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Agenda Item 03

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
STRATEGY FOR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having considered document GEF/C.65/03/Rev.01, *Global Environment Facility Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning*, approves the strategic directions proposed for knowledge management and learning, and encourages the GEF Secretariat to engage with Agencies and STAP in facilitating implementation of the Strategy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) as a global network of partners and stakeholders is uniquely positioned to serve as a knowledge and learning entity for the planet. This will not only enable the GEF to address environmental challenges effectively, but also, to influence critical decision-making regarding the global environment, culminating in sustainable and scalable solutions. A strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (KM&L) in the GEF is therefore key to ensuring operational effectiveness and services that meets the needs of all stakeholders while at the same time advancing its mandate to safeguard the planet.

2. Efforts to develop a KM&L strategy has been a focus for the GEF since the Fifth Replenishment Cycle (GEF-5), with policy recommendations that led to a KM Strategic Framework in 2011. Since then, the GEF Secretariat has supported a series of activities that included audits, needs assessments, stakeholder surveys, working groups and consultations, all geared toward socializing and developing the KM&L strategy. The GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) as part of its Seventh Operational Performance Study (OPS7) called for the GEF partnership to develop a clear KM strategy that "set out the KM priorities and define the roles and responsibilities across the GEF partnership." It also noted that the strategy should be supported by an action plan, with "principles and standards for the KM steps: knowledge capture, development, sharing, dissemination, and application articulated in reinforced project-level guidelines, requirements, and common KM metrics."

3. Guided by Council and with full engagement by GEF agencies and STAP, this strategy is a culmination of the collective effort by the GEF partnership to foster a systematic and coordinated approach to KM&L. With STAP guidance, the strategy is anchored on a Theory of Change which outlines "a simple set of necessary and sufficient causal pathways that interact with and reinforce one another" to deliver desired KM&L impacts in the context of GEF operations. The GEF vision is to become an efficient knowledge driven and learning entity for investing in the planet. The goal is to improve and enhance knowledge capture, sharing and learning processes across the GEF Partnership. This is based on the fact that knowledge is a key asset of the GEF Partnership, and plays a fundamental role in achieving sustainability, systems transformation and scale-up of results for impactful outcomes.

4. The KM&L strategy is intended to guide and promote a more systematic approach to how the GEF harnesses its knowledge resources, establish an appropriate system to management of the resources, and facilitate learning across the partnership. It is therefore framed around three main objectives: *1) Embedding cutting-edge knowledge into investments* to generate public goods in line with GEF mandate and enhance the role of knowledge management in projects and programs. *2) Increase knowledge flows through platforms* through partnership and communities of practice; and *3) Create and enable the environment for learning and capacity building* for greater exchange of knowledge and collaboration across the partnership.

5. To deliver on the objectives, the GEF Secretariat will strengthen its role as a knowledge broker and a think-tank, while at the same time facilitating engagement in KM&L by the broader GEF partnership. This calls for the GEF to anchor KM&L by investing in three pillars: *people,*

process, and *systems.* Underpinning these three pillars are supporting activities related to education and training, IT Infrastructure, human resources, security, and adaptive management. The GEF also needs to address these as a means of strengthening the KM&L agenda in the long term.

6. With this foundation and taking into consideration GEF-8 strategic vision and feedback compiled from across the GEF partnership, including the cross-cutting considerations from STAP, four key strategic directions will form the basis for pursuing the vision and objectives for KM&L, with specific action areas to guide GEF investments.

- *Strategic Direction 1* is on alignment of KM&L with GEF-8 delivery, with action areas on strengthening the knowledge base for blue and green recovery, harnessing IP platforms for increased learning and knowledge sharing, and fostering interactive engagement by GEF focal points.
- *Strategic Direction 2* is on strengthening KM&L in programming, with actions areas on enabling the GEF to reinforce ongoing efforts on mainstreaming KM&L across all GEF investments, from designing and implementation of projects and programs, to promoting south-south exchange for knowledge sharing and learning.
- *Strategic Direction 3* is on generation of global public goods, which will ensure that the GEF partnership supports efforts to facilitate the gathering, curating, and sharing of lessons learned and best practices from GEF investments in key priority areas of work.
- *Strategic Direction 4* is on alignment of KM&L with communications and outreach, to foster a more coordinated, appropriately funded, approach at the global, Agency, program, and project level for improved communication of GEF impacts and results, in line with relevant communications and outreach plans, and the GEF Communications and Visibility Policy.

7. The GEF Secretariat will lead and oversee the overall implementation, in consultation with the GEF KM Advisory Group and in cooperation with GEF Agencies and other key stakeholders. It is anticipated that a full-time KM&L lead will be responsible for day-to-day coordination of activities across the partnership, defining implementation targets, and timelines as well as keeping stakeholders informed and engaged. The Secretariat will report to the GEF Council once a year on KM&L outputs and lessons from the GEF portfolio as well as KM&L implementation progress across the Partnership.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the decision of GEF Council in December 2020,[1] this document presents the *Knowledge Management and Learning (KM&L) Strategy* for the GEF Partnership for Council consideration. The Strategy provides an overall vision and roadmap of actions on KM&L to support and amplify impact of GEF programming on the global environment.

2. An important backdrop for the Strategy is the latest KM evaluation conducted by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) as part of OPS7.[2] The IEO Evaluation specifically called for "the GEF partnership should develop a clear KM strategy," that "set out the KM priorities and define the roles and responsibilities across the GEF partnership, including the role of the KM Advisory group." It also noted that the strategy should be supported by an action plan, with "principles and standards for the KM steps: knowledge capture, development, sharing, dissemination, and application articulated in reinforced project-level guidelines, requirements, and common KM metrics." The evaluation also called for the GEF partnership to "invest in a technical solution that strengthens the KM system," including "the ability to capture KM data, lessons, and good practices and to present them in a usable and accessible format for both GEF stakeholders and externally."

3. To address these recommendations, the strategy has evolved through a consultative and collaborative process with partners and stakeholders, drawing upon the extensive knowledge, expertise, and experience of the GEF partnership. The process included a partnership-wide KM Audit and stock-taking exercise, broad-based consultations around stakeholder needs and priorities, as well as an investigation around a technical solution for greater knowledge capture, exchange, and dissemination across the partnership. Within the framework of its updated vision, the strategy is designed to be action-oriented and practical, learning from and building on existing GEF actions while taking on board the IEO's recommendations to develop clear priorities and invest in a technical solution that strengthens the GEF's overall KM system.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

4. The GEF is a multilateral fund dedicated to confronting biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution, and strains on land and ocean health. As the world's leading financial entity for the planet, the GEF partnership unites 185 member governments comprising donor and recipient countries. The partnership also includes the GEF Secretariat and secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), GEF agencies, an Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), a Science and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), and Civil Society Organizations (Figure 1).

[1] Council document, GEF/C.62/Inf.08, endorsing recommendations that: (a) the GEF Partnership should develop a clear KM strategy, and (b) the GEF Partnership should invest in a technical solution that strengthens the KM system.

