

Multicountry Project Arrangements

Report of a Thematic Review

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Preface

The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team is tasked with analyzing and documenting GEF results. Until now, conclusions of these efforts have been in the form of evaluation and study reports, annual Project Performance Reports, and GEF Lessons Notes. With the introduction of the M&E Working Papers series, we are publishing reports that are not full-fledged evaluations, but nevertheless deserve attention.

Many of the issues and early results that these reports identify will be pursued later in broader evaluations to arrive at more definite conclusions. We expect the M&E working papers to be a valuable catalyst for promoting dialogue on issues and results of importance within GEF's operational areas and efforts. We therefore look forward to your feedback and suggestions. Please contact us through the coordinates listed below and visit the GEF Web site to find out more about the Monitoring and Evaluation program.

The *Multicountry Project Arrangements* study is the result of a thematic review carried out in 1999-2000. Thematic reviews are not comprehensive evaluations – when many projects in a portfolio are relatively new, such evaluations would be premature. Rather, such reviews are more modest attempts to take stock of progress to date and identify lead indicators of achievements, if any. Additionally, reviewers may identify issues related to project design and implementation, thereby enabling discussion and reexamination of strategic issues within the GEF operational programs.

This review was carried out as a collaborative activity between the GEF Corporate Monitoring and Evaluation Team and the World Bank. The review was based on data and information collected from a variety of sources: (a) desk reviews of project documents, project completion reports, evaluation reports, and other relevant documents; (b) annual project implementation reports; (c) interviews with project managers in the implementing agencies; (d) a questionnaire sent to all projects; and, (e) visits to project offices and field sites around the Danube River (Austria, Hungary and Slovak Republic), the Mediterranean Sea (Greece), Lake Malawi (Malawi), Lake Victoria (Kenya, Tanzania), and the Baltic Sea (Finland).

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Multicountry Project Arrangements Thematic Review

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Executive Summary

A sizable portion of the GEF portfolio—all but a handful of international waters projects and about two dozen biodiversity projects—involves more than one country. The 1998 Project Implementation Review (PIR) identified several advantages that multicountry approaches can offer. However, these projects are frequently more complex than those carried out in a single country and present a number of preparation and implementation challenges to GEF and its implementing agencies. One of these challenges, in fact, is the greater importance for collaboration among implementing agencies, both in activities carried out with GEF funding and in their own assistance programs.

A thematic review was undertaken to explore experiences with multicountry projects. The review's objective was to identify emerging lessons about what kinds of multicountry approaches have worked, what have not, why, and under what circumstances. For activities that require joint efforts and commitments by more than one country, what characteristics of project design and inter-institutional collaboration processes and structures facilitate effective decision making and implementation on transboundary issues?

The review also looked into the issues pertaining to preparation and administration from the point of view of the implementing agencies and the GEF Secretariat. Early GEF experience is showing that multicountry projects may require more time and resources to prepare and administer. In analyzing this issue and its consequences, the review identified whether certain types of institutional and implementation arrangements can be used to reduce project

preparation time and the resources required for implementation without sacrificing project quality and sustainability. Answers to these questions will be fed into the design of future GEF projects as well as help guide projects already under way.

The review focused on multicountry projects in the GEF portfolio that address transboundary issues within a common ecosystem or other geographical area requiring joint action by participating countries. The focus of the review was on international waters projects, but selected biodiversity projects addressing transboundary issues were also included in the review. It encompassed a total of 36 projects: 28 international waters and 8 biodiversity projects. Basic data were collected through a desk study of project documents, PIR reports, evaluation reports and other available materials, as well as a questionnaire sent to all projects included in the review. Unfortunately, only 20 of the 36 questionnaires were returned and several had missing information. The desk study was supplemented by a more in-depth study of selected representative projects. The review team visited six projects; a further five were covered in a more detailed analysis of available documentation.

Summary of Lessons and Considerations

The review highlighted several specific lessons and areas of consideration for GEF pertaining to multicountry transboundary project design and implementation arrangements. It must be noted, however, that GEF's history of multicountry projects is still short and few projects have been completed.

Therefore, these conclusions should be treated as preliminary. Furthermore, they are applicable mostly to international waters projects, as few biodiversity projects actively participated in the review.

Facilitation in Complex Multicountry Issues. The review demonstrates that GEF can play an important role in facilitating multicountry approaches and helping countries deal with transboundary environmental problems. Complex multicountry and multi-implementing agency structures require careful preparation, which often leads to longer preparation periods and greater cost than single-country settings. The process of developing a shared vision and a framework for action among countries sharing a transboundary resource requires political commitment and public awareness. GEF could play a more proactive role in promoting regional implementation and leadership through programmatic approaches based on careful and scientifically solid analyses of the causes of environmental problems and threats to sustainability.

Addressing Issues through Shared Vision. Achieving a shared vision and commitment among countries can be facilitated by initial strategic projects, comparable to enabling activities, that can break down the barriers among countries and enable them to focus jointly on priority setting. This process allows complex situations to be broken down into more manageable, agreed-upon priority issues, which often have specific geographical implications. Joint fact finding and sharing of information in producing a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) can help the countries move toward producing a Strategic Action Program (SAP) of country-specific and regional actions needed to address the identified transboundary priorities.

Utilizing the Ecosystem Approach. Harnessing the scientific community as part of identifying the linkages in a TDA among components of transboundary ecosystems is a necessary step toward incorporating an ecosystem approach into development of a SAP. While these analysis and priority-setting processes take time in multicountry arrangements, it is often useful to complement strategic work with on-the-ground demonstration components that help create commitment at national and local levels. These components also help underpin application of the ecosystem approach to practical situations that may be replicated as part of more comprehensive compo-

nents of implementation projects that often follow the strategic first project. The succession of interventions constitutes a pragmatic way of incorporating an ecosystem approach into management decision-making through a logical series of steps that help to simplify complex situations.

Importance of Broad-Based Participation. Political commitment at the highest level is essential for ensuring efficient operation of multicountry institutions and on-the-ground implementation of the actions identified in strategic projects. Where the only demonstrated political commitment has been the agreement to proceed with a GEF-financed project, commitments for policy, institutional, and/or legal reforms and investments have been slow to emerge. The presence of a regional agreement or convention with progressively more specific commitments is highly beneficial. The involvement of relevant existing organizations has also clearly improved the commitment of stakeholders and facilitated project implementation. Because project actions often fall within the jurisdiction of several ministries, the formation of country interministerial committees has helped induce dialogue and communication.

All relevant stakeholders in the countries—including the public and private sectors, the scientific community, and civil society—need to be involved in the project. The inclusion of relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has been useful for involving local stakeholders. NGOs can play an important role to ensure transparency and political support. They can also support subnational implementation of project activities. The scientific community can ensure that sound science is used to improve management and decisionmaking.

The TDA-SAP approach may be most efficiently utilized if all implementing agencies are involved in the processes. Collaboration among the implementing agencies according to their respective comparative advantages is important in overcoming barriers to multicountry action, especially in the international waters field.

Coordination with other donors is similarly important. This coordination can best take place in a country-driven context that provides a framework for the different interventions. Such a framework may be based on a TDA-SAP process developed with GEF support or may be part of an emerging programmatic

approach. Often GEF projects leverage funding and prompt complementary actions by other actors that operate in the same region.

Involving Multiple Levels of Institutions. Action involving multiple levels of institutions is essential in addressing environmental problems facing transboundary water bodies and basins. A three-level strategy from regional to national and from national to local has broad applicability in multicountry projects. A regional agreement or convention may facilitate countries in reaching binding agreements to harmonize their legislation. At the national level, country-specific interministerial committees are key to ensuring coordination and desired implementation outputs. At the subnational level, local commitment can be strengthened through changed incentive structures, national empowerment/support, and enforcement. Information dissemination and public awareness building are essential in this process.

When it is not possible to start the regional process through a convention or another multicountry body, it may be appropriate to channel projects through national entities. Even in these cases, however, a specific regional component that is clearly spelled out and that has sufficient resources should be included.

The sustainability of regional bodies needs to be considered in project designs. Specifically, it is essential to ensure their continued funding beyond the project period. This will require that the multicountry institution be integrated into the participating countries' organizational structures.

Policy and Legislative Implications. The institutional structures among participating countries vary considerably. Therefore, establishing a common incentive and enforcement structure for the entire multicountry project is at times difficult. Due to political sensitivity, past GEF projects may not have had explicit components addressing policy and legislative implications and reform. Multicountry coordination of policy reforms requires mutual trust which often can only be created over a long time span. A relatively powerful regional coordinating unit, perhaps backed by a convention, has been helpful in supporting the process of political and legislative harmonization.

Financial Issues. The implications for preparation funding and administrative resources stemming from the higher transaction costs associated with multicountry projects must be addressed. Evidence shows that Block-B preparation grants can be effective in producing a TDA-SAP for preventive actions such as those in Operational Program 9. In some cases, however, the funding limit has been too low. In those cases, a full project may need to be used to prepare a TDA-SAP.

The threat to the global and regional environment often stems from local actions caused by social and economic conditions. It is therefore important to diagnose and address these root causes in order to improve the transboundary environmental conditions. Creating financing packages in which a GEF project is combined with projects by the implementing agencies addressing development issues and national benefits appears to be important to ensuring that a spectrum of domestic and global benefits may accrue to the environment.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plays a central role in managing complex multicountry projects. Effective M&E systems ensure transparency regarding project progress and results. They can also identify areas where problems and delays are typically experienced. Although GEF can help countries set up the M&E system, data collection and analysis ultimately should be handled by the countries themselves.

All multicountry projects should include clear provisions for indicators at three levels: (1) process indicators (focusing on the processes that are likely to lead toward a desirable outcome), (2) stress reduction indicators (concrete actions that will reduce the environmental stress on the shared ecosystem), and (3) environmental status indicators (actual improvement of ecosystem quality). As the time scale for achieving actual environmental benefits is long and usually beyond the duration of the project, it is important to ensure the sustainability of the M&E system; this is being done in several GEF international waters projects. Experience demonstrates that the M&E system can be integrated into the regular functions of the participating countries or a regional mechanism.

Background and Introduction

The nature of global environmental issues often requires a holistic approach across sectors and political boundaries. Sustainable management of transboundary natural resources, to be effective, requires that all parties sharing the resource address the issues. In the GEF portfolio, multicountry projects are still a minority. Yet a sizable portion of that portfolio—notably most of the international waters projects, but also several biodiversity projects—consists of projects involving two or more countries working together to manage a transboundary resource. There are numerous advantages to multicountry approaches, but these projects also tend to be more complex than single-country projects.

The GEF 1998 Project Implementation Review (PIR) recommended a more systematic in-depth examination of multicountry implementation arrangements in GEF projects, including their requirements for collaboration among implementing agencies and with other organizations.¹ This thematic review is intended to address this recommendation. The review focuses on project arrangements for multicountry projects that focus on a water body shared between several countries.

The review's objective is to identify emerging lessons about what kinds of multicountry approaches have worked, what have not, why, and under what circumstances. For activities that require joint efforts

and commitments by more than one country, what characteristics of project design and inter-institutional collaboration processes and structures facilitate effective decisionmaking and implementation of transboundary issues? The review also looks into the issues pertaining to the preparation and administration of multicountry projects from the point of view of the implementing agencies and the GEF Secretariat.²

The Issues

Countries often have varying, sometimes even conflicting, interests regarding a shared resource. For instance, an international water body may be used as a freshwater source by one country and for sewage disposal by another. Sometimes the development of fisheries or agriculture may be in conflict with biodiversity conservation, water quality, or tourism. These varying uses of a particular environmental resource can cause complex problems between countries, as well as between community groups within countries.

Experience in the North in addressing these transboundary water and environmental problems has demonstrated that their solution takes a great deal of time. The North American Great Lakes and the Rhine River Basin countries each used multicountry commissions in the 1950s to study the shared environ-

1 GEF, *Project Performance Report* (Washington, DC, 1998), pp. 35-37.

2 See Annex 1, Terms of Reference.

mental problems; these studies and subsequent implementation of significant actions took some 20 to 25 years to facilitate—and, in fact, continues to this day. For the North Sea, Baltic, and Mediterranean, about 25 years have elapsed since regional conventions were signed to promote improved environmental management of the shared waters; significant implementation actions have still to be undertaken. It remains to be seen whether application of the lessons from establishment of these early multicountry arrangements can deliver similar results in developing countries and those in economic transition in a similar time frame.

As a result of these early lessons, GEF has formulated its international waters strategy as follows:

The overall strategic thrust of GEF-funded international waters activities is to meet the agreed incremental costs of: (a) assisting groups of countries to better understand the environmental concerns of their international waters and work collaboratively to address them; (b) building the capacity of existing institutions (or, if appropriate, developing the capacity through new institutional arrangements) to utilize a more comprehensive approach for addressing transboundary water-related environmental concerns; and (c) implementing measures that address the priority transboundary environmental concerns.³

The specific issues that form the starting point of this review include the following:

- *Why do we need multicountry projects?* Environmental problems addressed under the GEF portfolio often include externalities that require a larger perspective than that of a single country. A shared vision or joint agreement regarding the priority of various issues and common strategies on how to address them at the regional and coun-

try levels is generally needed to facilitate the desired change.

- *What are the difficulties in a multicountry setting?* Multicountry arrangements require joint action that, if not wanted or considered a priority by a given country, may lead to unwillingness to address the problem by one or more countries. Even under the most favorable circumstances, multicountry arrangements need organizational solutions specially designed for multicountry purposes. Most international organizations historically have not been well equipped to address regional activities. GEF is fostering the development of such capabilities.

Ultimately, these issues relate to the following questions:

- Will action by several countries be needed to solve the transboundary question, or will action be needed in a country other than that experiencing the problem?
- Will countries working individually have enough commitment to necessary actions to solve the problem, or will joint multicountry collaboration be needed?
- Are the transaction costs to facilitate multicountry cooperation reasonable?

The utility of the multicountry approach essentially boils down to the question: Is it possible to achieve project objectives at a lower cost and in a shorter time by facilitating multicountry arrangements compared to the overall cost of countries acting individually? Furthermore, it may be difficult to analyze the root causes of transboundary environmental problems and identify the best course of action through a single-country approach. Advantages and disadvantages of single- and multicountry settings are presented in the following table.

3 GEF, Operational Strategy (Washington, DC, 1996), p. 48.

	Single-Country Setting	Multicountry Setting
Advantages	Low transaction costs if countries agree; higher transaction costs if not	Possibly shorter time to on-the-ground results
	Easier to implement	Helps to foster multicountry dialogue and prevent free-riding externalities
	Allows countries with different economic conditions and pace of implementation to find their preferred way of implementation	Serves to feed problems into legal processes in a neutral way
Disadvantages	Difficulty in streamlining activities in various countries; streamlining absorbs more time	Higher preparation cost
	Possible impediments to new multicountry agreements	Varying priority setting in various countries
	Difficulty in getting comparable data	Difficulty in streamlining local, national, and international activities

Despite higher transaction costs, a multicountry setting may lead to shared—and thus lower—costs for project implementation activities. A shared vision expressed in an action program and interaction among countries may lead to improved results. However, regional organizations sometimes need a substantial amount of strengthening in order to be sustainable, especially if donors do not take a regional approach into account in their financing schemes.

Review Approach

This thematic review has analyzed experience in greater depth than is possible during PIRs, but is not intended to be a full, field-level program evaluation. It is based on document and literature reviews, interviews, and limited field visits.

