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Foreword

This is the second annual thematic evaluations report presented by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Evaluation Office to the Council. Thematic evaluations cover evaluations of cross-sector topics ranging from strategies and policies to cross-cutting programs. This year's report presents an overview of the progress of the Evaluation of GEF Enabling Activities and the main conclusions and recommendations for the Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies.

The Evaluation of GEF Enabling Activities aims to provide the GEF Council with lessons learned from implementing enabling activities and evaluative evidence of their role in the overall catalytic effect of the GEF. The evaluation began in May 2012; its main findings and recommendations will be incorporated into the Fifth Overall Performance Study.

The main objective of the Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies was to collect and assess information related to the GEF-5 (2010–14) focal area strategies to gain a systematic understanding of the elements and causal links each strategy envisions. The evaluation found that these strategies fulfill crucial functions in guiding GEF programming, are largely responsive to convention guidance, and correspond with current scientific consensus. The construction of theories of change for each focal area revealed that, in most cases, the strategies do not draw on a systematic identification of the envisaged causal relationships between different

elements of the relevant strategy. The potential for broader adoption of results is recognized in the strategies, but the pathways to do so are not systematically considered. The evaluation also found that the strategies do not have a comprehensive approach for multifocal area activities.

The evaluation commenced in February 2012, and its conclusions and recommendations were presented to the Council the following November. Upon reviewing the document and the management response from the GEF Secretariat and Agencies, the Council requested the Secretariat ensure explicit discussion of causal linkages for GEF-6 (2014–18) strategies, more flexibility for multifocal area projects, clearer pathways from activities to outcome and impact, and a review of the approach to capacity development in GEF-6.

The GEF Evaluation Office would like to thank all who collaborated with the report: its staff, GEF Secretariat staff, convention staff, and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel. I would also like to thank all those involved for their support and useful criticism. Final responsibility for this report remains firmly with this Office.



Rob D. van den Berg
Director, GEF Evaluation Office

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by Anna Viggh, Senior Evaluation Officer and Team Leader for thematic evaluations at the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Evaluation Office. The Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies was managed by Anna Viggh. Björn Conrad, Evaluation Analyst, was the Task Manager.

The Office thanks members of the GEF Secretariat; representatives of the GEF Agencies and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel; and staff of the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants for their input and support.

Abbreviations

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity
COP conference of the parties
GEF Global Environment Facility
LDCF Least Developed Countries Fund

OPS overall performance study
SCCF Special Climate Change Fund
UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on
Climate Change

All dollar amounts are U.S. dollars unless otherwise indicated.

1. Introduction

This is the second annual thematic evaluations report presented by the Global Evaluation Facility (GEF) Evaluation Office. Through these annual reports, the Office summarizes evaluations of cross-cutting topics, including strategies, policies, and programs. They present the progress of ongoing evaluations and summaries or syntheses of findings and conclusions for evaluations completed during the year.

Annual Thematic Evaluations Report 2012 reports on the progress of the Evaluation of GEF Enabling Activities and presents the main conclusions and recommendations for the Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies. The thematic evaluations team is also coordinating the work of the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5). The Progress Report of the GEF Evaluation Office

Director presents detailed information on OPS5 implementation.

The Evaluation of GEF Enabling Activities was begun in May 2012 by a team consisting of a GEF Evaluation Office Senior Evaluation Officer, an extended term consultant, and a senior consultant with extensive experience in capacity development. The Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies was conducted between February and September 2012 by a team consisting of a GEF Evaluation Office Senior Evaluation Officer and an extended term consultant. The evaluation team developed the theory of change behind each focal area strategy in consultation with the GEF Secretariat. The full focal areas evaluation report and technical documents for each focal area are available on the GEF Evaluation Office website (www.gefeo.org).

2. Progress on the Evaluation of GEF Enabling Activities

The Evaluation Office has made significant progress in the implementation of the Evaluation of GEF Enabling Activities. The evaluation aims to provide the GEF Council with lessons learned from implementing enabling activities and evaluative evidence of the role of enabling activities in the overall catalytic effect of the GEF. Activities covered will only be those that are funded through the enabling activity modality. The approach paper for the evaluation was approved by the Director of the Evaluation Office on May 16, 2012, and is available on the GEF Evaluation Office website (www.gefeo.org).

