



GEF/C.68/06  
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68<sup>th</sup> GEF Council Meeting  
December 16-20, 2024  
Virtual Meeting

**Agenda Item 09**

**Management Response to:  
Evaluation of GEF Programs in Pacific Small Island Developing States**

**Recommended Council Decision:**

The Council, having considered document GEF/E/C.68/02 *Evaluation of GEF Programs in Pacific Small Island Developing States*, and GEF/C.68/06, *the Management Response*, takes note of the related evaluation recommendations and endorses the management response to address them.

## INTRODUCTION

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

The GEF Secretariat welcomes the findings of the evaluation “highlighting significant progress has been observed in the GEF's programmatic approaches since the last SIDS evaluation”. This has facilitated better alignment with national priorities and enhanced environmental outcomes and produced more inclusive and informed interventions.

The GEF Secretariat is encouraged that the evaluation highlights that “GEF programs in Pacific SIDS are strategically aligned with regional priorities, advancing key environmental and development goals”. The programs have been particularly important to the Pacific SIDS meeting their priorities under various multilateral environment agreements (MEAs), as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the SAMOA Pathway.

The GEF Secretariat is pleased with the finding that knowledge management, innovation and socio-economic co-benefits across the programs, contributed to program effectiveness. The Secretariat notes that knowledge management proved to be a particular strength, especially in the R2R program where ten child projects established successful knowledge transfer. In addition, the Secretariat is further encouraged that the programs demonstrated innovative approaches such as the CPDP's infiltration galleries for flood management and R2R's integrated watershed management.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1: Enhance coordination and collaboration to maximize development impact and resource efficiency.** While existing coordination between governments and international agencies shows promise, there remains significant untapped potential to enhance donor alignment and government engagement for improved project outcomes. Key opportunities exist to strengthen external coherence through expanded partnerships among GEF Agencies and other development partners working in the Pacific. By implementing proven coordination mechanisms and fostering deeper collaboration, organizations can achieve more efficient resource allocation, minimize redundant efforts, and reduce transaction costs for governments. This coordinated approach would ultimately lead to more sustainable and impactful development initiatives that better serve the region's needs while optimizing the GEF's strategic influence through harmonized support systems.

The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.

The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that since GEF-5, a number of mechanisms have been utilized to increase the potential to enhance donor alignment and government engagement and to strengthen external coherence through expanded partnerships among GEF Agencies and other development partners. This has included:

- National Dialogues and Expanded Constituency Workshops implemented under the Country Engagement Strategy, where Agencies within the GEF partnership as well as other bilateral and multilateral donors are invited to engage in discussions on programming at national and regional levels. These mechanisms facilitate and encourage sharing of knowledge and provide opportunities to build coherence and alignment amongst development partners.
- Targeted donor collaboration, an example of which is the GEF-GCF Long -Term Visioning initiative<sup>1</sup>. The Long-term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence, and Collaboration (LTV) between the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was initiated in 2021 in response to calls to ease access to country funding, increase impact and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of both funds through enhanced coordination and harmonization.
- GEF Secretariat membership on the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHLRSS) led Inter-Agency Consultative Group (IACG) on SIDS, which drove the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and will continue to do so for the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS). These meetings bring together multilateral and bilateral development partners and donors with the purpose of advancing and enabling SIDS to meet their priorities set under this global agenda. It provides an opportunity to deepen collaboration and harmonize support to all SIDS, including the Pacific SIDS.
- At the project and program level, the GEF Secretariat's extensive technical engagement during the program/project review process ensures that, from the design stage, there is intentional and effective collaboration among existing investments and initiatives. In addition, the evolving global coordination mechanism embedded within programs also facilitates extensive coordination and collaboration with external partners to maximize development impact.

The GEF will continue to seek both immediate and long-term opportunities to strengthen coherence, collaboration, and coordination with external partners. The upcoming GEF-9 replenishment process will provide the opportunity to take stock of existing mechanisms, assess their impact, set the stage for their improvement where needed, and explore potential new mechanisms in alignment with other GEF-9 strategies during their development.

