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ANNUAL COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION REPORT - 2008

(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed document GEF/ME/C.33/4, *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report-2008*, document GEF/ME/C.33/5, *Management Response to the Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation – 2008*, and having taken note of the three Country Portfolio Evaluations in Benin, Madagascar and South Africa (GEF/ME/C.33/Inf. 1-3) requests the Secretariat to:

- (1) continue to strengthen the concept of integrated multi-focal areas approaches, particularly adaptation to climate change and land degradation, to ensure maximization of global environmental benefits,
- (2) further develop specific, proactive and more flexible engagement approaches with countries in Africa, particularly LDCs that have limited capacity to access and implement GEF funding.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This is the first Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation report presented by the Evaluation Office to the GEF Council. It provides a summary of three Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPE) conducted by the Evaluation Office in Africa: Madagascar, Benin, and South Africa. A fourth CPE took place in Cameroon but could not be completed in time for the preparation of this Council document. The CPEs were conducted between September 2007 and March 2008 by a team of consultants with extensive experience in the country and staff from the Evaluation Office, using comparable terms of reference. The methodology included a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and standardized analytical tools. Drafts of the three reports were presented and discussed and comments were received from GEF stakeholders at consultation workshops in each country. The evaluation teams found high levels of interest and substantial participation in the evaluation from GEF stakeholders in all countries.

2. The Annual CPE reports on three key areas, based in the terms of reference of the CPEs:

- relevance of GEF support to GEF mandate (i.e., generation of global benefits) and to national sustainable and environmental policies and priorities;
- efficiency of GEF support measured by the time and effort it takes to prepare and implement a GEF project, roles and responsibilities as well as synergies between GEF stakeholders;
- results and sustainability of GEF support, particularly at the higher global environment benefits levels.

CONCLUSIONS

Results

1. In biodiversity, the GEF has supported the three countries to achieve significant environmental benefits, as reported at the project level.
2. Generation of global environmental benefits has been mixed for other focal areas with land degradation and adaptation as important gaps in GEF support.
3. The GEF support has delivered some improvements in capacity, public awareness, and the enabling environment.
4. Although there have been examples of catalytic effect and replication, the long term sustainability of the global benefits achieved so far is uncertain

Relevance

5. In the three countries, the GEF support was found to be relevant to national environmental and sustainable development priorities and also to international and regional processes.

6. Country ownership of the GEF portfolio varies from focal area to focal area but overall ownership of the portfolio needs to be enhanced.
7. GEF support is relevant to the GEF mandate, particularly in biodiversity and international waters, but further integration among focal areas and across sectors could have significantly increased the total benefits.

Efficiency

8. The Focal Point mechanisms were found to be weak, in particularly regarding to strategic guidance, promoting coordination, monitoring and evaluation, information sharing and learning and synergies.
9. The conclusions reached in the Joint Evaluation of the GEF Activity Cycle were confirmed in the three African countries – for GEF stakeholders the GEF project development cycle appears complex, overly lengthy and an unclear process. Recent improvements in the project cycle have not yet become “visible” at the country level.

Resource Allocation Framework (RAF)

3. Given that the Evaluation Office is presently conducting the mid-term review of the RAF no findings or recommendations are included on this topic. Nevertheless, it was evident that the RAF was a current issue to many of the GEF stakeholders interviewed. A short discussion on emerging issues on the RAF implementation is included.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The GEF should increase support to and strengthen the concept of integrated multi-focal area and cross-sectoral approaches, going beyond the national boundaries, to ensure maximization of global benefits.
2. The GEF should develop a specific and proactive engagement approach with countries in Africa, particularly Least Developing Countries (LDC) that have limited capacity to access and implement GEF.

INTRODUCTION

1. This is the first Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation report presented by the Evaluation Office to the GEF Council. It provides a summary of three Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPE) conducted by the Evaluation Office in Africa: Madagascar, Benin, and South Africa. A fourth CPE took place in Cameroon but it could not be completed in time for the preparation of this Council document.

2. The CPEs were conducted under comparable terms of reference (“Standard Terms of Reference for Country Portfolio Evaluations,” 2006), responding to similar key questions, following similar methodologies, with appropriate adaptations to each country’s context. Separate publications for each country report are provided for Council review (as information documents). The country reports will be published at a later stage by the Evaluation Office. The Office has previously conducted three CPEs in Costa Rica, Samoa, and the Philippines between 2005-07.

3. In trying to reduce the number of evaluations that the Office presents to Council at each meeting and also trying to be more strategic on the issues and proposed decisions brought by the Office to the Council, one summary report is presented, contrary to previous years in which each individual CPE was presented to Council. The Office intends to present, at each Spring Council meeting, an annual report on country level evaluations, with a summary of findings and proposed recommendations from the year’s CPEs.