The review began with a series of discussions with the GEF secretariat and representatives of the implementing agencies. In these discussions, mutual understanding about the scope of this review was reached. A key point made was that most of the projects in the GEF portfolio are still just beginning or are in the preparation stage. Thus, it will be difficult to make judgments about the final performance of each multicountry approach because it is not yet known whether in fact the project will succeed. The review consequently concentrated more on assessing organizational and implementation arrangements in

multicountry approaches than on making a final judgment about “what has worked, what has not, why, and under what circumstances,” as stated in the Terms of Reference (Annex 1).

A total of 36 GEF projects was included in the review. All 28 relevant projects in the international waters portfolio, Operational Programs (OPs) 8 and 9, were included. In addition, eight projects from the biodiversity portfolio were included, as they focused on biodiversity protection in the context of transboundary water bodies.

It was decided during the discussions to extend the review with an in-depth study of 10 projects. The in-depth study included the review of available project documentation (i.e., project briefs, project documents, supervision reports, evaluation reports, and completion reports). It was further decided to make on-site visits to selected project sites. Visits to the Danube Basin and Mediterranean area were made in November 1999. In January 2000, missions to Lake Malawi and Lake Victoria were conducted. In February-March 2000, the Baltic Sea Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) was visited. Finally, in April 2000, the East Asian Seas project was visited by a GEF Secretariat staff member who was not part of the core review team.

Some limitations were observed during the review’s conduct. The present status of the GEF portfolio pro-

vided only a limited opportunity to analyze projects at various stages of implementation and make conclusions about their multicountry implementation arrangements. Most projects under implementation were developed during the pilot phase; many newer projects are still at very early stages. Another limita-

tion was the relative scarcity of material for the analysis. It was possible to get sufficient materials from only half of the projects chosen for the survey. Only 20 of the 36 projects returned the questionnaires, and only a few were complete (see Volume II of this report).

The Review

Site Visits

This section presents the main lessons learned and future considerations with respect to the projects that were visited during the review. Detailed reports of the project visits are included in Volume II of this report, available from GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation Team.

Danube River Basin Projects: Pilot Phase, Bridging Project, and Preparation of the Regional Implementation Project

Project Background

The Danube River Basin is in the heartland of South Central and Southeastern Europe. The river flows for a distance of 2,857 kilometers and drains an area of 817,000 square kilometers. The area includes all of Hungary and Romania, most of Austria, Croatia and Slovenia, nearly half of Czech Republic and Slovakia, a third of Bulgaria, and significant areas of Germany and Ukraine. Land use in this large basin is highly diversified, including a wide range of agricultural practices, forestry, mining, natural areas, settlements and industries. The critical interdependence of upstream and downstream neighbors for managing the environmental quality of the Danube can be seen at all levels of the basin. In addition, there are important linkages with the Danube River, its delta, and the environmental quality of the Black Sea.

Among the transboundary issues of the Danube River Basin are the following:

- The quality of water: pollutants (hot spots), wastewater, agricultural practices, toxic substances
- The quantity of water: dams, flood control
- River navigation: dams, regulation
- Fisheries.

Even though the problems of the Danube River have been recognized for decades, it was not certain as of the beginning of the 1990s that there would be a Danube program. In September 1991, however, a planning meeting was held in Sofia. The Environmental Program for the Danube River Basin (EPDRB), Phase I, was launched in 1992. A Strategic Action Plan (SAP) was prepared during 1994. The second phase of the EPDRB started with the SAP Implementation Program (SIP) in 1996. The SIP switched the program's emphasis from planning to doing. In this, it was a forward-looking program of projects designed to take the EPDRB to the year 2000. Since 1996, the SIP has intensified technical assistance to continue and introduce new demonstration projects and activities for transboundary issues. At a 1994 meeting in Bucharest, participants agreed upon a progress review after three years (1997); this review resulted in a revised SAP in 1999.

In summary, then, the EPDRB Phase I came to an end by 1996. A bridging project was implemented during 1996-99, culminating in a revised SAP. The EPDRB was initiated by GEF/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Organizational Structure

The Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River serves as the legal base for the Danube River Program. The convention has its own permanent secretariat in Vienna to support the International Water Commission and other bodies established within its framework. The convention also has established permanent expert groups for specific tasks.

The EPDRB Project Coordination Unit (PCU) was initially established by the EU PHARE program in Brussels in 1991. GEF thus came, in a way, to participate in an ongoing project. In 1994, the PCU moved to Vienna; it dealt with the daily coordination of program activities and financial matters, arranged meetings, and acted as a technical advisory body. The PCU's main task was to assist the Project Management Task Force (PMTF), a body of about 30 members including representatives from the Danube countries, various donors, experts, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The PCU became the convention secretariat in 1999. The transformation of the PCU to a secretariat supported by the countries is a key element for ensuring verification and transparency among all stakeholders and for information dissemination through a website for the public.

There are three principal actors in the EPDRB: the European Union (EU), GEF, and the Danube River Protection Convention. EU implements its activities through the PHARE program and GEF through UNDP. The convention joins the other stakeholders in the project through the PMTF. The UNDP-PHARE PCU helps the PMTF work with the expert groups, which are sometimes divided into subgroups. The other GEF implementing agencies, the World Bank and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), are assisting in the development of the final GEF-funded regional project and in the implementation of investments.

Observations

The succession of regional projects in the Danube Basin and similar ones in the six Black Sea countries represent the most mature of GEF's strategic interventions in this focal area. With EU and GEF support, the pilot phase project aimed to facilitate the Danube Basin countries' learning to work together and beginning to develop a common understanding of and con-

sensus on their shared environmental problems. It demonstrated that donor funding and donor collaboration were essential to begin such work and that a project coordination unit was critical in facilitating country involvement from the beginning. The pilot phase project was begun before the GEF Operational Strategy was adopted by the GEF Council; because other unscheduled outputs were needed for GEF purposes, a second modest GEF project—known as the bridging project and conducted with additional EU funding—was implemented.

During these interventions, the multicountry processes grew more in line with the GEF Operational Strategy as the countries undertook processes to jointly agree on a few transboundary priorities through the production of a TDA based on existing information; identified hotspots contributing to the priority issues; and formulated an SAP delineating what policy, institutional, and legal reforms and investments they intended to implement to address the priority issues. Experience dictated that if all environmental issues were to be addressed, very little progress would result in a defined time. By focusing on selected transboundary issues, there was a better chance of success.

Interministerial committees were formed by necessity in each country to provide input to the multicountry deliberations in producing the TDA and SAP. This was evident when the mission visited Hungary where such an interministerial system was critical to the country's input. The Danube projects also demonstrated the importance of working at multiple institutional levels to address complex transboundary water issues. Country capacity for joint work at the multicountry level was facilitated by the PCU, and decisions were made at this level in the PMTF. All three GEF implementing agencies participated in the PMTF, along with major donors and NGOs. Dialogue occurred at the national level through the interministerial coordinating arrangements in each country; this enhanced both information flow and collaboration among sectors that might not otherwise have typically interacted. Such committees are essential to (1) provide input to the multicountry activities; (2) lead the national planning workshops and processes of reforming national policy/legal arrangements and promoting needed investments; and (3) dialogue with subnational units of government and stakeholders for on-the-ground implementation, especially in hotspot cleanup. The interministerial com-

mittee then becomes the key element in implementation. It can also help provide visibility and empowerment to newly established environment ministries when they chair the interministerial committee.

The existence of the Danube convention and its political mandate was critical in sustaining positive country participation. During the course of the first two projects, the use of international consultants was gradually reduced and more local consultants were used. Over time, the conflicting priorities of various donors that had been experienced initially were sorted out through production of the SAP, so that some donors might help with certain priorities and others would assist with different interventions. Along with this evolution, the PCU gradually was transformed into the Danube convention secretariat in 1999 under direct control of the countries rather than the donors. This is a model for other multicountry arrangements to ensure sustainability in finances and political commitment following the end of GEF support.

NGO program involvement and support was also very important and was encouraged by GEF through support for a Danube Environmental Forum. At each PMTF meeting as well as through a small grants program, NGO participation in subnational activities was stimulated. This harnessing of stakeholders to participate in implementation is being expanded as part of current preparation of the SAP implementation project.

The Danube database that has been established can provide an important M&E function at the end of GEF support. Each country can then report to the convention the status of interventions it is to implement under the SAP. Each country will then report progress through performance indicators in undertaking necessary reforms (process indicators), pollution reduction measures (stress reduction indicators), and subsequent improvement in environmental status of the river. The last element is based on the jointly agreed, harmonized, and executed monitoring program to confirm ecosystem improvements. Perhaps the most significant lessons relate to collaboration among GEF implementing agencies and donors according to their comparative advantages, the use of GEF implementing agencies to facilitate the coordinated grouping of related projects in a geographic area to address downstream environmental problems of the coastal seas (which have been unaddressed across the world), and the influence of EU accession

processes and EU directives in accelerating implementation. The Danube SAP implementation project currently under preparation includes all three GEF implementing agencies according to their comparative advantages in assisting the Danube client countries. This collaborative approach has resulted from eight years of GEF support as countries focus on implementing the necessary policy, legal, and institutional reforms; demonstration activities; and priority investments in the SAP. Flexible EU support was essential during the gaps in GEF funding.

Through the implementing agencies' support for an array of projects in the 17-country Black Sea-Danube Basin region—support that is provided by three basin projects and embodied in a draft GEF Programmatic Approach for the area—the downstream needs for Black Sea restoration were incorporated into the upstream Danube and Dnieper Basin GEF projects. Around the globe, pollution of coastal seas can only be reversed by measures in the basins draining to them, and they remain virtually unaddressed. Completion of the needed strategic work and initiation of implementation was able to encompass priority Black Sea environmental needs in the six years since the convention (eight years since the first GEF intervention)—a relatively rapid pace compared to the other transboundary water programs in developed countries mentioned earlier. The EU accession process and availability of grant funding have stimulated this progress. If implementation proceeds as noted in the programmatic approach, the time to implementation from first political commitment would have been reduced to perhaps one-half that of some of the earlier transboundary programs of North America and Europe.

Determination of Priority Actions for Further Elaboration and Implementation of the Mediterranean Sea SAP

Project Background

The semi-enclosed Mediterranean Sea occupies a major portion of the total basin area, with large rivers such as the Ebro, Rhone, Po, and Nile draining into it. The 20 Mediterranean countries have a history of thousands of years of working together. Despite this long history, the variety of countries and their mutual tensions characterize the region: rich North versus poorer South; EU countries versus non-EU; Arab countries against Israel; Greece against Turkey; a divided Cyprus, Libya, Algeria, and so on.

On the other hand, the driving force in making the Mediterranean countries work together is tourism. As early as the 1960s, countries around the Mediterranean felt they had to do something to protect the sea. The Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) was adopted by 16 countries and the European Commission meeting under the auspices of UNEP in 1975. MAP entered into force in 1978. Its objective is the protection of the Mediterranean environment, particularly the marine environment, against various forms of pollution. Another program, the Program for Pollution Monitoring and Research in the Mediterranean Sea (MED POL), was also approved in 1975.

In 1976, the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (the Barcelona Convention) was signed by 20 countries; this convention became the legal basis for MAP, previously an ad hoc program. In the same year, the convention's first two protocols were signed, those regarding hazardous wastes and marine pollution). On behalf of the contracting parties of the Barcelona Convention (including the EU), UNEP made an application to GEF for a Block-B grant in order to complete the formulation of a Strategic Action Program for the Mediterranean Sea (SAP MED). The preparation process was implemented during 1997 and 1998. SAP MED is derived from the earlier MAP.

During the SAP MED process, transboundary issues were addressed. Past experience, together with the findings of the draft TDA prepared with a GEF project development facility grant, suggested that a major constraint to the protection of the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment results from inappropriate management of the coastal zone.

The Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Program (METAP), which is a partnership between donors and the 18 Mediterranean countries with a coastline, is part of a wider and older process of collaboration and cooperation which began with MAP in 1975.

Organizational Structure

The MAP Coordinating Unit (MEDU) was established in Athens in 1982 in order to act as a facilitator, i.e., a secretariat, to overcome the unavoidable discontinuities in program implementation. Specifically, MEDU enables daily contact with the national ministries and project units (i.e., the project focal

points). These focal points consist of representatives of the countries' appropriate ministries (environment, foreign affairs, etc.) and exist in areas such as biodiversity and emerging protocols. The focal points meet before the Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention to discuss upcoming issues. Such meetings are held every two years.

MEDU is housed in a UN office; MED POL is located in the same building, which has proven to be a good arrangement since it provides a good basis for coordinating activities. NGOs have also participated in MEDU meetings almost from the very beginning. They are invited to the focal point meetings, technical meetings, and action plan meetings.

Through protocols and legal agreements on such issues as dumping at sea, MAP pioneered the idea that the basin's pollution and degradation was a regional problem that should be tackled regionally. METAP was funded by the Commission of the European Communities, the European Investment Bank, UNDP, and the World Bank. METAP helps the Mediterranean countries—individually and collectively—design and implement environmental projects and strengthen or build environmental institutions by developing appropriate policy options and mobilizing resources. METAP is also a vehicle to raise public awareness about the environment.

Observations

The Mediterranean Program was found to have a quite complex institutional structure that reflects its long history and the complexities of the relationships among the 20 participating nations. An outsider would have difficulty comprehending the myriad agreements and arrangements ranging from MAP, created 25 years ago, to MED POL, MAP MEDU, the Blue Plan, METAP, the Barcelona Convention, the coordinating unit, the many protocols including the series of land-based pollution protocols, and now the two GEF-supported SAPs—one of which has already been completed and another that is being formulated under the recently initiated GEF international waters project.

The MAP-sponsored monitoring, assessments, and research have been the focus of activities for the last quarter century, perhaps as a means of finding ways to work cooperatively and build capacity to share common knowledge about the shared resource. The

MAP publications list contains 126 monitoring- and assessment-related reports produced over the years. Needless to say, involving 20 such diverse countries in building a common vision of the Mediterranean environment has been an enormously difficult task. One impediment has certainly been the marine nature of the Barcelona Convention, which did not specifically involve the river basin drainage area to the Mediterranean; this has hindered political commitment to address pollution sources from these river basins. The process of building support for reversing the degradation of the Mediterranean dates back to the 1960s. During the intervening years and with the intervening studies, the realization dawned that a new approach based on implementation of policy, institutional, and legal reforms and investments was needed to accelerate progress. Consequently, when GEF assistance was requested in 1997, the climate was ripe for governments to commit to a cleanup. The key factor was the revised Protocol to the Convention on Land-Based Sources of Marine Pollution adopted in Syracuse in 1996 in response to the 1995 Washington Program for Action on the subject. This political commitment seems to have been essential in the drive for quick results in 1997 and 1998 utilizing GEF preparation funding to adopt a SAP for reducing land-based pollution sources. The SAP is the best example of a GEF catalytic action involving political commitment. As a way of operationalizing their revised convention protocol, all countries, both developing and developed, that share the Mediterranean are committed through the SAP to reduce the releases of a large number of pollutants by specific amounts and specific deadlines. This is an excellent example of a best practice in the international waters focal area.

