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Unit



SYNTHESIS NOTE

An IEU deliverable for the Independent Evaluation of the
Green Climate Fund's Readiness and Preparatory Support
Programme

February 2023

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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION UNIT

Synthesis Note

AN IEU DELIVERABLE FOR THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION
OF THE GREEN CLIMATE FUND'S READINESS AND
PREPARATORY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

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First Edition

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ABBREVIATIONS

AE	Accredited entity
CN	Concept note
DAE	Direct Access Entities
DCP	Division of Country Programming
ESS	Environment and social safeguards
GCF	Green Climate Fund
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit
NDA	National Designated Authority
OPM	Office of Portfolio Management
PPF	Project Preparation Facility
RPSP	Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme
RRMF	Readiness Results Management Framework
SIDS	Small Islands Developing States

SUMMARY

1. The Green Climate Fund's Readiness and Preparatory Support programme (RPSP) is relevant to global priorities and country needs, but it requires more strategic clarity vis-à-vis GCF programming. The GCF's RPSP portfolio has evolved over time, reflecting shifting country priorities. The impact of RPSP on the capacity of the Direct Access Entities (DAEs) to get accredited is observed prominently. However, capacity building has not led to higher programming through DAEs so far. To that end, pipeline development has been a recent focus area of the RPSP activities. RPSP's effectiveness in supporting adaptation planning at a national level has been low due to the high institutional capacity threshold required for such support. Knowledge management and learning have been one of the objectives where higher success has been observed. However, RPSP remains hard and long to access in relation to the amount of funding in each readiness grant. Vulnerable countries find it hard to access RPSP, and this is on account of lack of institutional capacities at all levels (DAEs, national designated agencies [NDAs], GCF).
2. Delivery partners serve as the conduits to deliver RPSP-related activities financed through GCF readiness grants, but they don't always possess the necessary alignment with country needs or capacity to deliver on committed activities in RPSP proposals. This is especially true in the case of vulnerable countries. As pertains to the private sector, RPSP has yet to create an enabling environment for crowding-in investments in the private sector.

BACKGROUND

3. **Purpose.** The Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) will be undertaking an Independent Evaluation of the GCF's Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme in 2023 to offer a timely evaluation of RPSP including the effectiveness and efficiency of its operational processes, results and outcomes. Further, the IEU will assess the extent to which the RPSP is contributing to transformational and sustainable projects and programmes. The evaluation builds on the first IEU evaluation of RPSP that was completed in 2018. This synthesis document offers an overview of existing evaluative evidence on various dimensions of importance to RPSP based on the findings of previous IEU evaluations, including repeating selected findings from the first RPSP evaluation. It will provide preliminary lessons that can feed into the ongoing drafting of a new RPSP Strategy. It will also serve as a basis for the 2023 IEU's evaluation of the RPSP, which aims to update the GCF Secretariat and the Board on the effectiveness and efficiency of the RPSP in developing countries. This synthesis note was agreed upon as one of the deliverables of the Independent Evaluation of the Readiness Preparatory Support Programme to be presented at B.35 (Green Climate Fund, 2022f).
4. **Methodology.** The findings of this synthesis are gathered through a desk review of all evaluations done by the IEU and select GCF strategies and policies released/approved in the GCF-1 period. Each evaluation report was referred to for findings and conclusions specific to RPSP. These findings were then classified by the themes and evaluation criteria to which they might pertain. The criteria used for the synthesis are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, private sector, RPSP business model, delivery partners, and RPSP in vulnerable countries. In addition, the policies and strategies introduced from 2019 onwards have been reviewed to gather up-to-date guidance specific to RPSP.
5. **RPSP at glance.** GCF's initial Readiness programme (henceforth referred to as RPSP 1.0) was for the period of 2015-2018, while RPSP 2.0 under the revised RPSP Strategy has been operational for

the period of 2019-2021 (extended to 2022-2023 by decision B.33/04 (b)). The GCF's revised RPSP Strategy (RPSP 2.0 programme) has five objectives that cover:

- **Capacity building:** Under capacity building, the RPSP supports country NDAs or focal points in NDAs and country systems to enable them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and to ensure that policy requirements are operational and effective. In addition, this objective supports direct access applicants and accredited entities (DAEs) to enhance their capacity to meet and maintain the GCF's accreditation standards and strengthens the capacity of DAEs to develop a pipeline of projects and effectively implement GCF-funded activities.
 - **Strategic frameworks:** Under strategic frameworks, RPSP supports GCF recipient countries develop country programmes; develops or enhances strategic frameworks to address policy gaps, improve sectoral expertise, and enhance enabling environments for GCF programming; supports the preparation of entity work programmes; and supports the development of strategies for transforming and attracting private sector investment for low emissions and resilience.
 - **National adaptation plans and adaptation planning processes:** RPSP supports NDA to play a convening role to help govern adaptation planning and strengthen institutional coordination. This objective supports the development of evidence to help design adaptation solutions for maximum impact, including the facilitation of private sector engagement. Overall, the objective aims to increase the flow of adaptation finance.
 - **Pipeline development:** RPSP contributes to an increase in the number of quality project concept notes and funding proposals developed and submitted, especially from DAEs, with a focus on the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and African States.
 - **Knowledge sharing and learning:** This objective is cross-cutting across the four objectives mentioned above and aims to ensure that best practices with respect to institutional capacity building, direct access, and pipeline development are adopted and disseminated to strengthen engagement by NDAs, DAEs, and delivery partners with the GCF.
6. GCF's RPSP has seen an increase in resource allocation and approvals between the Initial Resource Mobilization period of GCF and the GCF-1 period. As of the conclusion of B.34,¹ the GCF had a total of 631 RPSP grants approved.

