorecard.

HOW THE GEF CAPTURES SOCIO-ECONOMIC CO-BENEFITS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

11. **The interplay between humans and the planet is at the core of the GEF-8 Programming Directions under the overarching healthy planet, healthy people framework.** This heightened ambition came with the recognition that the achievement of environmental outcomes needs to be supported by socio-economic benefits. The description of GEF-8 Programming Directions includes for example dedicated section on gender equality under each Focal Area and Integrated Program (GEF/C.62/03).

12. **The achievement of GEF-financed environmental outcomes often yields additional socio-economic co-benefits.** The importance of socio-economic co-benefits in generating GEBs is part of each GEF focal area approach. For example, the GEF promotes the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity resources, including through supporting wildlife regulations to protect nature's benefits and in partnership with indigenous communities. Land restoration takes place through supporting local farmers in making production landscapes more resilient. Climate change mitigation activities provide people with clean access to energy. Support to transboundary water ecosystems fosters capacity development for the management of shared water resources. Finally, the ultimate goal of activities to reduce chemicals and waste is to improve health outcomes for affected populations.

13. **Integrated Programs explicitly address the interdependency between human wellbeing and a healthy environment, as backed by the GEF-8 Healthy Planet, Healthy People framework.** This interdependency is key to ensuring that GEF investments are targeted toward food, energy, urban, health, and natural systems that underpin human development. Hence GEF investment through the integrated programs not only generates global environmental benefits, but also

³ IEO, *GEF Engagement with Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises*, January 2022.

creates innovative pathways for transforming these systems. This includes focusing on health outcomes and agriculture when targeting food systems, on the role of the private sector in fostering ecosystem restoration, as well as on reducing air pollution in cities, or in working with IPLCs to reduce deforestation. As they do so, integrated approaches also address cross-cutting socio-economic challenges, such as gender equality (see Box 1).

Box 1. How FOLUR addresses measures improvements in gender equality

The GEF-7 Impact Program on Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program (FOLUR) placed a high emphasis on gender equality and translated it into results indicators that can give an account of progress across child projects. As per policy, every child project develops a gender action plan to identify risks and barriers to address gender gaps; inform the development of gender action plans; and develop project specific indicators to monitor and report on activities and gender equality results.

In addition, FOLUR’s Global Platform recommends including as appropriate indicators that track: the number of strategies and policies supported by the program that include gender analysis and action; the number of women in leadership roles in community-based or producer organizations supported by the program; and the number of women with greater ownership, access to, and decision-making power over productive resources; and the number of women with increases in control over use of income from value chain activities.

14. **Distinguishing socio-economic co-benefits by their role in achieving environmental results provides a useful way to understand how project design can reflect these aspects.** Building on STAP’s distinction between prerequisite and incidental co-benefits helps assess how co-benefits matter to the achievement of environmental results and broader economic development (GEF/STAP/C.64/Inf.03). Pre-requisite co-benefits are benefits that are essential to the achievement of GEBs, whereas incidental co-benefits are not critical to achieving GEBs but help increase the overall impact of GEF investment. Table 1 provides illustrative examples of this conceptual distinction, with the understanding that these apply only in some contexts.

Table 1. Illustrative prerequisite and incidental co-benefits by environmental results area

Environmental Results Area	Prerequisite co-benefits	Incidental co-benefits
Conserving & sustainably using biodiversity	National level policy change in forest or land management	Decline in zoonotic diseases
Sustainably managing and restoring land	Agro-ecological and restorative agriculture practices maintain and restore healthy soils	Food security and healthier diet for people
Reducing GHG emissions	People benefiting from clean public transport	Reduced air pollution and asthma prevalence
Strengthening transboundary water management	Improved capacity to manage shared water resources	Increased income for fishing communities
Reducing chemicals & waste	Inclusion of women in decision-making about artisanal mining	Improved health of workers

15. **A review of a sample of GEF-7 projects indicates GEF investments provide a range of socio-economic co-benefits.** The GEF Secretariat reviewed the project results framework of a random sample of 82 GEF-7 full-sized projects, representative of the variety of standalone projects across Focal Areas and the Small Grants Programs. The review assessed whether each results framework included at least one indicator linked to either of four dimensions—social, economic, market development, cross-cutting areas—and related categories⁴. The summary review results, as presented in Table 2, highlight that a third of projects target social co-benefit indicators, with 29 percent of these projects aiming for improvements in livelihoods, wealth and quality of life. Gains in employment and agriculture are tracked in 26 percent of projects as economic co-benefits. Improvement in competitiveness and market development is part of 17 percent of the project results frameworks reviewed. Finally, institutional, policy and human capacity is tracked in 41 percent of projects, while empowerment is reflected in 20 percent of them, and indicators speaking to gender equality are observed across all reviewed projects—in line with GEF guidance to advance gender equality which tracks whether a project includes gender-sensitive indicators in its results framework. Annex A provides illustrative examples by category.

