

Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in the GEF



This evaluation assesses gender mainstreaming trends in the GEF since OPS5 and the GEF’s approach to gender mainstreaming compared to international best practice.

FINDINGS

1. There has been modest improvement in gender mainstreaming since the previous OPS period. Despite a dramatic reduction in gender-blind projects since the introduction of the policy on gender mainstreaming—from 64.0 percent to 1.3 percent—there has only been a limited increase in the percentage of projects rated gender sensitive or gender mainstreamed.

2. Projects that conducted gender analyses achieved higher gender ratings. The evaluation applied a weighted gender rating to compare the gender sensitivity of all projects. Projects that undertook a gender analysis at the design stage were rated considerably higher (a score of 2.97 out of 4.00) than the average rating across the whole OPS6 cohort (1.68 out of 4.00). Very few projects actually conducted gender analyses, despite it being one of the minimum requirements of the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming: only 15.7 percent of completed projects reviewed had completed a gender analysis prior to endorsement/approval by the GEF Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

3. The policy has increased attention to—and performance of—gender in GEF operations, but certain provisions and means of implementation are still unclear. The policy leaves too much room for interpretation on gender analysis, and on the respective implementation responsibilities of GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat. Additionally, the inclusion of gender-disaggregated and gender-specific indicators in project results frameworks is highly variable across GEF projects, as is the collection and use of gender-related data. The policy is not informed by or situated in wider human rights and gender equality norms governing international development frameworks, nor does it reference gender-related mandates or decisions issued by the conventions.

4. Institutional capacity to implement the policy and achieve gender mainstreaming is insufficient. The appointment to the GEF Secretariat of a dedicated senior gender specialist is widely recognized as an essential step forward that has helped increase attention to gender equality and women’s empowerment. However, this position is insufficient on its own to build wider

PURPOSE AND METHODS: This evaluation looked to answer the cross-cutting question of the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS6) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as to the extent and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in the GEF’s work since development of its gender policy. The evaluation team conducted an extensive portfolio review; assessed the GEF Secretariat’s progress in meeting gender mainstreaming capacity-building requirements; and carried out a meta-analysis of GEF Agencies’ gender mainstreaming policies, strategies, and action plans. In country visits to Ghana, Honduras, and the Philippines, the team interviewed key stakeholders to cross-check and validate the data collected. Data were analyzed and triangulated to determine trends and formulate findings, conclusions, lessons, and recommendations.

WEB PAGE: <https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/gender-mainstreaming-gef>

CONTACT: Anna Viggh, Senior Evaluation Officer, Aviggh@thegef.org

ABOUT US: The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the GEF has a central role in ensuring the independent evaluation function within the GEF. www.gefio.org

staff competencies and capacities to support gender mainstreaming across GEF programming and processes.

5. The GEF's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) has been a relevant and effective framework for implementing the policy. The GEAP has facilitated implementation of policy requirements, and key stakeholders concur that it has been a good directive for action. In the context of the time frame of the current GEAP (2015–18) and the updating of the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming, a strong action plan facilitates strategic priority setting and can drive the GEF's institutional agenda on gender mainstreaming.

6. The GEF Gender Partnership is slowly developing into a relevant and effective platform for building a wider constituency on gender and the environment. The partnership has brought together gender focal points and practitioners of the GEF Agencies, other climate funds, the Secretariats of relevant conventions, and other partners. It has become an important forum for leveraging a wide range of skills and experiences on gender equality and women's empowerment from across the GEF and its partners. It has facilitated a number of reviews, helping to compile and build the evaluative evidence on gender and the environment. It plans to produce a series of tools that will strengthen the GEF's capacity to mainstream gender systematically in projects and support the achievement of gender-specific results.

HISTORY

Adopted in May 2011, the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming expresses the GEF's commitment to enhancing the degree to which the GEF and its partner Agencies promote the goal of gender equality through GEF operations. It commits the GEF to address the link between gender equality and environmental sustainability and toward gender mainstreaming in its policies, programs, and operations. Prior to adoption of the policy, there were only limited references to gender within GEF guidance and templates, and only limited gender-related requirements demanded of the GEF Agencies. The policy now requires the Agencies to have policies or strategies that satisfy a set of minimum requirements for ensuring gender mainstreaming. The

policy also requires the GEF Secretariat to strengthen its own capacity for supporting gender mainstreaming. Notably, the Secretariat is now required to periodically assess whether GEF Agencies comply with the policy. Following a current review—and in part informed by this evaluation—a revised policy was submitted to the GEF Council in November 2017.