[2] GEF/E/C.59/04, *Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the GEF* (2020)

Figure 1. The GEF Partnership

5. GEF grants, blended financing, and policy support helps developing countries address their biggest environmental priorities and adhere to MEAs for which the GEF serves as financial mechanism. Through these investments, the GEF connects sustainability leaders across government, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and the private sector, and works closely with other environmental financiers for efficiency and impact.

6. Since its inception, the GEF has invested in a diverse portfolio of projects and programs that use and generate knowledge. The investments cover all dimensions of environmental challenges facing the planet and embody the core policies and principles of the GEF business model, including Stakeholder Engagement, Gender Equality, Environmental and Social Safeguards, and Fiduciary Standards.

7. The extensive global network of partners and stakeholders uniquely positions the GEF to facilitate the capture, transfer, uptake and scale up of lessons; and to harness expertise, innovations, and best practices for achieving impactful outcomes. These features enable the GEF to not only address environmental challenges effectively, but also, to influence critical decision-making regarding the global environment, culminating in sustainable and scalable solutions. KM&L in the GEF is therefore key to ensuring operational effectiveness and services that meets the needs all stakeholders while at the same time advancing its mandate to safeguard the planet.

2.1. Defining KM&L in the GEF Context

8. A GEF KM&L strategy is needed to accommodate the diverse sources of knowledge and practices that generate them, while taking full advantage of the intellectual capital that exists across the entire partnership. In this context, **knowledge** in the GEF encompasses the *information, knowhow, lessons, innovations, and good practice emerging from investments and inter-related related policy and operational work by the GEF and its partners*. This could include scientific and traditional knowledge.

Box 1. Knowledge Resources in the GEF

Strategy and Programming directions – The four-yearly replenishment cycles are framed around a detailed strategy and programming directions that inform and guide all GEF investments across focal areas. The consultative processes employed during the replenishment negotiations and the collective effort by the entire GEF partnership during the replenishment process creates for a rich knowledge sharing and learning experience.

Scientific information and data. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) provides objective scientific and technical advice on the GEF's policies strategies, programs, and projects through a program of work developed in collaboration with the GEF Secretariat, giving technical guidance on thematic issues based on the best available science. The Secretariat convenes Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) during replenishment process to ensure that the strategies, programming directions, and operations directions are informed by the latest scientific information and data. The GEF CEO leadership and staff are involved in a number of international boards, panels, committees, and partnerships that facilitate direct Secretariat involvement in a number of cutting-edge scientific initiatives. Secretariat staff routinely participate in academic conferences and prepare journal publications.

Policies, decisions and guidance - GEF investments and operations are guided by decisions of the GEF Council, including on priority issues such as Environmental and Social Safeguards, Stakeholder Engagement (including with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities), Private Sector Engagement, Gender Equality, and Fiduciary Standards

Programming portfolio - The GEF has financed a diverse portfolio of investments that include programs, projects, and innovative instruments that use and generate knowledge. In addition to addressing specific needs of 145 recipient countries, GEF investments also cover a wide range of thematic and regional priorities, including the use of integrated approaches to tackle drivers of global environmental degradation. For programs, the GEF also routinely invests in dedicated platforms to crowd-in additional partners for knowledge exchange, enhance financial leverage, achieve greater economies of scale, and maximize impact.

Project implementation and evaluation reports – This is a key requirement of the GEF project cycle, and for which GEF agencies and executing entities play a critical role. Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) are submitted yearly, Mid-Term Reports at the halfway-point, and Terminal Evaluation Reports (TERs) at completion of all projects. These reports provide useful information and data for portfolio analyses and syntheses on trends in project performance, resource flows, and progress toward outcomes. The Annual Monitoring Report and Score Card are based largely on data in PIRs and TERs, and the IEO also uses the information for its cyclical Operational Performance Studies (OPS) that generate important knowledge resources for the GEF partnership.

Synthesis and learning reports – The GEF Secretariat and Agencies routinely generate knowledge in the form of publications and reports on key lessons emerging from investments around the world. The GEF IEO and STAP also contribute important reports that help to inform programming strategies and as guidance for project activities in recipient countries. The knowledge resources are often disseminated through the websites of GEF Secretariat, STAP and IEO, and occasionally during GEF related events.

9. **Knowledge management** in the GEF includes the *processes and procedures involved in identifying, organizing, storing, and disseminating knowledge resources across the partnership*, and **learning** involves the *steps taken to harness knowledge resources for achieving outcomes and generate new knowledge*. The GEF knowledge resources are not centralized, but rather distributed across the GEF partnership through people (individual and groups), organizational processes, and organizational relationships (Box 1). It is found in the collective expertise and experience of the staff, consultants and other partners at the Secretariat, Agencies, STAP and IEO, with the OFPs and governments, and with partners and stakeholders in civil society, including indigenous and local communities.

10. Professional staff in the GEF Secretariat and in the GEF Agencies play a critical role in KM&L, both as sources of 'tacit' knowledge as well as 'explicit 'knowledge that is shared in groups (e.g., focal area teams, results-based management team, communications team) and communities of practice. Their technical expertise and collective experience enable the GEF partnership to effectively harness scientific guidance from STAP, respond to demand from countries, prepare comprehensive reports to Conference of Parties of MEAs, and contribute valuable inputs to evaluative processes undertaken by the IEO.

11. Organizational processes including routines, best practices and innovations play a critical role in facilitating KM&L. The GEF business model already embodies processes that generate, capture, and transfer critical knowledge across the partnership to inform and enhance GEF project design and portfolio management, and help to foster collaboration, innovation and scaling-up through demonstration and learning across the partnership. At the core is the GEF project cycle, which includes country-driven activities such as National Dialogues to socialize GEF programming directions and inform project priorities for investing GEF resources, preparation of project identification forms (PIFs), design of the projects for CEO endorsement, and submission of projects through the GEF portal. The GEF website and the GEF Portal also serves as interface for the GEF partnership to access knowledge and data resources.

12. Organizational relationships that are both intrinsic and extrinsic to the GEF partnership are also critical for KM&L. For example, GEF agencies have occasionally used communities of practices and inter- and intra- organizational networks to generate knowledge. The extensive global network of partners and stakeholders uniquely positions the GEF to facilitate the capture, transfer, uptake and scale up of lessons, expertise, innovations, and best practices. These features enable the GEF to not only address environmental challenges effectively, but also, to influence critical decision-making regarding the global environment, culminating in sustainable and scalable solutions.

2.2. Rationale for a Systematic Approach to KM&L

13. The GEF as a partnership has a vast array of KM&L opportunities in existence. All these efforts have contributed to the quality and impact of the GEF's investments by increasing awareness, knowledge, capacity and collaboration among beneficiaries, decision makers and practitioners, and by facilitating uptake and scale up of innovative solutions. A key challenge for the GEF is how to organize, manage and harness this complex and dynamic system of knowledge

assets and resources to advance its mandate of safeguarding the planet. This challenge is not unique to the GEF, as both public and private institutions similarly grapple with how business critical data and information can best be identified, captured, organized, and used to meet the end goal.

