

Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS 6): Project Level Accomplishments

Draft Approach Paper

Introduction

The independent Comprehensive Evaluations of the GEF, earlier known as Overall Performance Studies (OPS) of the GEF, are undertaken to inform the GEF Replenishment Group on the results and performance of the GEF Partnership and of the activities that the partnership supports, and on areas for further improvement. The Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS-6) is being undertaken to inform the replenishment for GEF-7 period. OPS-6 aims to assess two broad areas: (1) institutional, governance, strategy and programming issues, and (2) the performance and impact of the GEF.¹ The GEF IEO will conduct review of the project level accomplishments, as one of the activities to assess the GEF performance and impact.

Up to 31st of December 2015, GEF had approved more than 4100 projects that accounted for US \$ 14.6 billion in GEF funding.² Of these at least 1077 projects, which account for US \$ 4.8 billion in GEF funding, have been completed and covered in the GEF IEO reporting through its Annual Performance Report. The accomplishments of these projects, along with other completed projects for which terminal evaluations will be received by October 31st 2016, will form a basis for reporting on project level accomplishments.

This paper describes the key questions and the approach for the review. It also provides a brief outline of review report, along with the resources required for the review. The review will be completed by 1st week of April 2017. It will also be an input to the OPS6 Progress Report, which is to be delivered by June 2017. The review will be conducted concurrently with the review on GEF Performance and on Progress towards Impact, so that it benefits from the synergies with these reviews.

Key Questions

The review will address three key questions:

- To what extent are the GEF projects able to achieve their expected outcomes?
- To what extent are the achieved outcomes sustainable?
- What are the variables that explain the level of outcome achievement and sustainability?

¹ Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS-6) – Approach Paper (GEF/ME/C.50/07)

² This includes trust funds such as LDCF and SCCF, that are managed by the GEF.

Methodology

Definitions

The review uses the definitions provided in the OECD DAC's Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management (OECD DAC, 2002).³ The Glossary defines outcomes as: *"the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs."* It defines sustainability as: *"The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time."*

Sources of Information

The review will draw on several sources of information. These include the terminal evaluation review (TER) dataset prepared by the GEF IEO, PMIS, terminal evaluation reports, GEF IEO evaluations, and relevant publicly available datasets.

- Terminal Evaluation Reviews (TERs) will be prepared for the terminal evaluations submitted to the GEF IEO up to October 31st 2016 using the GEF IEO TER guidelines. The performance ratings and other information provided in the TERs will be used to update the GEF IEO TER dataset, which contains the cumulative data on performance of completed GEF projects. The dataset, especially ratings on outcomes and sustainability, will be analyzed to assess the extent GEF supported projects have achieved their expected outcomes and sustainability. When required additional data from the PMIS dataset and other sources will be merged into the TER dataset to facilitate additional analysis and explore causal relationships.
- Terminal evaluation reports, which are the original source of information for the TER dataset, will also be surveyed to gather more information on the factors that facilitate satisfactory outcome achievements and to sustainability these outcomes. Similarly, terminal evaluations for GEF-4 projects will also provide additional information on the actual environmental results that may be aggregated and then compared with the targets for the replenishment period.
- GEF IEO evaluations such as the Country Portfolio Evaluations, Impact Evaluations, and Thematic Evaluations, will provide another source of evidence on outcome achievements and sustainability, and the factors that affect the level of their achievement. Relevant information from these evaluations will be extracted through desk review.
- Relevant evaluations prepared by World Bank IEG, IFAD Independent Office of Evaluation, UNDP Independent Evaluation, and other agencies, will be surveyed to bench mark GEF project portfolio performance in terms of outcomes and sustainability vis-à-vis that of the other multilateral agencies.
- Publicly available datasets on governance, GDP, country capacities, political stability, etc will be accessed to determine the extent these factors may explain project outcomes and sustainability.

Coverage of GEF Projects

So far 1077 completed projects have been covered in APR (from APR2004 to 2015). The cut off for the receipt of terminal evaluations for the additional projects that will be covered in this review will be

³ As referenced in: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/2754804.pdf>

October 31st 2016 so that there is sufficient time to prepare terminal evaluation reviews and to analyze TER data. In addition to the 1077 completed projects covered in the APR so far, terminal evaluation submission for 75 additional completed projects may be expected by the cut-off date of 31st October 2016. Thus, analysis and reporting on outcomes and sustainability is likely to cover about 1150 completed projects.

