

GEF Council
November 16-18, 2010
Washington, D.C.

Agenda Item 9

EVALUATION OF THE GEF STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR ADAPTATION

(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed documents “*Evaluation of the GEF Strategic Priority for Adaptation*” (GEF/ME/C.39/4) and “*Management Response to the Evaluation of the GEF Strategic Priority for Adaptation*” (GEF/ME/C.39/5), requests the Secretariat to ensure that the mainstreaming of resilience and adaptation in the GEF focal areas continues, as a means of reducing risks of climate change impacts to the GEF portfolio, and requests the Secretariat to report to its November 2012 meeting on steps taken and progress made.

The Council requests the Secretariat to continue managing the implementation of the SPA with sufficient funding to ensure lessons can be learned from the portfolio. It requests the Evaluation Office, STAP and the Adaptation Task Force to provide guidelines for evaluations of adaptation projects to learn from outcomes and impacts of the projects.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In the November 2008 GEF Council meeting, the GEF Evaluation Office was mandated to conduct an independent evaluation of the SPA pilot to be submitted at its November 2010 meeting. It was expected that the lessons learned from this evaluation will assist the GEF Council in taking further decisions on Adaptation in the GEF. The SPA evaluation was developed and implemented by staff from the GEF Evaluation Office with support from an external consultant with extensive experience in the field of adaptation. The main objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Assess the SPA strategy and its implementation;
- Assess the SPA projects;
- Identify lessons on how to increase the resilience of the GEF supported projects.

2. A consultation workshop took place on September 27, 2010 to present the preliminary findings of the evaluation and receive feedback from key stakeholders on possible factual errors and analysis. Comments were reviewed and incorporated as appropriate into the final report. The present document presents the main conclusions and recommendations. The full evaluation report, as published on the website of the GEF Evaluation Office (www.gefeo.org), includes a thorough portfolio examination as well as detailed assessments of each of the key elements of this evaluation.

3. The SPA portfolio consists of 26 projects and programs amounting to \$48.35 million financed by the GEF. GEF SPA financed projects also received co-financing from other GEF Focal Areas, as well as from other sources for a total of \$780 million. The portfolio includes 17 Full Sized and 9 Medium Sized Projects. While all funding for the SPA was approved under GEF3, around 57% of the SPA funding was committed under GEF3 and the reminder, approximately \$20.8 million (43%), was committed under GEF4.

4. The evaluation reached the following ten conclusions:

- 1) All SPA projects fulfilled the GEF requirement regarding Global Environmental Benefits and explicitly included climate change impacts on these, and are relevant to the GEF mandate.
- 2) The \$50 million SPA initiative has the potential, to varying degrees, of providing climate resilience to \$780 million of investments.
- 3) The portfolio of projects represents diversity in sectors, themes and focal areas, with an emphasis on biodiversity and land degradation.
- 4) Projects were developed in accordance with the elements and requirements of the SPA Operational Guidelines, with some exceptions.
- 5) Adaptation measures proposed in SPA projects were found to be generally “no-regrets” measures, dealing with management of natural resources.
- 6) Results achieved so far have been at the output level; most projects are either in early stages of implementation or have not started yet.

- 7) There was evidence of mainstreaming of adaptation at the GEF - mainly at strategic level and to some extent in project design - but some limitations are preventing this integration from becoming fully effective.
- 8) Although the portfolio is still in the early stages of implementation some lessons could be extracted for the GEF as a whole.
- 9) There were weaknesses in the management of the SPA portfolio but there is still time to correct them.
- 10) As a learning pilot within the GEF, the SPA has yet to achieve its full effectiveness.

5. It should be recognized that resilience is an intrinsic part of protecting or creating global environmental benefits and that there is strong convergence between global environmental benefits, development and adaptation. The GEF should provide the necessary non-financial incentives and tools to operationalize the integration of resilience in its programming. A second step could involve the mobilization of financial incentives.

Recommendation 1: The GEF should continue providing explicit incentives to carry on the mainstreaming of resilience and adaptation into the GEF focal areas, as a means of reducing risks to the GEF portfolio

6. The relative youth of the SPA portfolio indicates that the SPA – although fully committed – still needs to be managed from within the GEF, particularly if it is to deliver the learning results it was intended.

Recommendation 2: To continue to manage the implementation of the SPA, the GEF needs to provide sufficient resources to the GEF Secretariat, beyond resources dedicated to the processing of a pipeline of projects.