14. The GEF can overcome this challenge by approaching KM&L in a coherent and consistent manner, taking into consideration the best available tools, systems, and practices necessary to meet the diverse needs and priorities across the partnership. Such an approach will not only enable the GEF harnesses KM&L to advance its mission but ensure that the partnership is adequately engaged and supported toward this end (Table 1). Ultimately, this will enable greater impact of GEF investments while at the same time strengthening the GEF as a knowledge organization and source of global public goods on innovations for environmental sustainability.

Table 1. KM&L Needs and Roles in the GEF Partnership

GEF Partners	Needs and Roles
GEF Secretariat	Have in place capacity, systems, and practices to meet needs of the GEF partnership for knowledge generation, sharing, and application.
Donor countries	Have access to the best available knowledge for understanding and assessing GEF progress and achievements across various dimensions of the replenishment cycle.
Recipient countries	Can track their evolving portfolio of investments and harness innovative tools and resources for knowledge exchange to inform and shape future programming of GEF resources.
GEF agencies, CSOs, IPLCs, Non-state Actors and Executing entities	Can leverage their expertise and institutional strengths to contribute and share knowledge innovations emerging from portfolio of GEF investments.
MEA Secretariats	Can assess and track portfolio of investments in global environmental benefits consistent with guidance from the Conference of Parties
STAP	Can identify and address the most critical needs for scientific and technical guidance to advance innovative practices across the GEF partnership.
GEF IEO	Can have access to appropriate documentation and resources for its performance evaluations that progressively help to inform and improve GEF policies and operations.

15. The KM&L strategy is intended to guide and promote a more systematic approach to how the GEF harnesses its knowledge resources, establish an appropriate system to management of the resources, and facilitate learning across the partnership. First, the document outlines the current state and architecture of KM&L to reflect progress and achievements made over the last decade. Second, it describes the methodology and processes used to assess and establish priorities, including findings and recommendations emerging from audits, surveys, and assessments. Third, it outlines vision, goal, and an underlying theory of change for KM&L in the GEF. Finally, it presents the strategic directions and action areas for delivery.

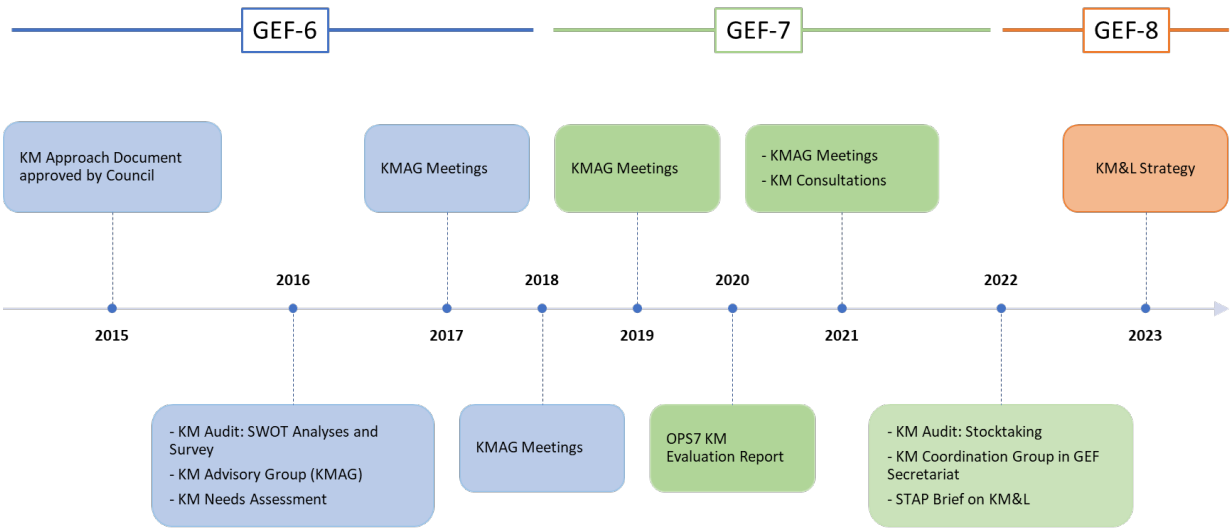
3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE KM&L STRATEGY

16. Efforts to develop a KM&L strategy has been a focus for the GEF since the Fifth Replenishment Cycle (GEF-5), with policy recommendations that lead to a KM Strategic Framework in 2011. However, it was during GEF-6 that the GEF began to more actively mainstream KM&L into its investments.

3.1. KM Approach Paper

17. In 2014, the GEF-6 Replenishment Policy Recommendations emphasized "*the importance of developing a knowledge management (KM) system that aims to improve the GEF partnership's ability to learn by doing and thereby enhance its impact over time*." Subsequently, the Council welcomed, in June 2015, the GEF Knowledge Management (KM) Approach,[3] which identified two key objectives: a) to improve the impact of GEF-supported projects and programs, and b) to inform global, regional, and national policy dialogues on options and approaches to reverse the course of environmental degradation. The KM Approach Paper also included inputs on observations and results of STAP's work on KM in the following areas: portfolio analysis of KM within the GEF portfolio, including evidence from the IEO; reference of KM experience from other institutions; and a general review of the principles of KM systems.[4]

Figure 2. Timeline and Milestones in Development of the KM&L Strategy



18. The GEF Secretariat began implementing the KM Approach in September 2015, with a series of activities that included audits, needs assessments, stakeholder surveys, working groups and consultations, all geared toward socializing and developing the KM&L strategy. Figure 2 shows key milestones and achievements since the KM approach was approved by Council. From

[3] GEF/C.48/07/Rev.01, GEF Knowledge Management Approach, June 2015
[4] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.STAP_.C.48.Inf_.03.Rev_.01_KM_in_the_GEF_STAP_Interim_Report_5.pdf

2016 through 2020, several major steps were taken to socialize the approach paper and implement many of the proposed recommendations. The KM evaluation conducted by the IEO as part of OPS7 noted the progress made during GEF-6 and GEF-7 in implementing the GEF KM Approach and recommended that the GEF enhance its KM&L efforts further in GEF-8 and develop a clear KM strategy in line with GEF-8 replenishment goals.

3.2. KM Advisory Group

19. To socialize the KM approach and engage the broader GEF partnership, a **KM Advisory Group** (KMAG) was established in October 2015 and has convened regularly on margins of GEF Council meetings. The KMAG brought together GEF Partners, including GEF Agencies, STAP, IEO, CSOs, member countries and the Secretariats of MEAs served by the GEF. It served as an informal vehicle for collaboration and consultation on KM&L initiatives across the GEF Partnership, as well as KM experts from like-minded institutions. To date, the KMAG has continued to provide a forum for consultation and collaboration on KM across the partnership.

3.3. KM&L Audit – SWOT Analyses

20. An **initial KM audit** was conducted in 2016 to assess the current state of knowledge capture, sharing and transfer at the GEF Secretariat and across GEF Partnership, identify key priorities for a successful knowledge management program that aligns with the strategic business objectives, and use key findings and opportunities to develop a KM Roadmap. The audit identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that helped to establish key priorities for a KM&L road map (Figure 3).

