



GEF CSO Network

Statement on Agenda 12 :[Evaluation of the GEF Sustainable Cities Program](#)

71th GEF Council Meeting, May 2026

Thank you. We welcome the evaluation and the management response. The program is strong, and the evaluation demonstrates that demand from cities currently exceeds its capacity. Our three points are about the people who live in these cities.

First, inclusion is uneven. Paragraph 71 of the evaluation finds that women are tracked in 98 percent of projects, but that tracking of involvement of Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and ethnic minorities remains limited. Cities are home to civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, and youth. The GEF-9 Programming Directions already name civil society and IPLCs as partners in project design. We ask the Agencies to make that real in the Sustainable Cities framework, so engagement happens during the design phase of child projects, not after.

Second, investment readiness must not crowd out the community. Recommendation 1 of the evaluation calls for bankable pipelines and early engagement with financial institutions and the private sector. We support this. But we recommend that residents, especially in informal settlements, be engaged as early as the financial institutions, not after the finance is shaped. The evaluation examined the risk of green gentrification and the displacement of lower-income residents and informal workers. The management response does not carry this into Recommendation 1. So we ask the Secretariat: what safeguards will stop these investments from displacing the urban poor and the informal workers in waste and transport, and how will the GEF-9 framework require a just-transition check on the bankable pipeline?

Third, measure inclusion, not only emissions and finance. Recommendation 3 of the evaluation calls for indicators that track system-level transformation. In paragraph 12, the evaluation recalls that an earlier review found the results framework focused mainly on greenhouse gas reduction and did not capture broader outcomes. We recommend the GEF-9 indicators must include the engagement of civil society, IPLCs, women, and youth.