

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION REPORT: MOLDOVA (1994-2009)

(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)

Main Conclusions and Recommendations

1.1 Background

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council has requested that the Evaluation Office conduct country portfolio evaluations (CPE) every year. In fiscal year 2010,¹ Turkey and Moldova were selected as countries to be evaluated. The overall purpose of CPEs is to provide the GEF Council and the concerned national governments with an assessment of results and performance of GEF supported activities at the country level, and of how GEF supported activities fit into the national strategies and priorities as well as within the global environmental mandate of the GEF.

Moldova was selected through a stratified randomized selection first among all countries in the region. Along with several considerations, Moldova was selected based on its large and diverse portfolio, including projects in the majority of GEF's focal areas, its group allocations under the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) for biodiversity and climate change, and the country's participation in Black Sea and Danube River regional projects.

Based on the overall purpose and the standard terms of reference of the GEF CPEs, the evaluation of GEF support in Moldova has the following objectives:

- Independently evaluate the **relevance and efficiency** of GEF support in a country from several points of view: national environmental frameworks and decision-making processes, the GEF mandate and achievement of global environmental benefits, and GEF policies and procedures.
- Assess the **effectiveness and results** of completed and ongoing projects in each relevant focal area.
- Provide additional **evaluative evidence** to other evaluations conducted or sponsored by the GEF Evaluation Office.
- Provide **feedback and knowledge sharing** to (1) the GEF Council in its decision-making process to allocate resources and to develop policies and strategies, (2) the country on its participation in the GEF, and (3) the different agencies and organizations involved in the preparation and implementation of GEF support.

Since 1994, the GEF has invested about \$21.72 million with about \$23.44 million in cofinancing in Moldova. When including financing for project preparation, GEF's contribution amounts to \$22.54 million with \$23.80 in cofinancing. As shown in table 1.1 GEF funding has been through 14 national projects—5 in biodiversity, 4 in climate change, 2 in international waters, 2 in POPs, and 1 multifocal project. International waters and POPs account for the largest share of funding, 45 and 29 percent of total support respectively.

¹ Fiscal year 2010 began July 1, 2009 and ends June 30, 2010.

Table 1.1**GEF Support to National Projects in Moldova by Focal Area**

Focal area	Number of projects	GEF grant	Total cofinancing	Percentage of total GEF support
		(million \$)		
Biodiversity	5	2.89	2.32	11.54
Climate change	4	2.36	3.69	13.40
International waters	2	9.51	11.13	45.70
POPs	2	6.76	6.28	28.86
Multifocal	1	0.20	0.03	0.50
Total	14	21.72	23.44	100

The World Bank, with eight projects totaling \$18.65 million, has been the main channel for GEF support in Moldova followed by UNDP (four projects totaling \$1.58 million). The majority of closed national projects were implemented through the World Bank while most of the new activities are through UNDP (with one project through UNEP and one planned project under preparation through UNIDO). In addition, Moldova has participated in 16 initiatives financially supported by the GEF with a regional or global scope. Most of the regional projects involving Moldova are international waters projects for the Danube River and Black Sea. The global projects have played a key role in developing communications to UN conventions and developing frameworks and actions plans.

1.2 Objectives, Scope and Methodology

An evaluation team composed of staff of the GEF Evaluation Office and two consultants, one national and one international, with extensive experience in Moldova's environmental sector conducted the Moldova CPE between November 2009 and April 2010. The methodology included a series of components using a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques and tools. Several sources of information from different levels (project, government, civil society, GEF Agencies, and so on) were the basis for the evaluation. The quantitative analysis used indicators to assess the efficiency of GEF support using projects as the unit of analysis (time and cost of preparing and implementing projects, and so forth). The evaluation team used standardized tools and protocols for the CPEs and adapted these to the Moldovan context. Projects were selected for visits based on their implementation status and on their geographic clustering (which made a visit to a number of projects in a particular geographic area within limited time frames a possibility). Two

review of outcomes to impact (ROtI)² studies were undertaken for completed projects. Triangulation and quality control were key elements at all stages.

