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GEF COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION: PHILIPPINES (1992-2007)

(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed Document GEF/ME/C.31/4, *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: the Philippines (1992-2007)*, and document GEF/ME/C.31/6, *Management Response to the GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: the Philippines*, takes notes of the recommendations of the evaluation and the management response and requests the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for developing country programs and strategies, in consultation with the GEF Agencies and taking into account their country assistance programs, for recipients with significant GEF support like the Philippines.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Philippines has been a long standing partner of the GEF. It has received GEF financial support since 1992 through a variety of projects and activities in collaboration with the GEF Agencies, government agencies, and civil society.

2. The evaluation of the GEF support to the Philippines took place from December 2006 to April 2007 following the Standard Terms of Reference for the GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation developed by the GEF Evaluation Office in October 2006. It was conducted by staff of the GEF Evaluation Office and an evaluation team of international and local consultants. The objectives of the evaluation are to provide the GEF Council with an assessment of how the GEF is implemented in the Philippines. It reports on results from projects and assesses how these projects are linked to national environmental and sustainable development strategies as well as to the GEF mandate of generating global environmental benefits within its focal areas.

3. The focus of the evaluation was 30 GEF national projects, the GEF Small Grants Programme and a few selected regional projects in which the Philippines participate with an estimated GEF investment of \$145 million. These activities were approved by the GEF Council (where applicable) and endorsed by the CEO between 1992 and December 2006 (the GEF Pilot Phase to the end of GEF3). Projects in the pipeline for GEF4 were not included. These activities have been implemented primarily by two of the GEF Agencies, the World Bank (WB) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Recently UNIDO and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have started implementation of GEF projects.

4. The evaluation reaches the following conclusions:

- (1) The GEF support has been relevant to the Philippine national development plans and its environmental priorities;
- (2) GEF support to the Philippines has been relevant to the objectives and mandate of the GEF;
- (3) GEF support to the Philippines has produced global environmental benefits but declining environmental trends and lack of compliance endanger these achievements;
- (4) There are several inefficiencies related to the GEF's portfolio in the Philippines.

5. The findings and conclusions of the evaluation lead to the following recommendation to the GEF Council:

- (1) The GEF should develop country programs and strategies for large recipients of GEF support like the Philippines.

6. Furthermore, the following recommendations have been brought to the attention of the Government of the Philippines:

- (2) Compliance with the environmental policies and regulations requires urgent attention;
- (3) The Philippines could consider including in future GEF support the globally unique small island regions, land degradation and improvement to climate change resilience;
- (4) Improve the efficiency of the GEF mechanisms in the Philippines.

1. BACKGROUND

1. The Philippines has been a long standing partner of the GEF. It has received GEF financial support since 1992 through a variety of projects and activities in collaboration with the GEF Agencies, government agencies, and civil society.

2. The evaluation of the GEF support to the Philippines took place from December 2006 to April 2007 following the Standard Terms of Reference for the GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation developed by the GEF Evaluation Office in October 2006. It was conducted by staff of the GEF Evaluation Office and an evaluation team of international and local consultants. The objectives of the evaluation are to provide the GEF Council with an assessment of how the GEF is implemented in the Philippines. It reports on results from projects and assesses how these projects are linked to national environmental and sustainable development strategies as well as to the GEF mandate of generating global environmental benefits within its focal areas. It did not enter into the question of how well the GEF portfolio in the Philippines matches the guidance of the conventions to which the Philippines is a party.¹

3. The Philippines was selected through a stratified randomized selection process first and then by a set of strategic criteria in which opportunities of synergies with on-going evaluations in the Evaluation Office play a role. The Philippines has been one of the largest recipients of GEF support, it will receive country RAF allocations in both climate change and biodiversity, it has one of the longest standing GEF Small Grant Programmes, all relevant GEF Agencies have been engaged and the environment sector is an essential part of the national sustainable development agenda.

4. The methodology included a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and tools, primarily reviewing existing information, extensive interviews with key GEF stakeholders, one major consultation workshop and visits to the sites of selected GEF supported projects. The evaluation explores three key questions for the GEF and the Philippines:

(1) Is the GEF support relevant to the Philippines national development agenda, environmental priorities and the GEF mandate?

(2) Is the GEF support efficient as indicated by the time, effort and money it takes to develop and implement GEF projects; synergies and partnerships between GEF projects and between GEF and government agencies as well as other GEF stakeholders? and

(3) what are the results of the GEF support?

