

GEF Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation 2013: India, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu and SPREP



The sixth *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report (ACPER)* 2013 contains a synthesis of evaluative evidence from country portfolio evaluations and country portfolio studies conducted in India, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, and Vanuatu and the Pacific countries involved in Secretariat for Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) –executed projects.

ACPER 2013 aims to highlight the results and sustainability of GEF support, particularly at the global environmental benefits level, and its efficiency and relevance to the GEF and recipient countries. The country portfolios included in this report consist of 109 national projects allocated in all GEF focal areas, most in climate change and biodiversity. Evaluations were conducted using desk and literature reviews, statistical data and scientific sources, interviews, field visits, and national consultation workshops. Triangulation of evaluative evidence was applied to all evaluations. Fourteen review of outcomes to impacts field studies were conducted.

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Findings

Results

In all the portfolios analyzed in the Asia and Pacific region, GEF foundational support to the establishment of national environmental priorities, policies, and legislative frameworks has achieved good results. In small and recent portfolios, such as Timor-Leste and Pacific countries, GEF support has mainly centered on helping countries to comply with their obligations toward international environmental conventions and capacity building. In larger and more mature portfolios, such as India and Sri Lanka, more sophisticated initiatives have been introduced, such as establishing environmental conservation trust funds, supporting agro-biodiversity, and removing market barriers, as well as creating transparent tariff mechanisms in the renewable energy sector.

While progress to impact through broader adoption mechanisms occurs in large portfolios, this is not yet happening in medium-size, smaller, and/or younger portfolios. Significant scaling-up of GEF project results is observed in India, where broader adoption has contributed to

global environmental benefits. In Sri Lanka, uptake beyond GEF support has occurred in the renewable energy sector through removal of market barriers, although not yet on a large scale. No replication and scaling-up is observed in Vanuatu and the SPREP countries, and support to Timor-Leste is still of an enabling nature.

Effective communication and outreach as well as uptake of lessons facilitated broader adoption. Lessons from past interventions are being mainstreamed in the formulation of most recent GEF projects, with few exceptions.

GEF project experiences and lessons in India are being disseminated through publications, conferences, project websites, e-libraries, workshops, toolkits, and handbooks. Evidence suggests that these lessons are being incorporated in Indian agencies and institutions in their activities outside those supported by the GEF. In Sri Lanka, lessons from past interventions have not been fully utilized in the early GEF phases. Recent projects have specific activities and budgets allocated for the dissemination of lessons. However, it is too early to assess the impact of these efforts as implementation just started. Lessons from past interventions in the Vanuatu and SPREP portfolios have not been incorporated into subsequent projects, despite there being specific recommendations, mainly because of the lack of political commitment at the national level.

Capacity, both individual and institutional, is an issue of concern in SIDS and in fragile states. In Vanuatu and SPREP member countries, staff is not being retained after the completion of GEF projects because of insufficient resources. Project outcomes cannot be scaled up to achieve long-term impacts as a result.

Relevance

GEF support has been relevant to national needs and priorities in environmental conservation and sustainable development. Support to Timor-Leste in climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation has been aligned with government policies and plans. In India, the relevance of GEF support is particularly evident from projects within the Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management program. In SPREP member countries, GEF enabling activities helped integrate the concept of sustainable development into national development plans. In Vanuatu, the Local Conservation Initiatives project promoted sustainable land management and conservation

practices on traditional lands. GEF support in Sri Lanka has included projects aligned to sectoral plans, national programs, and long-term development frameworks.

The relevance of GEF support to country priorities strengthened ownership in India, while in the other portfolios analyzed ownership is mixed. Factors that weakened country ownership of GEF support in Sri Lanka included externally driven project design, capacity issues, and inadequate stakeholder consultation during implementation. Vanuatu and SPREP member countries showed good ownership only for enabling activities. In Timor-Leste, although government and other stakeholders were involved in the design and implementation of the GEF portfolio, limited national capacities in reporting have greatly constrained ownership.

Efficiency

Long preparation times and delayed implementation affected overall efficiency in all the portfolios analyzed.

Factors included weak capacity in Timor-Leste; a tradition of heavy bureaucracy in India; loss of institutional memory, changes in staff, and changing national priorities in Vanuatu and SPREP countries; and insufficient technical capacity, frequent organizational changes, and delegation of tasks within partner government entities in Sri Lanka.

Except for a few projects in the Vanuatu, SPREP, and Sri Lanka portfolios, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is not happening to its full capacity.

In India, M&E is weak, especially with regard to the appropriateness of indicators used. GEF projects in the Vanuatu and SPREP portfolios regularly generate project implementation reports (PIRs), mid-term reviews, and terminal evaluations, providing some good examples of adaptive management and institutional capacity building. In Sri Lanka, many projects do not have PIRs, which means information is not being produced and circulated. Additionally, arrangements or institutions in place for monitoring results after project completion are weak.

The introduction of resource allocation mechanisms since GEF-4 stimulated country programming with varying degrees of success in the respective countries.

The Resource Allocation Framework stimulated country programming in India, which resulted in a decrease in the number of dropped or canceled projects. In Sri Lanka, despite a country programming exercise conducted in 2006 and the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise in 2011, project proposals formulated were not aligned with country programming documents. This was because of delays in the GEF cycle during GEF-4 and delays in clearance by national stakeholders.

Inadequate contractual arrangements between GEF Agencies and national executing agencies in India created a barrier to independent evaluation of projects by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office. The agreement between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the national executing agency did not specify that access should be granted to the Office to conduct independent field verification, resulting in delays in evaluation processes.

Follow-Up

The report was presented as an information document and did not include recommendations for the GEF Council. However it included two issues to be followed up and integrated with other emerging evidence in the final report of the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5) of the GEF:

- The GEF Secretariat should further promote country programming in GEF-6 (2014–18), to be steered by national focal point mechanisms and to be conducted more efficiently.
- The GEF Secretariat should further strengthen knowledge management as an enabling factor for broader adoption, by encouraging the introduction of communication and outreach components in GEF projects.

The third issue was included in the Council Working Document, “Work Program and Budget of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office”:

- Given the recent obstacles that the GEF Independent Evaluation Office has faced in accessing ongoing and completed GEF projects, the Council requested the Office to interact with the GEF Agencies to ensure that legal requirements for Office access without restrictions be incorporated into contractual arrangements for all projects.

The GEF Independent Evaluation Office is an independent entity reporting directly to the GEF Council, mandated to evaluate the focal area programs and priorities of the GEF. The full version of *GEF Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report 2013* (Evaluation Report No. 87) is available on the GEF Independent Evaluation Office website, www.gefeo.org. Also available on the website are the individual country reports for India, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu and SPREP. For more information, please contact the Office at gefevaluation@thegef.org.