The GEF project currently under implementation includes development of a SAP to operationalize the biodiversity-related protocol to the Barcelona Convention to include human impacts (pollution, loss of habitat, overexploitation) on the living resources of the Mediterranean. It will also support the production of national action programs that identify the country-driven priorities for investments and policy/institutional/legal reforms addressing land-based sources and human-induced degradation of the sea's living resources. This also seems to be an example of a best practice in utilizing national interministerial committees to translate political imperatives on the multicountry level into national reforms. These may then be implemented on the subnational level—with priorities already set in the TDA for 111 hotspots as

well as 54 sensitive areas (areas of concern) that may relate to habitat and living resources. The MAP coordinating unit in Athens, which is also the Barcelona Convention secretariat, has facilitated this process with national consultants, funding to countries, and involvement of NGOs. Thus, the Mediterranean countries have moved forward rapidly with political commitment and priorities for action with GEF support. One other item relates to the extension of MAP activities up to the river basins as part of the GEF-supported SAP. Countries will now focus not only on the marine water but also on the river basins and upstream pollution sources that were not covered in the original convention.

Another catalytic role for GEF relates to consolidating divergent activities under the rubric of the Barcelona Convention. The example is METAP, which was a separate program and had separate priorities. Now, through the joint GEF international waters project with UNEP and the World Bank, the Bank's support for METAP is institutionally being coordinated through the convention for prefeasibility studies of priority investments. Working with METAP, UNEP is using its comparative advantage under GEF and the Bank is doing likewise in the investment process. This coordination and cooperation fosters a more productive and logical approach that may be taken by the countries under the convention to address convention-priority investments.

Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project

Project Background

Lake Victoria and its basin contain five countries: Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya. Each country has access to the basin's natural resources, and each country has an impact on the lake's environmental condition. The Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project (LVEMP) is a comprehensive program aimed at rehabilitation of the lake ecosystem for the benefit of the people who live in the catchment, the national economies of which they are a part, and the global community. The project objectives are to (1) maximize the sustainable benefits to riparian communities using resources within the basin to generate food, employment, and income; supply safe water; and sustain a disease-free environment and (2) conserve biodiversity and genetic resources for the benefit of riparian communi-

ties and the global community. The project was designed for and by the three participating countries—Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda—with help from GEF. Given the political situation, Rwanda and Burundi have not been able to participate in the project.

The LVEMP Tripartite Agreement was signed in 1994 by all three countries. The agreement served as the basis for further preparation of the project. A regional task force was created, and each of the three countries formed national working groups. In each country, national reports were prepared through workshops and discussions at the grassroots level involving relevant stakeholders as well as the scientific community. The preparation lasted about two years at the national level; the end product was a report from each country. The reports identified very similar priorities and formed the basis for the application for World Bank funding submitted in 1996. The application was handed over to GEF and approved in 1997.

The project was designed to last 5.5 years. At present, project implementation is in its third year. Mid-term reviews in each country were conducted in the first half of 1999. The preparation used two Block-B preparation grants as part of the preparation phase, totaling US\$1.8 million.

Lake Victoria is relatively shallow. The Nile perch fishery, which was introduced in the 1960s, has evolved into the largest freshwater fishery in the world with an approximate value of \$200 million per year. The introduction of the Nile perch into the lake had a significant impact on biodiversity as the new species largely replaced those previously found in the lake. The basis of this fishery is in a changed environment that has resulted from the increased level of nutrients and sediment in the lake. Later developments have demonstrated the negative effects of excessive eutrophication, however. An infestation with water hyacinth and other weeds (e.g., hippo grass, papyrus) could threaten not only the fishery, but also the economic viability of all lacustrine communities, and toxic algal blooms are now being recorded.

The root causes of the changes in the lake environment are in the surrounding land areas, but these vary from country to country. In Tanzania, population densities and urbanization levels are not as high as in the other countries, but livestock and one urban area's

sewage contribute to the lake's eutrophication. The dense population concentrations, urbanization, and industrialization in Kenya and Uganda are major contributors to the lake's environmental problems of the lake. In Kenya, Kisumu and other major towns release virtually untreated sewage into the lake. A paper mill, breweries, and industrial-level production of sugar in multiple mills are major sources of nutrient inflows into the lake as is the application of subsidized fertilizer on sugar and tea estates. Other contributors to pollution include government-sponsored drainage of critical wetlands, such as the Yala Swamp, which reduce their nutrient-trapping ability.

Organizational Structure

The project started at the regional level. However, the project design reflects country-driven activities in three different national programs. The World Bank has made one individual credit agreement (IDA) and one grant agreement (to GEF) for each of the three countries, and a regional contract also exists. Each country implements project components on a national basis, with regional meetings held at several levels. For example, attempts have been made to harmonize the fisheries legislation and water quality standards, which differ considerably among the countries.

It was mutually agreed to locate the regional secretariat in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where the development of an environmental project had been going on with help from FAO since 1988. Each country also has a national secretariat. The Regional Policy and Steering Committee, consisting of three members from each country at a high political level, acts as the project's coordinating body. The committee is supposed to meet two to three times a year.

A Convention for the Establishment of the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO), drafted with FAO assistance, was discussed in the three countries in late 1993 and early 1994, and signed by all three on June 30, 1994. LVFO was to be presided over by a Council of Ministers responsible for fisheries. It was to have an Executive Committee made up of Directors of Fisheries Research, a Fisheries Management Committee, a Scientific Committee, such other subcommittees and working groups as might be needed from time to time, and a Permanent Secretariat located in Entebbe, Uganda.

Observations

Involvement of Basin Countries and Regional Coordination. LVEMP is very much three separate country projects located under a common umbrella. These projects have advanced at very different paces. Although a detailed tripartite agreement was signed at the time of the launching of the preparation process in August 1994, an integrated approach to project implementation has not been pursued. In this regard, an emphasis was originally placed upon working through LVFO. Currently, however, LVFO's role is mainly focused on fisheries.

The multicountry activities of the project are the responsibility of the Regional Executive Coordinator's office located in Dar es Salaam. The same office acts as the national secretariat for Tanzania, which is an arrangement that has been found to be a source of concern. It is felt, especially in the other participating countries, that this arrangement results in certain conflicts of interest and lack of attention to multicountry issues. With this in mind, it is advisable to separate these two functions and to provide a secretariat that has only one responsibility to enhance harmonization and coordination among the countries. This separation of functions has already been agreed upon by the project participants.

A unique achievement has been the establishment of a regional Tender Board to service the entire project. This feature is intended to provide economies of scale and to smooth purchasing under the project; in practice, however, it has been somewhat hampered by increased bureaucracy. Nevertheless, the concept is perceived as highly beneficial.

It has proven to be important to have an effective system for coordinating the activities between not only the sectoral authorities involved in the project but also between the countries. A key element of the project is the control of water hyacinth infestation. To this end, the project is testing various methods for water hyacinth control, including biological and mechanical means, and the utilization of harvesters. One of the major drawbacks in this and other respects in the project is that not all basin countries are party to it. For example, much of the water hyacinth reaches the lake through the Kagera River, meaning that it would be essential to engage Rwanda and Burundi in the project as soon as this is politically possible.

Benefits of a Comprehensive Funding Package. In a region such as the Lake Victoria Basin where real development and natural resource management problems affect people's day-to-day life, it is important that global environmental benefits accruing from a project be coupled with national and local benefits. In the case of LVEMP, the GEF grant is matched by concessional IDA loan financing in each country for productive activities with direct local and national benefits. This combination has had beneficial impacts on the project's perception in the region. For other international waters projects that must address land management issues, this experience is quite important in illustrating the need to produce financing packages so basin development needs may be met along with global considerations.

In the LVEMP umbrella multicountry setting, microprojects have proven to be a flexible approach in decreasing the startup transaction costs of joint activities. They have had a demonstration effect whereby microprojects in a basin country or area have enabled the implementation of LVEMP to move into concrete, field-level activities with local benefits. The success of community-based rearing of weevils for water hyacinth control is a good example.

Execution of Project Components Nationally and Regionally. Regional cooperation among the project components is vital in ensuring development of shared understanding, shared commitments, and harmonized actions that do not place countries at economic disadvantage. This cooperation will require sufficient funding for regional activities. The national secretariats have an important role in coordinating the domestic components' cooperation and for providing their country's input to the regional dialogue. The importance of unhindered flow of information, cooperation in component design, and sometimes even joint implementation is apparent. In addition to comprehensive problem solving, close cooperation may lead to economizing in data collection, monitoring, and sampling; avoidance of duplication of effort; and improved utilization of experiences.

It appears to be essential that the national project executing authorities be located close to where the activities need to be executed. In Tanzania, the 1999 move of the project office from Dar es Salaam to Mwanza resulted in accelerated project progress. In Kenya, while the project offices are now located in Kisumu and other basin towns, the slow release of

funds from the treasury continues to hamper project implementation. Most of the heads of the project components are also still based in Nairobi. These implementation differences contribute to the disparities among the countries and are likely to slow down overall project progress.

One aspect of the project is its large number of components and the fact that their implementation status vis-à-vis each other and the different participating countries varies significantly. Each of the components is encouraged to have regular meetings with their counterparts in the other participating countries. These efforts at harmonization have not been evaluated, but ad hoc meetings cannot substitute for an independent, dedicated facilitating organization that can establish a sense of trust and joint equivalent action among all countries.

Need for M&E and Indicators. The lack of process indicators as well as comprehensive M&E at the regional level make it difficult to assess progress. It will be important to better coordinate the activities of the sectoral or thematic components within each country as well as among the three. A joint, shared management information system for the entire project might help so countries could report progress in reduced stress on Lake Victoria, but this has yet to be put in place.

Institutional and Legal Harmonization. There is also a need to make a stronger link to policy formulation, legal and institutional reforms, and harmonization at both the national and regional levels. Only such linkages could result in the required institutional developments that would guarantee the project's sustainability.

Resources for Supervision and Donor Coordination. It seems evident that there will be a second phase to LVEMP, which has had a slow start. There is significant donor interest in the region. It is therefore important that other donors, including bilaterals, working in the same geographical area need to be coopted to a broader programmatic context. The GEF Operational Strategy recommends a process for countries jointly producing a SAP through country-specific interministerial committees as an instrument for ensuring country ownership of reforms needed; this can then produce a logical framework for donors that wish to help countries make the country-driven re-

forms they identify. This strategic work still needs to be accomplished.

Similarly, for complex and politically sensitive multicountry projects dealing with transboundary resources, such as LVEMP, the implementing agencies must provide appropriate incentives and sufficient administrative resources for project supervision. In the LVEMP case, the World Bank is already on its third task manager during the project life time. The supervision resources only allow one supervision mission to each country annually. More emphasis should be given to continuity and effectiveness of project supervision to ensure results on the ground.

Lake Malawi/Nyasa Biodiversity Conservation Project

Project Background

The emphasis of this GEF pilot phase project has been on establishing the scientific, educational, and policy basis for the sustainable conservation and management of the lake's globally important biodiversity. A major objective is strengthening capacity among the participating countries—Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania—in freshwater management, research, and environmental education. The project has provided baseline biological and water quality information for future scientific monitoring and lake resource management. These outputs together with the initiatives to harmonize policy and legislation are expected to strengthen trilateral lake research and management and provide the capacity and information necessary for maintaining biodiversity in the lake.

Although the Lake Malawi/Nyasa project encompasses all three countries sharing the lake, its activities are heavily concentrated in Malawi. This fact is largely due to the original driving force for the project being the Malawi government. The physiography of the lake is such that only its southern part in Malawi provides a shallow shelf which allows for small-scale coastal fisheries. In other parts of the lake, this shelf is missing and the shores are steeper. Furthermore, Mozambique and Tanzania both have a long coast to the Indian Ocean, which has resulted in more emphasis on oceanic fisheries. For these reasons, the pressures on the lake fishery in Mozambique and Tanzania are significantly less severe than in Malawi,

where intensive small-scale fisheries in the southern part of the lake has caused a noticeable decrease in fish yields and stocks in response to the rapid population growth in the country. Lake Malawi is not as important a resource for the other two countries, nor do they pose the main threats to the lake. This situation, however, is beginning to change as more people move to the shores of the lake in Tanzania and, especially, Mozambique where the extended civil war is now over and displaced people are being resettled on a large scale.

Organizational Structure

The project is supervised by a tripartite Steering Committee involving all three countries in the basin. The Steering Committee is chaired by the principal secretary of the Malawi Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs. The funds for project activities are channeled through Malawi; this country also dominates most project decisions. There was only one GEF legal grant agreement with the government of Malawi. The legal framework is being implemented through an agreement of technical cooperation that the three countries signed with FAO in 1997.

Observations

Political Commitment and Shared Long-Term Vision to Support Integrated Approach. The Lake Malawi/Nyasa Basin case demonstrates the need to develop political commitment among sectoral ministries in each country and among countries, as well as a shared vision of action to reverse land degradation and reduce fishing pressures where it is adversely affecting biodiversity. This commitment must incorporate environmental management with the requirement of improving the livelihood of the stakeholder communities in which poverty is still prevalent. As many threats to the lake's biodiversity and environment as a whole are related to management of land-based resources and the growing population that intensively farms the land or extracts fish from near-shore areas, it is important to assume an approach that integrates land and water management and engages all relevant agencies and stakeholders in the three countries. Apart from overfishing, the lake environment is threatened by sedimentation. Intensive small-holder agriculture, deforestation, and erosion in the watersheds surrounding the lake create strains on the lake environment that need to be addressed. Environ-

mental management of Lake Malawi/Nyasa thus requires an integrated approach to land and water management. Developing such an approach requires a longer term perspective in which coordination between the various components, sectoral ministries, and activities in the different countries is essential. A focus should also be on harmonization among project components where there is potential overlap or where cooperation could lead to economies of scale and complementarities.

There is a risk that projects of this type become too complex, with the result that the overall goal may be lost. It is also harder to monitor and evaluate the overall success of a project when the different components and different countries involved progress at varying paces.

Developing a Shared Vision and Establishing Long-Term Monitoring. Analysis of the Lake Malawi/Nyasa and the Lake Victoria projects demonstrates how differences in physical environment and socioeconomic conditions and development set the challenges for achieving sustainable development in a specific context. Consequently, proposed actions in a basin need to be based on a scientific analysis of the transboundary problems facing the lake in question. Similarly, long-term scientific M&E is needed that should continue beyond the project's lifetime in order to ensure its impacts. This may require searching for alternative and innovative funding mechanisms that would guarantee the sustainability of M&E efforts. Furthermore, M&E should focus on outcomes rather than outputs, and process indicators should be identified.

Need to Incorporate All Participating Countries. The present project focused almost exclusively on fisheries and on one of the countries—Malawi—which also reaped most of the benefits. Although the implementation of all project components was guided by a tripartite Steering Committee, the participation of the Mozambique and Tanzanian governments has been very limited. Tanzania and Mozambique have throughout the project expressed their desire for a more formal agreement that would guarantee a more equal sharing of project resources among the three countries for future monitoring and management activities.

One of the main lessons of the project is that, in order to engage countries effectively in a multicountry

project around a shared resource, all participating countries must be fully incorporated as equal partners in the management of the shared resource. A regional cooperation mechanism with sufficient resources is needed. Regional coordination should be the responsibility of an entity that is seen as independent from national mechanisms in any participating country. Regional activities should be identified as specific outputs and outcomes of multicountry projects, and should be monitored and evaluated as such. In regions such as the present one where the history of cooperation around the shared resource is short and where the countries have differing levels of interest in the lake, a phased approach could be adopted whereby the level of cooperation is increased as more experiences are gained.