4. The Annual CPE reports on three key areas:

- relevance of GEF support to GEF mandate (i.e., generation of global benefits) and to national sustainable and environmental policies and priorities;
- efficiency of GEF support measured by the time and effort it takes to prepare and implement a GEF project, roles and responsibilities as well as synergies between GEF stakeholders; and
- results and sustainability of GEF support, particularly at the higher global environment benefits levels.

5. In addition, the annual report provides a summary of findings and recommendations from each of the countries included in the particular year as an Annex. As mentioned before, Council will also have access to the key findings and recommendations from each CPE as an information document and the full CPEs are available at the Office’s web site.

METHODOLOGY

6. All three CPEs in Africa were conducted between September 2007 and March 2008 by staff of the GEF Evaluation Office and consultants with extensive experience with the particular country. The methodology included a series of components using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and standardized analytical tools. Different types of sources of information were utilized coming from

different levels: project level (project documents, implementation reports, terminal evaluations); country level (documents relevant to the broad national sustainable development and environmental agenda, priorities and strategies; strategies and action plans relevant to focal areas; GEF supported strategies and action plans relevant to the conventions; and national environmental indicators); agency levels (country strategies and their evaluations and reviews); evaluative evidence at country level from other GEF Evaluation Office evaluations; statistics and scientific sources, especially for national environmental indicators; interviews with representatives of all GEF stakeholders; a limited number of field visits. Each of the evaluations included a national consultation workshop to discuss and receive feedback on the first draft reports.

7. The quantitative analysis used indicators to assess the efficiency of GEF support using projects as the unit of analysis (that is, time and cost of preparing and implementing projects, etc.). The evaluation team used standardized tools and protocols for the CPEs such as a project matrix outlining the information relevant to the evaluation and expected sources; project review protocols to conduct the desk and field reviews of GEF national and regional projects; interview guide for interviews with different stakeholders. Several projects were selected for visits based on whether they had been completed, represented a particular aspect of the GEF portfolio in the country or were clustered in a particular part of the country.

8. The evaluations focused primarily on in-depth review of national implemented projects but also of some selected regional projects, in particular to include an assessment of the international waters focal area. The following table presents the number of projects included in each CPE, compared to the total number of projects and funding provided by the GEF since 1991 to the present, February 2008.

Table 1. Scope of each CPEs measured in number and funding of GEF projects included.

Country	National implemented		Enabling activities	Regional/global implemented	Completed projects
	#	US\$ million		#	#
South Africa	26	82	6	5 out of 25	14
Madagascar	3	35	7	8 out of 13	9
Benin	13	21	9	5 out of 15	6

Limitations and Challenges

9. The CPEs have certain limitations. Country portfolio evaluations in the GEF are challenging as the GEF does not operate through establishing country programs that specify expected achievement through programmatic objectives, indicators and targets. In general, CPEs entail some degree of retrofitting of frameworks in order to be able to make judgments about the relevance of the aggregated results of a diverse portfolio of projects. Attribution is another area of complexity. GEF support in any area is one contribution among others and is provided through partnerships with many institutions. The country evaluations do not attempt to provide a direct attribution of development and even environmental results to the GEF, but assesses the contribution of the GEF support to the overall results.

10. The assessment of results is focused at the level of impacts and outcomes rather than outputs. However sources of information are often limited in providing this type of information. Evaluating the impacts of GEF funded initiatives is not straightforward (in fact, this is a complex area for all projects, environmental or otherwise). The absence of information on project impacts is also attributed to the time frames of evaluation cycles; evaluations are usually conducted before measurable impacts could be expected. As this evaluation was restricted to mostly to secondary sources, there was no scope in the evaluation to conduct primary research to supplement project reports and identify impacts, although outcomes could be verified through selected field visits. The databases supported by the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies and governments contained inconsistencies, gaps and discrepancies. For example, start and completion dates for projects as well as formulations of objectives varied from document to document and sometimes even within documents and between documents and the GEF database.

11. The evaluation teams found high levels of interest and substantial participation in the evaluation from GEF stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS

12. As indicated above, the following findings are based on three CPEs: Madagascar, Benin and South Africa. The CPE for Cameroon will be included in next year's Annual CPE report. These three countries were not selected to represent the vast and diverse sub-Saharan region of the world. Therefore, the findings coming from each CPE cannot be applied generally. Nevertheless, for several dimensions of the evaluation, conclusions could be applicable to similar country situations. For example, the GEF support to Benin, mainly enabling activities with a few projects in biodiversity, could be considered typical of support to Least Developed Countries (LDC) and West Africa. Madagascar presents the case of larger recipients of the GEF, although still for biodiversity, with serious degradation of the environment. While South Africa is a rather unique case for Africa in all its indicators, it could be considered representative of the emerging economies of Africa and the world, with relatively large support from the GEF.