The 2015–18 GEAP aims to operationalize the policy through implementation of concrete gender mainstreaming actions at both the corporate and focal area levels. The GEAP advances the GEF's goals of attaining both global environmental benefits and gender equity and social inclusion; further, it provides a clear road map, building on the existing and projected gender strategies and plans of the GEF Agencies.

RESULTS

Gender performance trends. The evaluation's quality-at-entry review analyzed the extent to which gender was considered at CEO endorsement/approval in key project documentation such as proposals and results frameworks, and whether projects had undertaken a gender analysis. Based on the quality of documentation and gender analysis, a gender rating for quality at entry was applied to each project. These ratings allowed for comparison of gender performance across GEF cycles and—more pertinently—before and after the introduction of the Policy on Gender Mainstreaming.

While gender performance has clearly improved since the introduction of the policy (figure 1), only 13.9 percent

of projects at entry were found to have undertaken a gender analysis and/or social assessment with gender elements. Almost half of the projects did not mention either a gender analysis being planned or completed, and none of the enabling activities indicated that a gender analysis or social assessment would take place. A gender analysis, or a social assessment with gender elements, is an important component of gender mainstreaming in project review and design. Consequently, none of those projects that lacked a gender analysis or social assessment were rated as gender mainstreamed, and less than 5 percent of these projects were rated as gender sensitive.

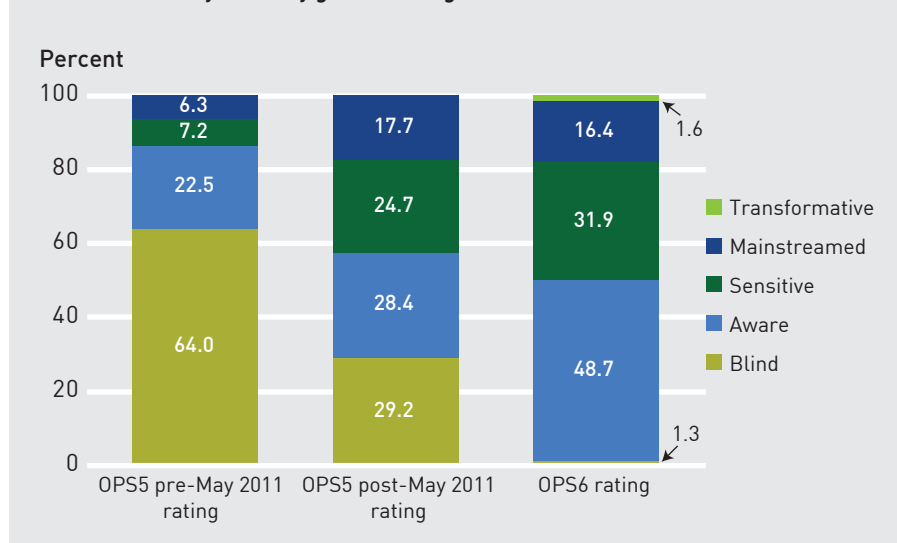
By Agency, there is a greater divergence in performance by gender rating score than across focal areas (table 1). The United Nations Industrial Development Organization's (UNIDO's) portfolio scores comparatively higher than that of

TABLE 1: Weighted gender rating score by GEF Agency

Agency	No. of projects	Score
FAO	18	1.67
UNDP	127	1.58
UNEP	76	1.66
UNIDO	38	2.03
WB	21	1.33

Note: FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; UNDP = United Nations Development Programme; UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme; WB = World Bank.

FIGURE 1: Quality-at-entry gender rating



the other Agencies; this is largely due to the relatively high proportion of UNIDO projects (71.1 percent) that benefited from a gender analysis.

Analysis was also undertaken on completed projects, with all documentation available at project completion examined. To identify trends, a sample of projects completed during OPS6 was compared with an equivalent sample of projects completed during OPS5 (table 2). Note that because almost all of the OPS6 projects were developed prior to the adoption of the gender policy, its effect on the cohort of completed projects will be limited.