Figure 3. SWOT Analysis of KM in the GEF

	HELPFUL	HARMFUL
INTERNAL	STRENGTH • Key financing institution in the space • 18 GEF Agencies partners across the globe • Well recognized and well funded • In a pivotal position to become a knowledge facilitator	WEAKNESS • No clear definition of knowledge management at GEFSEC and with partners • Various silos • Lack of alignment about KM at the leadership level • Limited bandwidth / allocated dedicated resources to KM
EXTERNAL	OPPORTUNITY • Develop expectations for knowledge capture with GEF partners • Position design of new project management system to make it a robust KM portal • Have leaders align on KM and begin implementation at GEFSEC • Facilitate collaboration of GEF partners	THREAT • Missed opportunities • Redundant efforts • Competitive threats • Continued limited visibility without focused efforts

3.4. KM&L Audit of the GEF Partnership

21. In 2022, the GEF Secretariat contracted a more detailed **KM Audit of the GEF Partnership**, which included a *partnership-wide KM&L survey*; a *project KM inventory* to take stock of GEF investments made in knowledge and learning through GEF 6 and 7 portfolios and knowledge outputs produced/planned as a result; and in response to IEO's recommendations, an *analysis of the information technology (IT) and Knowledge platforms and systems* in GEF agencies, including identification of system requirements and options for a potential GEF Knowledge Hub and GEF Communities of Practice that can leverage and link to them. The audit involved interviews and focus group discussions, as needed, with key GEF partner and stakeholders, including member countries and agencies.

22. The KM audits, needs assessments, and stakeholder surveys all offered a clearer understanding of status of KM&L across the GEF partnership and generate recommendations that helped to inform the strategy (Box 2). The findings also helped to inform internal brainstorming and consultations and served as basis for promoting an evidence-based and consultative strategy development process.

Box 2. Key Outcomes from KM&L Surveys and Audits

A. Action Items from Stakeholder Survey

- Raise awareness of KM&L tools/products/activities that the GEF already has.
- Enhance quality and improve flow and accessibility of existing GEF KM&M tools, products, methods, activities, and platforms.
- Systematize identification, compilation and sharing of best practices and lessons learned from GEF investments, ideally using existing GEF systems like the GEF Portal, GEF website and the GEF Academy, and leveraging agency and country platforms and/or hubs where available and appropriate.
- Connect the dots between results monitoring and KM&L processes and reporting requirements, especially at MTR stage in the GEF project cycle, by focusing on lessons capture and adaptive management.
- Be more realistic about expectations around KM for the GEF partnership, taking into consideration different levels of capacity and KM maturity of target audiences.
- Invest more corporate resources into KM governance, coordination, and capacity within the Secretariat.
- Prepare clear GEF guidance for project/program level knowledge capture, sharing and learning.
- Create incentives to better codify and share knowledge across the GEF partnership
- Build a shared understanding and capacity around good knowledge and learning outcomes for GEF funded projects/programs to enhance their impact and sustainability.

B. Recommendations from Project KM Inventory

1. Build KM Capacity and provide KM guidance and support. Designate or hire a KM lead for each project. Consider a requirement to ensure that part of KM budget is allocated to hiring a KM lead and an Monitoring and Evaluation specialist.

- Target capacity building towards KM that is results-focused and strategic. Besides designating or hiring a KM lead, build the capacity of a larger set of stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of the KM components.
- Enhance the usefulness of Section 8-KM approach by introducing a KM template and including prompts and questions which encourage a systematic and results-focused approach to KM and how it can support project outcomes

C. Recommendations from IT analysis

- A centralized knowledge hub: The GEF can benefit from a centralized knowledge hub/platform that enables GEF relevant knowledge flow and exchange across the Partnership, connecting to existing systems/platforms that are being used across the Partnership.
- Gateway to existing knowledge systems: The GEF website can be repositioned and utilized as a gateway to existing agency and convention knowledge systems by including a web page with links to these systems, including GEF-specific dedicated pages on Agency websites.
- Learning Platforms: Having broader awareness to surface around learning opportunities across the Partnership and connecting existing learning efforts/systems can serve as a valuable and cost-effective knowledge transfer mechanism.
- Collaboration and peer-to-peer learning: By having in-person workshops, site visits, demonstrations, webinars, virtual chat rooms, on-line discussion channels, peer-to-peer technical learning/sharing sessions and south-south exchanges, we can expedite knowledge transfer among key GEF partners and socialize partners to the GEF knowledge ecosystem.

4. VISION, GOAL, AND OBJECTIVES

23. Knowledge is clearly an important asset for the GEF, and there is considerable scope for the GEF Partnership to build from and leverage experiences with KM&L. The audits, surveys, and consultations conducted over the last two years all confirm that the GEF already has a knowledge base that is vast and unique. GEF has nearly three decades of experience in supporting developing countries to address threats to the global environment, with a mission that embraces several interrelated facets of a healthy global environment: biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters, and chemicals and waste.

As the GEF continues to embrace innovative approaches to tackling global environmental challenges, there is clear need for a more systematic approach to KM&L. The GEF also has extensive and equally cutting-edge experience on policy, partnership and operational matters critical to mission and best results. This experience provides an invaluable set of lessons to guide future work, and to connect strategy to country needs and priorities.

4.1. Vision and Goal

24. Recommendations from the audits, surveys, and consultations have offered valuable insights for a systematic approach to KM&L. With this strategy, the GEF vision is to become an efficient knowledge driven and learning entity for investing in the planet. The goal is to improve and enhance knowledge capture, sharing and learning processes across the GEF Partnership. This is based on the fact that knowledge is a key asset of the GEF Partnership, and plays a fundamental role in achieving sustainability, systems transformation and scale-up of results for impactful outcomes.

4.2. Objectives

25. Building on the useful recommendations from audits, surveys, and needs assessment conducted, recommendations from the IEO evaluation, and the additional guidance from STAP, the KM&L strategy is framed around three main objectives:

1. *Embed cutting-edge knowledge into investments*. To encourage learning, sharing and scaling new ideas, the GEF will establish clear commitments for its investments to both use and generate knowledge and to deliver knowledge products in line with its mandate. It will also leverage possibilities from IT systems to make available learning from projects and programs faster to all stakeholders and partners and continues to enhance the role of KM in projects and programs. The GEF Secretariat will also ensure progress in completing actions taken in response to learning from reports and evaluations, at both project and portfolio levels.
2. *Increase knowledge flows through platforms.* To build a partnership centered around a knowledge culture that fosters knowledge flows, the GEF will organize a community of practice for country OFPs, make available the relevant learning modules, and hold regional events on programming and policy. Analytical tools for mining content in

project and program documents will be developed for use by staff from GEF Secretariat and agencies.

3. *Create and enable the environment for learning and capacity building*. To set the stage for greater exchange of knowledge and allow collaboration across the partnership, the GEF Secretariat will deepen partnerships for learning, make available online learning and facilitate both virtual and in-person capacity strengthening initiatives for the partnership, in collaboration with GEF agencies and other partners. In particular, specific e-learning modules will be targeted for development on dedicated topics of strategic GEF relevance.

