



## GEF CSO Network

### Statement on Agenda 10 : [Evaluation of Socio-Economic Co- Benefits of GEF-Funded Interventions & Management Response](#)

69th GEF Council, June 2025

The GEF CSO Network welcomes the **Evaluation of Socio-Economic Co-Benefits of GEF-Funded Interventions and the accompanying Management Response**. We recognize the evaluation's finding that GEF-funded projects are associated with significant socio-economic co-benefits, where environmental and developmental outcomes are achieved together. It is encouraging to see growing attention to these co-benefits since GEF-5 and that over 40 percent of assessed projects aimed to strengthen capacity, build social capital, and promote new revenue streams and market access.

However, the evaluation and management response both highlight that these co-benefits are not always systematically targeted, measured, or reported. We support the call for clearer pathways to **generating socio-economic “benefits”** in project design, including explicit articulation in the theory of change, anticipation of potential risks, and measures to ensure equitable distribution—particularly for marginalized or low-income groups.

We also acknowledge the language around women's empowerment and focus on gender equality as key for equitable distribution. We welcome the Secretariat's commitment to refine the project review process and strengthen the capture of these benefits, as well as the ongoing implementation of the Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards to anticipate, prevent, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts.

The emphasis on strengthening country portfolio coordination and empowering Operational Focal Points is a positive step, as is the intention to enhance tracking and reporting of these benefits through improved indicators and guidance for agencies. In addition, education-related co-benefits, such as awareness raising, skills-building, and inclusive climate education, should be more clearly articulated and tracked in project frameworks, particularly for youth and women. As the Council considers the next steps, we urge that participatory and independent monitoring approaches be prioritized, ensuring that affected communities and CSOs can contribute directly to evaluation and learning. Transparency, participatory budgeting, and the inclusion of diverse stakeholders must remain at the core of GEF's approach.

While these recommendations are crucial for the remainder of GEF-8, we also encourage the GEF to apply these lessons to the GEF-9 replenishment progress. The CSO Network continues to advocate for direct access to resources, intersectional funding windows, and new metrics that capture justice, agency, and resilience. This includes creating more intentional entry points for youth participation, not only as beneficiaries, but as partners and decision-makers across GEF

programming. Let this evaluation serve as a catalyst for embedding socio-economic benefits at the heart of GEF's mission, building a more just, inclusive, and effective partnership with the communities we serve.

As civil society representatives and youth leaders, we stand ready to co-design indicators, co-implement grassroots programming, and co-monitor outcomes. GEF's vision for socio-economic co-benefits can only be realized with partnership from those closest to the ground.