Table 2. Socio-economic co-benefits found in a sample of GEF-7 projects

THEME	SHARE
SOCIAL	35%
Livelihoods, wealth, and quality of life	29%
Health and safety	16%
Access to essential services	10%
ECONOMIC	26%
Employment	8%
Agriculture, Food	23%
MARKET DEVELOPMENT	17%
Competitiveness and industrial development	17%
CROSS-CUTTING AREAS	55%
Inclusion and empowerment	20%
Institutional, policy and human capacity	41%
Gender equality	100%

⁴ These categories are derived from the broad taxonomy used by climate funds to compare socio-economic indicators used—an exercise held in 2023 under the Climate Funds Collaboration Platform on Results, Indicators and Methodologies for Measuring Impact. This exercise borrowed on: IEC, *Evaluation of the Development Impact from CIF's Investments*, 2023. It then adapted the taxonomy to the GEF's programming areas.

A REVIEW OF MEASUREMENT PRACTICES ACROSS CLIMATE FUNDS AND GEF AGENCIES

16. This section explores metrics tracked in GEF-funded investments, by Agencies and climate funds. This is done with a view to inform and guide further tracking of socio-economic co-benefits in the GEF's portfolio.

17. **Results measurement practices in tracking socio-economic results through standard indicators reflect the respective mandates and strategic priorities of the different Agencies and climate funds.** In Agencies with a development mandate, this includes adopting human-centric indicators that are aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals⁵, such as counting the number of people benefiting from social safety nets, better education, health services or climate smart agricultural training. For Agencies and climate funds with a mandate supporting climate change adaptation—MDBs and UN Agencies such as UNDP and UNEP, as well as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund, as well as LDCF and SCCF—, it includes counting the number of people with reduced vulnerability to climate risk.

18. **Standard socio-economic results indicators used by Agencies typically count the number of beneficiary people, just like the GEF does since GEF-7.** The most observed proxy used to track the results of agencies' support in terms of socio-economic benefits in a country is the reliance on indicators capturing the number of beneficiaries. This allows to quickly grasp the magnitude of the specific impact of an investment on the target population. This may include counting the number of beneficiaries from new services or infrastructure, beneficiaries from training, or broader institutional capacity strengthening. Such indicators on beneficiaries are routinely tracked in the corporate results frameworks of MDBs. The same is true of the GEF's own Results Measurement Framework as it currently tracks direct beneficiaries along five environmental areas.

19. **Reporting on the number of people benefiting from investments is disaggregated by sex at corporate level, while more disaggregation may take place at project level.** Adequately gauging progress in groups of people and how GEF support can be transformational requires monitoring disaggregated data. The review of corporate results frameworks used across all Agencies indicates systematic disaggregation of data by male or female beneficiary where applicable. Depending on the nature of the investment, some Agencies also disaggregate the count of beneficiaries at project level, such as by measuring the number of beneficiary youths, disable people, Indigenous Peoples or people located in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

⁵ While development agencies often indicate the alignment of each results indicator they track, the indicators themselves typically differ in definition and measurement practices from the SDGs themselves. This is because SDGs capture country level progress, whereas projects measure their own specific contribution to this broader goal. The corporate results frameworks of the AfDB, ADB, IADB and the World Bank for example highlight the alignment between the results indicators they track and the SDGs.

20. **Agencies grapple with the challenge of aggregating job creation given methodological issues with this approach.** Research and exchanges in M&E and results forums on the accuracy of employment measurements have led some Agencies to avoid reporting at portfolio level on the number of jobs created. This is because such indicators do not translate effectively if the job was created or supported by the intervention, its intended duration over time, or the quality or level of decency of the work itself. For example, the World Bank instead tracks the beneficiaries of job-focused operations both to overcome data quality challenges linked to counting jobs and to underline its focus on the topic. Others, like the ADB and IADB, continue to track direct jobs created.

