

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

# Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning



global  
environment  
facility  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Background and Rationale</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Defining KM&L in the GEF Context .....	6
Need for a Systematic Approach to KM&L .....	8
<b>Development of the KM&amp;L Strategy</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Vision, Goal, and Objectives</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Vision and Goal.....	12
Objectives .....	12
Theory of Change.....	13
<b>Strategic Directions and Action Areas</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Strategic Direction 1–Alignment of KM&amp;L with GEF-8 Delivery</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Action Area 1.1. Harnessing KM&L for the Blue and Green Recovery .....	16
Action Area 1.2. Facilitate Interoperability of Platforms and Tools to Share and Leverage Knowledge.....	16
Action Area 1.3. Launching a Knowledge and Collaboration Platform (KCP).....	17
<b>Strategic Direction 2–Strengthening KM&amp;L in Programming</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Action Area 2.1. Continue Integrating KM&L into Projects and Programs.....	17
Action Area 2.2. Investing in Tools for Portfolio Review and Learning .....	17
Action Area 2.3. Foster South-South Exchange for Cross-scale Dialogue and Learning.....	17
<b>Strategic Direction 3–Investing in Generation of Global Public Goods</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Action Area 3.1. Identify and Invest in Priority Areas for Knowledge Capture and Sharing .....	18
<b>Strategic Direction 4–Aligning KM&amp;L with Communications and Outreach</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Action Area 4.1. Use Existing ICT Infrastructure to Minimize Overhead Expenses and Shorten Project Deployment Cycle.....	19
Action Area 4.2. Raise Awareness about KM Initiatives through Targeted Outreach Efforts.....	19
Action Area 4.3. Fully Align with Communications Strategies across the Partnership and the GEF’s Communications and Visibility Policy to Maximize Impact.....	20
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>20</b>



# Executive Summary

As a global network of partners and stakeholders, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is uniquely positioned to serve as a knowledge and learning entity for the planet. This will enable the GEF to address environmental challenges effectively, as well as influence critical decision making regarding the global environment, culminating in sustainable and scalable solutions. The Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning (KM&L) is therefore key to ensuring the GEF's operational effectiveness and services that meet the needs of all stakeholders, while advancing its mandate to safeguard the planet.

The GEF has been developing a KM&L strategy since the fifth replenishment cycle (GEF-5). Following initial discussions, policy recommendations led to a KM Strategic Framework in 2011. Subsequently, the GEF Secretariat has supported a series of activities to support the strategy, including audits, needs assessments, stakeholder surveys, working groups, and consultations.

As part of its Seventh Operational Performance Study (OPS7), the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) called for the GEF partnership to

develop a clear KM strategy to "set out the KM priorities and define the roles and responsibilities across the GEF partnership." It also noted 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."

Guided by the Council and with full engagement by GEF agencies and the Science and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), the proposed KM strategy

embodies the collective efforts of 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 that 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 goal reflects the role of knowledge as a key asset of the GEF partnership, and its fundamental role in achieving sustainability, systems transformation, and scale-up of results for high-impact outcomes.

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 manage the resources, and facilitate learning across the partnership. It is therefore framed around three main objectives:

1. *Embed cutting-edge knowledge into investments to generate public goods in line with the GEF mandate and enhance the role of knowledge management in projects and programs.*
2. *Increase knowledge flows through platforms, partnership, and communities of practice.*
3. *Create and enable the environment for learning and capacity building for greater exchange of knowledge and collaboration across the partnership.*

To deliver on the objectives, the GEF Secretariat will strengthen its role as a knowledge broker and a think tank, while 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 pillars to help strengthen the KM&L agenda in the long term.