The main focus of the evaluation is the 14 national projects implemented within the boundaries of Moldova. An additional eight regional projects, including six in the international waters focal area on the Danube River and Black Sea, and six global projects were reviewed. These were selected because they had significant in-country involvement. A full assessment of the regional and global projects' aggregate results, relevance, and efficiency was beyond the scope of this CPE, given that only the Moldova components were assessed. National and regional project proposals under preparation were not part of the evaluation.

Several limitations were taken into account and addressed where possible during the evaluation:

- CPEs are challenging, as the GEF does not operate by establishing country programs that specify expected achievement through programmatic objectives, indicators, and targets.
- The identification of the GEF portfolio in Moldova was a difficult task, especially the identification of national components of regional projects. The evaluation team has managed to establish a clear and reliable set of data on projects and project documentation, despite inconsistencies, gaps, and discrepancies in the initial available data.
- Another complexity is attribution. The evaluation does not attempt to provide a direct attribution of development and environmental results to the GEF, but assess the contribution of GEF support to overall achievement.
- Evaluating the impacts of GEF-funded projects is not straightforward. Many projects do not clearly or appropriately specify the expected impact and sometimes even the outcomes of projects. As this evaluation was restricted to secondary sources, there was no scope to conduct primary research to supplement project reports or identify impact and outcomes. This difficulty has been addressed through analysis and cross-examination of information from the various sources used (meta-evaluation analysis of other evaluations, internal project reports, interviews of key stakeholders, field studies, aggregate portfolio analysis and two field ROtIs).
- The assessment should be seen in the context of the nature of the GEF portfolio in Moldova. GEF support in Moldova includes a large range of enabling and capacity building activities, which are not expected to produce direct impacts at the environmental level but rather as follow-up activities are implemented.

² The GEF Evaluation Office recently developed the review of outcomes to impact (ROtI) methodology, which is an innovative approach for assessing a project's progress towards impact through theory of change, a few years after project completion.

1.3 Conclusions

Results and Effectiveness

Conclusion 1: In the biodiversity focal area, while bringing significant support to Moldova in fulfilling its obligations under the CBD, progress towards impact is modest.

Out of nine projects in the biodiversity focal area, GEF support includes six projects which are enabling and capacity assessment activities. These projects have largely contributed to laying the foundation to manage biodiversity conservation. Of particular importance is the first biodiversity enabling activity, the Biodiversity Strategy, Action Plan, and National Report project, which supported Moldova in building a robust foundation for meeting its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by developing key policy documents and the country's first National Report to the CBD. Many of the activities included in the Action Plan have been further moved forward through national initiatives or international projects, including subsequent GEF supported projects. However, despite their considerable number, the enabling activities considered in combination had a rather limited impact. Many impact drivers including a consistently and regularly updated information database, continued interactions among stakeholders, and extensive dissemination of project results, have not been achieved. The main barriers are the limited existing capacities and institutional conflicts with other central authorities involved in biodiversity conservation and management.

The medium-size project (MSP) Biodiversity Conservation in the Lower Dniestr Delta Ecosystem did not achieve one of the key expected outputs, namely the establishment of the Lower Dniestr National Park as the Parliament did not approve the creation of the park. Nevertheless, it had some positive impacts. It succeeded in raising awareness and commitment from local authorities and population. It also managed to leverage additional financing for the development of local environmental action plans. Some of the project results such as the technical studies and management plan prepared for the national park and community resource management pilots are highly replicable. Of particular importance, the outcomes and lessons learned from this project have fed into the design and preparation of the recently started MSP Improving Coverage and Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area System in Moldova.

This project, which became effective in April 2009, aims to develop an enabling framework for the expansion of the protected area system to include under-represented ecosystems in Moldova. Since project implementation was recently initiated, it is too early to assess outcomes, namely improved representativeness and coverage of the protected area system and strengthened capacity to manage the protected area system. This would in the long-term contribute to improving the management of existing protected areas and to increasing the number and extent of protected areas in Moldova that can effectively conserve globally unique habitats and the species they contain, with a focus on those which are currently under-represented. An education and awareness program in Orhei is also planned. Replication of project outcomes is foreseen through direct reproduction of selected project elements, practices and methods, as well as through the scaling up of experiences. Institutional sustainability of the project is also very much linked to available resources in order to ensure the

continuity of project results. The project has a particular focus on increasing cost-effectiveness of institutional arrangements and securing income for the protected area network, both at the central level and for individual protected areas. Good cooperation between the Ministry of Environment and Moldsilva, the State Forestry Agency, is another significant factor not only for the achievement of the project impacts after completion, but even for the realization of its outcomes.