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<sup>1</sup> GEF/C.67/Inf.07 *Progress Report on the Long-term Vision on Complementarity, Coherence, and Collaboration (LTV) between the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF)*, 2024. [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-06/EN\\_GEF.C.67.Inf\\_07\\_2024\\_Progress\\_Report\\_on\\_GEF\\_GCF\\_LTV.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-06/EN_GEF.C.67.Inf_07_2024_Progress_Report_on_GEF_GCF_LTV.pdf)

**Recommendation 2: Strengthen program effectiveness by further improving alignment and operational delivery between Pacific SIDS parent programs and their associated child projects.**

It is crucial that parent and child projects maintain strong internal coherence while addressing persistent implementation delays that hinder overall program performance. A more streamlined M&E framework at the program level will enable better tracking of outcomes, facilitate adaptive management, and support strategic decision making across the portfolio. By enhancing internal coherence and operational efficiency, while maintaining robust yet simplified oversight mechanisms, programs can achieve more consistent and impactful results. These actions should be strategically designed to foster a culture of adaptive management, ensuring that M&E findings are regularly used to inform decision making and refine implementation strategies.

The GEF Secretariat agrees with this recommendation.

The GEF Secretariat would like to highlight that: i) evaluative evidence underlines enhancements in the GEF results-based management system through the implementation of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework<sup>2</sup> as well as with ii) the evolution of programmatic approaches toward making aggregate program-level reporting effective. The design of the coordination project of each GEF-8 program when program-level monitoring and evaluation needs are addressed – a marked improvement from earlier GEF phases which implements a commitment made in response to IEO’s evaluation on GEF integrated approach to address the drivers of environmental degradation.<sup>3</sup>

In the context of GEF-8 – a cycle not captured by the scope of the Pacific SIDS evaluation – this translated into ensuring that every child project of a GEF 8 Integrated Program measures the same key results indicators. The coordination project is now responsible for tracking and aggregating results across child projects. This effort is of particular relevance in GEF-8 as the flagship Blue and Green Island Integrated Program includes Pacific SIDS and nine out of fifteen Pacific SIDS participate in integrated programs. This enhanced alignment and operational delivery is designed to support adaptive management and strategic decision making across a program’s child projects. Enhanced attention on the matter is being applied on the matter by GEF Secretariat as coordination projects of integrated programs reach implementation stage.

**Recommendation 3: Prioritize robust institutional capacity development to ensure program success and enduring impact.** Given implementation constraints in Pacific SIDS, programs must establish realistic objectives aligned with local institutional capabilities. This requires focused capacity building in project management, environmental governance, and technical skills,

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<sup>2</sup> GEF/E/C.68/03 *Evaluation of Components of the GEF’s Results-Based Management System*, [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/EN\\_GEF\\_C68\\_E\\_03\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_Results\\_Based\\_System\\_November18\\_Final.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/EN_GEF_C68_E_03_Report_of_the_Results_Based_System_November18_Final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> GEF/E/C.60/09 *Management Response to: Results Based Management – Evaluations of the Agency Self-Evaluation Systems and the GEF Portal*, <https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/Results-Based%20Managemen%20Management%20Response.pdf>

supported by systematic performance monitoring. Effective capacity development should leverage existing governance structures, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to ensure sustained project benefits. Programs should emphasize practical training that addresses immediate implementation needs while building long-term institutional resilience. This balanced approach will support both timely project delivery and sustainable outcomes beyond project completion. Additionally, to strengthen institutional capacity in Pacific SIDS, the GEF should explore opportunities to accredit regional organizations thereby increasing the pool of qualified GEF Agencies working in the region. Any expansion would need to be balanced against the increased complexity of managing an expanded partnership and ensuring new Agencies can meet GEF standards and requirements.

The GEF Secretariat partially agrees with this recommendation.

Noting that the recommendation has five distinct parts, the GEF Secretariat would like to separate this recommendation into its respective components, and highlight our specific levels of agreement with each component as follows : a) programs must establish realistic objectives aligned with local institutional capabilities (partially agree); b) requires focused capacity building in project management, environmental governance, and technical skills, supported by systematic performance monitoring (agree) ; c) effective capacity development should leverage existing governance structures, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to ensure sustained project benefits (partially agree); d) programs should emphasize practical training that addresses immediate implementation needs while building long-term institutional resilience (agree); and e) to strengthen institutional capacity in Pacific SIDS, the GEF should explore opportunities to accredit regional organizations thereby increasing the pool of qualified GEF Agencies working in the region (agree).

*a) programs must establish realistic objectives aligned with local institutional capabilities*

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

The GEF Secretariat would like to note that the GEF is country demand driven. This means that the GEF Secretariat responds to the stated needs and priorities of GEF recipient countries within the bounds of the relevant GEF Programming Directions. Therefore, the extent to which the GEF can influence the interest of countries in particular programs is limited.

