

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE GCF'S READINESS AND PREPARATORY SUPPORT PROGRAMME (RPSP)

BACKGROUND

The evaluation¹ assessed the RPSP support to GCF eligible countries that was delivered under the Readiness Programme Strategy 2019–2021 and the GCF's Updated Strategic Plan 2019–2023. Given the similarities of objectives of the initial Readiness Programme and the revised Readiness Programme (2019–2021), this evaluation also looked at the GCF's readiness operations before 2019 to examine the respective priorities and focus areas of the Readiness Programme over the two time periods and to understand the significant changes between the two periods.

This evaluation used a utilization-focused framework, with the objective of being beneficial to its intended users in terms of providing learning, informing decision-making, and assessing and improving the overall performance of the RPSP portfolio.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The RPSP is the key GCF programme designed to meet the climate finance needs of developing countries, but its value proposition

remains insufficiently developed and shared within the GCF and by its stakeholders to substantiate its strategic importance.

While the RPSP has undergone significant changes since its inception, it remains a "work in progress" on account of iterations informed by evaluations, reviews and deliberations. The GCF has put in place two RPSP strategies and numerous processes, guidelines and frameworks to increase the relevance and effectiveness of the RPSP and provide readiness support in a timely manner. However, the full potential of the RPSP's value to countries and its contribution to GCF's overall goals and operations has not been fully understood and elaborated upon among different stakeholders within and outside the GCF. Being one of the world's key leading readiness programmes in the climate space, its role in the global climate finance architecture is insufficiently articulated and communicated.

2. The RPSP's effectiveness and efficiency are challenged by GCF's known operational constraints.

These constraints include, inter alia, a lack of sufficient staff capacity to meet its institutional ambitions,

¹ Independent Evaluation Unit (2023). Independent Evaluation of the GCF's Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme. Evaluation report No. 16 (September). Songdo, South Korea: Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund.



insufficient appreciation of operating contexts, a lack of flexibility in its processes, the long review times of RPSP proposals, and a lack of integration between different processes in the GCF (e.g., the discord between RPSP and Project Preparation Facility (PPF) support). These constraints also adversely affect timely access to the RPSP by countries. There have been some improvements since the first RPSP programme.

3. The fragmentation of GCF's internal structure affects the level of integrated engagement with country-level stakeholders and the degree of continuity in the transition from RPSP-related offerings to downstream initiatives related to funding activities.

The Secretariat's championship of the RPSP is not entirely clear, with RPSP responsibilities spread across numerous divisions. Discrepancies in data and availability across the Secretariat's data structure also speaks to this fragmentation. Furthermore, there is a lack of evidence that the CNs lead to the project proposals, as well as that the funded activities can be attributed solely to the RPSP. These different layers of fragmentation also affect the active integration of gender and indigenous people's issues into the RPSP.

4. The success of the RPSP at country level is predicated upon contextual factors which are not fully acknowledged and addressed in the delivery of the RPSP.

The Programme is delivered as a collection of individual grants; the success of individual grants depends on yet unaccounted-for contextual factors while the grant-specific approach prevents country-level or portfolio results. The "different languages" spoken by country stakeholders – including national DPs – and GCF create higher transaction costs for countries in accessing the RPSP.

At country level, factors such as a lack of NDA capacity or interest, staff turnover in NDAs, and a low understanding of GCF procedures and processes affect the RPSP. These factors give rise to the NDAs' ongoing capacity challenges, which contradict the possible assumptions of capacity-building as a static and largely one-time activity. The readiness programme does not always account for this country-specificity.

5. A lack of clarity around key concepts in its

theory of change is an impediment for the RPSP.

This is especially true for paradigm shift and country ownership. The RPSP has demonstrated the potential of achieving a paradigm shift in countries that have a developed understanding of paradigm shift. Building clarity on the concept of paradigm shift within the Secretariat and elaborating on a country-specific view of the concept are requirements that remain to be achieved for GCF to realize the full potential of the RPSP's key goal.

6. The Readiness Results Management Framework (RRMF) provides a framework for measuring RPSP results. Nevertheless, the Fund has no means to periodically assess the quality of RPSP implementation and its final results.