The evaluation is being conducted in two phases. The first phase entails a meta-evaluation to collect evaluative evidence from previous evaluations conducted by the Office, the GEF Agencies,

the conventions, and other stakeholders. A total of 64 documents have been reviewed; analysis of the information collected is ongoing. In addition, convention guidance related to enabling activities has been collected and will be used to assess the relevance of enabling activities. A portfolio database of enabling activities—including basic, project cycle, and financial information—is under development. The evaluation's first phase will establish the framework for its second phase, which will build on the findings of the meta-evaluation. The second phase will explore further issues of or gaps in evaluative evidence identified by the meta-evaluation. The steps and methodology for the second phase will be developed based on the terms of reference for the evaluation. The evaluation's main findings and recommendations will be incorporated into OPS5.

3. Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies

3.1 Context, Scope, and Objective

The Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Focal Area Strategies builds on prior evaluative efforts conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office. In particular, past GEF overall performance studies (OPSs) have presented assessments at the GEF focal area level. In the context of the Third Overall Performance Study (OPS3) in 2004, the GEF focal areas were assessed in a series of program studies. OPS4 presented evidence on focal area achievements, primarily focusing on their progress toward impact, as well as a comprehensive analysis of convention guidance to the GEF. The aggregation of evaluative evidence at the focal area level has proven to be of particular value in informing and providing recommendations for the GEF replenishment process. Accordingly, OPS5 will continue to report evaluative findings on focal area activities. The Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies represents one building block of this effort and a preparatory step for the broader assessment of focal area achievements in the context of OPS5.

This evaluation was designed as a formative evaluation, emphasizing learning as its primary goal.¹ Accordingly, the evaluation's main objec-

¹The evaluation literature distinguishes between summative and formative evaluations. **Summative** evaluations focus on the assessment of performance and progress measured against expected targets and are

tive is to collect and assess information related to the GEF-5 (2010–14) focal area strategies to gain a systematic understanding of the elements and causal links each strategy envisions. The evaluation encompasses the analysis of the following focal area strategies: [biodiversity](#), [climate change mitigation](#), [international waters](#), [land degradation](#), [chemicals](#), [sustainable forest management \(SFM\)/REDD+](#),² and—under the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)—[adaptation to climate change](#). The evaluation looks at the most recent GEF-5 focal area strategies and the LDCF/SCCF strategy on adaptation to climate change covering the period from 2010 to 2014.

The evaluation focuses on an analysis of the GEF-5 focal area strategies as they were formulated, emphasizing their intended rationale and internal logic. The analysis provides the foundation for a subsequent assessment of the implementation of

used to evaluate the accountability of a given system. In contrast, **formative** evaluations analyze evidence in order to learn from past experiences so as to inform improvements of a given system in moving forward. See [Scriven \(1967\)](#).

²The GEF defines REDD+ as reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

focal area strategies in GEF projects; this is being conducted in the context of OPS5.

3.2 Approach and Methodology

To improve understanding of the elements and causal links reflected in the GEF focal area strategies, the evaluation employed a four-step approach:

1. **Construct theories of change.** What are the elements, causal links, and overall rationale reflected in each focal area strategy? What are the identified causal pathways envisioned to lead to the achievement of the strategy's objectives?
2. **Review the relationship with convention guidance.** To what extent and in what way do the objectives formulated in the focal area strategies relate to the respective convention guidance?
3. **Assess the connection with scientific knowledge.** To what extent do the focal area strategies correspond with current scientific knowledge?
4. **Make recommendations for future strategies.** Based on the findings of Steps 1–3, what recommendations for the development of future GEF strategies can be provided?

3.3 Theory of Change Approach

A theory-based evaluation is designed around the theory of change of an activity or strategy. The theory of change systematically examines the elements and causal links that constitute the activity/strategy in order to understand and describe the logic of how that activity/strategy is expected to lead to the desired results ([Fitz-Gibbon and Morris 1996](#)). In preparation for OPS5, the GEF Evaluation Office has developed a general framework for the GEF theory of change, drawing on a large amount of evaluative evidence gathered over the years. This evaluation used the general framework to guide the

construction of specific focal area strategy theories of change.