With this foundation and considering the eighth replenishment (GEF-8) strategic vision and feedback compiled from across the GEF partnership, including the cross-cutting considerations from STAP, the GEF has identified four key strategic directions for pursuing the vision and objectives for KM&L:

- **Strategic Direction 1:** Align KM&L with GEF-8 delivery, with action areas on strengthening the knowledge base for a blue and green recovery, harnessing Integrated Program platforms for increased learning and knowledge sharing, and fostering interactive engagement by GEF focal points.
- **Strategic Direction 2:** Strengthen KM&L in programming, with action areas on enabling the GEF to reinforce ongoing efforts on mainstreaming KM&L across all GEF investments—from designing and implementing projects and programs, to promoting South-South exchange for knowledge sharing and learning.
- **Strategic Direction 3:** Generate 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:** Align KM&L with communications and outreach to foster a more coordinated and 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.

The GEF Secretariat will oversee 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 is

expected to coordinate day-to-day activities across the partnership. This role will involve defining implementation targets and timelines, as well as informing and engaging stakeholders. 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.





# Introduction

The Knowledge Management and Learning (KM&L) Strategy was produced in response to a decision of the GEF Council in December 2020,<sup>1</sup> and provides an overall vision and road map of actions on KM&L to support and amplify the impact of GEF programming on the global environment.

An important backdrop for the strategy is the KM evaluation by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) as part of Seventh Operational Performance Study (OPS7).<sup>2</sup> According to the IEO evaluation, “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 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.”

1 GEF. May, 31, 2022. “Update on Progress to Develop a GEF Knowledge Management and Learning Strategy (GEF/C.62/Inf.08).” <https://www.thegef.org/council-meeting-documents/gef-c-62-inf-08>. This Council document endorsed 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. Nov. 10, 2020. “Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the GEF (GEF/E/C.59/04).” <https://www.thegef.org/council-meeting-documents/evaluation-knowledge-management-gef-2020>.

To address these recommendations, the strategy has evolved through consultations 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 stocktaking exercise and broad-based consultations around stakeholder needs and priorities. In addition, it investigated 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. To that end, it learns from and builds on GEF actions, while embracing the IEO's recommendations to develop clear priorities and invest in a technical solution that strengthens the GEF's overall KM system.

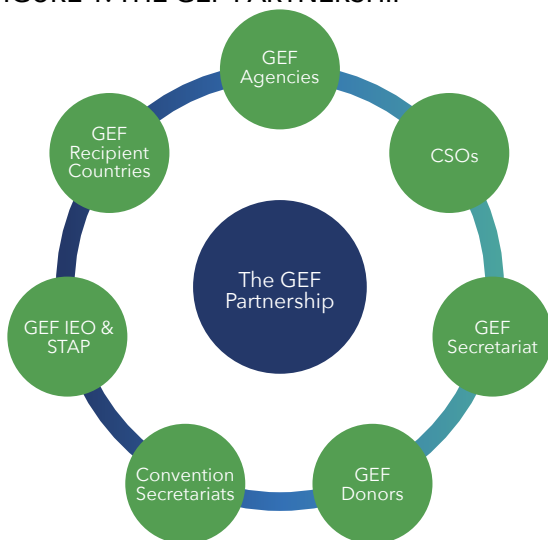




# Background and Rationale

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 186 member governments comprising donor and recipient countries. The partnership also includes the GEF Secretariat and secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), GEF agencies, the IEO, STAP, and civil society organizations (CSOs) (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. THE GEF PARTNERSHIP



GEF grants, blended financing, and policy support help 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. It works closely with other environmental financiers for efficiency and impact.

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.

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 high-impact outcomes. These features enable the GEF to address environmental challenges effectively, while influencing 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 meet the needs of all stakeholders while advancing its mandate to safeguard the planet.

## Defining KM&L in the GEF Context

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

**KM** in the GEF includes the *processes and procedures involved in identifying, organizing, storing, and disseminating knowledge resources across the partnership*. **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). KM&L is found in the collective expertise and experience of the staff, consultants, and other partners at the Secretariat, agencies, STAP and the IEO, with the operational focal points (OFFPs) and governments, and with partners and stakeholders in civil society, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Professional staff in the GEF Secretariat and in the GEF agencies play a critical role in KM&L. They act 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 harness scientific guidance from STAP effectively, respond to demand from countries, prepare comprehensive reports to the Conferences of Parties of MEAs, and contribute valuable inputs to evaluative processes by the IEO.