4.3. Theory of Change

26. Consistent with findings and recommendations from KM&L audits, STAP has provided additional guidance on how the strategy can be framed in a Theory of Change context, specifically in relation to the GEF-8 Strategy and Programming Directions[5] (Figure 4). The guidance note indicates that for the GEF to deliver on its goal of "systems transformation to deliver global environmental benefits" and vision of "a healthy, productive, and resilient environment underpinning the wellbeing of human societies," KM&L needs to: support more rapid learning and application to keep up with accelerating rates of change; ensure that innovation and learning are systematized, enduring, and kept up-to-date; work across internal and external silos horizontally to support policy coherence and integration; work across levels vertically to help merge top-down and bottom-up actions and across countries horizontally to inform priorities and improve policy coherence; demonstrate that GEF investments are delivering greater impact to encourage further investment; and have continuing support throughout the GEF.

[5] https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/56096%20-%20KM%20%26%20Learning%20brief%20-%20web.pdf

- **Figure 4. Key Pathways in a Simple Theory of Change Diagram**

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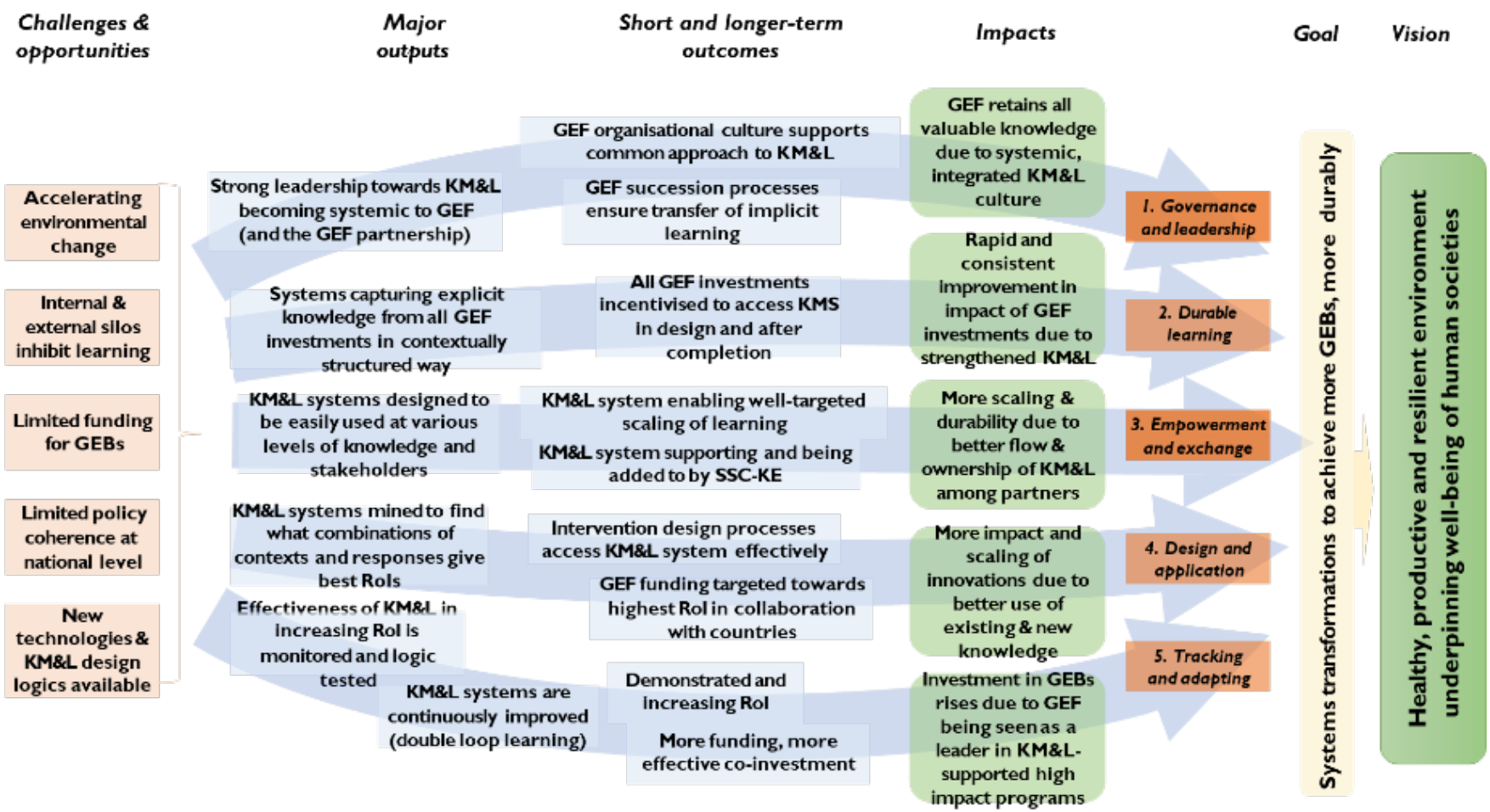


[*Note: GEB - global environmental benefit; KM&L - knowledge management and learning; RoI - return on investment; SSC-KE - South–South cooperation for knowledge exchange*]

27. In addressing these needs, STAP has proposed in the Theory of Change "*a simple set of necessary and sufficient causal pathways that interact with and reinforce one another*" to deliver desired KM&L impacts in the context of GEF operations:

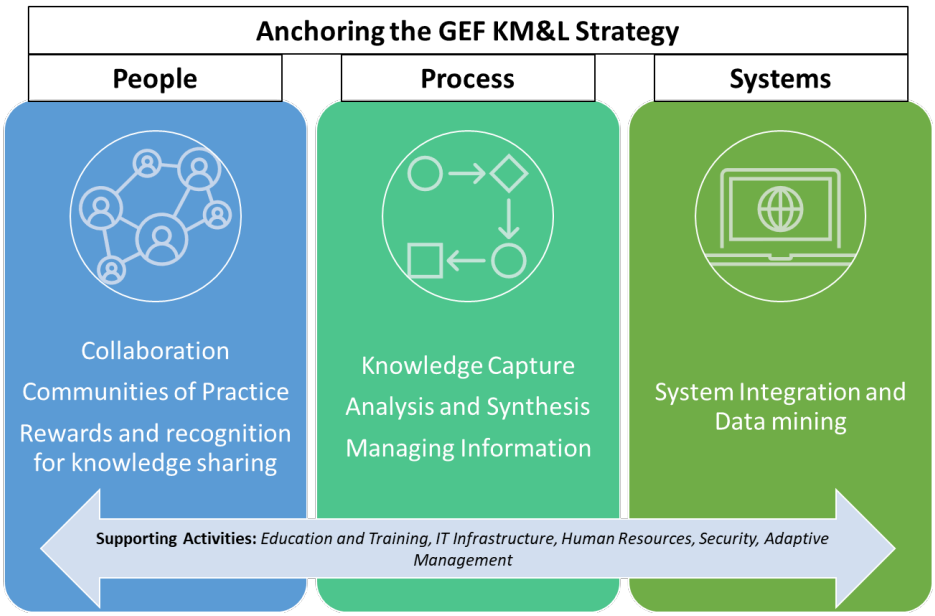
> *Pathway 1 – Governance and leadership* to ensure that the GEF retains all valuable knowledge through having a systemic, integrated KM&L culture. The governance of knowledge and learning within the GEF Partnership requires strong leadership to engage all staff at the Secretariat, GEF Agencies and GEF Focal Points in a learning culture. This pathway is key to the other pathways being able to operate well.
>
> *Pathway 2 – Durable learning* to attain more rapid improvement in the impact of GEF investments through strengthened KM&L processes. Approaches for capturing and sharing knowledge and learning from GEF investments should be redesigned so that explicit knowledge is systematically recorded and used in relation to context.
>
> *Pathway 3 – Empowerment and exchange* to achieve more scaling and durability from GEF investments through greater flow of, and ownership of, knowledge and learning among and across partners and countries. The KM&L system should be designed to be easily used for knowledge exchange purposes (e.g., to support regional workshops and training or existing communities of practice) and should be relevant, accessible, and used for South–South cooperation.
>
> *Pathway 4 – Design and application* to achieve more impact and scaling of innovations due to the better use of existing and new knowledge. Efficient processes should be developed to mine existing knowledge, identify where and how future investments are most effectively deployed to get the best returns on investment, and ensure that knowledge and learning are applied in the design of new investments.
>
> *Pathway 5 – Tracking and adapting* to position the GEF as a leader in KM&L-supported high-impact programs. Results from the GEF investment portfolio should be tracked to show the full value of GEF investments and to demonstrate continual improvement in the GEF's KM&L system.