13. Therefore, the following main findings are considered sufficiently representative (given socio-economic and environmental issues and priorities and levels of GEF support) and of relevance for Council consideration. They are presented according to the three dimensions of the evaluation.

Results

14. Results were measured with regard to three dimensions: (i) results at the global environmental level; (ii) catalytic and replication effects and (iii) sustainability of results.

Conclusion 1. In biodiversity, the GEF has supported the three countries to achieve significant environmental benefits, as reported at the project level.
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15. Although monitoring and evaluation systems are weak for the purpose of aggregation across country or focal area, some projects are reporting impacts on changes of environmental status, in particularly in biodiversity.¹ Several projects have reported improvements in biodiversity indicators, such as increase (or reduction in the rate of loss) of species health and improved ecosystems. Several projects have extended areas under protection and most projects have been able to show an improvement in the status and management effectiveness of the protected areas (or by replication outside of the project sites). Some of the biodiversity impacted by the GEF is considered some of the most significant in the world, such as the Cape Floristic and Succulent Karoo regions in South Africa, the unique environments of Madagascar and the Pendjari and W national parks in Benin. The GEF is getting a good return for its investment in biodiversity. However, sustaining these gains is still a challenge and there are many risks. This is discussed below.

Conclusion 2. Generation of global environmental benefits has been mixed for other focal areas with land degradation and adaptation as important gaps in GEF support.

16. In the case of International Waters, the regional approach has been successful in dealing with reduction of threats to fish population. For example, in South Africa, GEF support to International Waters projects has resulted in strengthening South Africa's commitment to global and regional cooperation to reduce over-exploitation of fish stocks and land based coastal pollution in the region. GEF support has contributed to the establishment of agreements to coordinate regional and international management of marine resources (for example the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) Commission, between Angola, Namibia and South Africa) and signing the International Maritime Organization convention of Ballast Waters. Equally important in Madagascar, the GEF supported the establishment of plans and infrastructure to mitigate oil spills in major ports. This project has now been followed up with an investment to improve international shipping navigation. Benin has benefited by three full sized regional /international waters projects. The success of the first project in mobilizing the countries in the region to jointly promote effective mechanisms of consulting, coordination and monitoring has lead to the set up of an organizational framework acting as a catalyst on several levels. The project has also achieved results on the policies and strategies of the countries involved, as reflected in the development of the management type initiatives, such as a national integrated coastal management plans in most of the countries. Support for freshwater has been limited so not many results can be reported at this time.

17. In climate change, the results have been mostly concentrated on creating capacity with limited impact on mitigation of GHG emissions so far. Furthermore, the GEF support to this focal area has been limited in these three countries, with the greatest investment in South Africa and one full size project in Benin. In the case of South Africa, the GEF support has been targeted to renewable energy (solar and wind) to improve enabling conditions, such as policy and regulatory framework development but

¹ Biodiversity is the largest focal area in each of the reviewed countries (at least 2/3 of the funding in the three countries). This is also the same partner as the rest of Sub-Sahara Africa.

conditions are still judged to be difficult.² In the case of Benin only one full sized project has been implemented in this focal area. The village based Carbon Sequestration project achieved impressive results through the adoption and implementation of participatory forest development plans. Noteworthy is the continued activities after 10 years of project completion. One clear gap in the GEF support to these countries is in the area of adaptation, a clear priority in all three countries. In the case of Madagascar, the National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) has been completed, and has assisted the Government in prioritizing areas for investment.

18. Regarding the Permanent Organic Pollutants (POPs) focal area, the National Implementation Plan (NIP) in Benin is currently being finalized, while in South Africa and Madagascar they are still on-going. No results on the ground have been delivered. Although the regional Stockpiling project is beginning to invest in identifying POPs across Africa the lack of inventories could diminished its effectiveness (inventories should be coming from NIPs). The case of South Africa has been identified as much larger than anticipated.

19. No national projects within the land degradation focal area has been approved in these three countries. This is another significant gap in the GEF support given the importance of this environmental problem in the three countries. Some regional projects are providing support to this focal area. Two projects under TerrAfrica are being prepared for Madagascar; however the scale of problems outstrips planned investments.

20. Furthermore, the national portfolios have not been integrated across focal areas; therefore impacts have not been maximized. Land degradation and adaptation are two issues that could have been integrated into the portfolio.

Conclusion 3. The GEF support has delivered some improvements in capacity, public awareness, and the enabling environment.