Need for Continuity in Project Management. Sufficient administrative resources and appropriate incentives for the management of complex multicountry projects are needed both in countries as well as in the implementing agencies. In the case of the Lake Malawi/Nyasa project, the World Bank is already on its fourth task manager—a situation that is not ideal for continuity in managing a project. Similarly, sufficient resources are needed for adequate supervision.

In the countries concerned, frontline supervisors responsible for the important work may have much lower pay than the middle managers to whom they report. Consequently, the GEF project may lose key country frontline supervisors to other higher paying jobs, often after sending them for advanced degrees and training with little long-term benefit to the project. This disruptive element should be addressed by the implementing agencies in fees through the adoption of premiums, and by countries in proper remuneration for frontline supervisors.

Baltic Sea Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM)

Project Background

Baltic Sea environmental protection has a rather long tradition, stretching at least as far back as the 1974 Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea. The diplomatic conference on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea adopted the Baltic Sea Environmental Declaration in 1992, which endorsed the strategic approach

and principles of the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Program (JCP). As a result of these meetings, a new Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area—the 1992 Helsinki Convention—was signed by all nine countries involved as well as by the European Economic Community. The new convention came into force in January 2000.

Two other international conventions have jurisdiction over the Baltic Sea large marine ecosystem. The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea has been involved since 1901 in developing international cooperation and advice for the North Atlantic and adjacent seas such as the Baltic. Governments have used the council's scientific advice for management purposes. In addition, the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission manages the fisheries of the cooperating Baltic nations.

Observations

Political Commitment and Public Support. The success achieved to date in implementation of the JCP is directly related to sustained political commitment and broad-based public support. This success can be attributed to the exceptionally effective development of a strong series of partnerships between HELCOM, the European Union, regional organizations, cooperating countries, local governments, international financing institutions, bilateral donors, academic and applied research institutions, NGOs, and a large number of individual citizens. Furthermore, the relatively favorable economic situation around the Baltic also contributes to the success of cooperative activities.

The successful incorporation of legal, policy, and regulatory reforms into the HELCOM project has been exceptional. Thus a major lesson learned from HELCOM is the necessity of emphasizing institutional development as well as biological and technical activities. Another key element of the project has been public awareness, which has helped create the needed commitment at the individual as well as policymaking levels. Note, however, that HELCOM has addressed pollution issues, while the other two commissions address mainly living resources. The three commissions have traditionally worked separately. The GEF project currently under development will contribute to implementation of the JCP through support for high-priority complementary activities to

be defined in detail under the GEF Project Development Facility (PDF)-supported process, including Interrelationship of Living Marine Resources to the Baltic Sea Environment and Ecosystem and Reduction of Non-Point Source Pollution for Agriculture. It will also support Strengthening Monitoring and Assessment of the Ecosystem and Development of Ecosystem Indicators. These activities have been selected for support by GEF based on their importance to transboundary environmental management of the Baltic Sea ecosystem and high potential for development of model activities whose experience could be transferred by GEF to other locations that share similar challenges. The project is intended to provide an important mechanism for fuller integration of the ecological dimension through increasing emphasis on the sustainability of living marine resources. It also aims to accelerate the rate at which actions will be undertaken at the farm level to reduce non-point source pollution from agriculture in a cost-effective manner. Through GEF catalytic action, all three commissions with jurisdiction will work together for integrated management of the Baltic Sea large marine ecosystem.

Links to Economic Development. Baltic Sea environmental protection has gone hand in hand with economic development programs that have also been beneficial to the JCP. The alteration of pricing structures and attempts to better define property rights have contributed to the results. However, domestic priorities—especially in countries with economies in transition—have often hindered those countries from reaching the best possible results. Another lesson learned from HELCOM is the necessity of transparency both with regard to the activities and among countries.

The Time Dimension. In order to achieve sustainable results, projects such as HELCOM need to be planned for 15 to 20 years rather than 3 to 5 years. However, HELCOM has found that there is an increasing demand on the part of countries for quicker reaction time than previously. This has led to a restructuring of HELCOM, with committees and working groups being replaced by task-oriented groups capable of responding quickly to needed activities.

Dealing with Transboundary Pollution. An important share of Baltic Sea pollution is of transboundary origin. The major guideline for most Western countries in such matters is the “polluter pays” principle. It is understood, however, that this cannot be the sole regulator in the Baltic Sea. First, the countries with reforming economies within the region do not yet have the necessary capital or human resources to provide the required pollution control investments during their period of restructuring. Second, the higher income countries in the region are experiencing steeply rising unit costs of pollution control. Third, all the countries are subject to transboundary pollution. Therefore, a case can be made for complementing this principle with a transboundary approach to environmental investments for domestic pollution reduction and by providing support for cost-effective action in other countries to reduce transboundary pollution.⁴

Organizational Issues. GEF funds are ordinarily directed to projects; HELCOM is a commission. GEF was able, however, to fund HELCOM, as it and its secretariat are intergovernmental bodies. GEF’s role is financing incremental environmental costs, while the World Bank finances economic activities. In a situation like this, there is a danger that the commission consisting of countries will be bypassed by the implementing agencies dealing directly with the HELCOM Project Implementation Task Force.

A major question with respect to HELCOM is its active role in relation to other donors that work directly with the countries.⁵ A commission such as HELCOM can only do what the member countries want, yet HELCOM is currently at a stage where the political commitment of many member countries is in question. To maintain political commitment, public awareness about JCP implementation needs improvement. In the near future, HELCOM is hiring a full-time information officer to do publicity work, collect information, maintain contact with the media, and keep the commission’s website updated.

A challenge to a commission of this nature is to define its role and obtain the requisite political and public support based on this definition. Closer coop-

4 HELCOM, “The Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Program,” Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 48 (Helsinki, 1993).

5 This question also concerns other commissions such as the Danube and Black Sea Commissions.

eration with other similar arrangements, such as HELCOM and those for the Danube, Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea, may play a beneficial role.

Program on Prevention and Management of Marine Pollution in the East Asian Seas

Project Background

The East Asian Seas project was approved by the GEF Council in July 1993, under the GEF's pilot phase, with an allocation of \$8.0 million. UNDP is the GEF implementing agency, and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) serves as the project's executing agency. A regional program office, the Program Development and Management Office (PDMO), was set up in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines and began operations in January 1994. By December 1998, the pilot project had completed all its major activities and submitted its terminal report and evaluation to UNDP and GEF in October 1999. A follow-on international waters project building on the pilot project was approved in July of that year.

The project covers a regional water body shared by 11 countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam). It represents a unique approach to multicountry coordination by an international organization, utilizing demonstration projects at both the subregional and local levels to develop and test management mechanisms that may then be replicated elsewhere in the region. The project has five objectives: (1) development and implementation of integrated coastal management (ICM) demonstration sites, (2) development and demonstration of environmental management of a subregional sea area using risk assessment/risk management processes, (3) enhancement of participating countries' ratification to and implementation of international conventions related to the prevention and management of marine pollution, (4) development and promotion of sustainable financing mechanisms for marine pollution prevention and management programs, and (5) establishment of an environmental monitoring and information management network.

Organizational Structure

The project's institutional structure makes use of

three levels of coordination. The first level is project execution by an international organization, IMO. To facilitate day-to-day operations, the project established its own regional office, the PDMO, based in one of the participating countries (Manila, Philippines).

The second level of coordination is at the subregional level, specifically a demonstration project in the Straits of Malacca. The project focused on pollution prevention and management in a subregional sea area bounded by three countries. The coordinating mechanism involved a steering group, comprised of senior government representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, and a technical and scientific group comprised of more than 30 experts and scientists from universities in each of the littoral states. The mechanism served to develop consensus on the goals, methodologies, and expected outputs among the three countries, as well as scientific and technical support to deliver and achieve concurrence on the outputs themselves. A subregional environmental risk assessment was completed, highlighting areas of concern common to the three countries related to the ecosystem within the Straits, human health of coastal communities along the Straits, and society as a whole in the three countries. The approach will serve as a model in other subregional sea areas of the region.

In addition to the PDMO and demonstration sites, at the third level, the project introduced the following institutional mechanisms to ensure multicountry coordination:

- *Program Steering Committee (PSC)* composed of representatives of participating countries, UNDP, and IMO, with observers from international and regional organizations, donors, and NGOs—The PSC met annually to provide policy guidance and assess progress of activities, especially with regard to meeting the needs of countries in the region. The project workplan and budget were also approved by the PSC, which signified endorsement of the project's objectives and operations by the countries.
- *Regional Network of Legal Advisors and Regional Network on Environmental Monitoring*, comprised of in-country professionals and institutions—The networks provide materials and inputs to develop project training materials and related technical/legal documentation. Workshops and training activities were designed for specialized manage-

ment-oriented programs, including environmental monitoring, strategies and techniques for implementing international conventions, model legislation, etc.

- *National Network of Marine Experts*, comprised largely of in-country professionals—The network provided the materials and resource persons for capacity-building workshops designed for specialized management-oriented programs and marine pollution modules, including training in ICM, oil pollution preparedness and response, and environmental impact assessment. The network also produced a good practices guide that was translated into nine regional languages.
- *Local Interagency Project Committee* in the two demonstration sites (Philippines and China) to provide a pilot model for multisectoral consultation that also involved the private sector—Although the institutional setup was at the site and community levels, there are significant impacts regarding its operation and structure that may be applicable to multicountry arrangements. The local committees were effective in building stakeholder consensus on priority activities and dispute resolution. An important contribution of the local committee setup was facilitation of the formulation and passage of key local legislation and regulations on access and use of coastal and marine resources.

Observations

Utilizing an Umbrella Multicountry Approach.

The East Asian Seas project has been based on an umbrella approach developed during the pilot phase which has allowed activities to be undertaken nationally. This approach has been used to improve management of identified hotspots through government-sponsored demonstration sites. China and the Philippines provided significant counterpart support to the Xiamen and Batangas Bay sites, respectively; and the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore jointly produced an assessment of environmental risks in the Malacca Straits. The umbrella approach can facilitate multicountry collaboration and information sharing on nationally implemented actions.

National capacity was developed cost effectively by coordinated multicountry training programs. Over the

life of the project, 29 training courses and workshops were attended by over 1,270 participants from the 11 countries in the region.

Similarly, such an umbrella project can induce collaborative activities with international partners. The project was successful in sponsoring and facilitating the conduct of more than 30 collaborative activities with international and regional agencies and organizations, such as regional training courses, publications, international workshops, and information exchange with international partners, including the Canadian International Development Agency, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, City University of Hong Kong, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Japan Association of Marine Safety, the Norwegian government, and the British Council.

Important project-initiated activities have supported country ratification of international and regional conventions through the development of, e.g., Guidelines on National Legislation on Marine Pollution Prevention and Management for East Asian Countries and a Model Framework of National Marine Pollution Legislation for East Asian Countries. These products are supplemented by a legal information database containing over 600 materials and references, an aggressive awareness and dissemination campaign, and reviews of existing national marine pollution legislation. There have been at least 36 country-specific ratifications of conventions and protocols during the project's lifetime. However, several countries still have not ratified some of the most critical international and regional marine pollution conventions.

Defining the Geographical Scope of Management and Project Boundaries.

An umbrella project such as the present one can define the overall framework for managing the ecosystem within which more geographically distinct actions can take place. An example of this would be Malacca Straits, where collaboration was organized within a multicountry subunit of the ecosystem covered by the project. GEF approved the follow-up project with the understanding that individual ecosystem-based projects, such as the South China Sea and Yellow Sea, would complement the existing project.

Maximizing Advantages of Local-Level Implementation. The GEF international waters OPs recognize the need to focus actions on three institutional

levels: multicountry, national interministerial, and subnational. This project focused on implementation at the subnational level where project impacts matter most. Although it can be argued that the weak link may lie in scaling up the gains from localized involvement to multicountry levels, the project has demonstrated that there are replicable aspects. Perhaps it is in the area of expanding the improvements in the pilot sites to national programs and regionwide impacts where the challenge may be greatest.

The institutional mechanisms established in the pilot sites offer significant lessons for similar projects. For example, in Xiamen, the municipality established an interagency coordinating committee and special marine office that facilitated the passage of legislation by the Chinese Congress. The lesson in this experience indicates that pressures from communities may be more effective than focusing at the top, as the project has shown in its difficulties in securing ratification of MARPOL 73/78 by the Philippine government.

Single-country demonstrations as part of multicountry projects may be irreplaceable in breaking down barriers for other countries to adopt similar approaches. The countries may feel more comfortable with new approaches based on the experiences of other countries in their region.

In the Batangas Bay site, the provincial government set up a new office to handle environmental assessments and encouraged the private sector to set up its own foundation, the Batangas Bay Resources Management Foundation. The foundation, which is composed of 23 local industries, serves as the counterpart monitoring mechanism to the provincial government. However, while the private industries surrounding the bay are important stakeholders in controlling marine pollution, the project realized that fishermen's associations and local communities had to be engaged proactively. Clearly, the lesson was to expand stakeholder participation so that those who are directly affected by the quality of the waters in the bay, and those who have the most to lose if marine pollution continues unchecked, need to be involved much earlier in the project cycle. This highlights the importance of implementation at the subnational level, in line with GEF's Operational Strategy and Public Involvement Policy.

Strengthening National Participation. A common, yet critical, issue in any multicountry project is strengthening national participation beyond the government's initial cash and in-kind counterpart contributions. Several reasons are cited for the dwindling interest of governments. One is the changing government agency administration and representation on the PSC. This lack of consistency makes coordination difficult, especially if the transition from one administration to another is not as smooth as desired. One way of strengthening national participation is by offering concrete, tested approaches to coastal and marine resource management. In fact, the project has improved awareness of the lessons learned in ICM through its extensive publication and information exchange programs. However, there is a need to incorporate these more systematically into national plans and strategies. This link to national plans is one of the most challenging tasks facing the second phase of the project since most of the countries in the region do not have updated or comprehensive countrywide coastal and marine resources development strategies. In other projects (e.g., the Danube), development of a SAP has helped facilitate government commitment, and SAP implementation can lead to the incorporation of identified priorities into national planning processes.

Another area where improvements may be introduced is maximizing the comparative advantages of IMO as a global mechanism for the conventions and protocols. So far, the project has not shown how an international organization, compared to a regional mechanism like ASEAN, can offer better results for multicountry coordination so that the objective of reducing marine pollution and creating more effective coastal and marine management can be achieved. The advantages may lie in the services that IMO may offer to facilitate interregional exchange of experiences, especially in the areas of intercountry dispute resolution. In general, existing regional mechanisms should provide an overall framework and linkages to other activities within which the project operates.

At the level of national implementation, there may be additional support needed to coordinate local-level activities with national programs of related agencies, such as agriculture and fisheries, infrastructure, finance, and social services. Because most of the populations in affected coastal communities belong to the bottom 30 percent income bracket of countries, there

is the additional challenge of integrating poverty alleviation programs. The interagency setups of the Xiamen and Batangas Bay sites provide good examples of how such coordination can be done at the local level.

One lesson on multicountry coordination from the Batangas Bay site is the increased use of civil society groups, especially the private sector. In fact, a common observation in most multicountry projects is the importance of involving a broad base of stakeholder groups as early as project preparation. During project design of the Batangas Bay site, there was a conscious effort to bring all concerned government agencies together, but such coordination had to be done by only one unit—in this case, the provincial government. Scientists from the province's universities and other professionals brought in by the project provided the scientific basis for designing the pollution control and prevention activities. But it was through the private sector where funds were mobilized and where concerted actions on the part of industries were made.