5. The focus of the evaluation was 30 GEF national projects, the GEF Small Grants Programme and a few selected regional projects in which the Philippines participate with an

¹ The Evaluation Office looks at responsiveness to guidance of the Conventions in other evaluations, such as the evaluations of the focal areas.

estimated GEF investment of \$145 million.² These activities were approved by the GEF Council or CEO between 1992 and December 2006 (the GEF Pilot Phase to the end of GEF3). Projects in the pipeline for GEF4 were not included. These activities have been implemented primarily by two of the GEF Agencies, the World Bank (WB) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Recently UNIDO and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have started implementation of GEF projects.³ The following figure and table depict the distribution of projects across focal areas, project status, GEF Agency and GEF modalities of projects.

Figure 1. Amount of GEF funding for all GEF activities in the Philippines according to the focal areas and GEF Agency

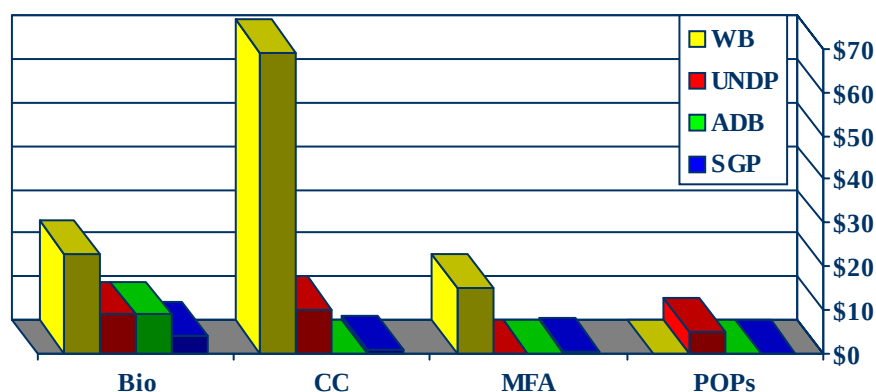
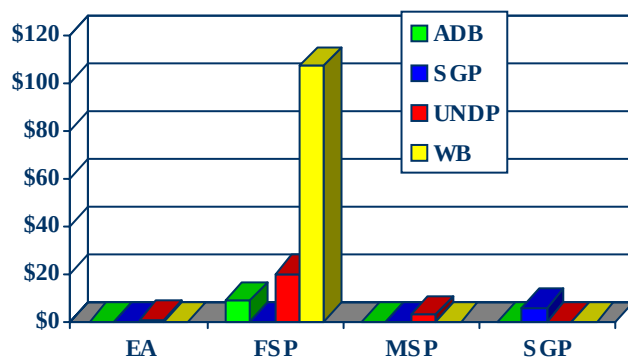


Figure 2. Amount of GEF funding for all GEF activities in the Philippines according to GEF modality and GEF Agency



² Funding for regional projects are not allocated by country so there was no attempt at trying to determine the amount received or implemented by the Philippines. The Philippines has participated in several regional projects under the international waters focal area but only two were considered, PEMSEA and MANTI, have been considered here, since their projects units are located in Manila. This is not the case for the other projects.

³ UNEP does not have GEF national projects in the Philippines, although UNEP implements a few regional projects in which the Philippines participate, but these are not included since their bases of operations are not located in this country.

2. CONCLUSIONS

Relevance of the Portfolio

6. The evaluation reviewed the relevance of the GEF support to the country's sustainable development agenda and its environmental priorities as well as the GEF mandate and focal area programs and strategies. The major conclusions are the following.

Conclusion 1: The GEF support has been relevant to the Philippines national development plans and its environmental priorities.

Detailed findings

The GEF support is on line with the development and national priorities set up in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan.

7. In the energy sector, the GEF support has focused on energy efficiency and renewable energy, both of them considered high priority in the Medium Term Philippines Development Plan (MTPDP). Two ongoing projects address removal of barriers to energy efficiency and seek to increase investments in energy efficiency activities. Since the Philippines is an island state (with more than 7,000 islands) renewable energy systems such as solar and wind are considered as the most cost-effective means of making power available in remote areas. Several GEF activities are promoting this goal, for example the Leyte-Luzon Geothermal project, the Palawan Renewable Energy project (solar), a project to build capacity to remove barriers to renewable energy and the rural electrification project (solar) and projects within the climate change area of the GEF SGP. The MTPDP 2004-2010 indicates the Philippines plan to become a world leader in geothermal energy, wind and solar power in Southeast Asia. The GEF support has contributed to this ambitious goal.