Terminal Evaluation Review Process

All of the terminal evaluations that will be covered as part of this review will undergo or would have undergone through the terminal evaluation review process undertaken by the GEF IEO and/or the independent evaluation offices of the GEF Agencies (the World Bank Group, UNEP, and UNDP). When terminal evaluations are reviewed by the IEO, the procedure is as follows. Using a set of detailed guidelines to ensure that uniform criteria are applied (see Annex B of APR 2015 for these guidelines), GEF IEO reviewers assess the degree to which project ratings provided in terminal evaluations are properly substantiated, and address the objectives and outcomes set forth in the project design documents approved by the GEF Council and/or GEF CEO. In the process of drafting a terminal evaluation review, a peer reviewer with substantial experience in assessing terminal evaluations provides feedback on the report. This feedback is incorporated into subsequent versions of the report.

Although the processes used by the independent evaluation offices of the GEF Agencies and GEF IEO are not identical, these are very similar. The GEF IEO regularly determines the extent to which the ratings provided by the independent evaluation offices of the Agencies are consistent with the ratings that it provides. So far the ratings provided by the independent evaluation offices of the Agencies have tended to be mostly consistent.

Rating Scale

The GEF IEO and/or the independent evaluation offices of the GEF Agencies provide performance ratings on project outcomes and sustainability of outcomes. These ratings form a basis of the analysis presented in the Annual Performance Reports (APR) prepared by the GEF IEO.

Outcomes are rated using a six point scale from Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory. It takes into account achievement on parameters such as relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

- **Highly satisfactory.** The expected outcomes were achieved and level of achievement of at least some key outcomes was substantially greater than expected.
- **Satisfactory.** The expected outcomes were either fully met or less than expected achievement of some outcomes was balanced by greater than expected achievement of others.
- **Moderately satisfactory.** The expected outcomes of the project were mostly met with achievement of some of the outcomes being less than expected.
- **Moderately unsatisfactory.** The expected outcomes of the project were clearly lower than expected, and/or some of the outcomes were achieved but achievement of most of the outcomes was substantially lower than expected.

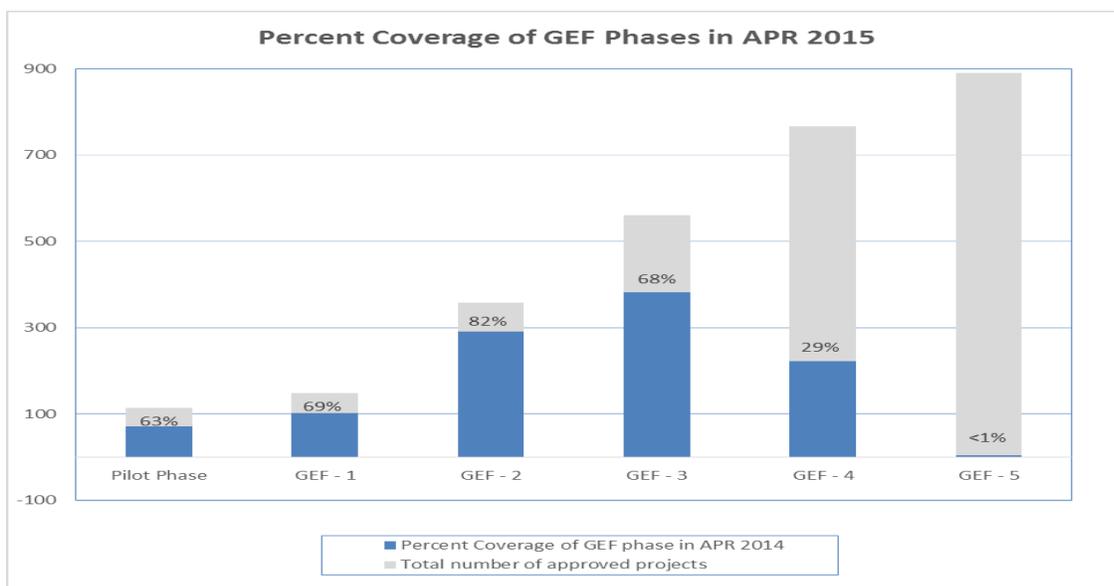
- **Unsatisfactory.** The expected outcomes of the project were not achieved, or only negligible achievement and/or there were some minor negative unintended results.
- **Highly unsatisfactory.** The expected outcomes of the projects were not achieved and there were substantial negative unintended results.