However, the GEF stands ready to provide targeted support to Pacific SIDS programs or programs that involve Pacific SIDS in a strategic way and expects to explore further such opportunities in the GEF-9 replenishment.

*b) requires focused capacity building in project management, environmental governance, and technical skills, supported by systematic performance monitoring); d) programs should emphasize practical training that addresses immediate implementation needs while building long-term institutional resilience*

The GEF Secretariat agrees with these components of the recommendation.

Capacity building in technical skills linked to the delivery of programs and child projects is currently expected to be incorporated in project design. The expectation is that this will enable local institutions to not only deliver on the objectives of specific programs and corresponding child projects, but also to provide the capacity to sustain these initiatives after the programs and projects have ended.

In line with these elements of this recommendation, the GEF has an opportunity in the upcoming GEF-9 replenishment negotiations to consider the enhancement of the Country Engagement Strategy towards providing targeted capacity building support to SIDS and in this case Pacific SIDS.

*c) effective capacity development should leverage existing governance structures, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to ensure sustained project benefits*

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

Since GEF-5, there has been a progressive focus by the GEF Secretariat on inclusion, as evidenced by the Policies on Stakeholder Engagement<sup>4</sup> and on Gender Equality.<sup>5</sup> This has encouraged and required projects and programs to demonstrate how traditional knowledge and community representatives and perspectives are built into planned interventions in their project designs.

However as stated previously GEF is country demand driven and as countries deliver projects within often unique country context, there is often a balance between meeting the requirements of accessing GEF funding and operating and implementing a project within the context of their cultural norms.

In GEF-9, the GEF will continue to strengthen the capacity of Pacific SIDS to apply inclusion principles into project design, preparation, and execution to leverage existing governance structures, local civil society organizations, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to ensure sustained project benefits. This again can be potentially considered under the remit of the GEF-9 Country Engagement Strategy as well as further work on the inclusion agenda.

*e) to strengthen institutional capacity in Pacific SIDS, the GEF should explore opportunities to accredit regional organizations thereby increasing the pool of qualified GEF Agencies working in the region*

The GEF Secretariat agrees with this component of the recommendation.

Possible expansion of Implementing Agencies to Pacific SIDS can be considered as one approach to prioritizing "...robust institutional capacity development to ensure program success and

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<sup>4</sup> GEF/C.53/05/Rev.01 *Policy on Stakeholder Engagement*, [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN\\_GEF.C.53.05.Rev\\_.01\\_Stakeholder\\_Policy\\_4.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.53.05.Rev_.01_Stakeholder_Policy_4.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> GEF/C.53/04 *Policy on Gender Equality*, [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN\\_GEF.C.53.04\\_Gender\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.53.04_Gender_Policy.pdf)

enduring impact”. This is supported by the parallel analysis coming to the 68<sup>th</sup> Council on the GEF Partnership<sup>6</sup>, which highlights “...the need of context-sensitive approaches for SIDS, where more robust, targeted regional support is essential to bridge the gaps in project engagement”. The forthcoming GEF-9 replenishment negotiations will offer the opportunity to further the discussion on this part of the recommendation.

## **CONCLUSION**

This evaluation examined three major GEF programs in Pacific SIDS and their corresponding 19 child projects (13 completed and 6 ongoing): the Pacific Islands Ridge-to-Reef National Priorities (R2R), Climate Proofing Development in the Pacific (CPDP), and Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in SIDS (ISLANDS) programs. Building on previous evaluations of SIDS in general and programmatic approaches, the evaluation provides useful insights on the performance of integrated programming in this sub-region, noting challenges, opportunities, and lessons to inform future GEF interventions in SIDS.

The GEF has outlined in this management response i) areas where efforts are already being made to improve programmatic approaches as well as programming and engagement with SIDS; and ii) opportunities where these efforts can be expanded and enhanced. The GEF is committed to continuing to meet the unique needs of the SIDS and, in this regard, to ensure that program design and implementation can be improved to enhance effectiveness and sustainability.

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

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<sup>6</sup> GEF/C.68/10: *Strength of the Partnership: Coverage by Agencies*, [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/EN\\_GEF.68.10\\_Strength%20of%20the%20GEF%20Partnership%20%281%29.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/EN_GEF.68.10_Strength%20of%20the%20GEF%20Partnership%20%281%29.pdf)