Adopting Well-Defined Performance Indicators. Project impacts and sustainability were assessed through the application of performance indicators, but these were limited to the ICM sites. Four sets of indicators were used: *process indicators*—measuring achievements in the process or approach adopted for project design and implementation, *stress removal indicators*—measuring progress in developing ways of reducing environmental stress in the coastal and marine areas, *sustainability indicators*—measuring impacts of introducing mechanisms for ensuring and continuing environmental management efforts beyond the project's life, *environmental stress indicators*—assessing the changes in the coastal and marine environment before and after the project.

Although there are improvements to be made in measuring these indicators, they have been very useful in detecting progress and areas where changes need to be introduced at various stages of the project. It may be useful to add more socioeconomic indicators, especially those that relate to diversity in culture and history, governance, and community impact. Additionally, it may be helpful to think about how these indicators can be measured and evaluated by nonproject participants, and how such measurements can be made by engaging affected populations and communities. A similar framework for M&E of inter-

national water projects is currently under discussion within the GEF International Waters Task Force.

Desk Studies

This section presents the review of projects selected for in-depth desk studies.

Rio de la Plata

A variety of different views and a large number of institutions can make project preparation very complex. This seemed to be the case for the project covering the Rio de la Plata and its Maritime Front that was submitted by UNDP on behalf of Uruguay and Argentina (\$10 million total, \$6 million GEF). The area is part of the Patagonia Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) and is biologically rich from a fisheries standpoint.

The project's transboundary issues relate to massive pollution loading, continued dredging for navigation that stirs up highly toxic bottom sediments, overfishing, releases of contaminants from ships, and fragmentation of institutional jurisdictions for addressing these issues. As evidenced by the long preparation time, different assumptions held about what GEF might support, the number of GEF Council comments when the project proposal was submitted, the number of institutions that necessarily must be involved, and the sheer complexity of the situation, international waters projects can be institutionally and technically very complex and necessarily take long periods of time to sort out solutions.

Two joint commissions between Argentina and Uruguay have jurisdiction depending on the area, one close in on the Plata estuary and the other extending out into the LME. They were created under the Treaty of the Rio de la Plata and its Maritime Front, signed by the countries in 1973. Both the Binational Technical Commission for the Maritime Front and the Administrative Commission for the Rio de la Plata were proposed to be involved in the project according to their mandates. However, their jurisdictions begin offshore and therefore have little legal jurisdiction over the land-based sources of pollution that are driving degradation of that part of the Patagonia Shelf LME.

Another important lesson relates to the use of a GEF project in creating a steering committee (known as the Project Coordinating Committee) that will have all the necessary jurisdictions represented on the apex committee as well as in a Technical Advisory Group and Intersectoral Working Groups in each country to provide that country's input to the TDA and SAP processes. The bodies representing appropriate jurisdictions include the Argentina Secretary for Natural Resources and Sustainable Development, City of Buenos Aires Secretary for Urban Planning and Environment, Province of Buenos Aires Secretary for Environmental Policy, Argentina Navy and Coast Guard, Ministry of Economy, and Argentina Undersecretary for Fisheries. In Uruguay, the representative bodies are the Uruguay Ministry of Housing, Land Planning and Environment, Municipality of Montevideo, Uruguay Navy and Coast Guard, Uruguay Planning and Budget Office, and National Fisheries Institute. Together with the Administrative Commission for the Rio de la Plata and the Binational Technical Commission for the Maritime Front (in the Foreign Ministries), the three GEF implementing agencies, and the Inter-American Development Bank, this large group forms the Project Coordinating Committee or apex group responsible for the project.

One of the institutional issues to be addressed is whether some more simple arrangement for joint management of the area would make more sense in addressing the ecosystems concerns of the shared water body. Another dimension of this fragmented approach is this UNDP project covering only part of the LME, while a complementary series of World Bank GEF and regular program projects, a UNDP GEF biodiversity project, and IDB projects address the remaining areas. In order to facilitate an ecosystem-based analysis in this fragmented world of jurisdiction-based requests for GEF projects, the UNDP Rio de la Plata project was charged with the responsibility to produce the TDA in a coordinated manner to set out the linkages among environmental problems in a clear and transparent context. The GEF International Waters Task Force has identified this complex plethora of project requests and environmental problems to be a priority for a programmatic approach under the international waters focal area similar to that developed for the Danube-Black Sea Basin.

Rio Bermejo

The Bermejo River Basin of Bolivia and Argentina originates in the Andes and flows through the Chaco region to the Paraguay River. It is a major basin of 123,000 square kilometers, covering an area the size of Hungary and Bulgaria. Excessive levels of sediment, important transboundary biodiversity, and the existence of a binational commission for development of the basin made the area attractive for the first GEF international waters project to be undertaken within the TDA-SAP project formulation (for consistency with the GEF Operational Strategy). In essence, such a small initial project—\$2 million from GEF for two years—with such strategic multicountry work coupled with demonstration activities in basin management and land degradation control was a paradigm for OP-9 in the Operational Strategy for international waters and for involving stakeholder groups in the basin in helping determine their sustainable development future.

Consistent with the GEF Operational Strategy, a follow-on international waters project is under preparation to implement the priority measures identified by the SAP along with expected baseline activities funded by others. This is similar to the strategy in other GEF focal areas where an enabling activity grant is provided to undertake the strategic work of identifying priorities and producing action plans/strategies for submittal to convention Conferences of the parties; this is then followed up with a number of country-driven projects addressing the top priorities submitted to the conventions. In this case, the SAP implementation projects are submitted to the GEF Council and serve as the basis for determining country-driven funding priorities of a transboundary nature. Of particular note is that the project was able to evoke considerable involvement and excitement from NGOs and subnational levels of government as well as from the binational commission. This lesson—that OP-9 projects can benefit from the participation of local stakeholders in the identification and planning of both demonstration activities as well as necessary multicountry strategic work (TDA and SAP)—is important for commitment to implementation at later stages as the SAP is implemented with or without GEF assistance.

Another observation from the completed SAP has been the use of demonstration activities to catch the attention of stakeholders upfront and to try pilot interventions to determine whether they may be scaled up in the implementation project. This made the basin land and water management problems concrete to the wider public whose use of poor land management practices initially created the transboundary sedimentation problems. These demonstrations may have shown that future implementation will be less risky and that corrective actions for transboundary purposes that depend on the cumulative impact of many local actions may well be successful. This raises the same issue as the Lake Victoria project: To be successful on the broad scale needed to reverse the type of land degradation being experienced in the Bermejo and in the downstream Paraguay-Paraná system, projects warrant financing packages that address local issues at the same time as stakeholders are being asked to address global issues. The Bermejo is at about the same stage as the Black Sea-Danube, and both projects may benefit from an exchange of lessons.

One final observation involves the institutional structure of the project. UNEP does not have a country presence to undertake such a project. It chose to partner with the Organization of American States (OAS), which does have such a country presence, has the capacity to address these difficult land and water resource management issues, and served as a coach to the binational commission. The commission and its subsidiary country agencies undertook the project work. While coordination meetings were explicitly facilitated by OAS to involve UNDP and the World Bank on the project's steering committee, it does not appear that the priorities in the SAP have been considered by the two organizations as part of their support to the two countries. Similarly, the lack of formal interministerial committees in each country may mean that priority needs identified by the NGOs, binational commission, and subnational governments in the SAP may not have been internalized in the finance, planning, agriculture, or environment ministries of the two countries to ensure that root causes of the degradation identified in the TDA could be addressed quickly. Further insight into these dynamics would require a site visit, which was beyond budget scope.

Aral Sea Basin

The serious environmental degradation of the Aral Sea Basin has resulted in a commitment to begin

corrective activities in each of the basin states. This commitment of state governments has led to mutual agreement regarding program activities, even where countries' individual priorities vary greatly. GEF and its implementing agencies were involved in this process, with the World Bank being the actual implementing agency.

Compared to the project identification and design processes used in, for example, the Danube River Basin or Rio Bermejo, the method of involving all relevant stakeholders into the process at an early stage seems to have been informal. This has perhaps contributed to a tension between local and international parties, including consultants.

It is not clear whether the "GEF as coach" strategy could have led to another kind of project design using the strong commitment in the area as a driving force. The question about the role of local organizations with respect to international consultants may be a topic requiring discussion within GEF. This discussion is even more relevant in regions where there is a strong local culture with set ways of dealing with situations and circumstances, as compared to the bureaucratic culture of a large international organization.

The International Fund to Save Aral Sea is a high-level cooperative body with representatives from several ministries from each basin state. The organization serves as a coordinative mechanism, allowing information flow between various ministries and states. In this sense, it acts in a somewhat similar manner to the interministerial committees, such as in the Danube Basin project. Even though it seems to be an appropriate mechanism in a multicountry setting, it is possible that some lower level connection that allows NGOs and other relevant organizations to participate could be useful.

Red Sea and Gulf of Aden

The seven countries of the Red Sea have long recognized that they experience common environmental problems and threats in their shared large marine ecosystem. In 1982, they signed the Jeddah Convention to affirm their commitment to cooperate in protecting the Red Sea ecosystem; they also created a Program for the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. This program was officially established in 1996 by the Cairo Declaration, which was signed by all parties.

The countries sought GEF assistance for project preparation funds in 1995, and a Block-B grant was issued with all three GEF implementing agencies collaborating in project preparation. Each agency used a portion of the Block B funding to prepare its component of the project. The resulting project was approved by the GEF Council; its total cost was \$37 million, with \$19 million of that provided by GEF.

The collaboration began with preparation funding being distributed among all three implementing agencies. Each agency therefore had administrative resources with which to develop collaboration as well as preparation resources to manage the in-country work. The strategic work needed for consistency with the Operational Strategy was accomplished during Block-B preparation. A simple TDA was produced as well as a SAP upon which the project was based. While this level of progress is possible during preparation for OP-9 preventive and simple projects, OP-8 remedial projects with serious transboundary issues may take an entire project and several years to gain multicountry agreement. The resulting project was the first GEF international waters joint project among the three implementing agencies. This modality is being tested and replicated for remedial activities as part of OP-8 in the Caspian Sea project.

The Red Sea project is based on the concept of underwater protected areas that are not only important biodiversity sites but also serve as spawning and nursery areas, sustaining fishery populations upon which commercial and artisanal fishers depend. Political commitment represented by the regional convention and Cairo Declaration is important for GEF because it demonstrates a commitment to carry on with regional activities—sustaining interventions and SAP implementation—through continued financing of the program when GEF funding has ended.

The Red Sea has provided a unique opportunity to cluster international waters and biodiversity projects, enabling complex situations to be broken down into manageable chunks for simplicity in implementation. The Red Sea project was developed with the understanding that it would not duplicate four single-country integrated coastal management projects (Egypt, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea). In addition, the Gulf of Aqaba is the worst hotspot for transboundary pollution in the Red Sea. With the World Bank, a separate remedial, single-country international waters project (in OP-8) was developed to address the hotspot pollu-

tion sources so that the regional project could be focused on prevention and straightforward activities with a good chance of success.

Lake Tanganyika

The multicountry Lake Tanganyika project entitled Pollution Control and Other Measures to Protect Biodiversity in Lake Tanganyika was designed in a radically different way from the predominantly single-country Lake Malawi project discussed earlier. Building on early experiences in facilitating the Danube and Black Sea Basin projects, UNDP applied some of these project principles to assist Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, and Zambia in addressing their shared lake basin. With more than twice the funding of the Lake Malawi project (\$10 million), a great deal more could be accomplished in building institutional commitments for joint multicountry collaboration.

A PCU was established to facilitate each country's participation in activities independently as well as jointly. High-level officials from each nation participated in a steering committee that was responsible for the project. Various programs were established with the objective of helping the riparian countries produce an effective and sustainable system for managing and conserving the lake's biodiversity. By involving local communities in its design, the project embraced the dual needs of development and conservation so that people's livelihoods can be maintained into the future. It covered a broad range of issues, from biodiversity to fisheries, impacts of sedimentation and catchment degradation, pollution, socioeconomic issues, education, and development of a joint geographic information system (GIS).

The original concept called for production of a strategic plan for the lake. Following adoption of the GEF Operational Strategy by the GEF Council, UNDP worked with the project to modify its program of work to be more consistent with the international waters portion of the Operational Strategy. The project adopted the approach of joint fact-finding in compiling information so all countries could review it and update it through the GIS. The result is a TDA that prioritizes two or three top shared issues and relegates the remaining environmental problems to other efforts. Pollution discharges in Bujumbura, Burundi, and Kigoma, Tanzania, were cited as hotspots for abatement activities. Excessive sediment

loading from certain river basins, mostly in Burundi and D.R. Congo, and scattered elsewhere, were identified for accelerated attention; the overfishing issue was identified as important because of the large commercial fishery, its economic importance to certain nations, and the transboundary nature of the stock and patterns of landings and markets.

The program also adopted the formulation of a SAP, a series of activities to be implemented not only jointly but also by individual countries to address the top-priority issues. Various assessments conducted under the programs built the capacity of country officials to sample and assess environmental status in the areas of biodiversity, pollution, and sedimentation. Many of the publications are available on the project's website, which also features country links and links to UNDP, GEF, and coaches from international organizations. Additionally, the site facilitates dialogue among the countries on shared issues. For those without Internet access, CD-ROMs are produced every three months. These, together with the public portion of the website, promote transparency among NGOs, government officials, countries, and funding organizations.

As of the end of 1999, the Lake Tanganyika governments had produced a fourth draft of an international treaty to affirm their political support for the restoration and protection of the Lake Tanganyika ecosystem (Convention on the Sustainable Management of Lake Tanganyika). The draft convention establishes a Lake Tanganyika authority consisting of a joint management committee and a secretariat to assist the nations in operationalizing sustainable management of the lake, its biological resources, and the catchment area draining to it. Various protocols and annexes will specify progressively more stringent country commitments as implementation proceeds. The draft SAP includes the commitment to move toward the convention and the lake management authority. It also contains provisions for national actions within the regional framework.

Despite war and unrest in D.R. Congo and Burundi—which necessitated moving the coordination office to Tanzania in the short term—important progress has

been made in understanding the technical issues of a transboundary nature, identifying hotspots for concerted action, building a joint understanding and shared ownership of the lake basin, harnessing scientific organizations and local communities, and setting the stage for building political commitments at the top level for joint management of the resource. The GEF project is expected to close during the latter part of 2000.

Portfolio Survey

Survey Design

Questionnaires (see Annex 2) were sent to all 36 sample projects. Twenty questionnaires were returned; only a few, however, were fully completed. All returned questionnaires are available from the GEF Secretariat M&E Team as Volume II of this report.

The survey had 20 questions, 9 of which concerned project identification and design; the remainder involved various aspects of project implementation. The following presents a brief description of the survey population:

- Thirteen out of 18 belong to the international waters focal area, and 5 belong to the biodiversity focal area.
- Eight projects are implemented by UNDP, six by the World Bank, and three by UNEP. In two projects, all three implementing agencies are involved; in one UNDP is working together with UNEP; and in another, the World Bank has joined with UNDP.
- Four projects are executed by UNOPS, four on a national or binational basis; the rest have varying arrangements.

Inventory of Projects

The inventory of projects covered by this review is presented in the following table.