Table 1. RPSP programming during RPSP 1.0 and RPSP 2.0

Replenishment period	Year	Number of grants	The volume of finance (USD millions)
RPSP 1.0	2015	31	5.87
	2016	33	11.57
	2017	87	33.35
	2018	90	83.61
	Sub-total	241	134.4
RPSP 2.0	2019	134	98.38
	2020	85	74.98

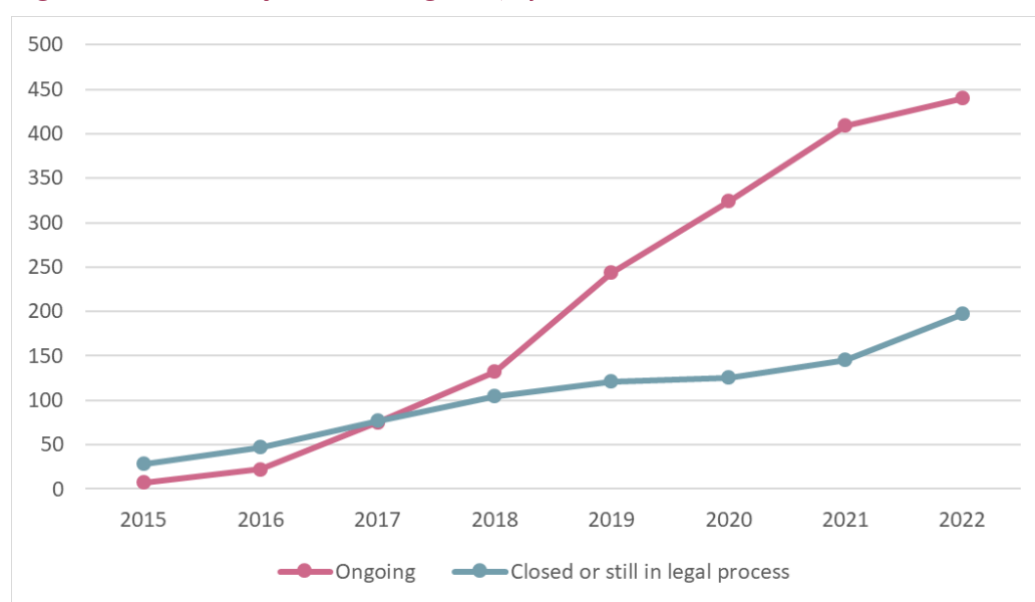
¹ IEU's databases are updated as of every Board session.

Replenishment period	Year	Number of grants	The volume of finance (USD millions)
	2021	105	87.11
	2022	66	56.71
	Sub-total	390	317.18
Total		631	451.58

Source: GCF iPMS and Fluxx dataset as of 31 October 2022, analysed by IEU DataLab.

7. As can be seen from Table 1, the funding for grants in RPSP 2.0 is expected to be more than double that of RPSP 1.0. Over the years, the number of grants under active management has increased drastically (Figure 1). As of B.34, nearly 450 grants are under different stages of implementation. The RPSP grants approved differ by year within RPSP 1.0 and RPSP 2.0 periods. Over RPSP 1.0, the programme has seen a steady increase in approvals. So far, the maximum value and volume of RPSP grants were approved in 2019.

Figure 1. Number of cumulative grants, by status²



Source: GCF iPMS and Fluxx dataset as of 31 October 2022, analysed by IEU DataLab.

Note: The 'ongoing' cluster includes all grants that have an effective legal agreement and have received at least first disbursement, whereas 'closed or still under legal process' cluster consists of all newly approved grants yet to secure legal effectiveness as well as the completed grants.

² Being "still in legal process" refers to grants which are in the process following the approval of the grant where the GCF Secretariat and delivery partners have to sign a grant agreement with the grant recipient, which includes and incorporates the standard conditions.

Section 1. RELEVANCE AND INTERNAL COHERENCE

8. **RPSP is relevant to global priorities and country needs but it requires more strategic clarity vis-à-vis GCF programming.** The RPSP design and activities are well aligned with the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the GCF, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement. GCF's RPSP is also found to be highly relevant to countries' needs and has seen good demand from a wide range of developing countries (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2018; 2019b). Before the introduction of RPSP 2.0, evaluations identified the need for further clarifying and refining the overall vision and purpose for RPSP support and for directing the resources more efficiently to achieve GCF goals (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2018).
9. **RPSP's linkage to GCF's private sector operations is weak.** RPSP is appropriately focusing on the 'software' that helps strengthen climate action such as institutional processes and building of human resource capacity. However, RPSP has yet to contribute much to putting in place domestic policies and institutional frameworks that improve the enabling environment and incentives for the private sector (including households) to invest in low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2018). This is due to the limited structural linkage between RPSP and GCF's private sector operations. Of the 14 outcomes mentioned in the RPSP Strategy, only three are relevant to the private sector.³ Institutionally, there are limited incentives and linkages to address these outcomes through an integrated approach that addresses capacity support or project development. There are limited inputs or oversight from the GCF's Private Sector Facility into the RPSP (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2021c).
10. **The GCF's RPSP portfolio has evolved over time, reflecting shifting country priorities.** It has been noted that grant requests are shifting away from awareness building and mobilization of in-country stakeholders to pipeline development and DAE support aimed at strengthening technical capacity for designing investments and enabling accreditation. Previous IEU evaluations have also highlighted a similar trend in that more recent grant requests are moving away from developing initial NDA capacities towards developing regional investment prioritization tools, sectoral plans and concept notes (Independent Evaluation Unit 2020c; 2023c).
11. **RPSP needs to be better integrated into the accreditation process, which can help increase the relevance of support to the entities and countries.** Such integration will ensure that more GCF-ready entities will get accredited and help achieve greater participation and disbursement of GCF investments through DAEs (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2019a). RPSP activities also lack coherence and linkage with other activities within the Secretariat, such as the DAE action plan which seeks to address challenges across the entire DAE engagement cycle from accreditation to project development and implementation (Independent Evaluation Unit 2022b; 2023b).

