



GEF CSO Network

Statement on : Draft Policy Directions for GEF-9

[Presentation by GEF Secretariat \(Document GEF/R.9/09\)](#)

GEF-9 Replenishment (Second Meeting), Oct 07-09, 2025

The GEF-CSO Network welcomes the Draft Policy Directions for GEF 9 and its reference to the importance of a Whole of Society approach. However, we are concerned that the commitment to Whole-of-Society is not adequately integrated into the specific Policy Directions and recommendations for GEF 9 with only one out of more than 20 recommendations referring to this. In addition, we are concerned that some of the proposed policy reforms may in fact undermine the effective consultation and engagement of Civil Society, IPLCs and youth.

Para 25 lists the proposed actions to enhance access and empowerment and point p. highlights the need to ensure financing to IPLCs women and youth - however no details are given to the actual proposed actions for GEF 9 - only a reference to the ongoing Inclusive Conservation Initiative as a possible option. In our opinion, this section needs to be much more specific and set detailed clear directions and overall and resourcing targets to demonstrate the practical implementation of the commitment to the Whole-of-Society Approach.

We are concerned that the level of funding for GEF's flagship Small Grants Program has declined significantly in real terms over the last 15 years; the funding for the Inclusive Conservation Initiative currently enables support to only 10-15 countries.

We therefore call on GEF make a specific commitment to provide at least 10% of GEF resources (a minimum \$500 million) directly to Civil Society organisations, IPLC, women and youth

We Call on GEF to

- Increase total funding target for SGP to 360 million (through an allocation of at least \$260 million from core set aside plus \$100 million from STAR add on)
- Increase core allocation to the Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI) to \$100 million to enhance funding direct to Indigenous peoples and local communities (the recent mid-term review of the ICI could help guide this)
- Allocate \$40 million in GEF 9 for special cross-cutting programmes for capacity development and action for Whole of Society engagement through a dedicated capacity support mechanism through the Secretariat or appropriate GEF agencies - building on the GEF 8 financing for the GEF Civil Society Challenge programmes (\$20 Million), Fonseca Leadership Program, etc



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We are concerned on the following points in the Document that undermine CSO and IPLC engagement.

1. We echo comments of Brazil under the OPS8 and worry that the proposed streamlining of the project cycle (Para 15a) will significantly reduce the opportunities to engage key country stakeholders including civil society at an early stage in the project cycle. While the document is not very clear on the exact project cycle, the proposal to drop the PIF stage will remove an important step when local stakeholders need to be consulted and strategies for civil society and IPLC involvement are identified. It will also remove the opportunity for the GEF Council, Civil Society and other stakeholders to provide input and direction for the development of the projects. By delaying the council review till the end of the design process (if that is what is proposed) will increase the burden of the Council by having to review complete design documents and will make it very difficult for changes to the design to be made at this stage. In contrast, if the council approval will only be at the PPG request stage - there may be inadequate information for review.
2. The proposal to establish National Steering Committees (Para 25s) only focuses on the involvement of government agencies in steering committees with no opportunity mentioned for engagement of other stakeholders. Currently some countries already include civil society and other representatives in their National Steering Committees or National Climate Change or Biodiversity Committees. Exclusion of CSOs, IPLCs or other stakeholders from the National Steering Committees would be a big step backwards.
3. There is little information on how the Country Engagement Strategy will incorporate the Whole of Society approach. We therefore call for GEF to develop clear guidelines to ensure consistent approach in using the Whole of Society approach and propose that the updated paper give clear information on this. We also propose that the IEO undertake a deep dive into the current engagement of IPLC, women, youth and CSOs in National Dialogues and country programming to identify barriers and opportunities to enhance these processes in GEF 9.

Finally, to ensure effective implementation of GEF 9 - **we need to ensure that there is an ambitious replenishment.** Although GEF funds have increased in nominal terms by an average of 1.3% per year between 2010 to 2025, the purchasing power of the US\$ has declined 3% per year in the same period – leading to a real-term decline in average GEF resources of more than 20% over the past 16 years, while needs have more than doubled.

We have additional comments that we will submit in writing