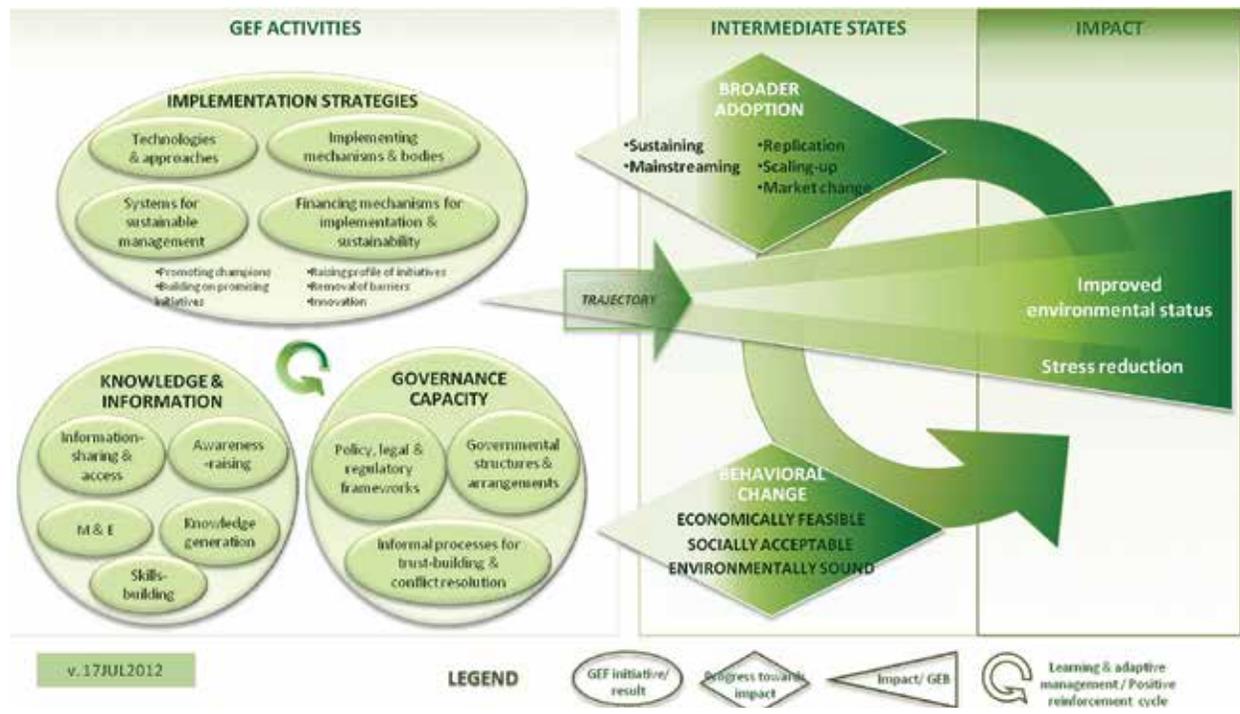
Figure 1.1 shows the general framework describing how the GEF provides support for activities that directly or indirectly address drivers of environmental degradation. The framework proposes three general categories for GEF activities: implementation strategies, institutional capacity, and knowledge and information. Outputs and outcomes of GEF activities—and their interactions with their contextual environment and actions by other actors—are expected to lead to broader adoption of the promoted approaches and technologies, and to institutional action and behavioral change.

The evaluation applied the general framework to each of the GEF-5 focal areas as well as to the LDCE/SCCF strategy on adaptation to climate change. The resulting theories of change map out the strategies' elements and causal links for each strategy, depicting the means-ends linkages envisioned explicitly or implicitly in the respective strategy and thereby identifying the logical chain of actions that are supposed to lead to the achievement of the strategy's objectives. Throughout the theory of change process, the evaluation team consulted extensively with the respective GEF Secretariat team for each focal area to ensure correct interpretation of the strategy documents and establish agreement on the central aspects of the theories of change.

3.4 Analysis of Convention Guidance

To assess how the focal area strategies reflect convention guidance, the evaluation conducted a full review of all convention guidance to the GEF issued by the conferences of the parties (COPs) to the conventions. The review included identification of guidance relevant to the GEF, a quantitative analysis of guidance over time, and a qualitative classification of each individual item of COP guidance. Based

FIGURE 3.1 General Framework for the GEF Theory of Change



on this review, the evaluation conducted a mapping exercise to identify the links between guidance and focal area strategies. The mapping illustrates how topics raised by the conventions are reflected in the strategies and how the strategies are in turn shaped by different kinds of guidance.