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. These processes inform and enhance GEF project design and portfolio management, and help 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, design of projects for CEO endorsement, and submission of projects through the GEF Portal. The GEF website and the GEF Portal also enable the GEF partnership to access knowledge and data resources.

## 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 guide all GEF investments across focal areas. Consultations during the replenishment negotiations and the collective effort by the entire GEF partnership during the process create a rich base of knowledge and shared learning.

**Scientific information and data**—The GEF receives scientific and technical advice on policies strategies, programs, and projects. It convenes Technical Advisory Groups during the replenishment process to ensure the latest scientific information and data inform strategies, programming directions, and operations directions. Finally, it participates in cutting-edge scientific initiatives to share knowledge and achievements from projects and programs.

**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 which use and generate knowledge. In addition to addressing specific needs of recipient countries, GEF investments cover a wide range of thematic and regional priorities. The GEF also 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**—The GEF project cycle includes annual project implementation reports (PIRs), mid-term reports at the halfway-point of implementation, and terminal evaluation reports (TERs) at completion. 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 Scorecard are based largely on data in PIRs and TERs. 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 inform programming strategies and guide project activities in recipient countries. The knowledge resources are often disseminated through the websites of the GEF Secretariat, STAP, and the IEO, and occasionally during GEF-related events.

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 practice 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 both to address environmental challenges effectively and to influence critical decision making regarding the global environment, culminating in sustainable and scalable solutions.

## Need for a Systematic Approach to KM&L

As a partnership, the GEF has a vast array of KM&L opportunities. 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.

The GEF can overcome this challenge by approaching KM&L in a coherent and consistent manner. To that end, it should consider the best available tools, systems, and practices necessary to meet the diverse needs and priorities across the partnership. Such an approach will both enable the GEF to harness KM&L to advance its mission and ensure the partnership is adequately engaged and supported (Table 1). Ultimately, this will enable greater impact of GEF investments while 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
<b>GEF Secretariat</b>	Have in place capacity, systems, and practices to meet needs of the GEF partnership for knowledge generation, sharing, and application.
<b>Donor countries</b>	Have access to the best available knowledge for understanding and assessing GEF progress and achievements across various dimensions of the replenishment cycle.
<b>Recipient countries</b>	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.
<b>GEF agencies, CSOs, IPLCs, Non-state actors, and Executing entities</b>	Can leverage their expertise and institutional strengths to contribute and share knowledge innovations emerging from the portfolio of GEF investments.
<b>MEA Secretariats</b>	Can assess and track the portfolio of investments in global environmental benefits consistent with guidance from the Conferences of Parties.
<b>STAP</b>	Can identify and address the most critical needs for scientific and technical guidance to advance innovative practices across the GEF partnership.
<b>GEF IEO</b>	Can have access to appropriate documentation and resources for its performance evaluations that progressively help to inform and improve GEF policies and operations.

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 state and architecture of KM&L to reflect progress and achievements over the last decade. Second,

it describes the methodology and processes to assess and establish priorities, including findings and recommendations emerging from audits, surveys, and assessments. Third, it outlines the 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.





# Development of the KM&L Strategy

The GEF has been developing a KM&L strategy since the fifth replenishment cycle (GEF-5). At that time, policy recommendations led to a KM Strategic Framework in 2011. During GEF-6, the GEF began to mainstream KM&L into its investments more actively.

In 2014, the GEF-6 Replenishment Policy Recommendations emphasized “the importance of developing a knowledge management 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 Approach.<sup>3</sup> It 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 environmental degradation.

The GEF Secretariat began implementing the KM Approach in September 2015. It initiated a series of activities, including audits, needs assessments, stakeholder surveys, working groups, and consultations. These were all geared toward socializing and developing the KM&L strategy. From 2016 through 2020, the Secretariat took several major steps to socialize the approach paper and implement many proposed recommendations. The KM evaluation by the IEO as part of OPS7 noted the progress in implementing the GEF KM Approach during GEF-6 and GEF-7. It recommended the GEF enhance its KM&L efforts

3 GEF. May 11, 2015. “GEF Knowledge Management Approach Paper (GEF/C.48/07/Rev.01).” <https://www.thegef.org/council-meeting-documents/gef-knowledge-management-approach-paper>.

in GEF-8 and develop a clear KM strategy in line with GEF-8 replenishment goals.