21. **To track the broader socio-economic and economy-wide impact of their investments, Agencies rely on alternative methodologies. Recognizing the need to measure more than just the number of beneficiaries and to capture the wider impact of activities, some Agencies have reinforced their measurement toolkit with additional methodologies. This includes methodologies such as:**

- *Impact evaluation.* IFAD tracks a series of socio-economic benefits through the use of impact evaluations on 15% of its projects. Areas measured include: people with increased income, improved production, improved market access, greater resilience, improved nutrition. Conducting impact evaluations requires relying on rigorous methods to determine the changes in outcomes which can be attributed to a specific intervention, sometimes based on comparisons to a control group not affected by these interventions.
- *Joint Impact Model grounded in input-output modeling.* A number of agencies and funds—CIFs, AfDB, BOAD, French Proparco, UK CDC, BIO, Dutch FMO, FinDev Canada—implement this model to ascertain their impact in assessing the value added to the economy, as well as the direct, indirect and induced jobs supported through their interventions. This approach relies on input data from investment portfolios to estimate financial flows through the economy and its resulting economic (value added) and social (employment) impact⁶. It works well for projects supporting MSMEs and infrastructure.
- *Computable General Equilibrium modelling.* CGE modelling allows to identify the positive and negative impact of financing on economies by relying on extensive information on the activities of households, firms and the government, and then integrating information on the investment demand for local goods as well as price, level and composition of the demand for local goods. Such example is applied by the European Commission through its CGE model called RHOMOLO.
- *Geospatial analysis linked to population data.* By leveraging ultra-local population data, Agencies can analyze and compare situations across locations. This enables to see patterns specific to the population targeted by an intervention. Overlaying geotagged datasets, satellite imagery and census survey data allows also to assess progress over

⁶ See more at: www.jointimpactmodel.org

time, providing a ‘before and after’ picture on a range of social and economic issues, which can to some extent be attributed to project activities.

22. A comparison of climate funds’ experiences in tracking socio-economic and climate change adaptation results points to the use of indicators aligned to each fund’s core mandate.

A stocktaking exercise took place in 2023 at the initiative of the Climate Funds Collaboration Platform on Results, Indicators and Methodologies for Measuring Impact; a platform composed of the Adaptation Fund, the CIFs, the GCF, Mitigation Action Facility, and GEF trust funds. Findings from this analysis indicate that climate funds rely on very heterogeneous socio-economic indicators as they pertain to their own specific mandate. The GEF Trust Fund and Mitigation Action Facility were among the funds that included the least number of such indicators given their focus on GEBs. Meanwhile, climate funds with a climate change adaptation focus tracked more context-specific results. This is the case of the Adaptation Fund, the GCF, the CIFs and LDCF/SCCF. Exchanges on reporting practices allow, over time, to ensure more coherence in methodologies and use of indicators across climate funds, hereby benefiting countries.

23. Within the GEF family of funds, the LDCF and SCCF use indicators that highlight climate change adaptation action contribute to socio-economic benefits. The common results framework of LDCF and SCCF includes a series of core and sub-indicators that, among other things, measure beneficiaries from more resilient physical and natural assets, with strengthened livelihoods, from new climate information services—all elements supported by climate change adaptation-focused activities.

A WAY FORWARD TO IMPROVE THE TRACKING OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CO-BENEFITS

24. The GEF will continue to take steps to improve its results architecture toward strengthening its capacity to capture and track socio-economic co-benefits. The following identifies potential areas for further investigation and pathways toward strengthening the GEF results architecture. This comes in the context of the preparation of the Results Measurement Framework for GEF-9, which will more greatly reflect the whole of the society approach and inclusion agenda that are features of GEF-8. Pathways to explore include:

- Identify a small number of standard indicators that would provide an aggregate view of the GEF’s contribution to socio-economic co-benefits. This exercise will seek quantifiable and aggregable indicators that could apply to a large number of GEF financed projects and programs. Informed by this paper and forthcoming evaluative evidence on the topic, the GEF will explore the feasibility of identifying standard indicators in socio-economic co-benefits and results areas discussed in this paper.
- Assess the feasibility of relying on alternative measurement practices in the context of the GEF portfolio or specific projects or programs, such as geospatial analyses linked to population data.

- Better capturing and monitoring the results of GEF financing for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), civil society, and youth⁷. This may include the development of standard indicators or custom ones specific to projects and programs. In addition, a possibility may be to further disaggregate indicators that include the number of beneficiary people as their unit of measurement by, for example IPLCs and youth. In parallel, the GEF will better track its financing supporting IPLCs, civil society and youths⁸.
- Leverage the value of qualitative and narrative reporting to better demonstrate the value of context-specific socio-economic results. Building on current practices of the GEF's communication work, this may include further dissemination of stories that feature social-economic co-benefits and gender-responsive results, including in terms of improved livelihoods, wellbeing and access to finance.
- Continue reviewing projects and programs to ensure an appropriate consideration of socio-economic co-benefits during the design stage. This includes taking into consideration the necessary steps to identify and incorporate co-benefits in the project description, results framework and theory of change, as informed by advisory work on the topic (GEF/STAP/C.64/Inf.03).