8. In biodiversity, GEF support was found to be highly relevant to the national agenda and instrumental in the establishment, development and consolidation of the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS). Furthermore, through the support to the implementation to the NIPAS and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) initiative, the GEF support contributed in the substantial expansion of the protected areas system. The GEF has contributed to slow down the continue degradation of forest ecosystems and loss of natural forest. Another priority on the national agenda has been the development of ecotourism and payment for environmental services. Both of these areas have been supported by the GEF: notably in the Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park through the Conservation of Priority Protected Areas Project and trough the Tubbataha and the Bohol Marine Triangle projects. Many projects have combined elements of conservation, sustainable use and local livelihoods, which are in line with the MTDPs.

The relevance of the GEF support to national action plans developed within the GEF focal areas was very high

9. GEF support was found relevant to the development and implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPA), the National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention and the National Capacity Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management, among others.

There is a high level of country ownership and commitment to GEF support.

10. The evaluation found national ownership behind the majority of the GEF support. The projects originate within national agencies (i.e., the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Department of Energy, DOE); local authorities (i.e., Metro Manila Development Authority, and the Local Government of Marikina); NGOs (i.e. Foundation for the Philippine Environment, Haribon Foundation, CARE, Conservation International, and WWF) or local stakeholders (i.e., stakeholders to the Tubbataha Reefs Marine National Park and World Heritage Site). Many of the GEF initiatives are based on existing initiatives and have been demand driven with good commitment from both governments and civil society. However, respondents also expressed that GEF funds often are seen as donor or aid funding, in particular at the level of the GEF Agencies and the National Executing Agencies, and that donor requirements and needs are to be followed. This sometimes overshadows the GEF guidelines and policies.

GEF project documents do not reflect their relevance to the Medium Term Philippines Development Plan

11. Although the GEF-support is highly relevant to the Philippine national agenda it was found that some of the project documentation actually fails to establish specific links to the MTPDP and how the activity supports it. This appears to be a result of a weak M&E system of the GEF project portfolio.

Conclusion 2: GEF support to the Philippines has been relevant to the objectives and mandate of the GEF.
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Detailed Findings

GEF support in line with the biodiversity focal area ...

12. The GEF support has targeted conservation and sustainable use at species and subspecies levels including the majority of the country's endemic and threatened species. Activities have often been concentrated in larger priority areas in urgent needs for conservation action representing a substantial number of globally threatened species. The focus of the GEF support has been in 8 of the 16 Philippine terrestrial biogeographic regions⁴, mostly on the larger islands,

⁴ Biogeographic regions are areas of animal and plant distribution having similar or shared characteristics throughout. In the case of the Philippines there are 16 terrestrial and six marine biogeographic regions. Each of the

such as Luzon and Mindanao. Other and equal unique ecosystems and extremely vulnerable biodiversity within nine globally unique biogeographic regions located on smaller islands in western Philippines had no or insufficient attention from the GEF. It is within these smaller regions where the highest number of critical threatened species occurs and where most natural habitats now are near-depleted and soon fully converted.

... the climate change focal area ...

13. In climate change, the GEF support has supported the reduction of carbon emissions (through renewable energy and zero-emission transport) and increases of energy efficiency. As indicated previously, GEF support to renewable energy (geothermal, wind and solar) has assisted the country in implementing its energy strategy, reducing and avoiding emissions. Although the GEF successfully supported the development of alternative transport such as bicycles this may not be replicable in a hot and humid country to a larger scale.

... POPs ...

14. Following the GEF strategy in POPs, the Philippines has completed and adopted the national action implementation plan to reduce and eliminate releases of a number of POPs, including pesticides and industrial chemicals.

... and international waters

15. Among the regional projects supported by the GEF to improve marine environments affecting international waters, the Philippines participates in the Partnership in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA).

Results of the Portfolio

Conclusion 3: GEF support to the Philippines has produced global environmental benefits but declining environmental trends and lack of compliance endanger these achievements.