21. GEF support to institutional capacity and strengthening has been important, for example the National Center for Wildlife Management (CENAGREF) in Benin and the South Africa National Biodiversity Institute are considered international class institutions. Support for the development of environmental policies and strategies (particularly for natural resources management) have been successful. The implementation and enforcement of them are still a concern. Capacity development has been a major part of the Environment Program in Madagascar, but the investments have resulted in the creation of many institutions which have subsequently become donor dependent.

22. Enabling activities in the focal areas have provided direct support to the development of policies (all National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans, climate change national communications, NAPAs and NIPs). The National Capacity Self-Assessments

² Present energy shortage and increasing price of energy in this country has created new opportunities and experiences coming out of the GEF support are .

have not been completed yet. They could have been used to guide the more strategic decision-making process to invest in capacity building. Limited capacity is brought up basically by all projects documents as one of the weakest points in these countries but yet the GEF has not provided support in a more strategic way, based on national requirements rather than project by project.

Conclusion 4. Although there have been examples of catalytic effect and replication the long term sustainability of the global benefits achieved so far is uncertain.

23. The GEF has acted as a catalytic agent in several ways. The three CPEs have shown cases of catalytic effects. For example in South Africa, GEF support has provided the initial support necessary to develop ideas and then galvanized financial and political support from government and other relevant players. Furthermore, it has catalyzed the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity and Protected Areas Acts and several approaches and concepts (bioregional approaches, systematic conservation planning, protected area planning and management systems and biodiversity mainstreaming) have been replicated within and beyond the portfolio. In the International Waters focal area, the GEF support through the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) has catalyzed the harmonization of policy and management across the region, for example, enabling an ecosystems approach to fisheries management. Finally, the power utility, Eskom, is building on the GEF solar water heaters project in an extensive programme to install 1 million heaters around the country. In the case of Benin, the GEF portfolio has performed well in terms of catalytic and replication effects. In fact, the portfolio in Benin showed that GEF and its partners have often managed to build on their earlier successes and even influenced the lines of action of other development partners towards achieving global environmental objectives. The GEF has also been catalytic in the development of policies, strategies and management practices. GEF supported activities have been able to influence and provide inputs/lessons/feedback on experiences supported by the GEF. Approaches such as on participatory and sustainable management of protected areas, introduced through GEF support are in some cases widely used and are being scaled-up (for example the experience with the Anjozorobe protected area in Madagascar).

24. In spite of the positive results reported above, the three CPEs noted that these gains are at risk because of weak financial, institutional and economic sustainability. In addition, the state of the environment in these three countries is declining and sustainable development is a challenge. Securing and sustaining benefits is directly linked to eradication of poverty and environmental gains are bound up with the progress of social and economic development in ways that pose specific dilemmas that need to be recognized in all forms of the GEF support. There has been some forward thinking. For example in the case of South Africa, the GEF support has moved away from protected areas to dealing with interventions in landscape areas, recognizing the linkages (for example two recently approved projects dealing with grasslands and the wild coast ecosystems). Nevertheless, environmental benefits to local communities are not always identified. In Madagascar, despite 17 years of donor investment (totaling over US\$400m of which GEF invested \$35m) in the Environmental Program financial and institutional sustainability will remain a key weakness at the end of the third phase. Madagascar is

now looking to resolve financial sustainability through development of a conservation trust fund.

25. There are good practices of sustainability at the local level for example in Benin through co-management initiatives and activities. Furthermore, the CPE in Benin found that these practices could be / and are replicated elsewhere. For example, the Local Association for the management of Wildlife Reserves (AVIGREF) model in Benin has inspired several neighboring countries (including Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali and Cote d'Ivoire) to introduce and replicate this approach.

26. As described above, the GEF has provided substantial investments in capacity building, at all levels, but then its sustainability is uncertain. In grouped countries, the RAF is seen as a way of even further limiting the sustainability since the GEF has provided assistance to develop plans (for example through enabling activities) and now there is no funding to support the implementation.

27. In the case of Benin and Madagascar, "environment" is not given significant financial recognition in the national budget despite the dependence of the population on natural resources. Therefore, with national investments remaining low, donor funding, including the GEF will be needed in the medium to long-term to maintain global environmental resources.

Relevance

Conclusion 5. In the three countries, the GEF support was found to be relevant to national environmental priorities, sustainable development priorities and also, to international and regional processes.