The GEF set up a KM Advisory Group (KMAG) in October 2015 to socialize the KM approach and engage the broader GEF partnership. It has since convened regularly on the margins of GEF Council meetings. The KMAG brought together GEF partners, including GEF agencies, STAP, the 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 for KM experts from like-minded institutions.

The KM audits, needs assessments, and stakeholder surveys all offered a clearer understanding of status of KM&L across the GEF partnership. This, in turn, generated recommendations that helped inform the strategy (Box 2). The findings also helped inform internal brainstorming and consultations and promote 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 existing KM&L tools, products, and activities in the GEF.
- Enhance quality and improve flow and accessibility of existing GEF KM&L 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 the mid-term review 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, considering 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

- Build KM capacity and provide guidance and support. Designate or hire a KM lead for each project. Consider a requirement to ensure that part of budget is allocated to hiring a KM lead and a monitoring and evaluation specialist.
- Target capacity-building toward 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 the Section 8-KM approach by introducing a KM template and including prompts and questions that 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, connecting to existing systems/platforms in use across the partnership.
- Gateway to existing knowledge systems: The GEF website can be repositioned and used 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 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: In-person workshops, site visits, demonstrations, webinars, virtual chat rooms, online discussion channels, peer-to-peer technical learning/sharing sessions and South-South exchanges can expedite knowledge transfer among key partners and socialize them to the GEF knowledge ecosystem.



# Vision, Goal, and Objectives

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. Audits, surveys, and consultations over the last two years all confirm that the GEF already has a vast and unique knowledge base. This knowledge draws on nearly three decades of experience in supporting developing countries to address threats to the global environment, with a mission that addresses 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 global environmental challenges, there is a 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 the 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.

## Vision and Goal

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, 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 knowledge



as a key asset of the GEF partnership, and plays a fundamental role in achieving sustainability, systems transformation, and scale-up of results for high-impact outcomes.

## Objectives

Building on recommendations from audits, surveys, needs assessments, the IEO evaluation, and 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 learning from projects and programs available faster to all stakeholders and partners. Finally, it will continue 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. This will 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 the 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-building 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.

## Theory of Change

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.<sup>4</sup> 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 well-being 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.
- Have continued support throughout the GEF.

4 Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to the GEF. April 2022. “Knowledge management and learning.” <https://stapgef.org/index.php/resources/policy-briefs/knowledge-management-and-learning>

In addressing these needs, STAP 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 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.

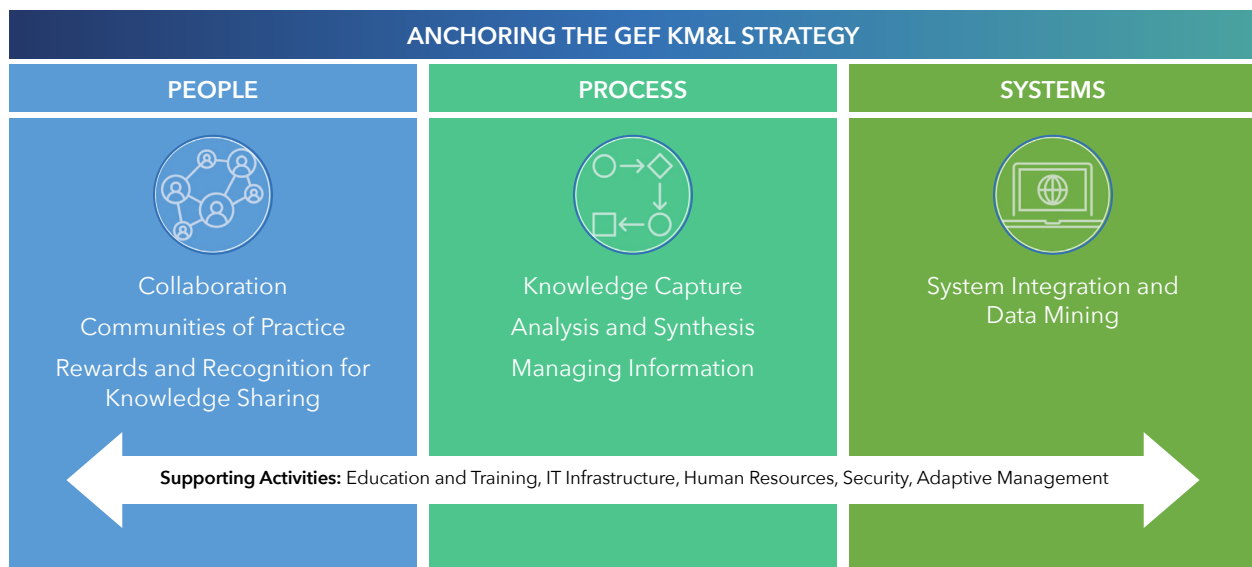
This strategic guidance is consistent with the internal findings of the Secretariat from the various KM&L surveys and audits as reflected in Text Box 2. Taken together, these form the foundation upon which the following strategic directions and action areas are built.