3.5 Real-Time Delphi Approach

The [Delphi method](#) was developed by the RAND Corporation in the late 1950s as a method for collecting and synthesizing expert judgments. The methodology has since become a widely recognized technique of expert consultation. The Delphi method requires anonymity to ensure equal weighting of each participant’s responses and to reduce the bias resulting from the perceived authority of renowned experts.

The original Delphi method involves repeated rounds of responses from experts on a question-

naire, with each expert receiving feedback on peer responses between rounds. This time-intensive method was further developed into a “round-less,” online-based process that allows for asynchronous input and makes expert answers available to the entire group in real time, eliminating the need for round-to-round feedback and considerably shortening the communication time required. This form of Delphi process is called [Real-Time Delphi \(RTD\)](#).

Seven online questionnaires—one for each focal area strategy—were formulated by the evaluation team with extensive input from the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and embedded into an RTD online platform. Each question required a quantitative as well as a qualitative response covering the central aspects of each focal area strategy. A total of 167 participants signed onto the RTD platform to provide answers to the online questionnaires.

3.6 Conclusions

CONCLUSION 1: The GEF-5 focal area strategies fulfill an important function for GEF programming by defining areas of GEF activities, providing a general rationale for GEF engagement in these areas, and identifying the types of activities to receive GEF support.

The GEF-5 focal area strategies fulfill crucial functions for guiding GEF programming. Specifically, they define the general areas of activity the GEF should engage in by breaking down the focal areas' overarching goals into objectives; establish the reason for GEF engagement in a specific area by describing the corresponding environmental challenges and explaining the GEF's potential to contribute to a solution; and identify the types of GEF activities to be supported under a certain GEF objective, including illustrative examples of concrete activities to receive GEF financing.

The GEF-5 focal area strategies generally provide a clear picture of what the GEF intends to support during the replenishment period. The strategies thus serve as a guide for the GEF Secretariat on programming as well as an overview of fundable activities to inform recipient countries and GEF Agencies during project conception and development. In addition, the strategies include a results framework that defines expected outputs for each focal area objective. The frameworks establish what the GEF intends to achieve and thereby serve as the basis for the GEF's results-based management system, a benchmark for evaluations, and the basis for resource allocation decisions during the GEF replenishment process.

CONCLUSION 2: The GEF-5 focal area strategies are not based on systematic identification of envisaged causal relationships between strategy elements or of connections between GEF activities and expected results.

In most cases, the GEF-5 focal areas do not draw on a systematic identification of the envisaged

causal relationships between different elements of the relevant strategy. This pertains to both links between different types of GEF activities, such as the relationship between mutually reinforcing elements like the enabling policy environment and successful demonstration), and to more complex causal chains that are intended to lead from GEF activities to achievement of results.

This does not mean that the causal links between GEF activities and the chains of causality toward the achievement of expected results are not recognized in de facto GEF programming. On the contrary, [Technical Papers 1–7](#) (box 1.1) highlight a multitude of causal chains toward achievement of results that are implicit in the GEF focal area strategies. Many of these links are identified and discussed in other publications of the GEF Secretariat and included in the GEF programming process. In most focal areas, however, they have not been brought together in a systematic way and are not embedded as an explicit basis of the GEF-5 focal area strategies. By way of example, even though GEF support in establishing and operating energy service companies is an important instrument in achieving the GEF-5 CCM-2 objective (promote market transformation for energy efficiency in industry and the building sector), it is not explicitly mentioned in the strategy's text.

Using the system of causal links that is already reflected to a large degree in GEF programming as the basis for the GEF-6 (2014–18) strategies could strengthen a strategic approach that currently allows GEF projects only to contribute certain elements to the chain of causality toward results. This approach could reduce the burden on individual projects to cover a maximum of different elements. Instead, GEF programming could rely on a more modular approach based on an explicit understanding of how elements from different projects are to be linked in order to achieve a complete causal chain toward results. In addition, an explicit

system of causality that includes causal relationships of elements from different focal areas could support and guide the design of multifocal area activities (see [Recommendations 1](#) and [2](#)).

CONCLUSION 3: The GEF-5 focal area strategies recognize the potential for broader adoption of results, but in most cases do not systematically consider the pathways that could maximize the catalytic role of GEF activities.