³ Outcome 1.3: Relevant country stakeholders (which may include executing entities, civil society organizations and private sector) have established adequate capacity, systems and networks to support the planning, programming and implementation of GCF-funded activities; Outcome 2.4: Strategic for transforming and attracting private sector investment for low emissions and resilience developed and being used; Outcome 3.3: Private sector engagement in adaptation catalysed.

Section 2. EFFECTIVENESS

12. The results of RPSP from countries will be one of the focal areas of the independent evaluation of RPSP in 2023. The previous RPSP programme and the current RPSP Strategy (2019-2021) have objectives which have similarities as elaborated in Table 2 (Green Climate Fund, 2019). Thus, the objectives of RPSP 1.0 and RPSP 2.0 will be looked at, in a continuum, by the independent evaluation. Effectiveness will be assessed along the lines of outcome areas under each of these objectives.

Table 2. Similarities between objectives of the Initial RPSP and RPSP Strategy (2019-2021)

Initial Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme	Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme Strategy 2019-2021
NDA capacity for engagement with GCF	Capacity building for climate finance coordination
Direct access to climate finance	
Country programming process	Strategic frameworks for low-emission investment
Formulation of national adaptation plans and/or other adaptation planning processes	Strengthened adaptation planning
Climate finance accessed	Paradigm-shifting pipeline development
	Knowledge sharing

13. For this synthesis, the findings and lessons from previous evaluations on the objectives of the RPSP Strategy (2019-2021) are captured.

Objective 1 - Capacity building

14. **The effectiveness of capacity building through RPSP is adversely affected by numerous factors outside the immediate remit of the RPSP.** RPSP has been beneficial for NDAs and focal points to build their capacity. However, RPSP is not the only source of RPSP support, and many countries have also benefited from support to establish an NDA/focal point through other sources of climate finance readiness funding. Capacity building efforts of RPSP are hindered by certain in-country factors such as high staff turnover in NDAs. This is further exacerbated by the fact that RPSP has provided short term consultancy support, which has not ensured the retention of core staff that could support the NDAs/focal points long term. The lack of transparency in accredited entity (AE) reporting during project implementation (i.e., through annual performance reports) also limits NDAs/focal points' ability to monitor their countries' GCF portfolios (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2019b). The usage of RPSP has also been limited for helping to strengthen NDA/focal points; supporting planning, programming and investment design; and creating enabling conditions and a policy environment for the private sector (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2021c).
15. **The impact of RPSP on the accreditation of DAEs is observed prominently, but it has yet to enable higher programming through DAEs.** In the first phase of RPSP, it was not very effective in building the capacity of prospective DAEs to promote accreditation, relative to other support areas (Independent Evaluation Unit 2019b). More recently, many DAEs have managed to secure accreditation, but challenges around the requisite capacity to prepare funding proposals remain (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2021c; 2023b). Further capacity development is required for DAEs to enhance their ability to propose concept notes for the GCF (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020b).

The effectiveness of RPSP for DAE institutional capacity building and improvements in the quality of funding proposals (FPs) have not been systematically monitored and evaluated (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2022b). Post accreditation support is critical, and the RPSP needs to be reinforced to support DAEs in the preparation of FPs (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020b). In addition, more clarity is needed in terms of differentiation between RPSP and Project Preparation Facility (PPF) and their respective roles in supporting the preparation of FPs (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2023c).

16. **There was no systematic framework for measuring results on capacity building until recently.** There are results and outcomes such as the countries' environment and social safeguards (ESS) to which RPSP has contributed significantly. However, there had not been any frameworks for monitoring and measuring RPSP results and reporting on the strengthening of AE capacities regarding the ESS and gender policies, standards and institutional mechanisms (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020a). With the approval and adoption of the Readiness Results Management Framework (RRMF) in February 2022, this aspect is likely to improve but the impact of RRMF use needs to be assessed fully at a later stage (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2022b).

Objective 2 - Strategic frameworks

17. **RPSP support for strategic frameworks has yet to bear significant results.** In the past, the deliverables under this outcome such as country programmes have not been systematically collected nor shared. On the one hand, RPSP supports strategic frameworks (i.e., country programming). On the other hand, country programmes need to elaborate on what kind of readiness support they require. However, country programmes have been inconsistent in describing the kind of readiness support needed at the country level, thus hindering the ability to strategically use RPSP. As such, country programmes have not yet adequately delivered on their aims, although significant RPSP resources have been committed to country programme development. The purpose of country programmes has not been well articulated. The result is that in many countries, the country programmes was viewed as merely a GCF administrative requirement, rather than as a real contribution to country planning (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2019b).