Finally, in the field of biosafety, two GEF global projects have been completed as enabling activities. The projects played an important role in supporting the development of the National Biosafety Framework and interaction with the biosafety clearing house mechanism. The results of these projects have been further sustained through the ongoing MSP Support to the Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework. This project focuses on the development of key legislation, capacity building and awareness raising at both national and local levels. It has been particularly successful in triggering cooperation between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Conclusion 2: In the climate change focal area, GEF support had limited results, but considering up-coming projects, there is potential to achieve meaningful impacts, provided that successful replication takes place.

In the climate change area, GEF support includes two completed national enabling activities, which supported the first and second National Communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It has also provided capacity building in the sector and for improving the quality of the greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory.

These enabling activities have contributed to putting climate change issue higher on the government's agenda and to raise awareness among main stakeholders. The enabling activities project team has noted that the first project was a learning exercise and allowed to build enough capacity and expertise for future projects. Similarly to the biodiversity focal area, enabling activities have been particularly successful in pulling competencies and expertise together and to define priorities and measures to be taken to address climate change issues.

Only one MSP, the Renewable Energy from Agricultural Waste project, has been completed. The project's main objective was to overcome the barriers to the update of biomass technology by providing examples of best practice (demonstration plants) in the use of biomass (straw) fuelled energy systems as a viable alternative to fossil fuels and a sustainable means of addressing the energy supply problems facing rural communities and agro-enterprises. In addition to limited actual annual emission reductions through greater efficiency and fuel switching from coal to straw biomass, the project has been very successful in demonstrating to the local population the social and economic benefits from the use of renewable energy, including decreased operating costs. Replication is taking place although in a limited scale to-date.

The ROTI study carried out for this project has shown that by successfully delivering the planned outcomes, the project has been instrumental in ensuring the partial realization of the foreseen impact drivers. The main area of concern is the assumptions, which are considered as the factors necessary

to reach the project's ultimate impacts. Policy, legislation, and especially funding are still not sufficient to encourage the development of biomass use. Furthermore, economic growth, in particular in rural areas, has not taken place yet.

The MSP Reducing GHG Emissions through Improved Energy Efficiency in the Industrial Sector, PIF approved in January 2010, aims to improve energy efficiency of the Moldovan industrial sector leading to reduced global environmental impact and enhanced competitiveness.

In conclusion, in the climate change focal area, while bringing significant support to Moldova in fulfilling its obligations under the UNFCCC, results are still modest. This can be attributed to the fact that one of the two MSPs is still in a proposal preparation stage, while the completed MSP was completed less than two years ago.

Conclusion 3: In the international waters focal area, it is too early to assess the results of the two national FSPs, only one being completed recently. Results of other projects are limited.

In Moldova, GEF support in the international waters focal area has a clear regional dimension as it has been provided through regional projects targeting the Danube River basin and Black Sea. Two large child projects have been implemented: the full-size project (FSP) Agricultural Pollution Control, under the WB-GEF Strategic Partnership for Nutrient Reduction in the Danube River and Black Sea and the FSP Environmental Infrastructure, under the Strategic Partnership Investment Fund for Nutrient Reduction in the Danube River basin and the Black Sea. Apart from these two child projects, activities undertaken in Moldova under regional projects are not easy to identify. The regional projects had very limited national components in Moldova and included mainly collection of information on nutrient reduction, small grants, and wetland demonstrations activities. The assessment of results is limited, because only one of the FSPs was completed recently (December 2009).

