

Evaluation Brief



GREEN
CLIMATE
FUND

Independent
Evaluation
Unit



Independent Evaluation of the Green Climate Fund's Approach to Gender

JUNE 2026

BACKGROUND

The Governing Instrument of GCF states that “*The Fund will strive to maximize the impact of its funding for adaptation and mitigation, and seek a balance between the two, while promoting environmental, social, economic and development co-benefits and taking a gender-sensitive approach.*”¹ Building on this mandate, the first Gender Policy and accompanying Gender Action Plan were adopted in 2015, establishing a gender-sensitive approach focusing on inclusion and do-no-harm principles. A 2019 update marked a strategic shift towards a gender-responsive approach that requires mandatory project-level Gender Assessments and Gender Action Plans.²

The Independent Evaluation of the Green Climate Fund's Approach to Gender (2026) examines the Fund's overall approach to gender mainstreaming across its institutional architecture, operations and portfolio of funded activities.³ It assesses the extent to which the updated Gender Policy (2019) and its accompanying institutional Gender Action Plan (GAP) have been implemented, and whether the Fund has set up the organizational, procedural, and system level conditions necessary to deliver gender responsive climate results.

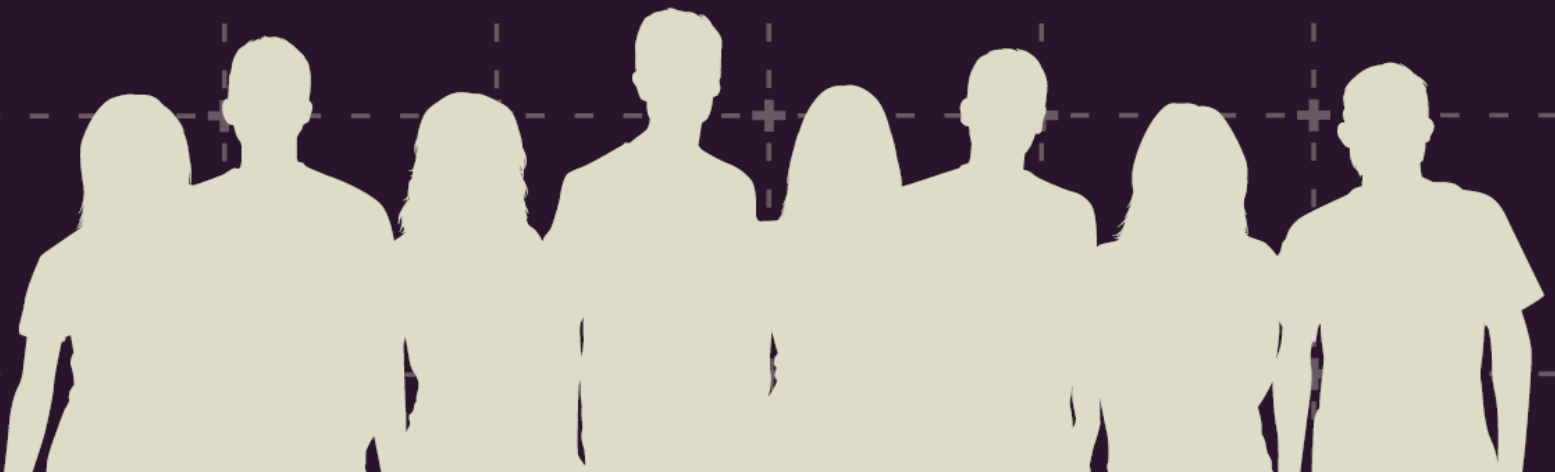
OBJECTIVES & SCOPE

The evaluation is strategically timed to inform the update of the institutional GAP and the development of the GCF's third Updated Strategic Plan 2028-2031 (USP-3). It also builds on the 2025 Gender Synthesis, which included a literature review and a benchmarking study comparing the GCF's gender approach with that of the Adaptation Fund, Climate Investment Fund, Global Environment Facility, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

1 Green Climate Fund, Governing Instrument for the Green Climate Fund (2011), para. 3, <<https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/governing-instrument.pdf>>.

2 B.24/12: Updated Gender Policy and Action Plan 2020–2023, 14 November 2019. <<https://www.greenclimate.fund/decision/b24-12>>.

3 Independent Evaluation of the Green Climate Fund's Approach to Gender. <<https://ieu.greenclimate.fund/evaluation/gender2025>>.

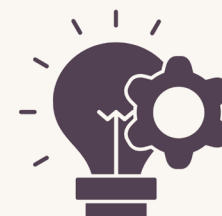


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METHODS

The evaluation draws on a mixed methods approach, including a desk review of institutional documents, a portfolio review of 20 projects, six country deep dives, an online questionnaire, and consultations with 244 stakeholders across the Fund's ecosystem, including national designated authorities (NDAs) and focal points, accredited entities (AEs), executing entities (EEs), civil society organizations (CSOs), gender and other experts, and a wide range of other stakeholders.