28. GEF support, particularly through enabling activities has assisted the countries in determining their environmental priorities. It has also helped in the development and implementation of national environmental policies and strategies. For example, in Madagascar, the GEF support has enabled the Government to develop national strategies for adaptation and persistent organic pollutants, as well as to identify investment priorities. GEF support has been relevant to national sustainable development priorities (not all countries have an official sustainable development strategy so this is a difficult question to answer) in particularly when environment is essential/integrated part of these priorities. In Benin, the evaluation found that the portfolio had performed satisfactorily in terms of developing and strengthening the local structures involved in co-managing natural resources and their benefits. Madagascar is also taking steps to improve the relevance of biodiversity conservation at local government and community level, and a successful model has been developed around Anjozorobe Forest Corridor. In South Africa, biodiversity projects are directly related and relevant to the implementation of National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan. Some of these projects have reported creating jobs and dealing with local poverty issues, that reduce trade-offs between conservation and development. Nevertheless, the socio-economic relevance and benefits, sustainable use and integration with other relevant mandates remain a challenge for these projects and the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan. Similarly in

the climate change focal area, in South Africa, the focus of projects on mitigation rather than adaptation measures and on renewable energy rather than energy efficiency is not clearly aligned to the analysis of the needs, challenges and options in government's policies and strategies.

29. GEF support has had positive impacts on international and regional agendas and this has been most visible in the area of international waters, where all countries have been involved in Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) – Strategic Action Plan (SAP) processes. In the case of South Africa and Madagascar, planning and infrastructure investments have assisted in mitigating oil spill and navigation risks associated with international shipping. Furthermore in South Africa, the GEF support has made a relevant contribution to addressing South Africa's most significant challenges in the marine environment – fisheries impacts and management, pollution, mining, impacts of coastal development and climate change. South Africa has been enabled to strengthen its partnerships with its neighbors post democracy in transboundary marine resource management.

30. The provision for enabling activities is extremely relevant in all the three countries since the introduction of policies and strategies since 1992 have required detailed baseline information, technical and contextual analyses and research that did not exist.

Conclusion 6. Country ownership of the GEF portfolio varies from focal area to focal area but overall ownership of the portfolio needs to be enhanced.

31. Country ownership can be measured by different ways. The simplest way is by determining who developed the project. The answer in the three CPEs indicates that most of the projects were conceptualized and developed and guided by national interests.

32. Another measurement is the capacity of national executing agencies to manage projects (who does the implementation?). This varies across the three countries. In South Africa, initially the capacity was weak, but this situation was reversed (particularly with institutions dealing with biodiversity and international water projects), while in Benin and Madagascar as typical LDCs both exhibit significant individual and institutional capacity constraints which have reduced the implementation ownership of GEF investments. Indeed, ownership in Madagascar has been diffused due to the propensity for implementing agencies and others donors to create new environmental institutions, which subsequently become donor dependent.

33. A third measurement of, country ownership is how embedded global environmental issues are within the national environment sector budgets. Here the picture is mixed. In South Africa the Government has considerable funds to devote from the national budget to co-finance GEF interventions. However, in Benin and Madagascar national funding for environmental issues is very low despite the importance of environmental resources to national development, poverty reduction and global environmental resources. In these two countries, there is a high dependency of overseas

development assistance to support environmental projects, which diminishes country ownership since this funding needs to respond to the donors' priorities.

Conclusion 7. GEF support is relevant to the GEF mandate, particularly in biodiversity and international waters, but further integration among focal areas and across sectors could have significantly increased the total benefits.

34. From the discussion above it is clear that in both biodiversity and international waters GEF support has targeted global significant biodiversity areas and large marine ecosystems (limited interventions in freshwater ecosystems). In the case of climate change, the relevance to GEF mandates becomes weaker and potential global benefits have not been maximized. This is particular relevant to South Africa. While wind, solar and transport projects are clearly relevant, there are gaps such as energy efficiency (although a project on this subject is in the pipeline for the second half of the RAF).

35. Considering the extent to which the objectives of biodiversity, land degradation, international waters, climate change and POPs are co-dependent or directly linked, the requirement to conform to the strategies within one funding window has resulted in missing opportunities to enhance global and local benefits and therefore, sustainable development in South Africa, Madagascar and Benin. This is in particular evident when looking at projects that were prepared and implemented in the earlier phases of the GEF. For example, in previous evaluations and the present CPE point out that in Madagascar GEF and donor investment in the environment sector has tended to focus only on protected areas. While opportunities to address land degradation pressures (particularly deforestation) as part of the rural development – conservation nexus have been under developed, thus the external threats to protected areas have not been effectively addressed. Similar gaps were also identified in South Africa with respect to land degradation. This leads to the conclusion that the outcomes for biodiversity, land degradation, water resources and adaptation strategies could be significantly multiplied if viewed as an integrated natural resource management landscape intervention, based on a longer-term programmatic or sector wide approach.