Detailed findings

16. The results of the evaluation show that many positive achievements have been produced through the GEF support:

- Significant offset of GHG emissions, about 2.26 million carbon tons annually, through a range of renewable technology options (i.e. mini-hydro sub-projects, geo-thermal energy, and solar power energy), and testing of innovative approaches to reduce geothermal CO₂ emissions by re-infusion of CO₂ to underground geothermal wells.

16 terrestrial regions are a separate island or island group supporting a large number of unique species and is recognized as a center of biodiversity. The six marine regions are broad transition zones based on the affinities of the associated reef fish assemblages, the evolutionary geology of the archipelago and the predominant ocean circulation patterns.

- GEF supported activities have probably slowed down the downward trend on the conservation status for a number of the country's threatened species. The NIPAS has been supported since its establishment and an expansion of more than 2 million hectares of protected areas exist today. GEF has supported protected areas establishment and consolidation through participatory management planning, capacity building, biodiversity monitoring, payment for environmental services and livelihood improvement. The support has mainly been implemented in 8 of the 16 Philippine terrestrial biogeographic regions, while in coastal and marine areas the GEF support has been within 5 out of 6 of the country's marine biogeographic zones.
- Successful livelihood initiatives in the coastal and marine-based projects have been able to contribute to increased income for local people and at the same time enabled them to shift their sources of income away from depleted species and thereby reducing the pressure on the resources.
- The GEF support to the Philippines has produced approaches and experiences that have or could be replicated, having a positive catalytic effect of those investments. For example, innovative techniques on solar and small-scale hydro-power solutions and reinjection of CO₂ emissions within geothermal plants, have potential in the global market; the biodiversity monitoring system for protected areas. The latter has been replicated by other donor projects and NGOs not only in the Philippines, but also in other parts of the world. Payment for environmental services with local incentives to better preserve and protect forest habitats were introduced through several projects and are now being replicated in other initiatives.
- Regional programs on marine and coastal environmental management have replication taking place across a number of countries in the region including the Philippines.
- Elements of the two oldest completed projects, the geothermal and biodiversity conservation projects, have achieved better results than expected (and assessed) at completion. The Philippines is now considered one of the most important global powers in geothermal energy with some best practices on environmental management. A few of the protected areas supported by the biodiversity project are now considered best practices in biodiversity conservation within the country.

While impressive results were achieved, these were overshadowed by many obstacles and declining national environmental indicators.

- The Philippines lost 32.25% of its forest cover, or around 3.4 million hectares between 1990 to 2005 (which reduces the GEF achievement to a negative 1 million hectares of protection). Furthermore, the number of threatened species in the Philippines is among the highest in the world.
- Protected areas cover 7.8% of total land area, still below Asia's average (8.3%) and the world target of 10%. Present budget levels and human resources to effectively manage

protected areas remain insufficient. Livelihood initiatives within land-based projects have not been successful in reducing the pressure on these protected areas.

- Smaller islands within the context of the country, with unique and extremely vulnerable ecosystems have not been supported by the large GEF projects, only CEPF and to a certain extent GEF SGP have financed some limited activities on those ecosystems.
- The GEF project Asian Least-Cost Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy (ALGAS) calculated that CO₂ emissions will increase almost 6 times from 1990 levels to 2020, which indicates that the GEF partly may be working on the wrong areas. For example, a large portion of GHG emissions in the Philippines is the result of land degradation and conversion of forest to agriculture so it could have been expected that the GEF would have provided more support to forest land management as a strategic approach to carbon sequestration at local and national levels.
- The government is now moving towards electrified mass transportation although legislation is still pending and the GEF has not provided support on this area.
- Adaptation to climate change impacts has only recently become part of the GEF support to the Philippines although it is now a top priority to the country's development agenda.
- Adaptation to climate change impacts, although a priority of the country, has not been supported by the GEF until recent.
- Capacity building efforts through the GEF have failed to get a better grasp of what kind of new institutional and university curriculum arrangements and set-ups are needed in order to address biodiversity and natural resource management capacity constraints. It will therefore be important to approach capacity development in GEF support in a more strategic manner with focus on longer-term permanent training initiatives that gradually would transfer ad-hoc capacity-building efforts away from GEF and other donor project portfolios to the main departments and universities responsible for the country's natural resource management and educational outcomes.

The quality of reporting on results is poor.

- There is limited documentation on catalytic and replication effects within projects and GEF Agencies documentations. Furthermore, 60% of projects documents did not present any form of synergetic approaches, missing the opportunities for catalytic and replication effects.
- Although capacity development is the objective of many projects not all documents present their achievements. Documentation has gaps on reporting the impact of these capacity development efforts.