No.	Project Title	OP or Pilot Phase	Full project or PDF-B	Funding (M \$)		IA	EA	No. of Countries	Convention	PCU	Inter-min Committee	SAP		Questionnaire Returned	Other Material
				Total	GEF							TDA/ PDF-B	FP		
1	Black Sea Environmental Management	Pilot Phase		23.3	9.3	UNDP	UNOPS	7	X	X					X
2	Industrial Water Pollution Control in the Gulf of Guinea Large Marine Ecosystem	Pilot Phase		6.0	6.0	UNDP	UNIDO	5	X						
3	Pollution Control and other Measures to protect Biodiversity in Lake Tanganyika	Pilot Phase		10.0	10.0	UNDP	UNOPS	4		X					
4	Danube River Basin Environmental Management	Pilot Phase		43.5	8.5	UNDP	UNOPS	9	X	X	X	TDA		X	X
5	Prevention and Management of Marine pollution in the East Asian Seas	Pilot Phase		11.4	8.0	UNDP	IMO	8		X				X	X
6	Developing the Danube River Basin Pollution Reduction Programme	OP-8		3.9	3.9	UNDP	UNOPS	9	X	X	X	TDA/ SAP		X	X
7	Developing the Implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan [Program?]	OP-8		8.7	1.8	UNDP	UNOPS	7	X	X					X
8	Lake Victoria Environmental Management	OP-8		77.6	35.0	WB	National	3		X				X	X
9	Determination of the Priority Actions for the further Elaboration and Implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the Mediterranean Sea	OP-8		10.5	6.3	UNEP	Barcelona Convention	11	X	X		TDA/SA P-LBS		X	X
11	Lake Ohrid Management	OP-8		4.3	3.0	WB	National	2	No	X				X	
12	Addressing Transboundary Environmental Issues in the Caspian Environment Program	OP-8		18.3	8.4	UNDP/JUN EP	UNOPS	6	No	X			P	X	X
13	Pollution Control and Habitat Protection in the Rio de La Plata and its Maritime Front	OP-8		10.8	6.0	UNDP	Binational	2	X	X			P	X	
14	Mekong River Water Utilization	OP-8		17.9	11.1	WB	MRC	4	X						
15	Reversing Degradation Trends in the South China Sea	OP-8	PDF-B			UNEP							P	X	
16	Benguela Current LME	OP-8	PDF-B			UNDP		3		X	X	TDA/SAP		X	
17	Bay of Bengal LME	OP-8	PDF-B			WB		8					P	X	X
18	Yellow Sea LME	OP-8	PDF-B			UNDP				no		TDA draft p			
19	Strategic Action Program for the Binational of the Bermejo River	OP-9		6.0	3.2	UNEP	OAS	2					P	X	X

20	Water and Environmental Management in the Aral Sea Basin	OP-9	71.5	12.0	WB	IFAS	5		X				X	X
21	Implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden	OP-9	45.0	19.3	UNDP/WB/UNEP	PERSGA	5		X		SAP+TDA		X	X
22	Preparation of the Strategic Action Program and Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis for the Tumen River Area, its Coastal Regions and Northeast Asian Environs	OP-9	10.1	5.2	UNDP	UNOPS	5		X			P		
23	Building Partnerships for Environmental Protection and Management of the East Asian Seas	OP-9	28.5	16.2	UNDP	IMO	9							
24	Implementation of the Strategic Action Program of the Pacific Small Island Developing State	OP-9	20.3	12.3	UNDP	SPREP	13	X			Draft SAP	P		X
25	Integrated Management of the Lake Chad Basin	OP-9			UNDP							P		
26	Western Indian Ocean	OP-9			UNEP			X			Draft SAP			
27	Integrated Management of the Okavango Basin	OP-9			UNDP		3						X	
28	Costa Rica-Nicaragua: San Juan River Basin	OP-9			UNEP	OAS						P		
29	Baltic Sea Regional Project	OP-9			WB/UNDP	HELCOM	20	X	X					X
30	Conservation of Biodiversity in the Lake Titicaca Basin	OP-2	4.0	3.1	UNDP	Bi-National	2	X	X				X	
31	Lake Malawi/Nyasa Biodiversity Conservation	OP-2	5.4	5.0	WB	National	1						X	X
32	Danube Delta Biodiversity	OP-2	1.7	1.5	WB	National	1						X	
33	Establishment of a Programme for the Consolidation of the Meso-American Biological Corridor	OP-3	23.6	10.9	UNDP/UNEP	UNOPS	8	X	X					
34	Forest Biodiversity Protection (Poland)	OP-3	3.0	3.0	WB	National	1							X
35	Reducing Biodiversity Loss at Cross-Border Sites in East Africa	OP-4	18.4	12.9	UNDP		3							
36	Transcarpathian Biodiversity Protection (Ukraine)	OP-4	0.6	0.5	WB	National	1							X
37	Biodiversity Protection (Slovak Republic)	STRM/Pilot	3.2	2.3	WB	National	1							X
38	Nile Basin Initiative-Basin-Wide Shared Vision Program	OP-9 Pilot Phase	115	15	UNDP/WB	UNOPS/WB	10				TDA		X	

Summary of the Survey

Project Identification and Design

GEF project identification usually involves a variety of multinational and national organizations, including NGOs. In one-third of the projects, the GEF Secretariat was also involved. The GEF Secretariat's input was used mainly in more recent projects based on experience with the older ones. That is understandable, given GEF's rather short history. In recent projects, such as the second Danube Basin project, a consultant familiar with GEF requirements was hired to assist in finalizing the project proposal. In one of the latest projects under preparation, the Nile Basin project, the World Bank planning philosophy starting from the "vision" was utilized.

The existing regional conventions and international and multicountry agreements were recognized in the project preparation process. However, only seven projects were based on a special convention. The interest of national governments varied: usually national governments seemed to be more active in projects where the number of participating countries was relatively low, perhaps depending on the generally higher amount of financing available to each participating country.

NGOs were, to some extent, involved in project design. Selected NGOs were invited to participate in steering committees. The scientific community was usually used in project preparation. Only in three cases was the scientific community represented on the steering committee. Other commissions or secretariats were utilized in project preparation in half of the cases. In six projects, interministerial committees were formed during project preparation.

As a general conclusion, in most cases a wide variety of organizations are involved in the project preparation process. This is important in creating commitment and ownership. With respect to multicountry settings, the various stakeholders could be even more involved on a regional basis than they would be if each country attempted to involve them internally.

Project Implementation

Organization. Project organization usually consists of three levels: a regional decisionmaking body, a regional implementing unit, and national secretariats.

In the decisionmaking body, project member countries are usually represented by the appropriate ministries. Projects like the Mediterranean and Rio de la Plata efforts are implemented directly under the corresponding convention. The Danube Basin pilot phase project was steered by a task force in which other stakeholders, NGOs, and international donors were also represented.⁷

Most projects have project implementation/ coordinating units or regional secretariats handling day-to-day operations. The role of the regional secretariat with respect to national secretariats varies from project to project. In projects such as that at Lake Ohrid, both participating countries have their own project implementation units. Regional secretariats often coordinate regional expert groups. National secretariats may be independent agencies, or they may be directly under ministries.

The following observations about project organization can be made:

- It is important that the regional secretariat be an independent unit not bound to a national secretariat.
- In some projects, the appointed secretariat personnel are conducting that assignment in addition to other duties. This has prevented the secretariat from being as efficient as it could be. Both regional and national secretariats should therefore employ their personnel as full-time employees.
- Projects have benefited from involving stakeholders such as NGOs into the decisionmaking body.
- Intergovernmental multicountry organizations seem to be a very effective means of involving countries' sectoral ministries in addressing transboundary concerns. Multicountry organiza-

⁷ The Danube project now receives directions from the convention Conference of the Parties.

tions have been effective in enforcing national political and legislative interventions because of the harmonization that occurs in their multicountry processes.

The scientific community is usually involved in project preparation and implementation. It seems that it is often easier for scientists to work with multicountry issues than it is for policymakers. However, the cooperation of both groups is needed to obtain sustainable results. The extent to which the scientific community is needed in project management and decisionmaking remains to be analyzed. As noted, however, scientific analysis of data is critical in producing a TDA.

About half of the projects had arranged interministerial committees or other groups to cope with issues dispersed among several ministries. These arrangements have significantly improved the flow of information between ministries and improved the understanding of various points of view of the different ministries with respect to project issues. Many projects would benefit from more intensive interministerial multicountry cooperation in the form of improved information gathering and development of ways for producing “buy-in” with regard to needed changes.

In most projects, the involvement of the private sector and NGOs could be improved. The same applies to local governments, municipalities, and cities. The commitment of these groups is crucial for changing the attitudes and behavior of the initial target, the local populace.

The role of consultants varies in project implementation. International consultants have been used for tasks where regional expertise has not existed. In those cases, a transfer of knowledge to regional experts has been emphasized. The experience in projects examined shows that, for sustainable results, the use of local consultants is preferred.

Operational Linkages and Funding. The projects have established operational linkages with other project activities in the area in order to avoid duplication of effort and reduce competition. However, only a few operational linkages between GEF-funded projects were reported. The GEF Secretariat could negotiate with the implementing agencies regarding how GEF projects could benefit from other project

experiences and whether results could be improved through larger regional cooperation (e.g., Danube, Black Sea, Mediterranean, or Lake Malawi, Lake Tanganyika, and Nile Basin). More portfolio-wide interactions through programmatic approaches would help in addressing this problem.

Project funding occurs through the implementing agencies. On the average, 50 percent of funding was provided to governments, 15 percent was utilized by the PCUs, 27 percent was used by external consultants, and 6 percent was used by other groups such as NGOs. Based on such a small sample, it is difficult to say whether there are differences in funding allocations across projects conducted by the different implementing agencies.

Verifiable Indicators of Political Commitment.

The most frequently mentioned verifiable indicator was the financial or in-kind support of member countries to project activities or project coordination. Some projects followed the national budget allocations for the project. Expressions of support, whether written or oral, are also carefully noted.

To achieve the political and legislative changes needed to guarantee sustainable development, verifiable indicators should be identified.

Involvement of Other GEF Implementing Agencies.

The majority of the projects responding to the questionnaire regarded the involvement of other implementing agencies in the project in a positive manner. During project preparation, the involvement of several agencies was considered less important.

The World Bank could be involved in projects where economic development is important for environmental improvement. The World Bank’s role could also be to finance investments to model solutions directly related to pollution reduction.

UNDP could use the project mechanisms and expertise in developing and implementing technical assistance projects in related fields.

UNEP’s role could be in the area of scientific, legal, and policy issues. It could act as a coordinator of policy questions among countries in the region. An “honest broker” role related to other UN agencies was also proposed for UNEP.

Multicountry Issues That Have Required Special Attention. There was a vast variety of responses to this question. Most answers concerned issues related to communication, coordination, and data sharing. These issues should already be taken into account during project design. When planning a project, legal and social issues should be an integral part of project implementation just as are scientific and environmental concerns.

The free flow of data seems to be a problem in some projects. This also should be taken into account in the project design phase. One reason for limited information flow is language problems, particularly in regions where there is no common language. Another is data “protectionism” or commercialization: in some countries, organizations expect financial compensation to release data.

Perhaps the most difficult multicountry issues are related to different and conflicting uses of a particular resource. Conflicts between industrial waste, sludge, agriculture, water use, fishing, recreation, and biodiversity may occur both within and among countries. Selection of hotspots has also created problems between countries. Another problem is whether an upstream country is entitled to build a dam leaving the downstream areas without water.

Technical questions may create multicountry issues as well. This is especially common in international basins where the water flow unites all the countries in the watershed. The Lake Victoria water hyacinth problem is just one example.

Most Positive Aspects in Multicountry Implementation Arrangements. Most of the projects’ positive achievements are related to increased cooperation and mutual trust among the riparian countries and various stakeholder groups involved. In complex multicountry settings, the establishment of a positive atmosphere among countries must be regarded as an important achievement. Cooperation and creation of mutual trust has even been possible among groups of project participants where there are no political contacts between countries.

Challenges with Respect to Multicountry Settings. Most of the challenges related to a lack of commitment and involvement on the part of the various countries. Differing priorities, especially in regions with great economic differences, is a common prob-

lem in virtually all multicountry projects. Neither pure market solutions nor pure political and legislative solutions can be presented alone for resolving these issues; both types of solutions are needed.

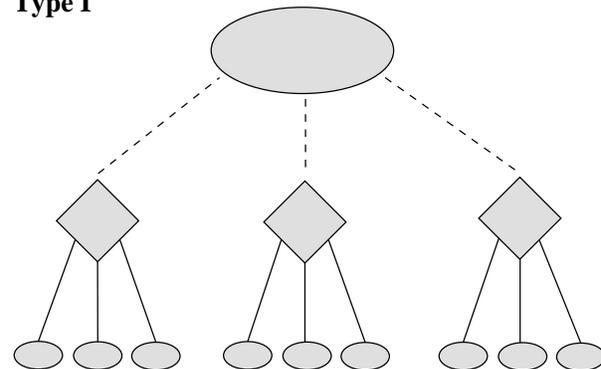
Organizational Structures

As mentioned above, project organizational structures vary considerably. In the following, a rough classification is made. It is impossible to place all of the projects in one of these categories; rather, they are meant as broad descriptions of the varying organizational models.

Regional project organizations usually have three basic levels: regional, national, and project. In addition to this, a decisionmaking body above a regional secretariat or implementing unit exists.

Type I regional project organization is presented below.

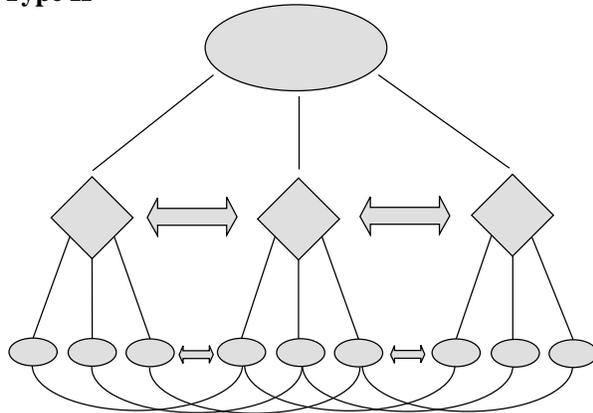
Type I



This type of organization consists of relatively independent national organizations with weak linkages to the regional unit. This type of organization is similar to those used in the Lake Victoria projects and, perhaps, the Lake Ohrid project. National independence allows countries to proceed at varying speeds suitable to each country. Considering the differences between countries in the projects, making progress in solving transboundary issues may be hampered. This applies to both technical and political components in project implementation. Because GEF projects are most dependent on regional activities, such activities need special attention in this kind of organizational structure. The Type II structure relies heavily on national coordinating units and both horizontal and vertical cooperation. The Danube Basin project organization

was of this general type. The decisionmaking body consisted not only of member countries, but also of other relevant organizations and is now the Conference of Parties in conjunction with the commission.