The FSP Agricultural Pollution Control aimed to increase the use of mitigation measures by agro-industry and farmers to reduce nutrient discharge. This was done through collaboration with agro-industry and farmers benefiting from the ongoing World Bank Rural Investment and Services Project. The project also had activities in a pilot watershed area (installation of communal and individual platforms, development of a code of good agricultural practices and wetland restoration activities, public awareness). In addition, the project contributed to strengthening the capacity of water and soil quality monitoring. The project succeeded in raising awareness on manure management in rural areas, but the results need to be further sustained. Replication by three villages is considered as a significant achievement. Although a lot of interest has been expressed for replication outside the pilot sites, this still depends on the availability of financial means at the local level and support from the local authorities. Therefore, the impact is limited at present and is conditional on commitment and financial capacities of local authorities. The replication and sustainability of project results is very much dependent on local population and authorities' commitment (manure management, wetland restoration, forest planting), financial means (manure management), efficient awareness raising (Good Agricultural Practices). It is not possible at this

time to assess the impacts of the project given the short time span since completion of the project and the limited extent of the pilot area.

The ongoing FSP Environmental Infrastructure aims to improve the quality of sanitation services in Soroca, and to reduce the discharge of pollutants from Soroca municipal sources into the Nistru River and subsequently to the Black Sea through the construction of a wastewater treatment plant (constructed wetlands) in the municipality of Soroca and engineering technical assistance. One of the objectives of the project is to test and disseminate the constructed wetlands technology in the region. Considering the low cost of this technology compared to traditional wastewater treatment plant and the need for sewage treatment in the region, the project could have a significant impact at national and regional levels, if the technology proves efficient and is replicated throughout the region. Still, it relies on the success of the project's outcomes, which will only be measurable once the constructed wetland is in operation. The project implementation faced a series of difficulties due to changes of national responsible agency, changes of local leadership due to local elections, and land allocation for the facility.

Results of several regional projects are very limited and not visible enough. For example, the completed regional project Strengthening the Implementation Capacities for Nutrient Reduction and Transboundary Cooperation in the Danube River basin only provided small grants support to NGOs to promote and demonstrate nutrient reduction practices. These were considered as successful, in particular in raising awareness among the local population. Another case is the regional ongoing project Promoting Replication of Good Practices for Nutrient Reduction and Joint Collaboration in Central and Eastern Europe, which focuses on identification of nutrient reduction best practices and lessons learned, dissemination and promotion of these, and successful nutrient reduction replication strategies. The project activities in Moldova are rather limited and intended to contribute to the reduction of water pollution, especially diffuse organic pollution in the Prut River basin through promotion of best agricultural practices in a pilot area.

National components of regional projects are often marginal. It has even been difficult to identify those during the evaluation. This absence of dissemination of project results is preoccupying and a serious obstacle to experience sharing at regional level.

Conclusion 4: Through a mixed and staged combination of enabling activities and an FSP, GEF support to the POPs focal area has been of strategic importance.

In the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) focal area, Moldova was successful in securing an FSP, the results of which are reinforced and complemented by various other donors' projects, and led to significant additional results, with sustainable outcomes achieved.

The enabling activities related to the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on POPs in Moldova supported the country in preparing the National Implementation Plan (NIP) for the Convention. This project facilitated collaboration among various institutions and was instrumental in raising awareness concerning POPs. In addition, under the global project, Assessment of Existing Capacity and Capacity Building Needs to Analyze POPs in Developing Countries, GEF provided some support for capacity building targeting laboratories, including training and equipment.

The POPs Management and Destruction project contributed to the environmentally safe management and disposal of stockpiles of POPs contaminated pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The quantitative targets for the destruction of POPs contaminated stocks of obsolete pesticides and PCB capacitors were achieved and in some cases surpassed. The project was effective in strengthening capacity to enhance the POPs information management and reporting system, POPs monitoring capacity, and control. It also provided support to improve the legal framework for POPs management. This component was delayed and, at the time of the evaluation, was not yet completed. In addition, the project included a POP awareness and educational campaign, which aimed to establish a communications framework for POPs and other chemicals management and raising public awareness concerning POP sources and effects for different target groups. This component of the project has been successfully implemented and has resulted in increased awareness among the authorities and the public about POP and PCB issues. Strengthened capacity and raised awareness achieved by the project are key elements in sustaining the project outcomes.

Throughout the development of successive projects financed by various donors, use has been made of results from previous activities. For example, the inventory of obsolete pesticide stockpiles was used to evaluate financial costs for subsequent projects. The NIP approved at the end of the enabling activity was considered as a good basis for applying for an FSP. Due to the experience gained in developing the FSP, it was easier to prepare the other two projects, which UNEP and the Canadian International Development Agency funded.