The Portfolio's Efficiency

Conclusion 4: There are several inefficiencies related to the GEF's portfolio in the Philippines.
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Detailed findings

Project preparation and approval are time-consuming and may lead to problems with stakeholder participation

17. The evaluation shows that the period between entry into the pipeline and project start-up is quite long. On average it takes about 20 months from program entry to get the CEO approval, and another 8.5 months to the project started. Total time from program entry to project start-up takes an average 2.4 years. The long preparation time may produce setbacks and loss of stakeholder commitment.

Lack of transparency and poor quality data on the project cycle supports earlier evaluation findings.

18. Several of the stakeholders interviewed indicated problems with the absence of information regarding (1) requirements, norms, and mechanisms of the GEF project cycle; and (2) the progress of proposal reviews within the GEF project cycle. Furthermore, they raised concerns about poor information and lack of transparency in the processes. It is difficult for project proponents to find out what stage a proposal is in, which requirements or priorities are set by the GEF and which by the GEF Agencies, and so on. This is a leading source of confusion and even frustration. Also the absence of a clear, publicly accessible proposal tracking mechanism is a critical shortcoming.

There is a general confusion about the implementation of the RAF.

19. Most stakeholders interviewed indicated confusion about how and why projects have been “dropped” from the pipeline. Stakeholders do not understand the criteria utilized to make the decisions, and perceive inconsistencies and arbitrariness. Furthermore, information about RAF implementation, although available, is not clear, leaving for much interpretation by different sectors.

Lack of institutionalization of the GEF Operational Focal Point functions poses challenges for the Philippines to interact with the GEF.

20. The Operational Focal Point position in the Philippines is placed in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, but is not institutionalized. From 1992 and onwards there have been at least 8 different Operational Focal Points, most of them politically appointed Undersecretaries, since 2000. The Operational Focal Point is supported by an insufficient number of staff and Technical Focal Points for multilateral environment agreements spread among a number of bureaus and represented by technical staff overburdened with other assignments. There is a tendency to compensate the limited capacity with substantial and costly consultant assistance paid by PDF grants. Furthermore, there is an absence of a strategic framework and clear guidelines for GEF projects at national level, although the new RAF

appears to have triggered a new approach. However, in spite of attempts at formulating an overall macro-framework for GEF in the Philippines, this has not yet materialized. As a result there seems to be an inadequate understanding of GEF focal areas, review criteria and other guidelines. The DENR has not linked the GEF projects to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the agency in charge of establishing and tracking development priorities unless they are blended with a World Bank or Asian Development Bank loan. NEDA offers a more efficient M&E capacity and mechanism that could assist DENR in managing the GEF portfolio.

Limited coordination among agencies implementing GEF in the Philippines

21. Despite the few stakeholders involved, there is limited coordination among them, in particularly in the past. This limited coordination is exacerbated by not having a GEF Country Program. The lack of coordination among GEF Agencies increases the competition for funds rather than a coordinated effort. For example, UNDP has assisted the DENR to develop a programmatic framework for support and management in the environment sector. In parallel, the World Bank has developed the Way Forward Action Plan for DENR, which has the same goal as the work of UNDP, namely to achieve a more programmatic approach in the environment sector. Furthermore, there are cases of overlap of projects trying to achieve similar objectives within the same geographic context (for example, several projects on integrated coastal resources management and on energy efficiency). Regarding national implementing and executing agencies until recent, when the first GEF national coordinating meeting called by DENR took place, there was no coordination or share of information between for example DENR, Department of Energy and Department of Agriculture, some of the major national agencies implementing GEF.

22. These limitations and weaknesses may produce the impression of a lack of clear leadership from the Department of Environment and National Resources, which affect the overall guidance and execution of the GEF support.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the GEF Council

Recommendation 1: The GEF should develop country programs and strategies for large recipients of GEF support like the Philippines.

23. The Philippines has been a large recipient of GEF support (about \$145 million) but the lack of a GEF strategy for this country has reduced the potential results and led to inefficiencies. The experience of the GEF in the Philippines provides valid lessons to justify the development of a Country Strategy. The Resource Allocation Framework has begun to trigger this development in the Philippines since the resources allocated a priori need to be prioritized and shared among different national institutions and GEF Agencies, compared to the past when allocations were made on a demand basis and there was a perception that every eligible project would be funded eventually by the GEF. The future GEF investment in the Philippines will be very relevant to the implementation of the environmental priorities of the country. As presented

in this evaluation, there are many major environmental and institutional problems in the Philippines. A coherent, publicly debated and transparent GEF strategy with clear targets and objectives, with a long and short vision and program would improve some of the weaknesses found in the evaluation.