36. Furthermore, a focal area response may have the effect of undermining co-operative governance where, for example, agriculture may not see itself as directly responsible for biodiversity outcomes, especially if direct outcomes for the agriculture mandate are insufficiently emphasized in the GEF strategy or project. While “silo” or compartmentalized responses may also be a systemic issue in terms of the interpretation of mandates of government departments, there is perhaps the potential to pilot and improve integrated natural resource management through the projects in ways that ensure alignment and embed institutional capacities more effectively and thus make a more significant impact to sustainable development and global environmental benefits.

Efficiency

37. Questions regarding the portfolio efficiency's revolve around assessing the time, energy and money required to develop and implement GEF projects. The efficiency element includes examining roles, coordination, lessons learned and possible synergies

among the various players and GEF projects, as well as the various challenges critical to the entire functioning of GEF operation – such as communication, information on projects and the GEF focal point mechanism.

Conclusion 8. The Focal Point mechanisms were found to be weak, in particularly regarding to strategic guidance, promoting coordination, supervision, information sharing and learning and synergies.

38. The Focal Points are not appropriately prepared and /or capacitated to do their job and the GEF focal point mechanism is often not working properly. For example in Benin, the operational national coordination structure (COCAFEM) and the operational focal points have been absent since 2005 a situation that has led to the loss of several potential opportunities for coordinating the GEF's actions in Benin and developing them in a cross-cutting way. In Madagascar, the Focal Point has been changed regularly.

39. The Focal Point mechanism needs to play a more effective role in providing strategic guidance. While South Africa had a GEF strategy (2001-2003), approved by cabinet, that provided a clear outline of the issues and their alignment to the relevant conventions, it did not establish an agreed program and framework of priorities. This hampered the effectiveness of the Focal Point mechanism.

40. The roles and responsibilities of the Agencies and Focal Points (political, operational and technical) are not clear to different GEF stakeholders and the coordination sub-optimal. Often, much of the coordination is left to personal relationships between individuals, rather than formalized institutional arrangements.

41. The operational Focal Points are facing difficulties in providing actual operational and strategic support under the modest funding available to them. It is imperative to reinforce, reactivate and strengthen the strategic and coordinating role of the focal points and the national committees and - by extension - the country ownership and drivenness.

42. Furthermore, the Focal Point mechanism could have played a more effective role in providing information, coordinating lesson learning and sharing amongst the GEF national stakeholders. For example in South Africa, there were missed opportunities for information sharing and learning that could have improved synergies. The main barrier is that reporting, for example, at the project level, does not include the Focal Point on a routine basis. In Madagascar and Benin, knowledge management and lessons learning are not formalized and are impeded also because of a lack of M&E function of these focal points. The evaluation noted a few good instances, for example, in Benin, one full sized project utilized a large variety of mechanisms for wide dissemination of project results and information to local and national stakeholders and actors. On the whole, the CPEs showed that some learning does occur within the Agency formulating the proposals, however this learning does not spread across to the other stakeholders involved, nor necessarily to the Focal Points.

43. Furthermore, there are ample opportunities to improve and exchange information among countries. The GEF Country Support Program subregional workshops may provide additional support but it may be too little and too spared.

Conclusion 9. The conclusions reached in the Joint Evaluation of the GEF Activity Cycle were confirmed in the three Africa countries – for GEF stakeholders the GEF project development cycle appears complex, overly lengthy and an unclear process. Recent improvements in the project cycle have not yet become “visible” at the country level.

44. This perception is still based on the previous project cycle, as few have experienced the new project cycle as of yet. Particularly, there is a lack of understanding of project cycle outside the focal point’s immediate circle. The new and shorter project cycle, although welcomed, has yet to reach a large number of GEF stakeholders (the perceptions have not changed yet, most likely because the new, more streamlined procedures, are not known to many).

45. The most blatant shortcomings, responsible for the many negative views, are lack of adequate information concerning the GEF project cycle and its requirements and an absence of clear explanations for the delays in approving or starting projects. As a result, the challenge for the GEF now lies in demonstrating that these features will not be carried over into the new project cycle that was recently adopted. For example, in Benin it took 2.7 years from the entry to project start up for full size projects, in South Africa almost 4 years.

46. There was general discontent about the implementation of the new project cycle so far, in particular frequent changes in GEF requirements (some projects have to prepare multiple versions of PIFs since GEF Secretariat was changing formats regularly). This back and forth has produced negative perception and increased discouragement at all levels but in particularly with project proponents.

47. The three CPEs found that there is a lack of capacity to develop and prepare GEF project proposals. This is a factor that has historically affected, and continues to affect African countries access to GEF funding. Countries have generally been able to determine priorities for GEF funding (identification of problems or issues that are GEF-bankable) but they are not able to produce the specific documents required by the GEF system. It is difficult to link the value added of these documents to the quality of the project design and to project success. For example does the re-writing of Project Information Forms (PIFs) multiple of times add value or just a requirement to fulfill GEF Council and management? Nevertheless, in the three countries examined, government and other national stakeholders indicated that there was value added by the GEF Agencies in the preparation of projects (not only just to respond to GEF requirements). In particularly, this is increased when the GEF Agency has a technical presence in the country.