# Strategic Directions and Action Areas

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 think tank. At the same time, it needs to facilitate 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 2).

FIGURE 2. ANCHORING THE GEF KM&L STRATEGY



- **People**—Professional staff and experts must be at the heart of KM&L for the GEF partnership to be fully engaged and enjoy benefits. 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 a powerful approach to harnessing GEF knowledge and expertise. Such platforms should have the potential to generate public goods while strengthening the 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 for managing information across the partnership. As the GEF is both a learning and knowledge-driven organization, such processes will enable seamless engagement by GEF partners. In this way, they can foster collective action and learning, leading to creation of more high-impact 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 help socialize GEF programming direction and investment opportunities. At the same time, they can empower OFPs to better leverage GEF knowledge resources toward national priorities for mobilizing resources, achieving policy coherence, and engaging stakeholders. Organizational relationships can be further strengthened through the use of communities of practice 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 will continue to improve its Portal as an interface for project and portfolio management, while 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 the 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.
- 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 pillars to help strengthen the KM&L agenda in the long term. With this foundation and considering the GEF-8 strategic vision and feedback compiled from across the GEF partnership, including the cross-cutting

considerations from STAP, the GEF has identified four key strategic directions 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**

GEF-8 sets an ambitious agenda to meet critical global environmental threats and challenges across all core areas of the GEF's work and mandate. It calls for nature-positive, carbon-neutral, and pollution-reduced investments that support and influence transformational change in natural, food, energy, health, and urban systems. These should be consistent with the goals of MEAs which the GEF serves and the global ambitions for a healthy planet and 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 GEF will target three action areas to strengthen the knowledge base for a 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**

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. This will highlight "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.

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

Platforms are an important component of the Integrated Programs and are supported by the GEF through dedicated global or regional coordination projects. These projects, which are implemented by GEF agencies selected to lead each program, link country-specific child projects to a "knowledge platform" that will facilitate learning and exchange between countries. The platform creates "space" for countries to access innovations, tools, and good practices, and to seek technical assistance on relevant thematic aspects. With support and guidance from STAP, the GEF Secretariat will help develop 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. Such an approach would provide project developers with useful information on what works, how, in what circumstances, and why; and on what does not work.

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

This action area will focus on strengthening engagement and interaction among OFPs, enhancing their ability to share 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. An online component and a community of practice will facilitate continued South-South exchange and cooperation among OFPs in recipient countries. This should also help build synergies with other initiatives and

platforms from the conventions, such as the NDC Partnership, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and the High Ambition Coalition.

## Strategic Direction 2– Strengthening KM&L in Programming

This strategic direction will enable the GEF to further mainstream KM&L across all GEF investments—from designing and implementing projects and programs, to promoting South-South exchange for knowledge sharing and learning.