Objective 3 - Adaptation planning

18. **Adaptation planning requires a high level of capacity which is not always readily available at the country level.** RPSP for adaptation planning has several predefined outcomes as per the readiness proposal template, including the establishment of integrated adaptation planning and monitoring systems.⁴ However, it is found that approved proposals show a more diversified range of outcomes, beyond the strategy's description. Perceived hurdles in accessing RPSP support for adaptation planning include difficulties in fulfilling the requirements for developing proposals, the capacity of NDAs and delivery partners and lack of matchmaking with adequate delivery partners in the country and region. It is also relatively early to understand the impacts of the RPSP grants on adaptation planning. RPSP support for adaptation started in 2016, and grants usually last for three years. Several grants have received no-cost extensions from the GCF. It has been challenging for the GCF to assess the quality of RPSP in adaptation planning as there was no outcome or impact

⁴ Four outcomes which are: Adaptation planning, governance and institutional coordination strengthened; Evidence basis produced to design adaptation solutions for maximum impact; Private sector engagement in adaptation catalysed; Adaptation finance increased.

measurement framework until recently. Further, the RRMF was only introduced in February 2022 (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2021a).⁵

Objective 4 - Knowledge management and learning

- 19. RPSP has supported significant knowledge management initiatives at the regional and GCF level.** Some of the earlier evidence on RPSP's role in promoting knowledge management and learning suggests that the programme has supported broader global, regional and thematic knowledge sharing. Especially, RPSP is evolving from promoting initial awareness-raising about the GCF to mediating among the needs of countries, the AEs and the GCF Board. Such evolution has given rise to the introduction of structured dialogues which takes place at the regional and sub-regional level (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2019b). Evaluations have found widespread appreciation of GCF structured dialogues by numerous partners (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2023b). Under the previous RPSP Strategy, of all outcome areas, RPSP was seen as most effective in facilitating information-sharing events through structured dialogues and other workshops, to enable country engagement with the GCF and sharing and learning from other countries' experiences (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2018).

Objective 5 - Pipeline development

- 20. RPSP has only recently pivoted towards pipeline development.** Pipeline development has been assuming increasing importance among RPSP outcomes. It has been noted that grant requests are shifting, and there are now more proposals seeking support for pipeline development and DAE support to strengthen technical capacity for designing investments and enabling accreditation. Previous IEU evaluations have also highlighted a similar trend in that more recent grant requests are moving away from developing initial NDA capacities towards developing regional investment prioritization tools, sectoral plans and concept notes (CNs). However, this shift is more recent, and it will take time to see the results of this outcome (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2023c). The previous evaluation of RPSP raised doubts as to whether overall RPSP support and project preparation funds were sufficient for transformative project pipeline development, particularly by DAEs, and to ensure innovation and scaling-up potential. RPSP support for country and entity work programmes was found to have a limited effect on the development of a robust GCF pipeline, especially in the SIDS (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c). LDCs and SIDS still face challenges in planning for, accessing and delivering climate finance, including in the development of good quality funding proposals and becoming accredited with climate funds (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c; 2022a). The increased prominence of pipeline development and the need to measure initial results under this outcome is also noted in the result areas highlighted under RRMF (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2023c).

⁵ This statement refers to the existing findings so far and the IEU Readiness Evaluation 2023 will take a closer look at the recent Readiness strategy as well as RRMF that was approved by the GCF Board in February 2022.

Section 3. EFFICIENCY

21. **Accessing RPSP funding is complex and cumbersome for a relatively small amount of money** (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020a; 2022a). Processing times for RPSP grant requests are lengthy and disproportionate to grant size and many delivery partners are surprised at the extensive documentation required and the extended delays in feedback (Independent Evaluation Unit 2023c). Given the difficulties entailed in applying for RPSP grants, vulnerable countries take longer in receiving RPSP grants than other countries (Independent Evaluation Unit 2023c). The complexity of procedures, templates, language and the review process are some of the factors affecting the efficiency of RPSP operations. The GCF Secretariat has made a series of revisions to the RPSP proposal template (Independent Evaluation Unit 2023c).
22. Simplification of the access to RPSP has been recommended in previous evaluations too (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2021b). Some evaluations have also recommended a tighter integration between readiness for pre- and post accreditation support with a single RPSP grant supporting pre- and post accreditation capacity building, contingent upon accreditation being achieved. Such integration will provide seamless support to AEs and reduce the transaction costs of mobilizing readiness funding at different stages (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c).

Section 4. RPSP BUSINESS MODEL AND DELIVERY PARTNERS

23. Delivery partners serve as the conduits to deliver readiness-related activities financed through RPSP grants. All AEs are eligible to access RPSP grants upon request from respective NDAs. Entities not accredited to GCF are also eligible to serve as delivery partners provided, they pass the Financial Management Capacity Assessment. Typically, delivery partners are meant to be entities with sufficient capacity and presence in the countries where they are nominated to implement grants.
24. **Delivery partners don't always possess the necessary alignment with country needs or capacity to deliver on committed activities in readiness proposals.** RPSP depends on the delivery partners for applying for readiness grants and then delivering the respective activities and outputs. However, delivery partners often lack the capacity to undertake readiness-related activities in a robust manner (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c; 2021a). Even where they have the capacity to undertake, they are found to undertake the types of support that they are capable of or interested in providing and the linkages to urgent country needs are uneven. Thus, the interest of delivery partners and the interests of countries may not align (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2023c). In contexts such as the SIDS, the simultaneous role of regional DAEs as delivery partners can represent responsibilities beyond their existing capacities. An RPSP grant to build regional DAE capacity also represents yet another financial instrument that must be administered by the DAE (e.g., audited financial statements, reporting), if serving as the delivery partner. Such contexts merit an expanded pool of delivery partners with more focused capacity building, tailored to the delivery partner (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c).
25. **Delivery partners do not always possess the capacity to sustainably deliver activities under RPSP.** Accessing RPSP grants entails a heavy investment of capacity by delivery partners and AEs (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c; 2022a). Even in cases where the delivery partners are appropriately resourced, they are unable to pass on the capacity building to countries to sustain the intended outcomes (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c; 2022a). The typical RPSP delivery partner

model of training workshops does not build sustainable or sufficient capacity for developing concept notes. Countries, especially the SIDS, often require not only technical assistance but also support to address their human capacity constraints. In such cases, countries require an accompaniment approach where a longer-term handholding of institutions is required (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c).