48. Moreover, compliance with provisions of three separate levels of entities (national, GEF Agencies and GEF Council/Secretariat) adds significant transaction costs but not much value to the process and results.

49. The long time delays in process also erodes interest mobilized during project design influencing the extent to which projects are country driven, in particularly when it comes to sustain gains (unrealistic project timeframes). Historically, almost all national projects have been implemented by the World Bank and UNDP. The African Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Food and Agricultural Organization have no national GEF project portfolio, yet.

Emerging issues on the RAF

50. Given that the Evaluation Office is presently conducting the mid-term review of the RAF, no findings or recommendations are included in this topic. Nevertheless, it was evident that the RAF was in the minds of many of the GEF stakeholders interviewed. A short discussion on emerging issues on the RAF implementation is included below.

- Very few stakeholders outside the GEF Agencies and focal point have heard of the RAF.
- Small allocations could produce country's disengagement with the GEF. In particular, because of the GEF Agencies disengagement in the small recipients, particularly World Bank and IFAD, given high transaction cost for preparing GEF projects.
- Given that the allocation for climate change are based on GHG emissions and most African countries have low emissions, there is very small allocations to Africa on this focal area. If vulnerability to climate change impacts would have been the basis for the indices these countries will be high recipients given their high vulnerability.
- The experience of the RAF negotiations for developing project proposals and endorsement of PIFs has increased the perception that country ownership of GEF projects has diminished. There has not been clear and transparent communications with countries regarding the design of RAF pipelines.
- For countries within a group allocation (such as Benin in biodiversity and climate change and Madagascar in climate change), the GEF allocation is not sufficient to support the implementation of strategies and plans previously developed with GEF support. Co-financing in these countries is also difficult to mobilize.
- The requirement that funding for the SGP is allocated from country RAF allocations has the potential to undermine the basic purpose of the SGP which is to keep a window open to non-government role-players, and communities to access funding for projects from a non-government controlled source.

- There is also concern that the RAF will have a negative effect on the regional portfolio with the limited amount dedicated to regional funding and with all allocations being made through country allocations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. The GEF should increase support to and strengthen the concept of integrated multi-focal areas approaches, going beyond the national boundaries, to ensure maximization of global benefits.

51. The three CPEs showed that the GEF is missing opportunities to maximize benefits given the historic lack of integration between focal areas and with other sectors such as rural development, agriculture and poverty reduction. Two areas of the GEF that have been missing in this region so far which also provide opportunities to improve linkages are adaptation to climate change and land degradation. Both issues are on the top of regional (continent level) priorities and have potential for providing local incentives to enhance the delivery and sustainability of global environmental benefits.

52. The GEF should redefine the boundaries of its interventions beyond the national boundaries. In fact, the positive experience of international waters projects in the countries reviewed should be considered. Aligning GEF projects with the strategies of regional (i.e., New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD) and subregional institutions (i.e., Southern Africa Development Community, SADC) will also improve sustainability (these priorities coming from regional and subregional institutions have already negotiated and accepted at the highest level of governments in the region). Considerable experience of working in a regional context has been established and many regional institutions have developed environmental regional agreements.

53. These types of approaches also would allow for increase capacities at the national level, since countries with limited capacity, like LDCs, would be supported by these regional approaches.

Recommendation 2. The GEF should develop a specific and proactive engagement approach with countries in Africa, particularly LDCs that have limited capacity to access and implement GEF.

54. This approach could include several elements:

- strengthening of GEF Focal Point mechanisms to function effectively, to improve country ownership, and to help develop an effective integrated strategic coordination approach for partnership funding. The GEF must play a more active role in enabling a proper and effective functionality of the focal point mechanism.
- facilitate the creation of partnership to increase the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the global conventions related to the GEF, in particular for LDC countries like Benin and Madagascar.

- facilitate the effective and strategic integration, coordination and dialogue amongst environmental actors on country level, in particular the participation of global conventions focal points.
- recognizing that there are difference in countries capacities and economic development. In the case of South Africa, the GEF should recognize its capacity to have a more proactive and direct way of managing its own portfolio.
- reduction of transaction cost for the recipient countries (i.e., adoption of country-based procedures when these meet the GEF (or GEF Agencies) requirements
- the GEF should review the effectiveness of the current focal point mechanism and should consider alternative modus operandi better suitable for countries in Africa.