Sustainability of outcomes is rated on a four point scale based on an assessment of the risks to outcome sustenance. The risks that are taken into account include financial, socio-political, institutional, and environmental risks. A four point scale is used:

- **Likely.** There is no risk or little risk to sustainability of outcomes.
- **Moderately likely.** There are moderate risks to sustainability of outcomes.
- **Moderately unlikely.** There are significant risks to sustainability of outcomes.
- **Unlikely.** There are severe risks to sustainability of outcomes.

Aggregation of environmental results

During replenishment negotiations the Replenishment Group establishes the corporate targets for environmental results for a given replenishment period. From GEF-4 onwards these targets have been specified in the programming documents. The review will aggregate the environmental results achieved for the projects that were approved in the GEF-4 period and will assess the extent to which progress has been made in achieving the GEF-4 targets. The coverage of the GEF-4 projects till December 2015 was 29 percent. By the cut off period for this review (i.e. October 31st 2016) GEF-4 coverage may be expected to increase to up to 35 to 40 percent. While this will not provide sufficient coverage for actual achievements, it will provide sufficient data to allow better projections for the period. Coverage of GEF-5 period is unlikely to increase to a level where such projections are possible. However, some case studies may be available for discussion.



Factors that affect outcome achievements and sustainability

The terminal evaluations will also be surveyed to gather information on factors that affect outcome achievements positively or negatively. The factors reported in the terminal evaluations will be classified into consistent categories. The information will then be added to the TER dataset and will be analyzed to identify patterns and relationships with outcome and sustainability ratings. Data on geographical, economic, political, policy, and governance related characteristics of the context in which GEF projects were implemented will also be added to the TER dataset to assess the extent these factors explain outcome achievements and sustainability. Where appropriate multivariate regression analysis will be used to uncover such relationships.

Data on cancelled projects will also be analyzed separately to determine the reasons for cancellation, and the patterns that may be discerned.

Review Report

The review report will present findings on trends in outcome and sustainability ratings. The trends in these ratings will be presented by GEF replenishment periods and/or year of project approval. The trends across various project types, regions and sub-regions, focal areas and focal-area programs, countries with special circumstances, and GEF Agencies (and Agency types), will also be presented. A comparison of outcome and sustainability ratings of the GEF project portfolio with that of the other multilateral agencies in the larger development realm will also be presented. The review report will also present an analysis of the causal factors that may explain project performance. This analysis will assess the extent to which outcome and sustainability ratings are influenced by factors such as country capacities, governance, co-financing, GEF grant size, project preparation delays, etc. The review report will have following sections:

- Introduction
- Key Questions
- Methodology
- Trends in outcome ratings
- Environmental results
- Trends in sustainability
- Factors that affect outcomes and sustainability
- Summary

Activity calendar

The review will be conducted by a team led by a Senior Evaluation Officer. Other members of the team will include an evaluation analyst, and two-three short-term consultants. The activities for the review will start in July 2016 and end in the first week of April 2017 (Table 1).

Table 1: Calendar of Activities

Activity	Duration	Milestone
Preparation of approach paper	July 2016	31 st of July 2016
Desk Review of GEF IEO Evaluations	August to September 2016	September 30 th 2016
Survey of terminal evaluations	September to December 2016	December 20 th 2016
Terminal Evaluation Reviews	August 2016 to January 2017	January 15 th 2017
Analysis	January to February 2017	February 15 th 2017
Draft review report	February to March 2017	March 7 th 2017
Final report of the review	March to April 2017	April 7 th 2017