28. This strategic guidance is consistent with the internal findings of the Secretariat from the various KM&L Surveys and Audits as reflected in Text Box 2. Taken all together, these therefore form the foundational basis upon which the following Strategic Directions and Action Areas of the Strategy are built.

5. Strategic Directions and Action Areas

29. To deliver on the objectives and harness pathways proposed in the Theory of Change, the GEF Secretariat will need to strengthen its role as a knowledge broker and a think-tank, while at the same time facilitating engagement in KM&L by the broader GEF partnership. This calls for the GEF to anchor KM&L by investing in three pillars: people, process, and systems (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Anchoring the GEF KM&L Strategy



- **People** – Professional staff and experts must be at the heart of KM&L for the GEF partnership to fully be engaged and benefit. As noted in the STAP Note on KM in the GEF, "*every team member – from recipient countries, from GEF Agencies, and from the GEF Secretariat – is a knowledge worker: everyone needs to understand the importance of KM&L and to help create a culture in which it flourishes*." The GEF therefore needs to invest in people as drivers and beneficiaries of an effective KM&L culture. This can be fostered by promoting and supporting collaboration, creating communities of practice around key issues or functions, and investing in rewards and recognition for knowledge sharing and exchange. Knowledge platforms such as those created for integrated programs already offer opportunities for professional staff to engage and collaborate. This needs to be formalized as powerful approach to harnessing GEF knowledge and expertise, with potential for generating public goods while strengthening capacity of individuals involved.

- **Process** – Institutional processes are key to achieving operational efficiency and effectiveness for KM&L. The GEF KM&L strategy must strengthen processes for knowledge capture, analysis and synthesis, and managing information across the partnership. As both a learning and knowledge driven organization, such processes will enable seamless engagement by GEF partners to foster collective action and learning, leading to creation of more impactful knowledge. Processes to enhance KM&L for effective GEF project design and portfolio management will be invaluable for countries and GEF agencies, and for innovation and scaling-up through demonstration and learning across the partnership. Country-driven

activities such as National Dialogues should not only help to socialize GEF programming direction and investment opportunities, but also empower OFPs to better leverage GEF knowledge resources toward addressing national priorities for resource mobilization, achieving policy coherence, and stakeholder engagement. Organizational relationships can be further strengthened through the use of communities of practices and inter- and intra- organizational networks that foster sharing and generation of knowledge.

- **Systems** – The long-term effectiveness of KM&L in the GEF will depend on its ability to curate, share and reuse knowledge resources. This requires a robust and well-organized system that harnesses the best available technologies and tools to maximize access for all stakeholders. The GEF portal will continue to be improved as an important interface for project and portfolio management, while at the same time creating opportunities for data mining and expanding accessibility to countries for portfolio management. Websites across the partnership need to be increasingly linked and integrated to further amplify the value and significance of GEF's intellectual resources generated from its investments. The GEF should also continue to deploy existing and new knowledge and learning tools, products and initiatives.

30. Underpinning these three pillars are supporting activities related to education and training, IT Infrastructure, human resources, security, and adaptive management. The GEF also needs to address these as a means of strengthening the KM&L agenda in the long term. With this foundation and taking into consideration GEF-8 strategic vision and feedback compiled from across the GEF partnership, including the cross-cutting considerations from STAP, four key strategic directions will form the basis for pursuing the vision and objectives for KM&L. Each strategic direction will be addressed through action areas for GEF investment.

Strategic Direction 1 - Alignment of KM&L with GEF-8 Delivery

31. The Eight Replenishment Cycle (GEF-8) sets an ambitious agenda to meet the critical global environmental threats and challenges faced today, across all core areas of GEF work and mandate. It calls on the GEF to focus on nature-positive, carbon-neutral, and pollution-reduced investments that support and influence transformational change in natural, food, energy, health, and urban systems, consistent with goals of MEAs which the GEF serves and global ambitions for a *Healthy Planet, Healthy People*. Aligning the strategy to support the ambition and directions of GEF-8 is therefore a timely and critical opportunity to actively engage the entire GEF partnership in KM&L. The following three action areas will be targeted to strengthen the knowledge base for blue and green recovery, harness IP platforms for increased learning and knowledge sharing, and foster interactive engagement by GEF focal points.

Action Area 1.1. Harnessing KM&L for the Blue and Green Recovery

32. Building on past work and experience from GEF investments, the action area will enable the GEF partnership to integrate KM&L into core delivery areas of the GEF-8 agenda, highlighting

"innovation and learning" as one of the four levers for systems transformation that constitute key criteria and entry points for GEF-8 investments. Consistent with GEF-8 priorities, the action area will target specific areas to demonstrate progress and achievements in supporting the blue and green recovery, such as the following:

- Transformational and system-level change through the Integrated programs
- Core GEF-8 Focal Area strategies, including actions to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030 (30X30 goal); landscape/seascape approaches; nature-based solutions; payment for environmental services (PES); new systems approaches and technologies to support successful realization of circular economy, action on plastic pollution, and the growing problem of drought and land degradation in many parts of the world
- Blended finance and private sector engagement, aligned to GEF Strategy for Private Sector Engagement
- Project and program monitoring, learning and adapting/adjusting projects during project implementation for higher results
- Multistakeholder platforms to exchange knowledge, understand incentives and pathways to behavioral change that will drive systems change, and facilitate collaboration and scale up
- Local and community-based actions to support the aims of the GEF, including initiatives such as Inclusive Conservation, the GEF Small Grants Program (2.0), the new Country Engagement Strategy, and other actions across the portfolio including South-South Exchanges and the Knowledge and Collaboration Platform for GEF Focal Points.
- Capacity Building around key technical areas, including policy coherence and practical tools such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)

Action Area 1.2. Facilitate Interoperability of Platforms and Tools to Share and Leverage Knowledge

33. Platforms are an important component of the GEF-8 integrated programs that will be supported by the GEF through global or regional coordination projects. These projects, which are implemented by GEF Agencies selected to lead each program, are designed to link country-specific child projects to a "knowledge platform" that will facilitate learning and exchange between countries. The platform serves to create "space" for countries to access innovations, tools and good practices; seek technical assistance on relevant thematic aspects. This includes providing training and capacity development opportunities, establishing standards for monitoring and assessment of outcomes, and creating communities of practice on key thematic issues.