The construction of focal area strategy theories of change highlights the potential that the strategic approaches expressed in the focal area strategies have in catalyzing broader adoption of GEF results through replication, scaling-up, inducing market change, and other mechanisms for uptake. While this potential is reflected to some degree in GEF programming, considerations on the pathways of action toward maximizing broader adoption through GEF activities is in most cases not an explicit and systematic part of the focal area strategies. This situation underpins conclusions presented in OPS4, which highlighted the catalytic role of the GEF, but pointed out that the path toward broader adoption has “never been clearly defined” ([GEF EO 2010](#)).

As in the case of causal links (see [Conclusion 2](#)), the potential for broader adoption is recognized by the GEF and partially reflected in GEF programming. The GEF-5 focal area strategies in some instances refer to the influence of GEF activities on the larger national context and on the engagement of other actors. However, the strategies are in most cases not systematically based on considerations of chains of causality from GEF results to broader adoption, which could serve as a guiding framework for GEF programming to maximize the GEF’s catalytic potential (see [Recommendation 3](#)).

The level of consideration on pathways to broader adoption differs by focal area strategy (see [Technical Papers 1–7](#)). The focal area strategies on climate

change mitigation and international waters feature a comparatively stronger link to broader adoption than do the other strategies. The climate change mitigation strategy emphasizes the facilitation of systemic changes, and much of the strategy is dedicated to the direct support of broader adoption as an integral part of GEF activities in collaboration with other actors. The international waters strategy characteristically focuses on long-term processes that emphasize broader adoption over time.

CONCLUSION 4: The GEF-5 focal area strategies do not include a comprehensive approach to the creation and utilization of synergies between focal areas through multifocal area activities.

Multifocal area activities are rapidly gaining importance in the GEF portfolio. Because the GEF-5 focal area strategies were formulated before this development, they provide limited guidance on how to utilize synergies between focal areas consistently and strategically. The focal area strategy on land degradation is a partial exception, as it elaborates on linkages and potential synergies to other focal areas. However, none of the GEF-5 focal area strategies includes a systematic discussion of how elements of different focal areas can be strategically combined to create effective multifocal area projects. During consultations in the context of the evaluation, stakeholders consistently raised the formulation of a strategic approach to multifocal area activities as a central challenge for the GEF-6 focal area strategies (see [Recommendation 2](#)).

CONCLUSION 5: GEF activities regardless of focal area employ a certain “toolbox” of elements and causal links that fulfill different purposes in each focal area strategy, but are similar in their design.

The focal area strategy theories of change illustrate that the elements and causal links embodied in the strategies fulfill different purposes in each strategy but are similar in their design. This confirms the basic assumption of the general framework

for the GEF theory of change that GEF activities, regardless of focal area, employ a certain toolbox of comparable elements and causal mechanisms. The basic categories and subcategories established by the general framework proved to be suitable for adequately capturing the elements in all focal area strategies.

At the same time, each of the strategies retains its own unique character and internal logic. The differentiation between focal area strategies derives from the distinctive selection and combination of common elements and causal links. The selection is mainly determined by the nature of environmental challenges a strategy addresses. For example, some objectives require an emphasis on market-oriented elements and mechanisms, as is the case for the climate change mitigation strategy; others, like the chemicals strategy, rely more heavily on legally rooted activities. However, all strategies combine market- and legally oriented elements. Other dimensions of differentiation include stakeholder composition (the types of stakeholders on which successful achievement of objectives particularly hinges) and convention guidance to the GEF (see [Conclusion 7](#)).

CONCLUSION 6: Many types of GEF activities identified in the GEF focal area strategies build on creating local benefits for achieving global environmental benefits.

Many of the elements of the GEF toolbox identified in the focal area strategies (see [Conclusion 5](#)) build on the creation of local benefits to ultimately achieve global environmental benefits. GEF activities such as changing economic incentive structures in favor of sustainable practices, demonstrating benefits of alternative livelihoods, and reducing initial investments through new financing mechanisms are offering local benefits in exchange for behavioral changes that are ultimately envisioned to create global environmental benefits.

This conclusion drawn from the focal area strategy theories of change closely matches earlier findings presented in the GEF Evaluation Office's study of the Role of Local Benefits in Global Environmental Programs, which found

that local and global benefits are strongly interlinked in many areas where the GEF is active. Changing human behavior is one of the critical underlying premises of the GEF approach to achieving global environmental gains, and local benefits play a central role in stimulating changes that produce and sustain such gains ([GEF EO 2006](#)).