A weighted gender rating score of 0.71 for the OPS6 completed projects sample means that projects are on average not reaching the gender aware rating. But projects are, on average, at least closer to being gender aware than to being gender blind. Given that the OPS6 data set is slightly younger, it is likely that changes in gender policies of GEF Agencies and general advances in the field of gender equality have had a positive—albeit small—influence on the weighted gender rating score when comparing the OPS6 cohort against the OPS5 baseline.

Best practice across GEF Agencies and other climate funds. To understand the GEF’s comparative gender performance, a meta-analysis of approaches to gender mainstreaming across the GEF Agencies and other climate funds was undertaken. The following best practices were thus identified:

- Gender policies acknowledge gender equality not only as a human right or development objective in and of itself, but as an essential cornerstone for achieving sustainable development.

- Integrating or linking gender policies to corporate strategic plans and results frameworks helps mainstream gender at the highest levels.
- Gender analysis is the foundation on which systematic gender mainstreaming rests and should be considered a mandatory element of any project design.
- Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women’s participation at all levels of decision making.
- The seniority level of gender advisers and gender focal points, as well as the location of gender units, is crucial for translating gender policies and communicating the importance of gender mainstreaming to institutions’ substantive and operational work.
- Gender mainstreaming needs to be viewed as an institutionwide mandate for which all staff are responsible.
- Dedicated and adequate human and financial resources are provided to implement gender policies, strategies, and plans.
- Putting in place a reliable system for tracking financial data on gender equality enhances institutional accountability.
- Establishing portfolio performance ratings at project entry, implementation, and completion can help in monitoring and assessing change in institutional performance on gender and the contribution of projects to gender equality results.
- Accountability for translating gender mainstreaming into practice is system-wide and lies at the highest levels.

Future trends and directions. Given the emphasis that the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming and GEAP place on GEF

Agencies’ own policies and strategies, the evaluation sought to identify important trends that are influencing the future direction of those Agency approaches, policies, and strategies:

- **Introducing a mix of incentives can enhance institutional performance on gender mainstreaming.** Some Agencies are experimenting with performance-based initiatives such as regional gender awards; other funding mechanisms are increasingly assigning more weight to projects that have well-designed gender elements.
- **Ensuring quality during implementation.** Some Agencies have revised their reporting and support mechanisms to ensure better tracking and measuring of gender impacts, and to increase the availability of gender focal points/specialists.
- **Measuring outcomes rather than outputs or processes.** Qualitative indicators are increasingly being applied to measure different dimensions of change in women’s lives, such as access to information and participation in decision-making processes.
- **Beyond gender mainstreaming.** There is a growing recognition that gender mainstreaming in the project cycle is not sufficient to produce robust gender equality results. Nearly all GEF Agencies’ gender approaches focus on addressing the root causes of gender inequality in order to achieve transformative and lasting change in the lives of women—going “beyond gender mainstreaming” in the project cycle and tackling social norms, attitudes, and behaviors at the household, community, and national levels.

Performance of the policy and the GEAP. Combining the review of portfolio gender performance with the meta-analysis of best practices and future trends, the evaluation team assessed the overall appropriateness and performance of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the GEAP.

While the policy acknowledges that gender mainstreaming advances the GEF goal of attaining global environmental benefits as well as that of gender equity and social inclusion, it stops short of providing a compelling rationale for why gender matters in environment-focused interventions. It also does not provide a

TABLE 2: Completed projects’ gender rating for OPS6 and OPS5 baseline

Rating	OPS6 cohort		OPS5 baseline	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0. Gender blind	113	45.4	169	60.1
1. Gender aware	102	41.0	68	24.2
2. Gender sensitive	28	11.2	17	6.0
3. Gender mainstreamed	6	2.4	27	9.6
4. Gender transformative	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	249	100	281	100.0
Weighted score	0.71		0.65	