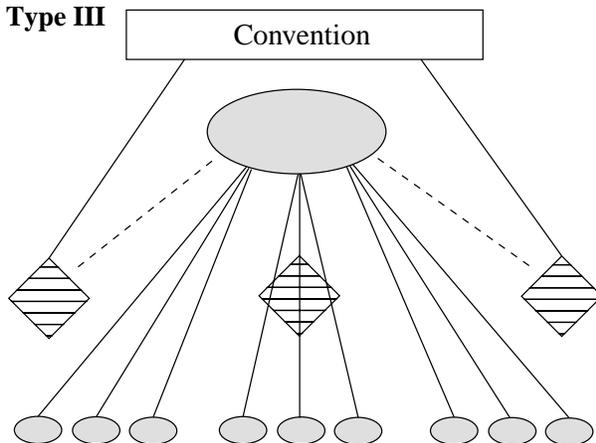
Type II



The Type II organization allows for tight contacts both horizontally and vertically. Having project components in direct contact with each other increases the effectiveness of information dissemination. This project structure requires special attention to connections with political decisionmakers; Otherwise, the complex network of contacts may lose its edge in catalyzing political and legislative change. The Type II structure requires much from cooperating parties. Thus, cultural, linguistic, and political closeness is important, as well as geographic proximity.

The Type III structure is presented below. In this structure, the regional secretariat has direct contacts to project components in various countries. Examples of this type of structure are the Mediterranean Sea project and HELCOM.

Type III



In this model, national bodies or ministries are not directly involved in project implementation and decisionmaking. Decisionmaking occurs through a convention, although its operationalization needs to take place via decisions at the national level.

This structure may be especially suitable in regions where there is a large number of countries. The legally binding convention allocates authority to the project organization with respect to riparian countries. Good coordination between project components and the regional unit allows for a good information flow from the project sites to the regional office; this would otherwise be very difficult in regions such as Mediterranean. The convention must be powerful enough to affect the riparian countries for needed institutional changes to take place. The project structures reflect the principle of tasks having regional dimensions being implemented at the regional level, tasks having national dimensions implemented at the national level, and tasks related to project components implemented at the project level. Several questions remain to be answered with regard to these organizational structures: Is it possible to find such a division of tasks? How does this division reflect the actual situation? Are there other aspects to be taken into account when designing a project organization?

Among the factors affecting project organization are the number and variety of countries, the resource in question, and political and economic realities. It may be that even though a project organization does not present the “ideal” structure, it may be the only structure the countries have been able to agree upon. Another issue influencing project structure may be the existing organizational structure of various stakeholders and their preferred ways of becoming involved in project implementation.

Lessons and Considerations

This final section outlines the main lessons arising from the thematic review. It also raises some considerations for GEF entities that may be useful for future development of multicountry projects. Note, however, that the history of GEF multicountry projects is still short and only a few such projects have been completed, most of which were designed during the pilot phase before the establishment of the Operational Strategy. Therefore, no firm and universal conclusions can be claimed. Furthermore, the thematic review has focused primarily on the international waters portfolio. Although selected biodiversity projects were initially included, the response rate to the questionnaire and participation of biodiversity project staff were very low. Consequently, only one biodiversity project was included in the field visits.

Facilitation in Complex Multicountry Issues

GEF can play a very important role in helping countries address multicountry environmental problems. Multicountry projects are invariably complex in design and include differing and often conflicting preferences by various stakeholders. This makes a multicountry setting politically sensitive—yet political acceptability is essential to success. For example, international waters projects, which can involve up to 15 to 20 countries that share a water body or basin, are necessarily complex in nature with a wide variety of social, political, economic, cultural, and physiographic conditions that must be taken into consideration depending on the nature of the priority transboundary water issue to be addressed.

The process of developing a shared vision and frame-

work for action in a multicountry setting can take more than a decade. It is evident that commitment and on-the-ground results in a multifaceted multicountry setting take time to develop.

The complex multicountry, multi-implementing agency structure requires more careful—and thus longer and often more expensive—preparation than a single-country setting. It is not enough that the project be technically and scientifically well prepared. The social, economic, and political aspects must also be taken into account. The inclusion of these aspects may prolong preparation time considerably.

Operations in GEF-funded multicountry projects could develop from (passive) consultations toward proactive regional implementation and leadership under a programmatic framework. Along this development, the utilization of OP-9 might be considered a tool. OP-8 project remediations are often so complicated that all three implementing agencies are needed. In OP-9 projects, which are of a more preventive type, cooperation with all implementing agencies may not be needed. Working in a simpler organizational context, quicker results might be expected.

Achieving a Shared Vision

Even in cases where there is a common understanding of the problem, the various countries involved may have different opinions about its importance and priority. The recipient countries may perceive that they have other more important priorities. Negative effects may be experienced in downstream countries, while

upstream countries may not feel the need to fix the problem.

The creation of political commitment and public awareness is especially difficult in regions where economic and social problems are given priority over environmental ones. These difficulties may be reinforced by a powerful industry sector resisting needed changes for financial reasons. These circumstances underscore the need for projects to identify and nurture “win-win” approaches that involve the private sector.

There is also the question of national sovereignty with respect to joint activities. Without a joint agreement, the unilateral effects of a single country’s actions may hinder solutions to environmental problems. On the other hand, the free rider problem—that is, a situation in which a party attempts to receive a benefit without contributing to its cost—may occur if there is no binding agreement among countries.

As noted in the GEF Operational Strategy elements related to international waters, initial strategic projects have been useful as the equivalent of enabling activities in other GEF focal areas by breaking down the barriers among countries and enabling a joint focus on high priorities. This approach allows complex situations to be broken down into several more manageable priority issues as part of the analyses to help speed understanding and implementation. The GEF-recommended processes of joint fact finding and sharing of information to produce a TDA helps facilitate agreement to focus on a few top-priority transboundary issues and sets the stage for countries’ production of a SAP of country-specific and regional actions regarding the policy, institutional, legal reforms and investments needed to address the transboundary priorities.

A well-timed succession of GEF-financed interventions constitutes a pragmatic approach to addressing such complex international waters and multicountry institutional issues. Following an initial strategic project, one or more multicountry and/or single-country projects may be appropriate to implement the reforms and investments outlined by the countries in the SAPs. Following agreements in the SAP, such a sequence might also be part of a programmatic approach to implementation resulting from a strategic project for particularly complex and difficult situations.

For the TDA-SAP approach to be more efficient, it should involve all of the implementing agencies. It should also focus broadly not only on scientific and technical dimensions, but also on the need to include socio-politico-economic dimensions. It should involve all relevant stakeholders, including the public and private sectors and civil society.

Six projects of those reviewed had already carried out either a TDA, SAP, or both. Eleven other projects are planning or finalizing their TDA/SAPs. Sufficient materials to collect experiences and conduct an analysis about the approach and its advantages and disadvantages as compared with other approaches, such as the “shared vision” approach, are not yet available.

When faced with complex situations, the solution might be parallel components consisting of a strategic project that produces the TDA and SAP and a component that conducts demonstration projects in each country related to the suspected top-priority transboundary issue. This strategic approach is valuable in that it may not only gain the multicountry commitments to collaboration but also energize and involve ministries, subnational governments, communities, and NGOs in the site work that precedes the upcoming implementation phase. To maintain commitment at the local and national levels, more concrete benefit-producing components should be present at the initial stages of the project. This could be a pilot project or an investment in a development activity. Microprojects and demonstrations have produced some positive results, although when implemented, implications regarding incremental cost have to be taken into account.

Implementation of activities needing immediate action might start in parallel with project preparation. In most projects there are hotspots that affect the environment and that can be assessed without extensive and time-consuming study.

Ecosystem Approach Key to Transboundary Resource Management

In cases where the ecosystem is regional, multicountry approaches are needed to address sustainable development of transboundary resources with a specific focus on a reduction of externalities. The management of a shared ecosystem requires an integrated and holistic approach.

The ecosystem-based approaches detailed in the international waters elements of the Operational Strategy strongly suggest that entire basins be considered if important transboundary linkages exist and that all the linked problems such as habitat loss, pollution, overfishing, and water diversion be addressed if they constitute priority problems. The production of the TDA often involves the science community so that analyses of the complex linkages are available to all participants. It does no good to just treat symptoms of problems such as weeds when the root causes remain unaddressed or other considerations such as overfishing still drive ecosystem degradation. An important lesson involves including the drainage basin as part of the ecosystem approach to international waters and to address fisheries, pollution, and habitat loss when they are linked to water body degradation as well. Many of the regional projects initiated activities that focused only on water resources without including an explicit analysis of actions to tackle land-based sources of environmental problems. As a result of past experiences, most projects have plans to address these issues at a later stage.

The inclusion of the entire catchment into the project analysis and design from the outset could also shorten the time required for activities to begin having an impact.

Importance of Broad-Based Participation

Political commitment at the highest level is necessary to ensure smooth operation of multicountry institutions and on-the-ground implementation of the actions identified in strategic projects. Such commitments have been expressed in numerous multicountry regional conventions that set the tone for many of the GEF projects reviewed here. Where no political commitment other than an agreement to proceed on a GEF project was present, commitments for policy, institutional, and/or legal reforms and investments have been slow to emerge. A series of conventions that are progressively more specific regarding commitments or a series of updated protocols or annexes are also proving useful to express multicountry commitments to action for transboundary issues. GEF implementing agencies have played, and are poised to continue to play, an important catalytic role in facilitating this evolution of commitments and of multicountry institutional arrangements over time.

The involvement of relevant existing organizations has clearly improved the commitment of stakeholders, and thus made the projects easier to implement. There are many different ministries involved in the same areas. Dialogue and communication have benefited from arrangements such as interministerial committees. The inclusion of relevant NGOs has been important in involving local stakeholders into the project framework. There have been some good experiences in letting local NGOs coordinate local project activities. NGOs may also play an important role in influencing policymakers regarding needed legislative interventions.

All relevant stakeholders (regional, national, and local governments; NGOs; the scientific community; and the private sector) must be involved in the process. The motivation and ownership thereby achieved are crucial to producing sustainable results.

Multicountry transboundary settings include myriad issues—technical, legal, institutional, behavioral, scientific, capacity, etc.—and project designs together with critical needs for important funding resources. This underscores the importance of strong donor coordination and cofinancing and can justify the partnerships based on comparative advantages and co-implementation by GEF implementing agencies. Most of the project areas already have activities funded and conducted by several international, regional, and/or bilateral agencies. Good coordination of activities and avoidance of duplication of work is beneficial to all parties. Competition among the funding agencies for the projects sometimes hinders such cooperation. Donor coordination is therefore important and should take place in a country-driven context, which can provide a framework for the different interventions. Such a framework may be based on a TDA-SAP or within evolving programmatic approaches. GEF projects can and should be used to leverage funding and actions by other actors operating in the same region.

With the complexity of these situations, collaboration among GEF implementing agencies according to their comparative advantages is proving to be a success story in overcoming barriers to multicountry action to restore and protect transboundary waters. Similarly, involving other executing agencies has been a strength of implementing agencies in this focal area. Executing agencies such as OAS, FAO, UNIDO, IMO, IOC, PAHO, IDB, SPREP, EBRD,

and AfDB are beginning to spread the reach of GEF implementing agencies in harnessing other competent organizations to assist countries to address their shared transboundary water problems. Collaboration with bilaterals and other donors can accelerate strategic work and time to implementation on the ground. While different priorities of different donors may create challenges and even problems, the existence of a SAP and the development of programmatic approaches to certain water bodies with complex situations provide a framework for all donors to assist recipient countries with the top-priority interventions detailed in their SAPs. This also provides a framework within which to harness comparative advantages of different executing agencies.

NGOs and the scientific community can play important roles in multicountry projects to ensure (1) transparency and political support, (2) that sound science is utilized to improve management decisionmaking, and (3) subnational level implementation of interventions at hotspots and in community-based activities.

Involvement of Multiple Levels of Institutions

Work on multiple levels of institutions is essential for, in particular, GEF international waters projects addressing transboundary water bodies and basins. The projects benefit from work on the international or multicountry level by countries that share the water body or basin: At the single-country national level, interministerial committees involve the sectors that create the stress on the water bodies in producing the input to the multicountry processes on behalf of each country and then translating the international political mandate down to the third institutional level, subnational governments and communities for implementation on the ground. The country-specific interministerial committees are key elements in ensuring expected outcomes.

The GEF Operational Strategy for international waters suggests that GEF project design include the development of transboundary mechanisms that can harmonize national activities in order to address the root causes of environmental problems. A succession of GEF international waters projects may be appropriate where the preparatory phase produces a TDA-SAP, and the next phase involves implementation of the SAP. It has been beneficial to projects if they have been able to produce a TDA-SAP as a basis for further activities.

The three-level strategy from regional to national and from national to local has applicability in multicountry projects. Experience shows that it is easier to reach a regional agreement that binds countries to harmonize their activities, for example, at the convention level, than to do it the other way around. The legally binding regional agreement may then be applied in the participating countries. In GEF projects, this is a long stage and advances at various speeds in different countries. An active multicountry organization is important during that process. It maintains a transparent database and provides a common means for countries to report their results. Alongside the national legislative activities, the third step—from national to local—may begin with increased local commitment emerging through a changed incentive structure and its enforcement. The role of information dissemination and public awareness cannot be overemphasized in this regard.

It is not always possible, however, to begin a regional initiative by providing support through a multicountry body. Channeling funds through national recipients may be appropriate, but the project design should nevertheless incorporate a truly regional component. The intent to build the regional level as well as the proposed process should always be clearly spelled out in project documents.

The sustainability of regional bodies is the key issue that should be taken into account in the project's preparation stage. Funding of regional arrangements should be ensured beyond the project cycle. Thus, those organizations that will be involved over the long term should be integrated into the mainstream of the participating countries' organizational structures.

Policy and Legislative Implications

The long time span of project activities seems to highlight a need for institutional changes and institutional development. Conventions and their institutions evolve over time toward more specific commitments. This evolution has implications for project organizations, and implies that GEF's role is a catalytic one. The institutional structures among countries are sometimes very different. For example, a common incentive structure and enforcement system for the project as a whole may be difficult to establish. Common and objective identification and measurement of indicators may be difficult to agree upon. Countries may or may not be sensitive to the

extent of environmental damage caused by their behavior.

Policy and legislative implications and interventions unfortunately seem to play only a minor role in the early phases of GEF involvement in the current portfolio. Projects often do not have components for a proper analysis of policy and behavioral implications. Project activities seldom have ways of tying national policymakers in as integral parts of project implementation. The Operational Strategy suggests a focus on policy, institutional, and legal reforms in subsequent projects.

Experience in GEF projects has shown that multicountry coordination of policy reforms requires mutual trust which often can be created only over a long time span. A relatively powerful regional coordinating unit, preferably backed by a convention, has turned out to be helpful in the process of political and legislative harmonization.

Even if countries in some projects have been able to alter relevant legislation, lack of enforcement and monitoring systems hinder legislative effectiveness in many cases. Similarly, the incentive structure for changing behavior could be influenced by political, legislative, and economic means.

Financial Issues

The preparatory process of a multicountry project involves extra transaction costs (incremental costs) that should be taken into account in making decisions about the funding of multicountry project preparation. Implications on PDF and administrative resources should be considered; this means that a significantly higher amount of resources should be allocated to these operations, both at the preparatory and supervisory stages.

There is evidence that Block-B money for producing a TDA-SAP has been an effective way of utilizing these resources. However, the maximum limit of \$350,000 may not be sufficient for that purpose. In such cases, a full project may be used for the preparation of a TDA-SAP.