For the project to reach its ultimate impact, additional measures are needed to finalize the elimination of POPs and PCB contaminated equipment. Further projects funded by both GEF and other donors should help to fully implement the NIP. In this perspective, the regional GEF/FAO Capacity Building on Obsolete Pesticides in EECCA Countries (2009-2011) provides further support to complete the inventory of POP polluted sites.

Relevance

Conclusion 5: Overall, GEF support has been relevant to national sustainable development and environmental priorities, to international conventions, and regional processes as well as to the GEF mandate, except for combating land degradation.

GEF support aligns with national sustainable development needs and challenges, as reflected in the different national development strategies formulated during the last ten years. In particular, by promoting sustainable practices in the context of economic restructuring and development, several GEF projects have contributed to local development policy, a key objective for Moldova given the importance of the agriculture sector in the economy and exacerbated poverty in rural areas.

GEF support has addressed most of the main environmental priorities set by national development and environmental policy documents, namely water resources through regional projects, toxic substances and waste management with a focus on POPs, and biodiversity conservation. GEF projects and activities have also tackled climate change, which is recognized in various strategies as

a main concern for Moldova, in combination with energy security issues, notably in terms of energy efficiency and development of renewable energy. Climate adaptation has been addressed in a marginal way, mainly through limited components integrated in international waters or biodiversity projects.

Enabling activities are supporting the fulfillment of the country's obligations under international conventions, while international waters projects, both regional and national, have contributed to regional processes aimed at the protection of the Danube River basin and the Black Sea. These activities have also supported the establishment of priorities for sustainable development and environmental protection.

One exception is the absence of projects related to land degradation, a priority established by sectoral strategies such as the 2000 National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and the National Comprehensive Program for the period 2003-2020 on Increasing Soil Fertility. Moldova is eligible for GEF funding in this area and project proposals for two MSPs were prepared with UNDP as the GEF Agency. However, both proposals were dropped by the GEF Secretariat in 2009 because funds for land degradation were depleted early in GEF-4.

Finally, the amount of GEF support to-date is not proportionate from one focal area to another, with the international water and POPs focal areas representing 74.6 percent of the total funding. However, various proposals currently in the pipeline focus on other priorities and, if accepted, would lead to a more balanced portfolio.

Conclusion 6: Country ownership is limited mainly due to the absence of coordination and clear strategy towards GEF support.

Project offices, Convention focal points, and GEF Agencies have been to varying extents the main drivers of projects. Project proposals are often prepared by a core group of dedicated people within the project offices, with support from GEF Agencies. The lack of political leadership and coordination during project preparation and implementation is the main obstacle preventing the country from influencing in a decisive manner project development and implementation. The quasi-monopoly of the Ministry of Environment as the GEF national executing agency has also been a factor contributing to a lack of coordination and involvement of a broad range of stakeholders. There is a risk that the GEF would be seen as the exclusive domain of the Ministry, preventing initiatives from other institutions.

This aspect should be considered in combination with the lack of coordination in programming and implementation at the national level. At present, the involvement of interested institutions is often limited to contacts within steering committees and there is no overall planning strategy in relation to GEF support. Another factor, which has a direct influence on ownership, is the change of government which often results in changes of priorities and in responsibilities or staff in national executing agencies, thus influencing the project implementation and outcomes. The same remark applies to changes of leadership following local elections.

In contrast, the case of the POPs Destruction and Management project where strong ownership and commitment at the national level have triggered complementarities of donor support and enhanced cross-fertilization between projects and sustainability of different initiatives, including GEF projects, shows the value of a robust country ownership. It has ensured coordination among the various relevant central authorities, and fully utilized and complemented results of previous projects by creating synergies between national activities and project activities funded by the GEF and other donors to address POPs.

The need for coordination and strategic planning has been recognized at a high political level and the government has recently approved new legislation which addresses this issue. The Regulation on coordination of foreign assistance sets new procedures, allocation of responsibilities and institutional restructuring. If fully and efficiently implemented, the regulation could serve as the much-needed foundation for the country to play a more active role in initiating, implementing and evaluating projects. It demonstrates the government's will to play a far more proactive role in influencing and shaping donor's assistance, as well as ensuring stronger ownership through organized and systematic coordination of the various central authorities to international assistance. More specifically with regard to GEF support, this new approach could enhance country ownership through the development of coherent national strategies and plans regarding donor's assistance, including the GEF.