26. **The profile of delivery partners is changing.** Historically, international accredited entities (IAEs) have accounted for a high share of delivery partners. However, this role is being increasingly assumed by DAE and non-AE delivery partners. The share of projects with non-AE DP has been growing for vulnerable countries (from 34 per cent in RPSP 1.0 to 49 per cent in RPSP 2.0). However, the RPSP grant-to-DP ratio for IAEs is still much higher than for non-AE DPs or DAEs, with several IAEs each having dozens of RPSP grants approved (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2023c).
27. **GCF Secretariat has yet to develop mechanisms to oversee the activities of delivery partners.** While AEs hold first-level responsibilities, the GCF Secretariat also has an important and growing responsibility to oversee the implementation of the readiness and funded activity portfolios to manage risks and results. GCF has not yet operationalized all the necessary tools to ensure an adequate control function, although the GCF Secretariat activities that were reported during GCF-1 indicate its increased attention to optimizing implementation and adaptive management (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2022b).

Section 5. PRIVATE SECTOR

28. **RPSP-related activities have not been able to address major gaps in private sector programming so far.** RPSP-financed activities have not been able to address the constraints facing the private sector. RPSP has not addressed issues around private sector capacity and resources to write funding proposals; loan conditionalities and concessional rates; and exchange rate agreements. RPSP support for the private sector, especially as it pertains to the SIDS and adaptation is in its early stages. More mature private sector support would include the development of studies, plans and strategy; supporting mechanisms for market activation and reforms; and supporting the project pipeline through CNs and FPs (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2019b; 2020c; 2021a).
29. **The scope of activities undertaken for supporting the private sector is limited.** The effective deployment of the RPSP has been limited in helping to strengthen the NDA/focal points; in supporting planning, programming and investment design; and in creating enabling conditions and a policy environment for the private sector and the use of RPSP in catalysing the participation of private sector actors, in particular local actors, is limited (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2021c). Little has been done through RPSP to improve the incentive environment for crowding-in private sector investments and “government authority is supported over other stakeholders, thus marginalizing civil society organizations (CSOs), with unintended effects on the political balance of power, causing some discord” (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2019b). GCF’s private sector approach will require addressing capacity support to small and medium-sized firms. GCF should clarify what the RPSP can do for small and medium-sized private sector companies (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2021a).

Section 6. RPSP IN VULNERABLE COUNTRIES

30. The GCF's Governing Instrument recognizes how the LDCs, SIDS and African states are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (Green Climate Fund, 2011). The Board has also ensured a floor of 50 per cent readiness support allocation to these vulnerable countries. For example, many vulnerable countries not only face extreme and increasing climate shocks and stresses but currently hold lower adaptation readiness.
31. **Access to RPSP for vulnerable countries is difficult.** One of the most significant barriers to accessing RPSP in vulnerable countries is the lack of institutional capacity among DAEs, NDAs, delivery partners and within the GCF (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c; 2022a; 2023a). Limited human resource capacity, governance, structural barriers, the type and positioning of the NDA and the language used for GCF processes all present barriers to accessing GCF readiness funding (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2022a). Countries with higher capacities are able to access GCF's RPSP funding more easily while countries with lower capacities find it difficult to access RPSP (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2022a). Past evaluations have highlighted the need for a diversification of the pool of entities to engage with as delivery partners and DAEs to avoid strain on their capacities and an accompaniment approach to capacity building, providing human resources to work side-by-side with government and DAE staff to build capacity over a longer period (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c).
32. **The lack of institutional capacity also negatively affects the effectiveness of RPSP.** While RPSP has provided valuable support to countries in identifying and nominating potential candidates for accreditation, it has been less effective in moving them through basic or upgraded accreditation. One exception here is the SIDS countries where the RPSP has been significantly more effective in this respect than other priority country groups. Even where accreditation of entities has been successful, RPSP has not been able to systematically move AEs from accreditation to the preparation of a concept note or approval of a funding proposal. This is especially true of DAEs in the SIDS which have experienced long gaps between Board accreditation and the approval of post accreditation RPSP support (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c). RPSP grant requests from vulnerable countries take longer than for other countries (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2022a; 2023c). The RPSP delivery partner model of training workshops has not been able to build sustainable or sufficient capacity for developing concept notes. Vulnerable countries require not only technical assistance but also support to address human capacity constraints (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2020c; 2022a).