ANNEX

Main findings and recommendations (to Council) from the three CPEs

Country	Results	Relevance	Efficiency	Recommendations
South Africa	- The GEF support to biodiversity in South Africa has resulted in significant impacts. - GEF support to the marine International Waters projects has resulted in strengthening South Africa's commitments to global and regional co-operation to reduce over-exploitation of fish stocks and land and sea-based pollution in the region. - There have been limited direct impacts on GHG emissions from the Climate Change portfolio but some catalytic and replication effects are expected. - Results in other focal areas are limited. - The long term sustainability of the global and local benefits achieved is uncertain. Summary Conclusion. At a country level, the GEF support to South Africa has produced significant results and global benefits in the biodiversity and SA component of the international waters projects, potential catalytic effects in the climate change projects but limited results in the other focal areas.	- The GEF support has addressed national priorities, particularly in the biodiversity and South African component of international waters projects but less clearly for climate change. - The GEF portfolio at a country level is relevant to South Africa's draft sustainable development framework and the South Africa GEF Medium Term Priority Framework in the broadest sense, but the balance of support to different focal areas raises questions. - Country ownership of the GEF portfolio varies from focal area to focal area but overall ownership of the portfolio needs to be strengthened. - The GEF support to South Africa is relevant to the GEF mandate, principles and the objectives in each focal area but this varies according to focal area.	- The GEF is seen as overly complicated & inefficient in ways which impact negatively on the extent to which the portfolio is country-driven. - The Focal Point mechanism should have played a more effective role in providing strategic guidance and information and in facilitating, learning and synergies.	- The GEF strategies and programs should recognize and respond to existing integrated regional and national analyses and strategies for meeting the requirements of the conventions, and/or support their development where relevant. - Improve the basis for monitoring and evaluating the GEF support. - Establish a basis for more flexible country-based portfolio management in order to strengthen country ownership, accountability, sustainability, relevance and efficiency. - Specify and communicate GEF Agencies' roles and responsibilities.
Madagascar	- The GEF support has contributed to significant results in biodiversity conservation - GEF is enabling Madagascar to address other environmental challenges - The GEF portfolio is at risk because of weak financial, institutional and socio-economic sustainability	- The GEF portfolio in Madagascar is relevant for the national priorities and strategies. GEF support is aligned with global environment benefits with the main 'on the ground' emphasis on biodiversity. - The issue of country ownership and the capacity to create ownership remains a key challenge for the government of Madagascar and donors	- The complexity and inefficiency of the GEF project cycle has presented barriers to project development - The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders are unclear and coordination is not optimal - The operational focal point mechanism is currently under resourced and unable to be operational - Knowledge management and lesson learning is not formalized and is impeded because of a lack of M&E	- The GEF council should consider supporting trust funds as an approach to improve sustainability of global environmental benefits - To improve the integration of community approaches into the focal areas - To develop a system / strategy to improve the capacities to address global environmental issues in the LDCs - The implementing agencies need to work more closely with the government of Madagascar and

Country	Results	Relevance	Efficiency	Recommendations
				other stakeholders to enhance country ownership The implementing agencies need to work with the government of Madagascar and other stakeholders to consider more sector-wide and programmatic approaches to supporting environmental sustainability
Benin	- GEF support to Benin has produced sustainable benefits to the global environment. - The village-based co-management models developed by GEF projects in Benin are sustainable in the long term and can be replicated.	- GEF support to Benin has been relevant to the country's environmental and development-related priorities. - Benin is ready for the implementation of the global conventions	- For the stakeholder in Benin the GEF project cycle was found to be too lengthy and was perceived as nontransparent "black box". - There is a lack of capacity in Benin to develop project proposals; this is a factor that has historically affected, and continues to affect, Benin's access to GEF funding. - The full sized project activities in the GEF Benin portfolio have, in general, used a variety of mechanisms for wide dissemination of project results and information to local and national stakeholders and actors. - Several potential opportunities for coordinating GEF's actions in Benin and developing them in a cross-cutting way are not being fully exploited.	- The GEF must play a more active role in its interaction with the LDCs in order to contribute to a more effective integrated coordination approach amongst the actors. It is currently not clear what role that the GEF will play in order to address these challenges in Benin, or in the LDCs in general. - There is a need to increase and to reinforce the technical and management capacities the LDCs, including Benin, on various levels. - To implement the global conventions, Benin must work closely with the GEF and its Agencies to develop new national and international partners - it is imperative to reactivate and strengthen the coordinating role of the focal point in Benin - both the operational focal point and the COCAFEM - in order to improve both coordination of the project concepts submitted and strategic planning at the national level - On the decentralization front, Benin must continue to use these sector programs and other initiatives to support the participatory model for co-managing resources developed with GEF support that has already demonstrated its effectiveness