MSPs and FSPs have produced mixed results. In some focal areas, projects have been effective in demonstrating benefits of good practices and innovative technologies. However, the impact drivers necessary to achieve the ultimate impacts of projects and in particular up-scaling of demonstrated practices/technologies are only partially achieved. Besides, the project results are not always fully nationally owned and integrated into national frameworks.

The analysis of the GEF portfolio in Moldova has also shown that an important element contributing to the sustainability of project outcomes is the ability to demonstrate likely social and economic benefits along the expected environmental ones. In other words, generation of incomes or savings or social benefits is an effective tool to gain support from the local population and its importance should not be neglected.

The level of cofinancing has been relatively low with a ratio of slightly over 1:1 for FSPs and MSPs. Cofinancing is far more limited for enabling activities. Besides, in certain cases, the expected cofinancing is not actually provided in full. A positive trend is the constant increase in cofinancing ratios over-time. Cofinancing has increased across the replenishment periods to reach a ratio of 1.63 under GEF-4 compared to 1.02 under GEF-2.

Efficiency

Conclusion 7: Total processing time span is comparable to average figures for GEF projects. There are mixed perceptions on complexity and duration of GEF project preparation and implementation procedures although the general view is rather positive.

Overall, in Moldova project preparation and the approval process has been relatively efficient in comparison to other countries. The average preparation cost across all national projects is very reasonable in comparison with the costs identified in previous CPEs. The processing time span is comparable to average figures for GEF projects with regard to MSPs (11 months on average from entry into the GEF pipeline to project start-up) and to enabling activities (three months on average from CEO approval to project start-up). For two FSPs, the time from pipeline entry to project start-up is comparable to average figures. The third FSP preparation time was exceptionally long as it lasted 6 years. This extensive duration was due to the particularities of this specific project.

However, the perception from different stakeholders varies. Several stakeholders considered that GEF project development procedures as difficult in comparison to procedures of other donors, and that the preparation of an FSP as overly time-consuming in particular due to the complexity of feasibility studies. Most of the interviewed representatives of MSPs and enabling activities found the procedures and duration of project preparation reasonable. In conclusion, the general view is surprisingly rather positive unlike previous evaluations where GEF processes and procedures were considered overly complicated and inefficient.

Some stakeholders have noted that the lack of coordination during the preparation of projects may lead to problems during the implementation stage if the relevant environmental impact assessment or authorization procedures established by national legislation are not taken into account.

Seven completed projects out of nine needed a time extension. These include six completed enabling activities for which time extension ranged from 7 to 32 months; that is from 60 to 270 percent of the planned duration of the activities.

Conclusion 8: Project offices set up under the Ministry of Environment, GEF Agencies, and some Convention focal points play a key role in preparation and implementation of projects.

The project offices created within the Ministry of Environment play a key operative role in both the design and implementation of projects. Project offices are set up per focal area, usually at the request of the relevant Convention focal point. The availability of funding to support the implementation of the corresponding Convention is the main criteria for setting up such an office. All project offices manage other donor projects in addition to GEF projects. They are seen as a useful tool to maintain a core team of qualified experts, which have built expertise for preparing, managing, and implementing projects. However, their existence is very much dependent on available funding and they often work in isolation, which leads to a lack of coordination across

focal areas. The evaluation has identified several examples of projects successfully building on previous projects. The core team of experts working in project offices, which have a strong motivation to develop new projects, generally facilitates consolidation of support across several projects.

Support from GEF Agencies is seen as critical, in particular for their resources and knowledge of GEF rules and procedures. The Convention focal points have occasionally played a driving role in the preparation of projects, mainly in initiating a project concept and providing guidance to the project office. This depends in most cases on the individuals concerned. Focal points' involvement has also been hindered by changes in staff.

Roles and responsibilities of national executing agencies and GEF Agencies are generally considered as clearly set and no specific problem was identified in this regard.

Conclusion 9: The dissemination of information and sharing of lessons learned is limited.