34. For the new GEF-8 programs, the GEF Secretariat with support and guidance from STAP will facilitate the development of a simple set of common principles to help make the platforms "interoperable." This will ensure that platforms of programs addressing related issues are developed and managed in a coordinated manner, which would then provide project developers

with useful information on what works, how, in what circumstances, and why; and on what does not work. For example, the Critical Forests Biomes IP will be delivered through five separate geographical programs: the Amazon (World Bank), and Congo (UNEP), Indo-Malay (IUCN-FAO), Meso-America (IUCN), and Guinean Forests of West Africa (CI). By making the platforms for these programs interoperable, the potential for influencing collective action by countries to safeguard tropical forests globally can be greatly amplified. Similar opportunities will be explored for the following IPs: Blue and Green Islands, Clean and Health Oceans, and Circular Solutions to Plastics Pollution.

35. For some GEF-8 programs that are addressing issues linked to programs from previous GEF cycles, the GEF Secretariat will also facilitate and support integration of knowledge platforms. This includes the GEF-8 Food Systems IP and GEF-7 Food Systems, Land Use, and Restoration Impact Program; GEF-8 Wildlife Conservation for Development IP and the GEF-7 Global Wildlife Program; and the Sustainable Cities Program with the World Bank led Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (GPSC) from GEF-6 and the UNEP led UrbanShift from GEF-7.

Action Area 1.3. Launching a Knowledge and Collaboration Platform (KCP)

36. This action area will focus on strengthening engagement and interaction amongst GEF Operational Focal Points (OFPs), so they can increasingly share their experiences with the GEF partnership. The GEF Secretariat will invest in an IT-based platform to formalize knowledge-sharing and collaboration across the GEF partnership and serve as an interactive Forum for the OFPs. Once operational, the platform will contribute to the objectives of the Country Engagement Strategy with an online component and a Community of Practice to facilitate continued South–South exchange and cooperation among OFPs in recipient countries. This should also contribute to building synergies with other initiatives and platforms from the conventions, such as NDC and NBSAP partnership, HAC, among others.

Strategic Direction 2 – Strengthening KM&L in Programming

37. This strategic direction will enable the GEF to further strengthen ongoing efforts to mainstream KM&L across all GEF investments, from designing and implementation of projects and programs, to promoting South-South exchange for knowledge sharing and learning.

Action Area 2.1. Continue integrating KM&L in Projects and Programs

38. The GEF will continue to require all GEF investments to incorporate knowledge and learning into project design by elaborating a KM approach and implementation plan. This will ensure that all projects allocate sufficient funding for direct investments in knowledge exchange and learning in accordance with GEF programming priorities. These direct investments will support interventions that prioritize knowledge generation, capture and sharing around innovative solutions in a target system, and efforts to enhance knowledge and learning in priority areas to inform the larger GEF portfolio. The latter can include targeted research, development and demonstration in key technical areas, knowledge exchange initiatives, networks and platforms, and professional training and capacity building.

Action Area 2.2. Investing in Tools for Portfolio Review and Learning

39. The GEF will also build on and leverage existing processes, tools and platforms to facilitate systematic capture and access of knowledge, so it is readily available to inform dialogue and decision-making. The GEF partnership already has important systems and practices in place to gather and share knowledge. The GEF will harness these and invest in a few targeted actions to further strengthen them. This will include more strategic use of the capabilities of the GEF Website, GEF Portal, and other shared knowledge platforms, connecting GEF knowledge systems and tools to other existing systems within the partnership.

40. With respect to the GEF Portal, for example, the Secretariat already has developed an IT-based approach for GEF Agencies to enter a summary of key lessons learned during project implementation, and at the important moments of Mid-Term Review and Terminal Evaluation. While agencies have begun to make these entries, a few additional steps are needed to achieve their full promise. One of these is to invest additional time to review and curate this information to make it more user-friendly and readily available to users in the system in priority topic areas noted above. A second is to work with the Agencies to help achieve greater consistency and clarity in entries across projects. A third is for the Secretariat to collate and analyze these entries in a systematic way at various levels of scale for example at the level of the projects, programs, focal areas, thematic areas, or particular country groupings such as fragile states, SIDS, LDCs, and regions, such as areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, as feasible.

Action Area 2.3. Foster South-South Exchange for Cross Scale Dialogue and Learning

41. Another avenue to success consists of opportunities for open discussion, exchange, reflection and learning around challenges, limitations, and failures along with good practice, success stories, innovative approaches and opportunities. The GEF has enormous capabilities in this area, with a diverse network of partners and stakeholders, and multiple opportunities to bring multi-stakeholder dialogue such as through the integrated programs, the new Country Engagement Strategy, and in conjunction with meetings of GEF Council and the GEF Assembly, and many others.

42. The GEF will continue and reinforce these actions and opportunities to generate dialogue, exchange and discussion, to help facilitate capture, transfer, uptake and scale up of lessons, expertise and best practices, globally, regionally and at the country level. There will be priority emphasis on facilitating South-South exchange as a core feature of KM&L work going forward. This will include, among other actions, organizing learning trips across regions to share lessons, disseminate knowledge and support learning, as a key component of the new GEF Country Engagement Strategy and Country Support Program. This will also include a series on online engagements and the development of targeted online e-courses.

Strategic Direction 3 – Investing in Generation of Global Public Goods

43. As a leading financial institution for the global environment, the GEF must play an important role in generating global public goods from its portfolio of investments. This strategic direction will facilitate the gathering, curating, and sharing of lessons learned and best practices from GEF investments in key priority areas of work.

Action Area 3.1. Identify and Invest in Priority Areas for Knowledge Capture and Sharing

44. The action area will build on existing GEF processes to capture, compile and report on project and portfolio level information, GEF investments in KM&L projects and programs such as GEF IW:Learn and IP knowledge platforms, higher-level documents on strategic directions (e.g., in GEF focal areas, Replenishment documents); inputs from civil society organizations; recommendations from independent evaluations; and cutting-edge scientific research and innovations (including studies and reports by STAP) that have the potential to catalyze and accelerate the delivery of GEF priorities.

45. The work on areas prioritized will give consideration both to well-tested and proven approaches to accelerate results as well as pilots, demonstrations and innovative actions where results are not yet demonstrated but potential for achieving impactful outcomes is high. In supporting this action, careful attention will be given to the crucial reality that knowledge and lessons learned need to be understood within the context of specific conditions and situations and tailored to needs and priorities going forward. The actions to gather, curate and share lessons learned and best practices will be tempered by this consideration, as a key input to users and decision-makers empowered to build on and learn from these lessons and experiences.