Recommendations to the Government of the Philippines

Recommendation 2: Compliance with the environmental policies and regulations requires urgent attention.

24. In general, environmental regulations are in place but compliance needs to be improved. There are considerable problems with compliance of the country's numerous environment policies, ranging from Environment Impact Assessment certificates to compliances with rules and regulations on critical land and marine areas and on natural resources; both within GEF-supported areas and elsewhere. The government is presently taking steps to develop and implement anti-corruption policies as well as improving the effectiveness of public agencies. Specifically, within the sectors in which the GEF works, the government's move towards a programmatic approach to environment and natural resource management is welcome. Furthermore, DENR should further strengthen and institutionalize inter-agency collaboration with other departments to increase environmental governance, which would then need to link into the broader efforts of the government to fight corruption and improve public sector effectiveness. Priority could be given to the critical conservation areas necessary to maintain food security, water supply and biodiversity.

Recommendation 3: The Philippines could consider including in future GEF support the globally unique small island regions, land degradation and improvement of climate change resilience.

25. The focus of the GEF-supported projects is mostly on the larger islands ecosystems. Unique ecosystems and extremely vulnerable biodiversity within nine small island biogeographic zones/regions received largely no attention despite it is within these globally unique areas the country's highest numbers of critical threatened species and sub-species occur and where all natural habitats now are near-depleted or converted. In future GEF support it should be considered to use DENR's focus list on Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and balance the GEF assistance more equal among the 16 land-based unique biogeographic zones; each being unique in a global setting. The DENR OPF and the GEF Agencies would use this approach in prioritizing future projects related both to biodiversity, land degradation and international waters

26. Climate Change adaptation is now a top priority of the government. It is therefore recommended that the GEF Operational Focal Point jointly with national stakeholders and the GEF Agencies increasingly include projects which improve climate resilience. Taking into account adaptive actions related to land degradation, biodiversity and integrated ecosystem management will ensure that the global environmental benefits in these areas can be sustained under changing circumstances.

Recommendation 4: Improve the efficiency of the GEF mechanisms in the Philippines.

27. There are several elements that could improve the efficiency of the GEF support in the Philippines:

- Strengthening and institutionalization of the Operational Focal Point functions with adequate funding, support staff relevant to all GEF operational programs, inter-agency mechanism to increase participation, and an information system (including a website component). Some improvements were recognized by the evaluation in the last few months, particularly in the context of the implementation of the RAF, but more could be done.
- Develop and implement a national GEF Country Framework with full participation of all key GEF stakeholders, beyond the RAF, with clear short and long term vision, targets and indicators and fully integrated with the Medium Term Philippines Development Priorities.
- Given the experience of NEDA with the monitoring of the Medium Term Philippines Development Plans and given that GEF activities are supporting these plans the monitoring of the GEF portfolio should be transferred to NEDA in order to improve accountability and transparency.
- Better coordination among GEF Agencies to improve the efficiency of the GEF support and provide better support to the implementation of the recommended GEF Country Strategy.

Observations

28. The Philippines experience with the GEF confirms findings and supports recommendations made by previous GEF Evaluation Office evaluations regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the project cycle as well as the serious problems with weak systems providing information on the GEF processes, procedures and particularly project cycle. Furthermore, it underscores the need for better indicators and systems of reporting on achieving global environmental benefits. On all of these issues the GEF 4 replenishment agreement and subsequent Council decisions are supported by the evidence emerging from this evaluation.

29. As found and recommended in previous evaluations the Philippines country evaluation supports that the reporting of global environmental benefits and other achievements are short of the reality. The main reason for this is that the GEF, at the global and national levels, does not have agreed global environmental benefits targets or indicators that are consistent across projects and agencies (within the same focal areas). Furthermore, the quality of reporting, from projects and GEF Agencies, is poor and inconsistent. GEF Agencies and projects in most cases do not report at this level. Moreover, a substantial part of the GEF contribution is blended with major development loans and there is a risk that the GEF global impacts will not be sufficiently reported.