

GEF Women and Gender Caucus' Priorities for GEF-9 and all GEF Funds

June 2026

The transformative ambitions of GEF-9 and all GEF-related Funds cannot be achieved without adequate, predictable, accessible and rights-based public environmental finance capable of addressing interconnected biodiversity, climate, land degradation and pollution challenges. Persistent funding gaps and insufficient financial contributions undermine not only environmental effectiveness, but also efforts to address structural inequalities and support locally led environmental action.

Environmental finance is not only a question of volume, but also of justice, governance and power. Adequate financing is essential, but so is transforming how resources are governed, allocated and accessed.

1. Environmental finance must transform structural inequalities, not reproduce them

2. Direct access to finance must become a core principle of transformative environmental funding

3. Governance of environmental finance must be equitable, representative and democratic

4. Gender justice must shape environmental policy, programming and reporting frameworks across all GEF-related processes and Funds

5. Effective environmental finance requires transparency, accountability and long-term evaluation systems

1. Environmental finance must transform structural inequalities, not reproduce them

GEF-9 and all GEF Funds must ensure that environmental finance actively contributes to transforming structural inequalities. Gender justice, human rights and environmental effectiveness are mutually reinforcing and essential for achieving lasting global environmental benefits.

Recommendations

- All contributors should fulfil and scale up their financial commitments to the GEF and all its Funds in a manner consistent with the scale and urgency of global environmental decline.
- GEF-9 replenishment processes should prioritise adequate, predictable and grant-based public funding capable of supporting long-term, rights-based and gender-responsive environmental action.
- Require all GEF-funded projects and programmes to demonstrate how proposed interventions will address structural inequalities related to land tenure, access to natural resources and environmental governance.
- Prioritise funding for projects that specifically strengthen women's land tenure security, including support for legal reforms, implementation measures, awareness raising and the elimination of discriminatory social norms related to land and resource ownership and access.
- Ensure that women's rights and contributions, particularly those of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, are supported, strengthened and respected throughout all GEF-related processes, programmes and initiatives.

2. Direct access to finance must become a core principle of transformative environmental funding

Direct, flexible and culturally appropriate access to funding is essential to ensure that environmental funding reaches those working on the frontlines of biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and sustainable resource management. Current access modalities, accreditation procedures and due diligence requirements continue to create disproportionate barriers for women-led organisations, grassroots groups and community-based actors.

Recommendations

- Establish dedicated direct-access financing windows and simplified access modalities for women-led organisations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and grassroots environmental actors across GEF and all its Funds, including the GBFF.
- Allocate dedicated resources to support proposal development, readiness and compliance processes for women-led, Indigenous-led and community-led organisations seeking access to GEF financing.
- Regularly assess the effectiveness, transparency and inclusiveness of GEF access modalities and Focal Point systems, including their role in enabling equitable access to environmental finance by women-led and community-led organisations.
- Resource mobilisation efforts should ensure that increased financing does not reinforce existing concentration of financial flows among large intermediaries, but instead expands equitable and direct access pathways for women-led, Indigenous-led and community-led initiatives.
- Establish transparent monitoring and public reporting on the extent to which GEF resources directly reach women-led, Indigenous-led and community-led initiatives across all GEF-related Funds and financing mechanisms.

3. Governance of environmental finance must be equitable, representative and democratic

Transformative environmental funding requires structural shifts in who shapes priorities, governs financial flows and contributes to decision-making processes. Governance systems across the GEF and the GBFF must become more equitable, representative and transparent in order to strengthen legitimacy, effectiveness and accountability.

Recommendations

- Formally recognise the Women and Gender Caucus within the GEF architecture as a dedicated mechanism contributing to discussions on environmental funding, governance, policy coherence, access to information and justice.
- Ensure that governance reforms under GEF-9 strengthen democratic decision-making and equitable representation within environmental funding systems rather than reinforcing highly centralised financing approaches.
- Strengthen transparency and inclusiveness within governance and consultation processes, including the Working Group of Council and other relevant governance mechanisms related to GEF reform and resource allocation.
- Regularly assess the transparency, inclusiveness and effectiveness of GEF governance structures, consultation mechanisms and decision-making processes, including the role of GEF Focal Point systems.

4. Gender justice must shape environmental policy, programming and reporting frameworks across all GEF-related processes and Funds

Gender justice cannot remain a cross-cutting aspiration. It must shape the policy frameworks, programming directions, operational modalities and reporting systems of GEF-9, the GBFF and all GEF-related processes and initiatives. Transformative environmental funding requires institutional frameworks that actively address structural inequalities and support rights-based and gender-responsive implementation.

Recommendations

- Review and update the GEF Gender Policy (2017) to align with recently adopted COP decisions on gender, including the CBD Gender Plan of Action (2022) and the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan (2025), and apply these commitments consistently across all GEF-related processes, programmes and initiatives.
- Establish clear programming directions, dedicated funding programmes and targeted budget lines under GEF-9 and all GEF-related Funds, consistent with Objective 3.6 of the CBD Gender Plan of Action (Decision 15/11), to support gender-responsive implementation of the CBD, the KM-GBF and related multilateral environmental agreements.
- Strengthen gender expertise across programming, technical assessment and project review processes, including through the integration of dedicated gender expertise within the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel and other relevant advisory and technical bodies supporting GEF implementation.
- Integrate gender-responsive budgeting approaches throughout GEF programming and operational frameworks to ensure that dedicated financial resources address structural barriers and support women-led, Indigenous-led and community-led environmental action.
- Require gender-responsive, participatory and disaggregated indicators across GEF monitoring and reporting systems to capture outcomes related to rights, governance, access to resources and long-term environmental stewardship.

5. Effective environmental finance requires transparency, accountability and long-term evaluation systems

Environmental finance cannot be considered effective if transparency, accountability and long-term impacts are sacrificed in favour of short-term, output-driven or purely technocratic approaches. Lasting global environmental benefits require evaluation systems capable of measuring transformational environmental, social, governance and institutional change over time.

Recommendations

- Publish regular, transparent and publicly accessible reporting on financial flows, allocation decisions, project outcomes and implementation impacts across all GEF-related Funds and processes, including the GBFF, in formats that are understandable, accessible and usable by local actors, including women-led organisations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- Require GEF Agencies, Implementing Agencies and recipient countries to systematically apply existing GEF gender guidance and gender-responsive indicators across project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes, including through regular reporting on long-term environmental, social and governance outcomes.
- Request the GEF Independent Evaluation Office to strengthen evaluation methodologies and performance assessments under GEF-9 to include transparency, gender equality, long-term social and institutional transformation, rights-based approaches and locally led environmental governance and action as core dimensions of environmental finance effectiveness.
- Require GEF evaluation frameworks and project assessments to integrate qualitative, participatory and long-term methodologies capable of measuring behavioural, institutional and community-level change beyond short project cycles.

The GEF Women and Gender Caucus is a self-organised coalition of women constituencies across the Conventions that GEF serves, as well as women networks, organisations, and gender allies united under GEF's diverse agendas, fostering a human rights based approach and social and gender justice. It works in close collaboration with the GEF Gender Partnership.

For more information visit: <https://cbd womenscaucus.org/initiatives/gef-women-and-gender-caucus> or contact coordination@cbd womenscaucus.org