One key condition for ensuring that projects produce effective results and reach their ultimate impacts is an effective dissemination of the project outcomes and outputs to decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public in general. Although some projects have indeed foreseen dissemination of GEF project lessons learned and achievements, mainly through final seminars and documentation left after the project's end, these measures are not framed in a clear strategy, including in the project proposals. This prevents replication and continued awareness raising beyond the project life-time.

Until recently, information on project results and lessons learned, have not been sufficiently disseminated by GEF Agencies, national executing agencies, and project teams. There have been several cases where websites developed under projects were not maintained after the end of the project, and useful information was not accessible anymore. Another example is the risk of databases developed under a project being neglected after project completion.

Conclusion 10: The GEF focal point mechanism has not provided sufficient strategic guidance and coordination.

In Moldova, both the political and operational roles of the GEF focal point are assigned to one person, and since 2008 the Minister of Environment has held this position. Given the additional responsibilities of the GEF focal point, concerns about the efficiency and effectiveness of the focal point mechanism were raised by several key informants. In particular, while the project offices or the Convention focal points play a noticeable role in operational activities, there is a lack of guidance and facilitation to align projects with the national development plan and environmental priorities. Besides, the focal point is not involved in monitoring and evaluation of the GEF portfolio. Another issue is the lack of information on GEF mechanisms and procedures.

On the positive side, recent initiatives may greatly improve the situation. Firstly, Moldova benefits from the GEF Country Support Program and it is likely that such support will continue in the future. Secondly, under the new Regulation on the institutional framework and the mechanism of

coordinating foreign assistance, the Ministry of Environment should designate a Sector Coordinator and a Sector Foreign Assistance Board, which will play a key role in the planning of foreign assistance including the GEF. This will entail defining assistance priorities, identifying project ideas and developing proposals, and negotiating and signing contracts for foreign assistance. Finally, with the support of UNDP, a workshop was organized within the Ministry of Environment in January 2010 to discuss Moldova's involvement in GEF-5. Although the Ministry decided to not include other GEF Agencies, it was a very useful planning exercise and informative especially for the new ministerial staff.

1.3 Recommendations

To the GEF Council:

Recommendation 1: GEF should fully support the introduction of the SGP in Moldova.

Projects with activities at the local level should be encouraged in order to overcome the potential lack of political commitment and encouraging replication. Generally, projects close to the local population have shown a high potential for replication. Concrete and practical examples of successful practices are seen as more effective than workshops and seminars and a strong involvement of the local population contributes to the up-scaling of demonstrated new technologies and good practices. This is especially true in relation to rural areas, which suffer even more from poverty issues. The direct involvement of the population at the local level contributes to enhancing the catalytic effect and replication of GEF projects. Such involvement would be better secured through the Small Grant Programme, which works directly with NGOs and communities-based organizations to address environmental issues and supports the delivery of global environmental benefits at local levels. Moldova has already had experience with small grants under regional international waters project as well as under the UNDP Small Grants Scheme component, which was designed according to the GEF SGP. These have been successful and have shown the potential for this new modality to help generate ownership at the local level. It would also provide much needed support to the Moldovan NGO community, which is very active but has limited means.

To-date, there is no SGP in Moldova. The country has expressed its interest and its application to the SGP has been very recently approved by the GEF SGP Steering Committee. GEF should support this process to ensure that the SGP is added as a new GEF modality in Moldova.

Recommendation 2: GEF should provide guidance and set up requirements on dissemination of project results and lessons learned.

As has been noted in the Fourth Overall Performance Study, learning in the GEF is still not systematically encouraged. The GEF lacks a knowledge management strategy that pulls all learning efforts together in a coordinated way. This results in lost opportunities for learning on the part of the GEF partners and countries.

At the country level, the evaluation of the portfolio in Moldova has shown the importance of learning efforts to encourage replication and up-scaling. However, dissemination of project results

and lessons learned is far too limited. Dissemination of information on project results and communication activities is primarily a responsibility of GEF Agencies, national executing agencies and project implementation teams under GEF projects.

It is therefore recommended that GEF supports these aspects through the development of relevant guidance and/or requirements. For example, these could include a requirement for large projects with a significant awareness raising component to develop a communication strategy that identifies and plans for information and communication activities not only during the project implementation phase but also after implementation. All project proposals should make provisions for disseminating information on project results during and after the project, with a corresponding budget allocation. Instructions should be provided as to how to ensure that information resources, including websites and databases, are to be maintained and used after the completion of the project. Similarly, guidance on dissemination of lessons learned would be useful to support exchange of experience between projects, GEF Agencies, and national executing agencies.