### Action Area 2.1. Continue Integrating KM&L into Projects and Programs

The GEF will continue to require all its 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 prioritize knowledge generation, capture, and sharing around innovative solutions in a target system. They will also support 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, networks and platforms, and professional training and capacity building.

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

The GEF will also build on and leverage processes, tools, and platforms to facilitate systematic capture and access of knowledge, making it more available to inform dialogue and decision making. The GEF partnership will harness its systems and practices to gather and share knowledge, investing

strategically to further strengthen them. This will include more targeted use of the GEF website, GEF Portal, and other shared knowledge platform to connect GEF knowledge systems and tools to other existing systems within the partnership.

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

Open discussion, exchange, and reflection around good practices, success stories, and innovative approaches, as well as on challenges, limitations, and failures, all provide opportunities for cross-scale dialogue and learning. The GEF has enormous capabilities in this area. Its diverse network of partners and stakeholders brings many opportunities for multi-stakeholder dialogue. Examples include the Integrated Programs, the new Country Engagement Strategy, and meetings of the GEF Council and the GEF Assembly. The GEF will reinforce these actions and opportunities to generate dialogue, exchange, and discussion. In so doing, it will help facilitate capture, transfer, uptake, and scale-up of lessons, expertise, and best practices, globally, regionally, and at the country level. The GEF will prioritize South-South exchange as a core feature of KM&L. This will include 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. It will also hold a series of online engagements and develop targeted online e-courses.

## Strategic Direction 3– Investing in Generation of Global Public Goods

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.

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

The action area will build on GEF processes to capture, compile, and report on project- and portfolio-level information, GEF investments in KM&L projects and programs. These include GEF IW:Learn and Integrated Programs knowledge platforms, higher-level documents on strategic directions (e.g., in GEF focal areas, and replenishment documents). Inputs from CSOs, recommendations from independent evaluations, and cutting-edge scientific research and innovations (including studies and reports by STAP) can also catalyze and accelerate delivery of GEF priorities. Work on priority areas will consider both well-tested and proven approaches to accelerate results. It will also draw on pilots, demonstrations, and innovative actions that show potential for delivering outcomes with high impact.

## **Strategic Direction 4— Aligning KM&L with Communications and Outreach**

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 and appropriately funded approach at the global, agency, program, and project level will help better communicate the GEF's impacts and results. KM&L initiatives, budgets, and products should be developed and implemented in line with relevant communications

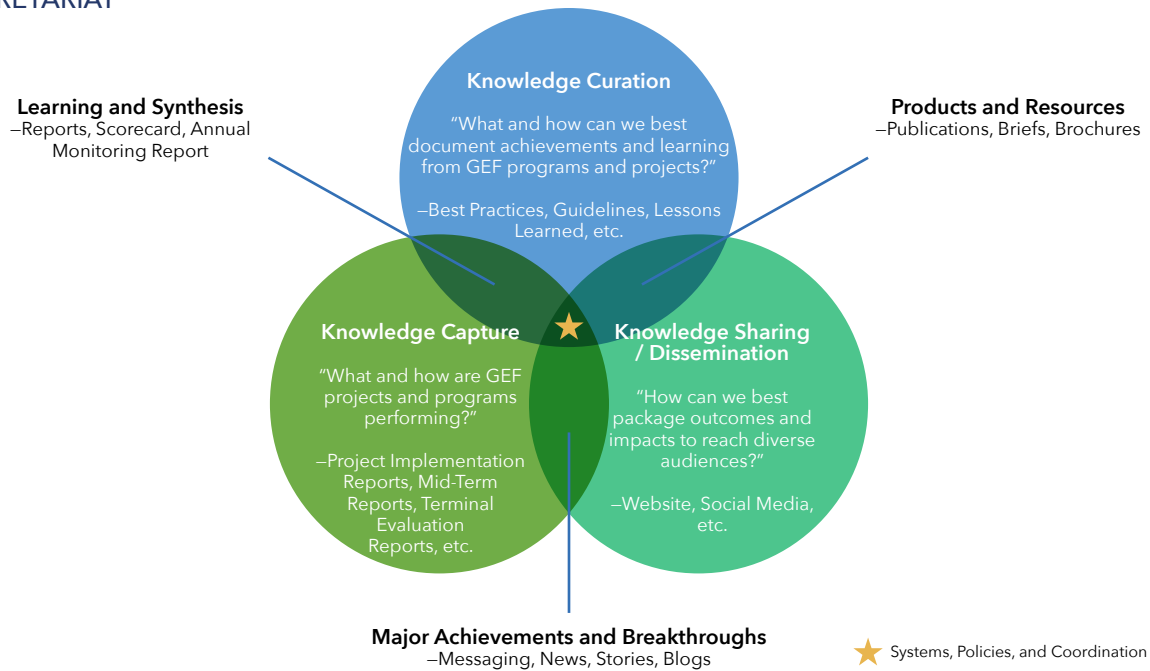
and outreach plans, and the GEF Communications and Visibility Policy.