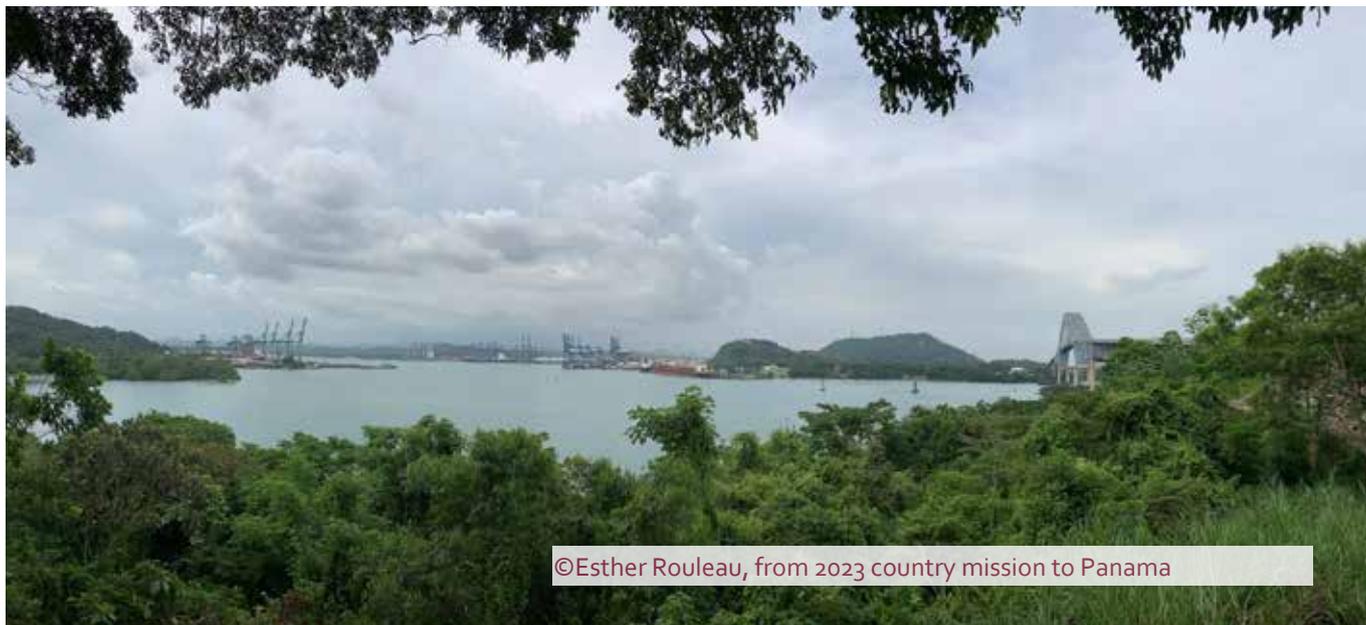
The RRMF was introduced in the middle of the implementation of the 2019 RPSP strategy and provides a framework for measuring the past and current results of the RPSP. The current data available to the Secretariat and the IEU is insufficient for assessing the outcomes, impacts and risks pertaining to the RPSP at portfolio level. The GCF also lacks mechanisms for measuring the quality of implementation.

7. There is little harmonization and coherence between the RPSP strategy and the tools for its operationalization.

There has been a time lag between the release of the RPSP strategy and various tools such as the RRMF, readiness handbooks, and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The time lag has extended nearly to the end of the current cycle of the RPSP strategy with the release of a revised handbook and Readiness Knowledge Bank (RKB) in 2023. The extended operationalization of the RPSP strategy creates an impression of constant change during the RPSP programme and also requires a retrofitting of RPSP grants. This imposes transaction costs upon countries and DPs.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: The GCF should sharpen its strategic intent and orientation for the RPSP at corporate level. The



©Esther Rouleau, from 2023 country mission to Panama

GCF should rationalize its capacity to resource the Readiness Programme.

- The GCF should clarify the value proposition and business case of its Readiness Programme as one of its central offerings. Its role needs to be anchored within the strategic directions and modalities of the Fund overall (including the PPF, PSF, accreditation and others).
- To effectively mobilize its strategic intent for the Readiness Programme, the GCF should provide for formal, “strategic” programme leadership.
- While clarifying its value proposition in the new RPSP strategy, the GCF should rationalize its capacity to resource the Readiness Programme.

R2: The RPSP should adopt a country-centered approach to its operations.