Section 7. RPSP IN GCF POLICIES, STRATEGIES, AND GUIDANCE NOTES DURING RPSP 2.0

33. **RPSP for partnerships.** For the most part, GCF has defined its partnership in terms of the number of accredited entities and the projects/programmes financed with them. However, some recent policies have framed RPSP as one of the means of establishing and maintaining partnerships. Delivery partners are recognized as a category of partners alongside accredited entities and executing entities. The important role of RPSP in building capacities in DAEs has been recognized in more recent policies and measures, such as a dedicated RPSP funding window for DAEs and tailoring of RPSP support for DAEs based on their capacities (Green Climate Fund, 2022f).
34. **GCF engagement with the private sector and innovations.** RPSP is identified as the first prong of GCF's engagement with the private sector. A role for RPSP is identified in enhancing the enabling

environment for private investment in countries. This requires greater usage of the readiness programme to promote greater engagement between governments and the private sector. In operational terms, RPSP is also seen as a mechanism for helping the private sector pilot new approaches, and design new instruments (microinsurance, weather-index insurance) and new climate finance vehicles (Green Climate Fund, 2022c). GCF has also identified the need to promote technology development and transfer, innovation, incubation, and acceleration. This includes identifying where GCF support can unblock bottlenecks in value-chains for technology innovation, diffusion and transfer at different stages of the technology cycle, including via deploying RPSP to support national innovation systems and supporting local technology production (Green Climate Fund, 2020).

35. **Predictability and longer-term orientation of RPSP.** The Updated Strategic Plan for the GCF 2020-23 highlights the importance of ensuring the predictability of RPSP. To that end, the Updated Strategic Plan has called for the need for multi-year readiness grants. As the USD 1 million annual cap inhibits continuity and longer-term planning, the Secretariat now allows three-year instead of one-year RPSP grants if an RPSP assessment has been completed; uptake has been very low so far because few countries have the necessary assessments already and awareness of this opportunity is low (Independent Evaluation Unit, 2023c). Updated Strategic Plan has also called for the RPSP to be deployed in a more streamlined way with PPF to help build lasting institutional capacity for transformational programming and convert promising project concepts into bankable investments.
36. **RPSP as a means of bringing a paradigm shift.** GCF's sectoral guides recognize the important role of RPSP in ensuring a paradigm shift, especially through the financing of activities that address core barriers in different sectors but do not generate financial returns (Green Climate Fund, 2022d; 2022e; 2022a). Some of the interventions at the sectoral level to address through readiness include institutional capacity building and technical assistance to sectoral governance, as well as for monitoring capacity, planning and undertaking reforms (Green Climate Fund, 2022b). However, the reference to readiness and its potential usage at the sectoral level is uneven across sectoral guides. The RPSP's role as elaborated in sectoral guides is not linked explicitly to the RPSP's existing objectives but rather mentioned in the context of GCF's need to provide grant resources, RPSP or otherwise, to address sectoral constraints.

Section 8. CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING AHEAD

37. RPSP has remained relevant. It serves as the first step to accessing GCF and helps in building the capacity of nominated entities and AEs to access GCF funding as a whole and to help countries create suitable policies and frameworks at the country level for accessing climate finance. However, access to RPSP is still cumbersome. The results of the readiness programme are adversely influenced by numerous factors, including disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. On most objectives, RPSP has borne partial results and challenges persist in the implementation through delivery partners and in implementation in vulnerable countries. In addition, the business model of delivering RPSP through delivery partners poses its own set of challenges.
38. The Secretariat continues to modify the RPSP Strategy and its processes but has not yet found the right balance to efficiently serve country needs, especially given existing caps and limited resources. A readiness action plan was implemented throughout 2022 that sought to further streamline and simplify processes for faster access, including through the development of Standard Operating Procedures, reducing review steps, standardizing review scopes, and better tailoring second-level

due diligence to project risks. The Secretariat is also in the process of updating the Readiness Guidebook, expected in early 2023, to better inform partners on expectations and processes relating to overall climate finance readiness at the country level as well as engaging with the GCF at different stages. These steps and processes will be closely reviewed by the independent evaluation of RPSP.

39. This synthesis note summarizes existing evidence about the effectiveness and efficiency of RPSP in GCF-eligible countries so far. The revised RPSP Strategy and the increase in amounts of grants and their volume in recent years call for another evaluation to examine whether progress has been made in achieving key RPSP outcomes and re-examine the continued relevance of recommendations made under previous RPSP evaluation, which have yet to be fully implemented (refer to Appendix). The independent evaluation will also build on the numerous findings captured in this synthesis and also assess the progress on readiness against milestones identified in RPSP Strategy 2019-2021 and other corporate policies approved after the last Independent Evaluation of the Readiness Preparatory Support Programme in 2018.
40. The next evaluation steps are the development of the approach paper to the evaluation by February 2023, and the submission of the final RPSP evaluation by the 37th Board meeting in October 2023. The issues identified in the synthesis note will be included in the approach paper as well as the main evaluation report. The evaluation will seek feedback on its major steps from the GCF Secretariat and the Board.

Appendix 1. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (SUBMITTED TO B.30)

Following is the management response from the Management Action Report on the independent evaluation of the GCF's readiness and preparatory support programme 2018 (submitted to B.30).⁶