25. **As it makes progress, the GEF will seek to ensure, through coordination efforts, that improvements to capture, track and measure social-economic co-benefits are considered in coherence with practices in other climate and environment funds.** This will take place with a view to meet the aspiration presented in the joint declaration of heads of climate funds issued during the COP28, which stated that climate funds will ramp up “collaborative work on monitoring, evaluation, and learning, including through the development of common indicators”⁹. The GEF will also seek the feasibility of integrating socio-economic results indicators across its trust funds, as applicable and relevant.

⁷ This comes in the context of the GEF Secretariat presenting for endorsement at the 66th Council Meeting the commitment to better track financing to indigenous people, in response to IEO's recommendation in the *Community-based Approaches Evaluation* report.

⁸ This complements a commitment made by the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) indicating that “projects to support actions by IPLCs for the conservation, restoration, sustainable use and management of biodiversity by IPLCs will be encouraged, on a country-driven basis, with a view to collectively achieving an aspirational programming share of 20% at the portfolio level by 2030” (GEF/C.64/06/Rev.01).

⁹ Heads of the Adaptation Fund, the Climate Investment Funds, the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, *Enhancing access and increasing impact: the role of the multilateral climate funds*, 3 December 2023.

ANNEX A – DESCRIBING THE REVIEW OF GEF-7 FSPs ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC CO-BENEFIT INDICATORS

This annex provides examples of indicators identified in the results framework of reviewed projects under each of the sub-categories used in this analysis. It is preceded by details on the sample of projects identified for this review.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE OF PROJECTS REVIEWED

This review covers Full-sized projects financed from the GEF Trust Fund as part of the GEF-7 phase. It includes a sample of 82 projects (representing 20 percent of GEF-7 FSPs), of which 70 percent were approved by Council during the last three Council Meetings of GEF-7; the rest were approved during the first Council Meeting of GEF-7.

This purposeful project selection allows to capture standalone projects, which are not child projects of a program. While this limits the representativeness of the sample, it also provides an indication of the extent to which “regular” projects lead to socio-economic co-benefits. This review also includes the first tranche of Core SGP resources.

Of the projects reviewed, 30 percent are located in Asia, 28 percent in Africa and 27 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. It includes 30 percent of multi focal area projects, as well as standalone focal area projects: 18 percent from Biodiversity, 18 percent from International Waters, 14 percent from Climate Change, 12 percent from Chemicals and Waste, and 6 percent from Land Degradation. Projects implemented by FAO, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank account for 80 percent of the reviewed projects.

THEMATIC AREAS UNDER REVIEW

Social

Livelihoods, wealth, and quality of life

Indicators identified under this category included among others: adoption of nature-based income-generating activities, increased income from blue economy for women and marginalized groups, diversified income, improved working conditions, improved livelihoods through participatory land use planning, improved land tenure, improved welfare conditions.

Health and safety

Results sought by projects under this category included a focus on a cleaner, healthier and safer environment, reduced risk of exposure of communities living close to contaminated sites, as well as access to healthcare and medicine.

Access to essential services

Metrics identified as pertaining to this category revolved around increased water access and reliability, improved access to infrastructure and public transport, and increased access to healthcare services.

Economic

Employment

Indicators related to the employment category measured the number of jobs created or supported by a project.

Agriculture, food

Results metrics under this category tracked improved food access or security through a nature-based solution, climate-smart agriculture, sustainable agriculture and fisheries, implementation of livestock policies, increased food security of the community by sustainable management of forest ecosystems and productive landscape, households adopting climate smart agriculture, through sustainable agriculture, efficient fishery management.

Market development

Competitiveness and industrial development

Indicators related to market development aimed to measure any decrease in demand for illegal biodiversity products, increase capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities, support linkages and partnerships for sustainable food production practices and supply chain management, including in sustainable fisheries management, enhanced production, improved access to climate finance, entrepreneurship, and economic diversification, enhanced public and private investment mechanism for biodiversity, water, oceans.

Cross-cutting areas

Inclusion and empowerment

Results indicators under this category covered: participation of stakeholders in capacity training, inclusive business models, with capacity building for women in SME, access to finance for marginalized communities, inclusive new sustainable tourism market, community engagement for implementation of new systems.

Institutional, policy and human capacity

This category captured indicators covering: new governance systems, education and awareness campaign, training provided to staff, adoption of regulatory frameworks, development of cross-sectoral policies, South-South peer networks and learning, improved institutional capacity.

Gender equality

This category captured, in addition to sex-disaggregated indicators, the following: share of women participation in committees, gender-responsive rules and regulations, training on gender mainstreaming, participation of women in leadership groups, participation of women in specific environmental and economic activities, participation of female scientists, gender-responsive policies.