In projects dealing with transboundary resources and those in which GEF's role is to focus on producing global benefits, it seems important to create financing packages that allow national benefits to accrue to the

participating countries. Such packages have led to increased commitment on the part of the project participants in the projects covered by this review. Furthermore, threats to the regional and global environment frequently stem from local actions and are caused by social and economic conditions in the area. There is need to address these root causes if the transboundary environmental conditions are to be improved. This suggests a package in which a GEF project is combined with a project by one of the implementing agencies addressing the development issues and national benefits.

One of the factors that makes it difficult to determine incremental costs is that those paying the cost of environmentally destructive activities are often in another political jurisdiction from the sources or causes of the environmental problems. The polluter may not even be aware of the damage caused. The question of who should pay the cost of an activity having a negative impact on the environment becomes a regional property rights question requiring regional political decisions. National (societal) costs and costs of individual behavior must be clearly defined to potentially highlight the agreed incremental cost that might be supported by GEF. Evidence suggests that the market alone, operating on the "polluter pays" principle is not always capable of solving these problems.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Monitoring and evaluation plays a central role in managing complex multicountry projects. Effective M&E systems can provide transparency among participating countries and project components regarding project progress and results. While GEF may play a role in starting the system, the collection of M&E data should be internalized and taken over by the participating countries. These data would ideally be posted in a regional database accessible to all stakeholders.

Each of the multicountry project designs should include indicators at three levels: (1) process indicators (focusing on processes likely to lead toward a desirable outcome—an example would be completion of a SAP); (2) stress reduction indicators (concrete actions that will reduce the environmental stress on the shared ecosystem, such as installation of a sewage treatment system); and (3) environmental status indicators (measures of actual improvement of ecosystem quality). Complex multicountry projects could also

benefit from identification of indicators for factors such as mutual trust among countries, public sentiment, and stakeholder commitment.

The development of process indicators allowing the monitoring and evaluation of trends and improvements in the regional cooperation process—i.e., policy analysis and behavioral modifications—is needed. This could help shorten the time required for political and legal interventions.

As the time scale during which actual environmental benefits can be expected is lengthy and benefits

would likely start accruing only after the project life span, it is important to ensure the sustainability of the M&E system. The system should therefore be integrated into the regular mechanisms of the participating countries or a convention/treaty. Alternative funding sources should be explored.

Programmatic approaches may provide ways of developing a longer term setting through a phased approach. Benchmarks, milestones, and other indicators should be developed for this purpose.

Acronyms

AfDb	African Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EPDRB	Environmental Program for Danube River Basin
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	geographic information system
HELCOM	Helsinki Commission
ICM	integrated coastal management
IDA	individual credit agreement
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IMO	International Maritime Organization
JCP	Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Program
LME	large marine ecosystem
LVEMP	Lake Victoria Environmental Management Program
LVFO	Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MED POL	Program for Pollution Monitoring and Research in the Mediterranean Sea
METAP	Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Program
MEDU	MAP Coordinating Unit
NGO	non-governmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OP	operational program
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PDF	Project Development Facility
PDMO	Program Development and Management Office
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMTF	Project Management Task Force
PSC	Program Steering Committee
SAP	Strategic Action Program
SIP	SAP Implementation Program
SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environment Program
TDA	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis
UNDP	United National Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Beginning on or around August 2, 1999, the consultant will provide up to 16 person weeks of services to the World Bank (Global Environment Coordination – Africa Region) in close collaboration with the GEF Secretariat Monitoring and Evaluation Program to assist in carrying out a thematic review of multi-country project arrangements.

Background

A sizable portion of the GEF portfolio—including all but a handful of international waters projects—involve more than one country. The 1998 Project Implementation Review (PIR) identified a number of advantages that multicountry approaches can offer. However, these projects can often be more complex than those carried out in a single country, and present a number of challenges to GEF and its implementing agencies. One of these challenges, in fact, is the greater importance for collaboration *among* implementing agencies, both in activities carried out with GEF funding and in their own assistance programs.

Objective

The objective of the review is to identify emerging lessons from experience about what kinds of multi-country approaches have worked, what have not, why, and under what circumstances. For activities that require joint efforts and commitments by more than one country, what characteristics of project design and inter-institutional collaboration processes and structures facilitate effective decision making and implementation on transboundary issues? The review would also look into the issues pertaining to

preparation and administration of the multi-country projects from the point of view of the implementing agencies and the GEF Secretariat. Answers to these questions will be fed back into the design of future projects as well as help guide projects already underway.

The review will focus on multi-country projects in the GEF portfolio that address transboundary issues within a common ecosystem or other geographical area requiring joint action by participating countries. These include projects that deal with transboundary water bodies, e.g., most of the international waters portfolio; and projects (or sets of projects) that address issues in a transboundary protected area or corridor.

Approach for the Review

The proposed review will analyze experience in greater depth than is possible during PIRs, but is not intended to be a full, field-level program evaluation. It will be based on document and literature review, interviews, and limited field visits. The review will catalog the variety of arrangements used in multi-country GEF projects to date, and examine their performance in terms of a number of measures. These measures are intended to capture the outcomes typically sought from successful approaches to inter-institutional collaboration and project design and implementation. They will be further elaborated during the initial stages of the review itself, but are likely to include the following factors:

- participating countries accept the need for joint actions to address common problems in the ecosystem

- decision making on transboundary issues is informed by science and fully involves all relevant stakeholders
- project initiatives are internalized within participating countries
- more is achieved through multicountry arrangements than through the sum of individual country actions
- there is a sufficient level of commitment of time and resources by participating countries
- implementation is on schedule
- project activities are sustained following project completion
- project participants learn from and share experiences
- inter-donor coordination is effective.
- the existence of a high-level declaration or convention among participating countries
- whether implementation is directed by a special coordination unit created specifically for the project or integrated within existing institutional structures
- the primary role of the project coordination unit: executive or advisory
- leadership qualities
- whether an international steering committee or similar is used
- underlying country socio-economic factors
- the degree of influence within their countries of those representing them in multicountry project mechanisms
- the extent of stakeholder involvement

The review will relate performance on these measures to a number of variables. It will try to determine whether there is evidence that the desired outcomes are affected by any of them. These variables will be further elaborated, but might include:

- whether the project requires *joint* decisions and actions among participating countries/agencies to achieve its objectives, or whether actions are taken independently by each one
- the urgency or immediacy of the issue being addressed to the participating countries
- how the project idea originated
- the nature of the design process, including the amount of time and resources devoted to it
- the number of countries and/or agencies participating
- existing/ongoing relationships among the countries/agencies participating (beyond project activities)
- whether or not the project builds on existing regional agreements, institutions, or mechanisms
- the structure of collaboration among implementing agencies, other donors
- an implementing agency's own procedures, experience, and incentives as they relate to multicountry (as opposed to individual country) projects
- whether the project is executed by an international organization.

It is recognized that multicountry projects may require more time and resources to prepare and administer. The review will also analyze this issue and its consequences and identify whether certain types of institutional and implementation arrangements can be utilized in order to reduce the project preparation time and the resources required for its implementation without sacrificing the quality and sustainability of the project.

Review Process

The review will be carried out in six steps. It will begin with an inventory of all multicountry projects in the current GEF portfolio of projects that have begun implementation. This inventory will be based on the 1998 PIR reports and a review of other project

documents for projects not included in the 1998 PIR. The databases developed of the biodiversity and climate change portfolios for the respective program indicators exercises could be used for the inventory, as well. A limited number of non-GEF projects suggested by the secretariat and implementing agencies may also be included.

The second step will be to develop a series of key questions and hypotheses based on the performance measures and variables agreed upon for the review. It will be used to guide interviews with implementing agency and GEF secretariat staff, including project managers and perhaps executing agencies. At the same time, a desk review (also based on these key questions) of PIR reports, other project reports and evaluations, and literature relevant to the subject of the review will be carried out.

From the desk review, ten to twelve projects will be selected for more in-depth interviews with people knowledgeable about project experience. These interviews would be step 3.

Two to three projects will then be selected for field visits in consultation with the implementing agencies. The selected projects should include both international waters and biodiversity projects. The field visits would be carried out by the consultant joined by GEF Secretariat staff. The field visits will be coordinated with implementing agencies and, whenever possible, will be carried out in conjunction with planned supervision and other missions in order to ensure the involvement of the implementing agency staff and to minimize the disturbance to the project. These field visits may be spread over a longer period of time.

The consultant, in consultation with the GEF Secretariat staff member in charge of the project, will prepare a draft report based on the work that has been carried out by October 15, 1999. This first draft report will be reviewed, discussed within the GEF, and revised for inclusion (second draft report) in the 1999 PIR process—step 4.

In step 5, the review methodology will be revisited in light of the experiences gained and further field visits will be organized as deemed appropriate. This will lead to the preparation of the third draft report.

In the final step (6), the third draft report will be circulated to the implementing and executing agen-

cies. A workshop will be organized where it will be reviewed and revised based on an in-depth discussion and the results of the further field visits.

The results of the review will be disseminated widely to all stakeholders through a variety of means. A *GEF Lessons Notes* issue will be prepared on the main findings and recommendations of the review.

Timetable

The assignment would be implemented according to the following timetable:

Step 1: Portfolio inventory; development of detailed methodology and work plan—Completed by August 8, 1999

Step 2: Desk review of project reports; selection of projects for in-depth review—Completed by August 20, 1999

Step 3: In-depth review of selected projects; interviews with key individuals in the implementing agencies and GEF Secretariat—Completed by September 3, 1999

Step 4: Field visits to selected projects (possible that at this stage only one key project will be visited)

1st draft report—Submitted for review by GEF Secretariat by October 15, 1999

2nd draft report—Revised and completed taking into account GEF Secretariat comments by November 1, 1999, for inclusion in the PIR process

Step 5: Further field visits to additional projects (probably two). Preparation of 3rd draft report—Completed by February 29, 2000

Step 6: Workshop and preparation of final report—Completed by March 31, 2000

Reporting and Supervision

In providing these services, the consultant will work under the day-to-day supervision and guidance of Christophe Crepin, World Bank Task Manager of this study, Global Environment Coordinator for the Africa Region in close collaboration with Juha I. Uitto, the M&E Specialist assigned to coordinate and oversee this review in the GEF Secretariat.

Annex 2: Survey Questionnaire

Name of the project Implementing Agencies

Dear Project Leader,

GEF is conducting a Thematic Review on multi-country implementation issues in projects within GEF involvement. For this purpose we need information from projects on their experiences in this area. We will kindly ask you to answer the questions below **and return the questionnaire to your GEF Implementing Agency contact by October 22.**

Project relations with respect to transboundary issues

Project identification and design

In this section the questions concern the period prior to the actual implementation. Please, choose one or more from the given alternatives by circling the corresponding number.

1. Which organization(s) were involved in development of the proposal from concept to the stage of GEF submission?

1. The World Bank
2. UNDP
3. UNEP
4. GEF Secretariat
5. Other multinational organizations, which _____
6. Bilateral organizations, which _____
7. Multi-country body, which _____
8. Single country, which _____
9. National organizations, which _____
10. Private sector, which _____
11. Other, what _____

2. Was the project design influenced by other projects either GEF or non-GEF projects?

1. No
2. Yes. If yes, please, provide details.

3. List any conventions or international legal agreements to which this project directly relates.

4. How were the national governments involved in the project design process?

- | | | |
|--|---|---------|
| 1. Were involved throughout the project design | Were they involved on a steering committee for project preparation? | 1. None |
| 2. Participated from time to time | | 2. Some |
| 3. Were not particularly involved | | 3. All |

5. How were the non-governmental organizations involved in the project design process?

- | | | |
|--|---|---------|
| 1. Were involved throughout the project design | Were they involved on a steering committee for project preparation? | 1. None |
| 2. Participated from time to time | | 2. Some |
| 3. Were not particularly involved | | 3. All |

6. How was the scientific community involved in the project design process?

- | | | |
|--|---|-------|
| 1. Were involved throughout the project design | Were they involved on a steering committee for project preparation? | 1 No |
| 2. Participated from time to time | | 2 Yes |
| 3. Were not particularly involved | | |

7. How were sub national organizations involved in the project design process?

- | | | |
|--|---|---------|
| 1. Were involved throughout the project design | Were they involved on a steering committee for project preparation? | 1. None |
| 2. Participated from time to time | | 2. Some |
| 3. Were not particularly involved | | 3. All |

8. Were any relevant international Commissions or Secretariats involved in the project design?

- | | | |
|--|---|-------|
| 1. Were involved throughout the project design | Were they involved on a steering committee for project preparation? | 1 No |
| 2. Participated from time to time | | 2 Yes |
| 3. Were not particularly involved | | |

9. Were inter-ministerial committees formed in individual countries during the project design?

1. No
2. Yes. If yes, please, give details

Please, also comment on the role of planning ministries and finance ministries from each country in the project?
Did they attend meetings?

Project implementation

These questions concern the period starting from the actual beginning of project implementation.

An indicative list of questions of interest to GEF is provided in boxes on the right column of most questions. Some points in boxes may not be equally relevant to all projects.

10. Please, give a short description about how project implementation is organized (please, supply an organigram if available).

Think about the organizational setting with respect to the following items:

- Is the project implemented jointly or separately in various countries? Why?
- Decision making: steering committees, project management groups, etc. How often meet, who attend?
- Problem solving processes
- Mechanism for guaranteeing each parties' commitment
- How the multi-country institutional arrangements are projected to carry on after the GEF project ends?

11. How is the Project Coordination Unit or coordinating function organized (please, supply an organigram if available)?

Think about the organizational setting with respect to the following items:

- No. of persons
- Location(s) and structure(s)
- Independently established or related to an existing structure
- Participation arrangements of various stakeholders
- Funding of PCU's
- Capacity building for the future

12. Please, provide a brief description of the role, if any, of the following groups in project execution

- a. Intergovernmental Multi-country organizations
- b. Individual participating governments
- c. The scientific community – nature of involvement
- d. Inter-ministerial or inter-ministry groups within each country
- e. Private sector
- f. Non-governmental (including community based) organizations
- g. Local government (provincial, district, municipalities, cities, etc., local people)

13. How were consultants (local/international) used in the project?

14. Please, outline the operational linkages between the project and similar or related activities at national and regional level

Think about the linkages with respect to following issues:

- What kinds of meetings: How often? Who are usually attending? Who should be attending but are usually not?
- Other means of communication? And coordination?
- What types of information are typically shared?
- Are there any formal or informal coordination agreements (e.g. MOU, Cooperation agreements, etc?)

15. What percent of project funding was:

- a. provided to governments to undertake project activities _____ %
- b. utilized by the coordinating unit _____ %
- c. used by external consultants _____ %
- d. other groups such as NGO's _____ %

16. What are the verifiable indicators of political commitment from the participating countries to the project?

Indicators may relate to e.g.

- Legislation/policy
- Budgets
- Institutional arrangements
- Manpower
- International/ Regional Convention ratification
- In-kind support
- Investments

17. Would the involvement of other GEF implementing agencies be needed to provide follow-up investments (WB), technical assistance (UNDP) or science and legal issues (UNEP) to improve the outcome of the project? Which agencies and why?

18. Give three examples in your project where multi-country institutional issues have needed special attention.

- | |
|-------------------|
| For the issues |
| • Problems |
| • Solutions |
| • Lessons learned |

19. In your opinion, what have been the most positive aspects in your project regarding multi-country implementation arrangements?

20. In your opinion, what have been the most difficult aspects in your project regarding multi-country implementation arrangements?

Thank you for your effort. We hope that this valuable information will help other projects in transboundary issues.