GENDER RATING SCALE

- **Gender blind.** Project does not demonstrate awareness of the set of roles, rights, responsibilities, and power relations associated with being male or female.
- **Gender aware.** Project recognizes the economic/social/political roles, rights, entitlements, responsibilities, obligations, and power relations socially assigned to men and women, but might work around existing gender differences and inequalities, or does not sufficiently show how it addresses gender differences and promotes gender equality.
- **Gender sensitive.** Project adopts gender-sensitive methodologies (a gender analysis is undertaken, gender-disaggregated data are collected, gender-sensitive indicators are integrated in monitoring and evaluation) to address gender differences and promote gender equality.
- **Gender mainstreamed.** Project ensures that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to most, if not all, activities. It assesses the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programs, in any area and at all levels.
- **Gender transformative.** Project goes beyond gender mainstreaming and facilitates a critical examination of gender norms, roles, and relationships; strengthens or creates systems that support gender equity; and/or questions and changes gender norms and dynamics.

rationale as to how the inclusion of gender equality in environmental projects would generate benefits beyond project effectiveness and efficiency. Moreover, the policy does not reference the gender-related mandates or decisions of the five conventions the GEF serves. Further, the policy was issued without a results or accountability framework. There were no requirements for the GEF Secretariat to track and assess progress against any performance targets or benchmarks; nor were clear roles assigned to oversee overall progress or to report on obligations to senior management or the GEF Council. While the policy called for a review in 2015, this review did not take place on time and is currently ongoing.

At the Agency level, Agencies confirmed that they have been able to align their own policies and plans with the GEF policy requirements. However, several Agencies noted that their own corporate requirements have evolved and now exceed those of the GEF policy; this risks marginalizing the GEF gender policy altogether, making it superfluous and less relevant. GEF Agencies acknowledged that the policy needed to be updated and aligned more closely with international best practice standards.

More positively, the GEAP has served as a relevant framework for implementing policy requirements and has provided a good mandate for action, with actions and outputs on a four-year time frame. Overall, it has advanced the GEF's efforts

to strengthen integration of gender in GEF programming and operations in a more systematic manner and has put in place a results framework and some indicators to support accountability and better monitoring of gender mainstreaming progress. One of its most significant achievements has been the establishment of the GEF Gender Partnership. The partnership is seen as an important forum for leveraging members' wide range of skills and experiences on gender equality and women's empowerment; and provides partners with a space to share and exchange knowledge, learning, and best practice as well as to discuss common issues, challenges, and solutions.

Comparison with other climate funds.

Other climate finance mechanisms have made concerted efforts to integrate gender into their institutions and operations in recent years. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) issued its gender policy and action plan in 2014; the Adaptation Fund did so in 2016. The Climate Investment Funds do not yet have a gender policy in place, but are guided by two successive gender action plans.

There are two crucial differences between the GEF's plan and those of the GCF and the Adaptation Fund. First, the other funds have a priority area dedicated to governance institutional structure, which outlines the detailed role of the respective boards in oversight of policy implementation and monitoring. Second, the other

funds' plans include a specific component on resource allocation and budgeting, holding those funds accountable for providing adequate resources to implement their gender policies at institutional and operational levels.

ISSUES TO ADDRESS

1. The GEF Secretariat should consider revising its policy to better align with best practice standards. The policy should be anchored in the gender-related decisions of the conventions and in the GEF Agencies' own best practice standards. The Secretariat should consider that policies grounded in rights-based frameworks tend to result in more effective gender mainstreaming. It should also consider using the demonstrated effective GEF Gender Partnership as the vehicle for stakeholder engagement in updating its policy. The policy should provide greater guidance on gender analysis, and on the respective responsibilities of the GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat.

2. The GEF Secretariat with its partners should develop an action plan for implementation of the gender policy in GEF-7. As at present, an appropriate gender action plan should support implementation of any revised policy on gender mainstreaming. This should include a continued focus on developing and finalizing comprehensive guidelines, tools, and methods. The plan should be developed and implemented in collaboration with the GEF Gender Partnership, drawing on the knowledge and best practice standards of GEF Agencies, other climate funds, the secretariats of relevant conventions, and other partners. Upstream analytical work on the associated links between gender equality and project performance across GEF programmatic areas would also support mainstreaming.

3. To achieve the objectives of institutional strengthening and gender mainstreaming, the GEF Secretariat should ensure that adequate resources are made available. During GEF-7, the Secretariat's institutional and staff capacity on gender mainstreaming will need strengthening: resources should be leveraged from within the GEF Agencies that have a strong institutional gender focus and expertise. ■