CONCLUSION 7: GEF focal area strategies are largely responsive to and shaped by convention guidance. CBD guidance has been detailed and restrictive, which has made it difficult for the GEF to formulate a strategic approach in the biodiversity focal area.

The mapping from convention guidance to the corresponding elements of focal area strategies shows that GEF-5 focal area strategies are largely responsive to the guidance of the conventions to which the GEF serves as the financial mechanism. Also, differences in the nature of guidance from the different conventions have shaped the corresponding focal area strategies. To illustrate this aspect, the evaluation specifically compared the influence of guidance from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on the focal area strategies.

The CBD provides frequent, reiterated guidance on a large number of technical matters and prioritization of activities. CBD guidance tends to be concrete, prescriptive, and specific, leaving little room for strategic interpretation. UNFCCC guidance is equally frequent with regard to the absolute amount of items. However, it focuses on issues directly relating to national obligations under the convention (national reporting) and largely refrains

from concrete elaborations of technical issues or prioritization of areas to be supported by the GEF. UNFCCC guidance also differs from CBD guidance in its formulation—which enables a greater degree of flexibility for the GEF to integrate it into an overall strategy.

The difference in CBD and UNFCCC guidance is reflected in the respective focal area strategies. The biodiversity focal area strategy reflects the large amount of distinct, prescriptive, and—at times—fragmented CBD guidance through a number of separate objectives or subsections of objectives. A large number of specific issues and priority areas demanded by the CBD are prominently addressed by the biodiversity strategy in accordance with CBD decisions. The CBD does not, however, provide guidance on how it envisions these various aspects to be integrated into an overall strategic approach in a consistent, effective, and efficient way. As a result, parts of the biodiversity focal area strategy appear less connected to the overarching strategic direction that is primarily embodied in the BD-1 and BD-2 objectives.³

The objectives of the climate change mitigation strategy display a high degree of consistency, in accordance with the UNFCCC guidance which allows for flexibility of interpretation and integration of issues. The objectives are equally weighted, addressing the main areas of GEF activity in a balanced and integrated way.

The influence of CBD and UNFCCC guidance on the respective focal area strategies highlights the potential tension between adequately reflecting convention guidance on the one hand and the formulation of a balanced, integrated, and coherent strategic approach on the other (see [Recommendation 4](#)). In this context, already existing

³ See table 4.2 for a list of all GEF-5 focal area strategy objectives.

CBD mechanisms and ongoing processes aimed at streamlining and improving the strategic coherence of CBD convention guidance to the GEF need to be highlighted. The effort resulting from the recent decision to consolidate and to reduce redundancies through the COP’s review of guidance to the financial mechanism represents a step toward reducing the overall quantity of guidance, albeit without decreasing the number of priority areas identified by the CBD to be supported by the GEF.⁴ The “Four-Year Framework of Programme Priorities Related to Utilization of GEF Resources for Biodiversity” included as an annex to the decision provides additional CBD guidance on prioritization of GEF support. Most recently, the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 aims at providing a more coherent and consistent overall framework for GEF support ([CBD 2010b](#)). The results of these efforts are not yet visible.

CONCLUSION 8: Based on results of the RTD process, the elements of GEF-5 focal area strategies, with few exceptions, correspond with current scientific consensus. From a scientific perspective, room for improvement exists in terms of relative prioritization of specific aspects and the selection of elements.

The quantitative responses provided by scientific experts during the RTD consultations on the scientific soundness of focal area strategy objectives and elements converged around a rating of 6 (fair). Means and medians fell into the range of 5 (somewhat) to 7 (considerably) with few outliers in

⁴ COP 9 ([Decision IX/31 C, paragraph 1](#)) requested a review of the guidance to the financial mechanism (i.e., the GEF). The CBD Secretariat prepared the review with the objective of identifying obsolete, repetitive, and overlapping guidance; and compiled an updated list of the existing guidance to the financial mechanism. The review was submitted as a working document to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation. COP 10 ([Decision X/24](#)) approved the proposed list of obsolete, repetitive, and overlapping guidance and the updated compilation of guidance.

either direction. While these quantitative results imply room for further improvement, the qualitative responses show that the majority of answers do not suggest a lack of scientific soundness of the strategies' existing elements. Instead, the suggestions for improvement mostly concern the relative prioritization of specific aspects over others as well as the selection of elements to be included in the strategies.