To the Government of Moldova

Recommendation 3: Address issues of land degradation and climate adaptation in GEF projects.

Since land degradation is a priority clearly established in national sectoral policy documents, it should be addressed in future GEF projects either within specific land degradation related projects or in projects addressing other focal areas, in particular biodiversity or international waters. In these two focal areas, project activities relating to sustainable agricultural practices are particularly relevant and should also address land degradation issues. Another growing priority is climate change adaptation. While GEF projects to-date have mainly focused on promotion of renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency, it is recommended that the government along with the GEF Agencies consider GEF support for projects targeted at climate change adaptation under the Climate Change Fund. Moldova is eligible for this fund as non-Annex I country. However, as the focus is on most vulnerable countries, funds available for countries outside Africa and Small Islands Development States may be rather limited. Therefore, it is recommended to look for other potential sources of funding for climate adaptation projects. Besides, similarly to land degradation issues, these are aspects that could also be usefully integrated into biodiversity and international waters projects in order to reduce the vulnerabilities of the population and communities to floods and droughts and to climate variability, while protecting and restoring ecosystems that also suffer from these consequences of climate change.³

³ The 2009 UNDP Human Development Report identifies climate change adaptation policy option and possible measures. Besides, such an approach is in line with the Final GEF-5 Programming Document, which underlined the existing inter-linkages between GEF focal areas, cross-focal synergies and avoidance of trade-offs in the individual focal area strategies.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen the focal point mechanism, and develop a strategic approach to GEF support to ensure efficient coordination among the main stakeholders, including other donors.

The functions of the focal point should generally be strengthened, notably through sufficient funding and provision of support staff. Such support would allow the enhancement of the strategic and coordination role of the focal point by providing additional resources to facilitate liaison with stakeholders and day-to-day communication, dissemination of project outputs and outcomes as well as lessons learned. It would also allow the focal points to get more involved in monitoring and evaluation of GEF supported projects.

In this perspective, the GEF Country Support Program is a very useful mechanism, which should be fully and effectively utilized by Moldova to disseminate information about GEF support, and coordinate with a wide range of stakeholders on a strategic approach to GEF support. In particular, it could be instrumental in helping to maintain websites and pages set up by projects and to develop and update project databases.

In addition, several measures and actions should be considered to improve coordination among main stakeholders, including other donors:

- Improve coordination in programming and implementation of GEF support by creating a framework and mechanism of coordination of future GEF support with all national stakeholders and GEF Agencies. Participation of stakeholders in the design and implementation of GEF projects should be further supported, in particular by facilitating effective integration and dialogue among the different central authorities and other key players in environmental fields. The implications of other organizations as GEF project national executing agencies should be seriously considered and promoted. It is considered that Moldova would benefit from undertaking a GEF portfolio identification exercise, coordinated by the GEF focal point and linked with national and GEF Agencies' planning processes, as being proposed under GEF-5.
- Systematic coordination among donors should be strongly encouraged. This would allow synergies during project implementation, and also can be instrumental in supporting replication and promote the catalytic effect of previous projects. For this, an effective strategy to support replication should be developed. In several cases, project impacts may not realize due to a lack of financial means and political commitments. On the other hand, coordinated implementation of various projects, such as other donors' projects or national projects and programs targeted at rural development, and GEF projects focused on the promotion of environmentally friendly technologies, is instrumental in creating synergies and ensuring the realization of the desired impacts. Such combined efforts between different projects can greatly help to ensure better continuity of the project results. Synergies can also be created if these other projects and programs are used to build on the project results while there is still time to do so, for example through support to replication of the demonstrated technology or good practices.

- Representatives of public authorities (Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Constructions and Regional Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Forestry Agency, and others), Convention focal points, NGOs, academia, and GEF Agencies should be involved in discussing and setting priorities and strategies for GEF support. In addition, they should be informed of results and lessons learned from GEF projects implemented in Moldova. An improved coordination of GEF support at national level would be a decisive step in involving more actively other national executing agencies.