- The GCF should adopt a country-centered approach to develop a country-specific approach to understanding the paradigm shift to be facilitated by the RPSP, integrate country context into RPSP operations, move away from a grant-by-grant and DP-centric view of readiness to a country-level view of readiness and get a better understanding of country-level climate finance needs and readiness needs.
- The GCF should update the guidance and reinforce support to countries on key considerations for the set-up and operation of country coordination mechanisms.
- In re-orienting the RPSP, GCF should consider

the interplay of objectives and the differentiated country needs. The complexities inherent in managing multiple stakeholder groups with distinct and often competing interests are enormous. Overall, the RPSP must be understood as a strategic “enabler” that does not operate in a linear fashion (i.e. sequencing from an original focus on objectives 1 towards 2 and then later on objectives 3 and 4, with 5 at the end). It should be re-imagined as a strategic, flexible and dynamic instrument that is responsive to country needs.

R3: In socializing the RPSP, the GCF should be more intentional and targeted in communicating programmatic offerings and enabling learning.

- The GCF should curate the value proposition of the RPSP to different categories of stakeholders and consider tailoring the communication of such offerings through dedicated channels and forums.
- The GCF should continue integrating and operationalizing tools for knowledge management such as the RKB, to link knowledge to investment opportunities in locally relevant ways.

R4: The GCF should invest in solidifying the newly created RRMF as a learning and accountability tool.

- The GCF should develop additional mechanisms to enable periodic elaboration and measurement of outcome and impact-level results of the RPSP at the portfolio level.
- The GCF should also develop mechanisms to enable rigorous, periodic assessment of the quality of

RPSP grant implementation.

R5: GCF should operationalize the new RPSP strategy in a time-bound and timely manner.

The GCF should introduce the tools, frameworks, and SOPs for operationalizing the new RPSP strategy in a time-bound and timely manner. This will ensure internal and external stakeholders are able to understand, internalize and operationalize the priorities and modalities set by the strategy and integrate the same into individual RPSP proposals and the portfolio at large. It will also minimize the perception held by numerous stakeholders of constant change in the Readiness Programme and minimize the need to retrofit existing grants.

R6: With a view to enhance the sustainability of RPSP results, the GCF should reach diverse actors and cultivate national climate finance ecosystems.

- To favour an optimized and sustained impact of the Programme, particularly at country level, the RPSP should continue to invest in strengthening the capacities of NDAs and (aspiring/nominated) DAEs.
- The Programme should be understood as playing an enabling role in building national climate finance ecosystems. The RPSP should further its orientation towards medium-term outcomes over short-term gains. In addition to supporting NDAs and DAEs, the Programme should more intentionally support the private sector, civil society and academia in particular, intent on harnessing their localized insight and expertise for climate action.

R7: The GCF should increase the overall accessibility and cost-effectiveness of the RPSP, particularly for vulnerable countries, by adjusting its strategic orientation, processes and mechanisms.

- The GCF should orient the new RPSP strategy

to the needs of vulnerable countries. This would allow the GCF to promote greater coverage and access for these countries. It will also provide for strategic guidance from which RPSP processes and mechanisms suited to vulnerable countries can be developed.

- The GCF should explore the possibility of creating RPSP requirements and processes that are adapted to vulnerable countries, where capacity challenges in developing Readiness proposals and implementing grants hinder the GCF's readiness ambitions in these countries.

METHODS

The evaluation employed a mixed methods approach to ensure a diversity of stakeholder perspectives and a balance of "breadth" and "depth" perspectives (i.e., an optimal blending of insight derived from systems level performance data versus that derived from an examination of particular examples of programme implementation). To this end, the evaluation used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. These included a synthesis of IEU evaluations on readiness, literature review, document review, portfolio analysis, online stakeholder surveys, key informant semi-structured interviews, as well as country case studies and a low-readiness deep-dive. Country case studies included Armenia, Belize, Bhutan, Côte d'Ivoire, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mexico, Panama, and Tanzania. The low-readiness deep-dive explored RPSP support in countries classified as having low-readiness as per the ND-GAIN and States Resilience Index (SRI), and drew on data from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti, Iraq, Mali, and Yemen.

CONTACT THE IEU

Independent Evaluation Unit
Green Climate Fund
175, Art center-daero, Yeonsu-gu
Incheon 22004
Republic of Korea

☎ (+82) 032-458-6450
✉ ieu@gcfund.org
🌐 ieu.greenclimate.fund



GREEN
CLIMATE
FUND

Independent
Evaluation
Unit