A partial exception is the discussion on protected areas as a suitable instrument for biodiversity conservation. Some experts voiced fundamental doubts about the contribution of protected areas to biodiversity conservation. Most experts deemed the emphasis given protected areas as the main component of the biodiversity focal area strategy as too high. Many responses pointed to the close connection between the effectiveness of protected areas and the successful mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into production landscapes, suggesting a stronger relative emphasis on the activities envisioned under biodiversity objective BD-2.

3.7 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: An explicit discussion of envisaged causal linkages and chains of causality in line with current scientific knowledge should form the basis for the formulation of the GEF-6 strategies.

An explicit, systematic, and comprehensive system of causality that is embedded as an integral part of the GEF-6 strategies could enhance the strategies' utility as the guiding framework for GEF programming. The already existing knowledge of causal links as reflected in GEF programming should be fully incorporated at the strategy level. An explicit understanding of how elements from different projects—within as well as across focal areas—are to be linked in order to create a complete chain of causality toward results could inform and support a more modular approach to GEF programming. The inclusion of causal relationships of elements from

different focal areas into a comprehensive system of causality could facilitate and guide the design of effective multifocal area activities that maximize synergies between focal areas. In addition, the identification of causal relationships could aid the coordination of activities implemented by different GEF Agencies, allowing the Agencies to intensify their focus on their respective comparative advantages based on systematic collaboration on activities.

The results of the RTD illustrate that close consultations with the scientific community can provide important information on the relative prioritization of existing elements as well as the identification of additional and/or alternative elements to be included in the GEF-6 strategies. To ensure that up-to-date scientific knowledge is fully taken into account, the GEF STAP should assume a strong role in the process of preparing the GEF-6 strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 2: GEF-6 strategies should enable a more flexible and strategic approach to developing multifocal area projects that would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.

Given the increasing importance of GEF activities that cut across focal areas, approaches to maximize synergies and ensure the added value of multifocal area activities should be an integral part of GEF-6 strategies. An approach to GEF programming that facilitates the combination of elements from different focal areas should be considered during their formulation. The systematic identification of causal links between elements can support and inform corresponding efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 3: GEF-6 strategies should be based on systematic considerations of potential pathways from GEF activities to the broader adoption of GEF results to further define and strengthen the GEF's catalytic role.

The focal area strategy theories of change highlight the potential of GEF activities to trigger broader

adoption and induce systemic change. This catalytic role of the GEF should be further defined and strengthened by basing GEF-6 strategies on systematic consideration of potential chains of causality between GEF activities and broader adoption through replication, scaling-up, change of market structures, or mainstreaming (with or without direct GEF support). The already existing knowledge on pathways to broader adoption as reflected in GEF programming should be fully incorporated at the strategy level.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Given the impact of convention guidance on the focal area strategies, the GEF should continue the dialogue with the CBD to further define the relationship between guidance and strategies to facilitate responsiveness as well as strategic coherence in GEF-6.

The evaluation findings illustrate the strong influence of convention guidance on GEF focal area strategy formulation, highlighting the importance of close coordination between convention secretariats and the GEF in the strategy-building process. The potential tension between adequately reflecting convention guidance in the strategies on the one hand and formulation of a balanced, integrated, and coherent strategic approach on the other should be addressed during the formulation of GEF-6 strategies. Where conventions, such as the CBD, choose to issue specific technical guidance to the GEF, this guidance should follow a coherent overall vision so as to ensure that it can be integrated into

a consistent strategic approach. The CBD is already working to enhance the strategic coherence of its guidance to the GEF. Its ongoing efforts are positive steps toward balancing convention demands and the coherence of GEF support. The formulation of the GEF-6 strategies should be closely connected to these efforts. The GEF should continue and intensify the dialogue at the appropriate level with the CBD to facilitate this process.

RECOMMENDATION 5: GEF-6 strategies should revisit the GEF's overall approach to capacity development in response to concerns voiced by the conventions.

Based on interviews with convention secretariats, GEF support of capacity development is perceived as being at odds with convention expectations. The analysis of focal area strategies suggests that this is primarily an issue of implementation rather than a lack of inclusion at the level of the strategies. In terms of implementation, the issue will be further examined during OPS5.