It is crucial to define communications and KM functions, including their relation to each other. Many KM processes take place internally, but the GEF partnership expands the KM arena to include external actors and systems. This, in turn, creates a natural synergy with the organization's communications and outreach functions. The GEF will align KM&L with communications and outreach through the following action areas:

### **Action Area 4.1. Use Existing ICT Infrastructure to Minimize Overhead Expenses and Shorten Project Deployment Cycle**

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 will be to strengthen efforts toward integrating KM&L and communications functions into the GEF Secretariat (Figure 3). This will ensure that communications and outreach systems are adequately harnessed to support knowledge capture, curation, sharing, and dissemination. 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, Integrated Programs), corporate website integrations, production of information-based materials, and multimedia.

FIGURE 3. TOWARD INTEGRATING KM&L AND COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS INTO THE GEF SECRETARIAT



#### Action Area 4.2. Raise Awareness about KM Initiatives through Targeted Outreach Efforts

This action area highlights the need for targeted outreach of KM projects and initiatives. This is different from the established general communication and outreach services that the GEFCO provides to the Secretariat and wider GEF partnership. Instead, it emphasizes identification of target audiences, 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

A more strategic and collaborative approach to communications across the partnership—at the global, regional, and country level—will better communicate the GEF’s impact and strengthen common messages and shared goals. Communications, including for relevant KM&L products and activities, should be planned and budgeted for in the design phase and prioritized throughout the life cycle of projects and programs. Consistent and appropriate application of the GEF’s Communication and Visibility Policy should strengthen the GEF’s brand, which is vital in this period of expansion. Results, return on investment, impacts, and lessons learned of GEF-funded activities should also be well recognized in all countries and across the institution’s current and future network of partners.





# Conclusion

The GEFs Strategy for Knowledge Management and Learning, which responds to recommendations by the GEF IEO, is the culmination of a constructive and consultative process involving the entire GEF partnership. It also draws on inputs from surveys, audits, and assessments 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 commits the GEF to improve and enhance knowledge capture, sharing, and learning processes across the GEF partnership. This will be accomplished through strategic directions and action areas designed to improve and strengthen KM&L in GEF investments and programming. In addition, the GEF will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of KM&L through investments in people, processes, and systems.

The GEF Secretariat will lead and oversee implementation, in consultation with the GEF KMAG and in cooperation with GEF agencies and other key stakeholders. A full-time KM&L lead is expected to coordinate day-to-day activities across the partnership, defining

implementation targets and timelines, as well as informing and engaging stakeholders. 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.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a multilateral family of funds dedicated to confronting biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution, and supporting land and ocean health. Its financing enables developing countries to address complex challenges and work towards international environmental goals. The partnership includes 186 member governments as well as civil society, Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth, with a focus on integration and inclusivity. Over the past three decades, the GEF has provided more than \$25 billion in financing and mobilized \$145 billion for country-driven priority projects. The family of funds includes the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund, Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF), Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund (NPIF), and Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency Trust Fund (CBIT).

All photographs: © GEF



JUNE 2024  
[www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org)

ISBN 978-1-959919-89-6