IEU recommendations (decision B.22/10)	Management response provided to the Board (decision B.22/10)	IEU rating	IEU comments
1A. Capacity building, outreach and support to countries			
Opportunities for peer learning should be encouraged. Peer-to-peer learning among countries and DAEs should be privileged more, in Structured Dialogues and also via sub-regional meetings.	<p>The Secretariat is strengthening efforts for the readiness programme to promote peer-to-peer learning, strengthen capacity support to accredited DAEs, improving guidelines for country programming, and make readiness information available to countries through the country portals.</p> <p>We agree with this finding, although the objectives of Structured Dialogues are also to align countries and entities in developing projects & programmes for the GCF, fostering peer-to-peer learning among countries, and more recently also to promote complementarity & coherence with other climate funds.</p>	Medium	In 2021, two virtual regional dialogues have taken place (Caribbean in March, Pacific in June). Additional webinars on the readiness programme COVID-19 response grants have taken place as well. In addition, consultations on the RRMF were conducted in April. However, progress on structured dialogues and regional workshops was hampered by the onset of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
Post accreditation support and capacity strengthening: Provision should be made for strengthening the capacities of NDA/FPs and offering post accreditation support for DAEs, in particular for the preparation of concept notes with clear climate rationales.	<p>The awareness of DAE support as part of the readiness preparatory support programme still needs further outreach targeted towards both NDAs and DAEs. Currently there are only 7 DAEs (out of 32 DAEs) that have requested (and received approval) for capacity building support that would assist in institutional strengthening as well as pipeline development. Pipeline development is at a nascent stage that is being undertaken through RPSP. Most DAEs have expressed their interest to request for possible support for both institutional strengthening and pipeline development where RPSP could be very helpful. Additionally, to accommodate DAEs request for pipeline development, in 2018, Division of Country Programming (DCP) has put in place a roster of three consultants who are being deployed in</p>	Medium	Support extended to NDAs and DAEs in crafting CPs and entity work programmes (EWPs). The Secretariat has created a roster of experts to support DAEs in developing RPSP proposal and strengthening CNs for improvement of their pipelines.

⁶ This appendix elaborates only those recommendations which have been rated medium or low in terms of degree to which they have been adopted and incorporated into policy, strategy or operations by the IEU in the RPSP Management Action Report. See Independent Evaluation Unit (2021d).

IEU recommendations (decision B.22/10)	Management response provided to the Board (decision B.22/10)	IEU rating	IEU comments
	<p>short term to help DAE develop concept note. For 2019, DCP is planning to develop structured trainings, create a roster of qualified experts to be deployed as long-term consultants to support DAEs starting from pipeline development to implementation of projects.</p>		
<p>Capacity building: Countries should be provided with financial support plus advisory services (i.e. capacity building and technical assistance) for meeting their needs and priorities; More long term national consultants should be funded to provide support to weak NDA/FPs in LDCs, SIDS and in Africa; Greater capacity building support should be provided on gender and ESS to ensure that countries are able to develop RPSP and Funded Project proposals in line with the gender, ESS and indigenous peoples policies of the GCF. With respect to gender, a concerted effort should be made in Africa.</p>	<p>We partially agree with the findings. The awareness of DAE support as part of the readiness preparatory support programme still needs further outreach targeted towards both NDAs and DAEs. Currently there are only 7 DAEs (out of 32 DAEs) that have requested (and received approval) for capacity building support that would assist in institutional strengthening as well as pipeline development. Most DAEs have expressed their interest to request for possible support for both institutional strengthening and pipeline development, where RPSP could be very helpful. Additionally, to accommodate DAEs request for pipeline development, in 2018, DCP has put in place a roster of three consultants who are being deployed in short term to help DAE develop concept note. For 2019, DCP is planning to develop structured trainings, create a roster of qualified experts to be deployed as long term consultants to support DAEs starting from pipeline development to implementation of projects.</p>	Medium	<p>Ongoing, several countries in the SIDS and the LDCs have utilized readiness grants to bring on board long term consultants who are embedded either in the NDA offices, or in some cases, national DAE offices, to provide long term support.</p>
<p>1B. CPs and in-country support</p>			
<p>DAEs and country ownership: Criteria should be developed to determine if some countries need several DAEs to pursue their objectives. If so, pre-accreditation support should be made available to all potential candidates recommended by NDA/FPs.</p>	<p>DCP has put in place a roster of three consultants who are being deployed in short term to help DAE develop concept note. For 2019, DCP is planning to develop structured trainings, create a roster of qualified experts to be deployed as long-term consultants to support DAEs starting from pipeline development to implementation of projects.</p>	Low	<p>The DAE action plan was presented to the Board under RPSP – Annual update report for 2020 (GCF/B.29/Inf.07/Add. 04). Also, the Office of Portfolio Management (OPM) is developing procedural guidance and templates on handling readiness grant implementation challenges, which is planned to be published with the new version of the Readiness Guidebook.</p>

IEU recommendations (decision B.22/10)	Management response provided to the Board (decision B.22/10)	IEU rating	IEU comments
<p>Coordination and firewalls to prevent conflicts of interest: Within countries, specific expectations and requirements for intra-governmental coordination and stakeholder consultations should be formulated, similar to the Country Coordination Mechanism of the Global Fund. Specifically, the evaluation recommends strong firewalls to eliminate conflicts of interest within these coordination and approval structures.</p>	<p>We agree with this finding that, under the country ownership principle, the countries have the flexibility to decide their institutional arrangement for climate financing and related processes. We will investigate the Global Fund model in the future. We agree with this finding, and will investigate the good practices in some countries, and facilitate the learnings across the countries. Many (if not most) countries have tended to build on existing coordination structures for finance or climate when establishing their coordination mechanisms for the purposes of GCF financing.</p>	Medium	<p>There is a Sustainability Guidance Note: Designing and ensuring meaningful stakeholder engagement on GCF-financed project, which provides requirements for stakeholder engagement. Several evaluations have recommended Stakeholder engagement policy, however, there is no stakeholder policy in place.</p>
1C. Secretariat level process changes			
<p>Results-oriented planning and reporting for RPSP activities should be introduced and implemented, including also periodic evaluations.</p>	<p>While we agree with this finding, it's also true that most grants only received their first disbursement in 2017, thus most of the expected results have not yet been achieved. In the recent Progress and Outlook Report of the RPSP, related sections, e.g., "Implementation at the Outcome Levels" and "Monitoring of the Readiness Grants" have been added to capture the results achieved so far. DCP and OPM have agreed to look into the qualitative measurements of the RPSP in the future.</p>	Low	<p>The Secretariat is working on developing the RRMF, which is in the consultation phase with key stakeholders.</p>
<p>The RPSP should have a database that is open to countries who can then view the status of their applications and grants. The information should be provided in a transparent and an inter-operable way and countries should be able to check status. The Secretariat should ensure that any further database development is harmonized, to avoid duplication, redundancy, and inconsistencies.</p>	<p>Not specifically responded.</p>	Not rated	<p>Fluxx database has been fully operational since mid-2019. However, there is no open database available for transparent and inter-operable ways for countries to review and check the status of their application.</p>