GEF-6 strategies should revisit the approach taken by GEF-5 strategies that largely address capacity development elements through distinct objectives within the focal area strategies as well as in a separate strategy (i.e., the cross-cutting strategy on capacity development). The inclusion of capacity development as an integral part of activities under different objectives is, in many cases, not emphasized in the GEF-5 focal area strategies.

Annex: Management Response

The Secretariat and the Agencies welcome the second annual thematic evaluations report prepared by the GEF's Evaluation Office. The report provides an update of the progress made to date on the Evaluation of GEF Enabling Activities and presents the main conclusions and recommendations for the Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies.

The Secretariat and the Agencies appreciate the progress that has been made on the enabling activities evaluation and look forward to receiving any lessons that are drawn from the two phases of the evaluation. For the Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies, the Evaluation Office presents several preliminary conclusions and recommendations as part of the preparatory step for the broader assessment of focal area achievements in the context of OPS5.

The Secretariat understands the evaluation of the strategies is a formative evaluation, and as such it is not an assessment of performance but rather an opportunity to learn from the GEF-5 process and improve the strategies for GEF-6. In addition to this evaluation, it is important to note that the Secretariat has in place other mechanisms that will also contribute to strengthening the GEF and the LDCF/SCCF's overall strategies; these include input derived from the results management system of the Secretariat, contributions from Agencies on project design and implementation issues, direct dialogue

with countries about their needs, engagement with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel and other experts on the scientific and technical merits related to the different focal areas, guidance from the conventions and convention-related work programs and targets, and direction from the Council.

The Secretariat believes that the five recommendations put forth by the Evaluation Office should be seen less as prescriptive recommendations that often accompany summative evaluations and more as suggestions for improvement. The GEF-6 strategy process must allow for the flexibility needed to undertake the complex task of developing coherent strategies within the GEF's partnership model.

Recommendation 1 states "An explicit discussion of envisaged causal linkages and chains of causality in line with current scientific knowledge should form the basis for the formulation of the GEF-6 strategies." The Secretariat will consider the specific causal linkages and pathways presented in this report for each focal area when developing the GEF-6 strategies. As stated in the evaluation and as was undertaken in GEF-5, the scientific community represented by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, together with experts that may be engaged through technical advisory panels, will play a central role to ensure the latest scientific knowledge is fully taken into account in strategy development.

The Secretariat fully agrees with Recommendation 2 that GEF-6 strategies should “enable a more flexible and strategic approach to developing multifocal area projects that would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.” The Secretariat and the Agencies have initiated discussions with regard to streamlining measures, and will continue to work with our partners to develop a more coherent strategy for multifocal area projects in GEF-6.

The Secretariat and the Agencies are committed to considering potential ways GEF and LDCF/SCCF activities can lead to transformational impacts. As part of the GEF-6 strategy development process, the Secretariat will take Recommendation 3 into account and consider “potential pathways from GEF activities to the broader adoption of GEF results to further define and strengthen the GEF’s catalytic role.”

Recommendation 4 states, “Given the impact of convention guidance on the focal area strategies, the GEF should continue the dialogue with the CBD to further define the relationship between guidance and strategies to facilitate responsiveness as well as strategic coherence in GEF-6.”

Beginning at COP-9, the GEF Secretariat has been working closely with the CBD Secretariat and the

CBD COP to enhance the coherence of guidance from the COP to the GEF. The result has been an increased convergence between COP guidance and the evolving GEF biodiversity strategy. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the Agencies, will continue to find ways and means to enhance responsiveness to convention guidance.

We note the evaluation’s perception of the disconnect between the support the GEF provides to implementation of two protocols of the CBD (the Cartagena Protocol and the Nagoya Protocol) and the goal of the current GEF biodiversity strategy and agree that this support and its rationale can be more coherently integrated in future iterations of the strategy. In addition, the Strategic Plan of the CBD for 2011–2020 and the Aichi Targets provide the overarching framework for GEF support going forward, and future GEF strategies will need to demonstrate their coherence with the strategic plan.

The Secretariat agrees with Recommendation 5 and will revisit the GEF’s overall approach to capacity development as part of the GEF-6 strategy discussion. While the Secretariat agrees that capacity development is included as part of activities within focal areas, flexibility for stand-alone capacity development is useful and necessary.

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