



GEF CSO Network

Final Statement on Draft report of OPS8

[GEF Independent Evaluation Office presentation \(Document GEF/R.9/07\)](#)

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

The GEF CSO Network welcomes the Draft Report of the Eighth Overall Performance Study of the GEF. The assessments have been very comprehensive resulting in key findings. While the overall conclusions are very positive, the Study highlights some remaining challenges with regard to social inclusion and stakeholder engagement. The Study highlights the importance of a community-based approach, *with projects using this approach having demonstrated stronger performance and environmental and socio-economic outcomes*. Despite this, it seems only a minority of recent projects fully applied good practices around accountability, participation and resource devolution. This needs to be addressed.

We welcome the comprehensive consideration of social inclusion in Chapter 7 of OPS8. We note that the findings highlight the importance of a Whole of Society Approach and indicate that, for example, *gender integration has been significantly improved across project design, but inclusion beyond gender remains inconsistent and many barriers to inclusion remain*. There are significant gaps in effective engagement of different target groups. While more than 90% of PIFs indicate there will be engagement of civil society and related stakeholders; and consultation levels were high (especially with women's groups) - But the actual level of active collaboration in project implementation remained low especially for IPLC and youth.

While we note that some references on social inclusion are buried in the sub-text of other recommendations such as the need to:

- a) ***enhance opportunities for inclusive stakeholder engagement during the preparation of Integrated programmes. (Recommendation 1)***
- b) ***Pay greater attention to enhancing linkages with national stakeholders including civil society, that can uphold and scale outcomes. (Recommendation 2)***
- c) ***Institutionalise engagement through early and inclusive dialogues that involve civil society and other stakeholders (Recommendation 6)***

We believe that with the rich findings and concerns raised about social inclusion - there should be **additional specific recommendation and guidance on enhancing the Whole of Society and addressing gaps in social inclusion**. We hope that this can be incorporated into the final report.

The GEF CSO Network therefore calls for GEF to enhance the level of Civil Society and IPLC engagement in design and implementation and monitoring of medium and full-sized



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GEF projects as well as enhancing the direct financing options of the SGP and Inclusive Conservation Initiative.

- **GEF has committed to take a Whole of Society approach in GEF 8 and GEF 9.**
- **Enhanced involvement of Civil Society will enhance the effectiveness, sustainability and replicability of GEF interventions**
- **GEF's Stakeholder Engagement policy mandates the engagement and participation of Civil Society, IPLC, Women and youth in all appropriate GEF projects and programmes**
- **There has been a decline in CSO-led GEF MSPs and FSPs over the past 20 years**
- **Based on the papers for the GEF Council in December 2024, a third of GEF Agencies have never financed CSO-led GEF projects while another third has appointed CSOs for only 1-5% of projects. While only 3 agencies appointed CSOs to lead more than 10% of projects**

GEF CSO Network calls for

- **At least 10% of GEF MSP/FSP projects to be CSO led and at least 60% of projects to have active CSO, IPLC or youth partnership and involvement**
- **All GEF Agencies should enhance engagement with CSOs and use of CSO execution by preparing a strategy for Whole-of-Society inclusion in their portfolios.**
- **CSOs to be appointed as members of GEF National Steering Committees and participate in GEF programme development and monitoring**
- **Special elements and components for CSO/IPLC engagement to be included in all GEF Integrated Programmes**
- **Strengthen CES to better engage and empower CSO and IPLC**

Finally, we will submit some written comments to elaborate on some of the above issues and also respond to the section in the OPS8 Report on the potential role of the GEF CSO Network to enhance scaling and sustainability of inclusion efforts.