Strategic Direction 4 – Aligning KM&L with Communications and Outreach

46. Effective communication and outreach across the GEF partnership is vital to ensure that donors, recipient countries, and other stakeholders see the value of the GEF's activities and initiatives. Creating a more coordinated, appropriately funded, approach at the global, Agency, program and project level will help to better communicate the GEF's impacts and results. It is important that appropriate KM&L initiatives, budgets, and products are developed and implemented in line with relevant communications and outreach plans, and the GEF Communications and Visibility Policy.

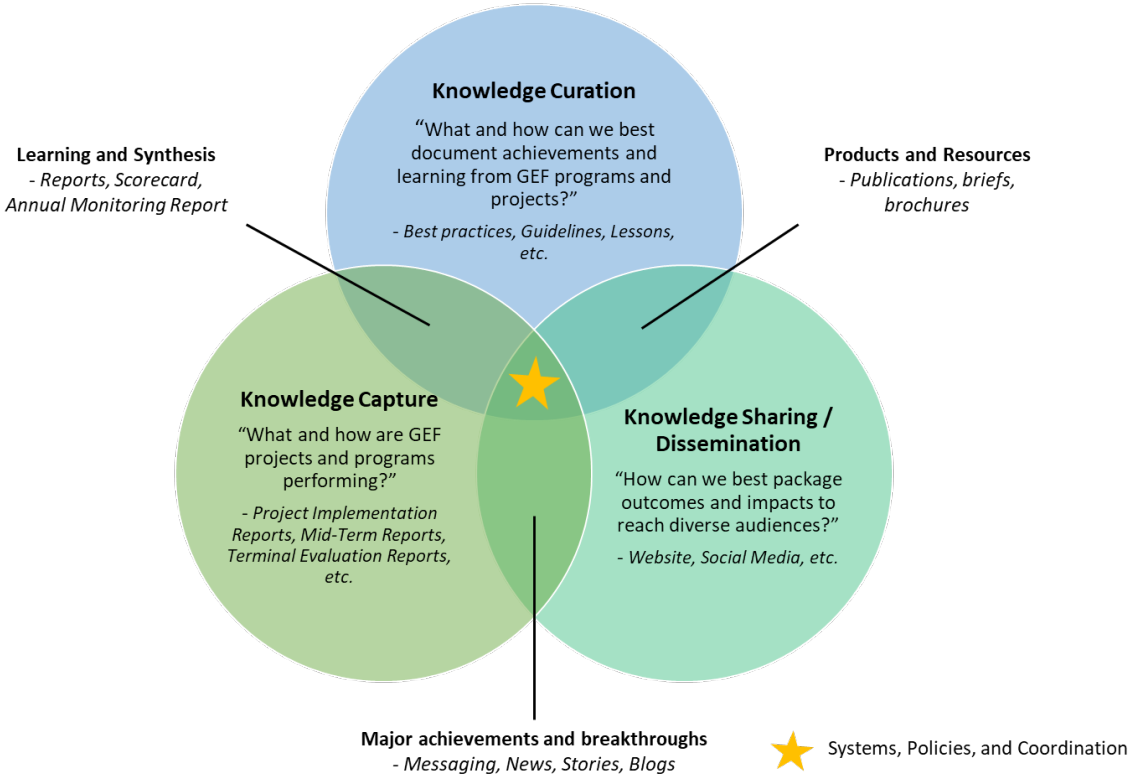
47. Every corporate entity describes communications and knowledge management functions differently, but it is crucial to define each of them in relation to one another. While many knowledge management processes take place in the organization's internal domain, the nature of the GEF as a partnership expands the KM arena to include the organization's external actors and systems, creating a natural synergy with the organization's communications and outreach functions. Aligning KM&L with the GEF's communications and outreach efforts will be accomplished through the following action areas:

Action Area 4.1 Utilize Existing ICT Infrastructure to Minimize Overhead Expenses and Shorten Project Deployment Cycle

48. The GEF Communications and Outreach unit (GEFCO) hosts infrastructure for web solutions and provides a diverse set of information and communication technology-based services for the secretariat. KM&L efforts will take advantage of these services through the established governance system. A key step in this regard will be to strengthen efforts toward integrating KM&L and communications function in the GEF Secretariat (Figure 4). This will ensure that the systems established for communications and outreach are adequately harnessed to support knowledge capture, curation, sharing, and dissemination.

49. Through its expertise and use of technology-based solutions, the GEF Communications team will support relevant KM activities that require design, development, and management of information and communications technology. This includes collaborative online platforms (KCP, IP platforms), corporate website integrations, production of information-based materials, multimedia, etc.

Figure 6. Toward integrating KM&L and Communication functions in the GEF Secretariat



Action Area 4.2 Raise Awareness About KM Initiatives Through Targeted Outreach Efforts.

50. This action area highlights the need for a targeted outreach of KM projects and initiatives to the audiences these products were designed for. This is different from the established general communication and outreach services that the GEFCO provides to the secretariat and wider GEF partnership, placing emphasis on identification of the target audience segments, and specific approaches and channels to reach them. Successful targeted outreach efforts will contribute to a better uptake of both newly launched and ongoing KM initiatives.

Action Area 4.3 Fully Align with Communications Strategies Across the Partnership and The GEF's Communications and Visibility Policy To Maximize Impact.

51. A more strategic, collaborative, approach to communications across the partnership – at the global, regional, and country level – will better communicate the impact of what we do as a whole and strengthen common messages and shared goals. It's important that communications, including for relevant KM&L products and activities, is planned, and budgeted for in the design phase and prioritized through-out the life cycle of projects and programs.

52. Consistent and appropriate application of the GEF's Communication and Visibility Policy is important to strengthen the brand identity of the GEF in this period when its mandate is expanding. It is also important to ensure that the results, return on investment, impacts and lessons learned of GEF-funded activities are well recognized in all countries and across the institution's current and future network of partners.

6. CONCLUSION

53. This KM&L strategy responds to recommendations made by the GEF IEO and culminates from a constructive and consultative process involving the entire GEF partnership, with inputs from surveys, audits and assessment commissioned by the GEF Secretariat, and guidance from STAP. With this strategy, the GEF is now prepared to pursue its vision of becoming an efficient knowledge driven and learning entity for investing in the planet. The strategy specifically commits the GEF to improve and enhance knowledge capture, sharing and learning processes across the GEF Partnership. This will be accomplished through a series of strategic directions and action areas designed to improve and strengthen KM&L in GEF investments and programming and increasing efficiency and effectiveness of KM&L through investments in people, processes, and systems.

54. The GEF Secretariat will lead and oversee the overall implementation, in consultation with the GEF KM Advisory Group and in cooperation with GEF Agencies and other key stakeholders. A full-time KM&L lead will be responsible for day-to-day coordination of activities across the Partnership, defining implementation targets, and timelines as well as keeping stakeholders informed and engaged. The Secretariat will report to the GEF Council once a year on KM&L outputs and lessons from the GEF portfolio as well as KM&L implementation progress across the Partnership.