IEU recommendations (decision B.22/10)	Management response provided to the Board (decision B.22/10)	IEU rating	IEU comments
<p>Measure and manage: How 'ready' are countries, at any given time? This requires progress and results indicators. It is premature and beyond the scope of this evaluation to provide the details of such a strategy for the RPSP. Nonetheless, the evaluation has identified several choices that the Secretariat could consider.</p>	<p>While we agree with this finding, it's also true that most grants only received their first disbursement in 2017, thus most of the expected results have not yet been achieved. In the recent Progress and Outlook Report of the RPSP, related sections, e.g., "Implementation at the Outcome Levels" and "Monitoring of the Readiness Grants" have been added to capture the results achieved so far. DCP and OPM have agreed to look into the qualitative measurements of the RPSP in the future.</p>	Low	<p>The Secretariat is working on developing the RRMF, which is in the consultation phase with key stakeholders.</p>
<p>Establish complementarity and coherence with unfunded elements of Investment Plans under the Climate Investments Funds (and potential others), in particular through the PPF and national adaptation plan support windows, and report on this as well.</p>	<p>The Secretariat will investigate the good practices in some countries and facilitate the learnings across the countries. Many (if not most) countries have tended to build on existing coordination structures for finance or climate when establishing their coordination mechanisms for the purposes of GCF financing.</p>	Medium	<p>The Secretariat, since 2019, included in the readiness programme application template the request for information on coherence and complementarity.</p>
<p>Identify and remove barriers to crowding-in private sector investments, while defining and supporting the creation of conducive policies for private sector participation.</p>	<p>While the RPSP has been providing funding support to countries for the NDAs/FPs to engage with the private sector on financing climate actions, and all NAPs approved have an explicit set of activities to engage and catalyze adaptation investment with the private sector, the creating national policy environment and the global system were not explicit objectives of the RPSP. The RPSP, together with Private Sector Facility could look into the strategy and measures in these aspects.</p>	Low	<p>So far, the readiness support has not been used in creating the environment for private sector mobilization. How the NDAs benefit from the strategy (e.g., enabling private sector participation and investment in low emissions development) is not clear.</p>
<p>Develop comprehensive strategies to catalyze investments to deploy and scale-up prioritized climate technology solutions.</p>	<p>The Secretariat will explore the measures to be put into place, for which we believe some foundational work, e.g., defining "transformational change" in GCF community, developing GCF Private Sector Engagement Strategy, Country Engagement Strategy, Entity Engagement Strategy, must be done. All of these will guide the RPSP to develop tools and provide support to countries.</p>	Low	<p>The Secretariat has a close working relationship with the Climate Technology Centre and Network for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. However, currently, there is no strategy for catalysing investment nor approach to technology under</p>

IEU recommendations (decision B.22/10)	Management response provided to the Board (decision B.22/10)	IEU rating	IEU comments
<p>Enable more flexible cooperation with the private sector, rooted in a strategy for engaging with the private sector that is based in greater alignment with its sectoral practices.</p>	<p>While the RPSP has been providing funding support to countries for the NDAs/FPs to engage with the private sector on financing climate actions, and all NAPs approved have an explicit set of activities to engage and catalyse adaptation investment with the private sector, the creating national policy environment and the global system were not explicit objectives of the RPSP. The RPSP, together with Private Sector Facility could look into the strategy and measures in these aspects.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>GCF's readiness support. So far, the readiness support has not been used to create an enabling environment for private sector mobilization. It is not straight forward how NDAs benefit from the strategy to allow private sector participation and investment in low emissions development.</p>
<p>Engage with additional parts of governments (e.g., ministries of agriculture, forestry, and meteorology departments).</p>	<p>The RPSP have been engaging with government at high level, namely the perception of the Structured Dialogue. The level of country coordination depends on the governance context in each country, varying from parliament or cabinet level to ministry or department level. The GCF Board has approved recommended criteria for country consideration as they conduct country coordination and multi-stakeholder engagement at the level of national priorities and strategies (or in the development of funding proposals, as appropriate). These criteria speak to the need to engage all relevant stakeholders in ongoing processes, also based on previous country experiences in the coordination of strategic matters. Many of the approved readiness requests propose setting up inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms that are expected to ensure high level political support as seen as appropriate for each country.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>The readiness programme has been used in building country's human and technical capacity involving cross-governmental ministries and department s and across various groups of stakeholder s. However, the question remains on how effectively it has been operationalized and how to ensure sustainability/retention of the built capacity.</p>

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