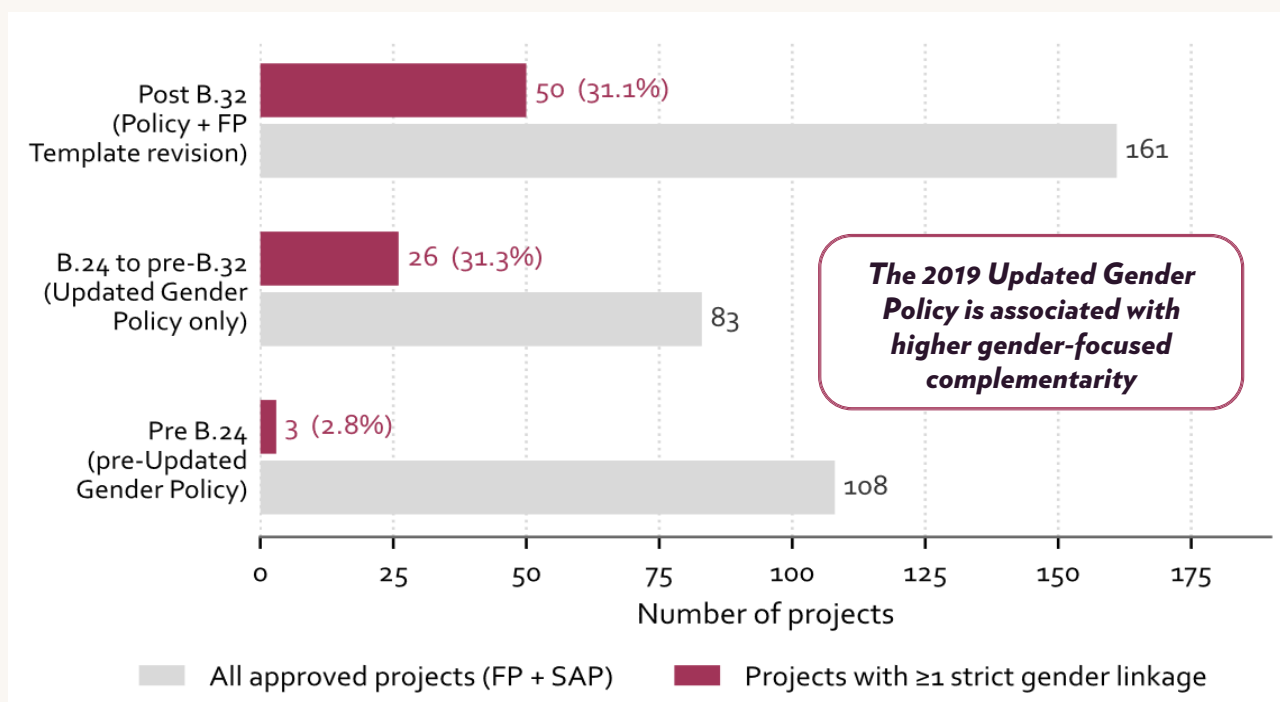
CONCLUSIONS



Gender Policy Architecture and Practice

The foundation of the updated Gender Policy is in place and strong but remains strategically unanchored and operationally disconnected, with persistent gaps between the updated Policy and its application in practice. Beyond the updated Policy, gender is not sufficiently embedded in the Fund's strategic planning architecture. Specifically, it remains positioned in USP-2 primarily as an implementation modality rather than being integrated into the Fund's programming priorities and institutional targets.

Figure: Influence of Updated Gender Policy (2019) on Gender-Focused Complementarity



Source: Coherence and Complementarity analysis of FPs by the IEU

Cut-off: B.44 (2026).

Notes: Universe = 352 approved projects (FPs = 285, SAPs = 67). The Updated Gender Policy was adopted at B.24 (March 2019); the FP Template revision introducing Section A.19 is associated with B.32. The three bins isolate the combined and incremental effects of policy and template.

C2

Gender Institutionalization

Institutional fragmentation has created accountability gaps that are likely to deepen with GCF's regionalization. Ambiguity in roles and responsibilities undermines institutional ownership and coherent implementation of the updated Gender Policy. The GCF's 2024 reorganization fragmented gender responsibilities between the Office for Sustainability and Inclusion, the Operational Safeguard team and departments relevant for programming and project appraisal, weakened internal coordination and introduced institutional ambiguity without demonstrating efficiency gains. Gender-related tasks are concentrated within the Operational Safeguards team, with limited clarity on how other divisions contribute to policy implementation.

C3

Embedded Gender Capacities

Gender-related capacities are siloed within the Secretariat and concentrated in designated teams. At the project level, capacity for gender mainstreaming is similarly uneven across many IAEs, DAEs and NDAs. Together, these gaps continue to pose challenges to the effective implementation of the updated Policy. At the institutional level, the GCF Secretariat has strengthened its technical capacity for gender through the expansion of the Operational Safeguards team. Still, such expertise remains limited across the broader Secretariat. Limited familiarity with the updated Policy and the absence of mandatory gender training or onboarding hinder the ability of Secretariat staff and Liaison Officers to integrate gender considerations in their day-to-day engagement with IAEs, DAEs and NDAs, and their management and oversight of the portfolio accordingly.

C4

Partnerships for Gender Integration

Gender-focused stakeholders remain structurally marginalized in decision-making roles, engaged overwhelmingly as consulted or beneficiaries, rather than as partners for executing or managing GCF-funded activities. This constrains ownership, depth of gender integration and sustainability at the country level. At the project level, gender-focused stakeholders remain insufficiently engaged across GCF processes, limiting both country ownership, quality of gender integration in funded activities and sustainability. Despite the updated Gender Policy's emphasis on inclusive, participatory approaches, women-led organizations and gender-focused CSOs were rarely identified as Executing Entities of GCF-funded activities or entrusted as partners with decision-making or governance responsibilities.

C5

Monitoring and Knowledge Management

The GCF's M&E and knowledge management architecture is fragmented and functioning sub-optimally, not currently well-suited to monitoring, reporting on, and learning from gender results. The project-level Gender Assessment (GA) and Gender Action Plan system functions as an approval mechanism, not an implementation monitoring tool. Knowledge about what works related to gender in diverse contexts exists, to a certain extent, but it is certainly not systematically reaching the people and institutions that need it to adapt. While most GCF projects collect sex-disaggregated data, the current monitoring, reporting, and learning systems in place are not yet capable of capturing and aggregating gender-responsive results across the portfolio. Across the portfolio, monitoring remains largely activity-focused, with APRs functioning primarily as reporting tools for participation counts. Few APRs provide evidence of outcome-level change, limiting the Fund's ability to systematically assess whether gender related activities are producing meaningful or sustained results.

C6

Partnerships for Gender Integration

The GCF has been supporting projects that are designed for, and actually producing primarily gender-responsive outcomes. However, these results are underdeveloped and reflect early-stage outcomes. More broadly, the absence of defined gender results pathways and a lack of portfolio-level gender outcome objectives prevent meaningful results aggregation. Thus, gender-responsive results are almost certainly being under-reported.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1

Strengthen Institutional Coherence and Accountability

The GCF Secretariat should reinforce institutional coherence, clarify institutional roles and establish clear institutional accountability for operationalizing the updated Policy and gender mainstreaming. The GCF Secretariat should consolidate the gender coordination architecture by establishing a mechanism spanning the relevant departments and offices, including the Operational Safeguards team, regional desks, liaison officers, and the monitoring, evaluation and learning function.

R2

Board accountability for the effective implementation of the institutional GAP

The GCF Board should reinstate its accountability for the implementation of the future institutional GAP and require the Secretariat to report periodically through a dedicated reporting mechanism. The Secretariat should establish a financial visibility mechanism necessary to track gender-related expenditure at the institutional level. These accountability measures entail: mandating a committee or working group to monitor institutional GAP implementation; requesting a gender budget tracking system that identifies and categorizes gender related expenditures; and ensuring future GAP include measurable indicators aligned with the IRMF and emerging work on gender co-benefits.

R3

Capacity Building - For a Shared Gender Responsibility

To ensure that gender integration further becomes a shared responsibility across the GCF and its ecosystem of funded activities, the Secretariat should strengthen system-wide capacity-building and guidance to support the implementation of the updated Policy. Capacity-building should include all relevant stakeholders. This institutional strengthening would include conducting a gender capacity assessment to inform staffing and training strategies; introducing mandatory orientation for senior leadership; expanding the network of gender champions; and updating the Gender Guidelines and Toolkit to reflect the updated Policy (2019) and future GAP. Readiness support should be leveraged more strategically to build national and entity level gender capacities.

R4

Effective Compliance - From Compliance Tools to Implementation and Learning

The Secretariat should fundamentally redesign the function and use of project-level Gender Assessments, Gender Action Plans and portfolio-level M&E to shift from compliance documentation to active implementation guidance and evidence-based learning. It is important for the Secretariat that these requirements function not only as entry-point compliance tools for FP approval, but also become active instruments for guiding implementation, monitoring, reporting and course correction throughout the project cycle. Achieving this shift requires integrating gender analysis and action planning into core project logic, ensuring that indicators and budgets are embedded in project key performance indicators, and updating Gender Action Plans at mid-term to guide course correction.

R5

Structural Pathways for Meaningful Access and Implementation

The GCF Secretariat should consider strengthening and leveraging the role of gender-focused and local actors through a partnership model that aims to deepen inclusivity, integration of gender-responsive practice and broader transformative outcomes at country level. In order to operationalize this recommendation, the GCF Secretariat could consider developing a partnership and access model that should apply across all partnerships, defining how different actors are identified, engaged, supported and leveraged. Such a model should establish pathways for women's organizations, government bodies, and CSOs as strategic partners. Readiness support for these partners to support access should be deployed.

R6

Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning for Gender-responsive Results

The GCF should strengthen its monitoring, reporting, and learning systems so that gender-responsive results are effectively tracked and aggregated, and used to inform decision-making and adaptive programming.



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