7. GEFO, STAP and the GEF Adaptation Task Force should work on developing guidelines for conducting midterm or final evaluations with specific emphasis on how to review, select and improve adaptation measures.

Recommendation 3. Given that adaptation measures in SPA projects are still under implementation, further evaluations could provide opportunities to learn from outcomes and progress toward impact.

8. Despite ongoing work to elaborate screening tools for climate change, the GEF Council decision¹ on the climate screening tools is yet to be fulfilled.

¹ GEF Council Document, May 2007. Business Plan FY08-10 and FY08 Corporate Budget (GEF/C.31/9).

BACKGROUND

9. Through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) developed country Parties (Annex I & II) committed themselves to “assist the developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting costs of adaptation to those adverse effects”.² At the 6th Conference of the Parties in Bonn in 2001³, three adaptation funds were created in response to this need, The Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), and the Adaptation Fund.

10. At the 7th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC in Marrakech in 2001, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was given the responsibility of managing the first two funds. However, as a precursor to their operationalization, the GEF was also mandated to provide financial resources as a means of “establishing pilot or demonstration projects to show how adaptation planning and assessment can be practically translated into projects that will provide real benefits.” The GEF followed through with the approval of a Strategic Priority entitled “Piloting an Operational Approach to Adaptation (SPA)”, a special program with an allocation of \$50 million from the GEF Trust Fund. The GEF Council approved the SPA in November 2003. A series of draft operational guidance documents for the SPA were circulated to the GEF Council in 2004 and at its 23rd meeting (May 2004), the GEF Council requested “that the new strategic priority on adaptation be implemented as early as possible (...) consistent with the principles of the Trust Fund, including criteria concerning incremental costs and global environmental benefits”. Operational Guidelines were finalized in March 2005.

11. The SPA aims at reducing vulnerability and increasing adaptive capacity to the adverse effects of climate change in any or a combination of the six GEF focal areas. “It supports pilot and demonstration projects that address local adaptation needs and generate global environmental benefits”. As requested by the Council, all projects under the SPA were to be funded based on the incremental cost principle.”⁴ Considering that the SPA pilot reached its financial close at the end of GEF 4, or June 2010, and that all of its resources are now fully allocated⁵, the lessons that can be extracted from it can be of direct relevance to the development and implementation of other adaptation funds and for further consideration of how the GEF needs to tackle climate change adaptation and resilience issues in its other activities.

12. In the November 2008 GEF Council meeting, the GEF Evaluation Office was mandated to conduct an independent evaluation of the SPA pilot⁶ to be submitted at its November 2010 meeting. It is expected that the lessons learned from this evaluation will assist the GEF Council in taking further decisions on Adaptation.

² Article 4, Commitment 4 of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, United Nations, 1992

³ Schipper, E.L.F., *Conceptual History of Adaptation in the UNFCCC Process*. Review of European Community & International Environmental Law, 2006. 15(1): p. 82-92.

⁴ Evaluation of the Strategic Priority for Adaptation (SPA) Approach Paper, GEF, 2010.

⁵ The last 2 million USD are planned for two regional projects through the ADB “Coastal and Marine Resources and Management in the Coral Triangle (Southeast Asia and Pacific)”, but not yet formally allocated.

⁶ Joint Summary of the Chairs, Decision on Agenda Item 13 report on the Completion of the SPA

Evaluation Approach

13. The SPA evaluation was developed and implemented by staff from the GEF Evaluation Office with support from an external consultant with extensive experience in the field of adaptation. The evaluation was guided by an overarching question:

“What can we learn from this pilot program on Adaptation in terms of climate change adaptation within the GEF focal areas, the resilience of these projects, and the effectiveness of the adaptation measures that have been applied so far?”

14. The main objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Assess the SPA strategy and its implementation;
- Assess the SPA projects;
- Identify lessons on how to increase the resilience of the GEF supported projects.

15. Key areas of interest in this evaluation included:

- The SPA strategy’s relevance to the GEF and its focal areas and mandate, national sustainable development agendas, and to the international financing for adaptation, including LDCF, SCCF and Adaptation Fund;
- Assessment of the adaptation measures in the design of projects and the effectiveness of those that started implementation;
- Lessons from project M&E systems;
- Dissemination and lesson learning mechanisms put in place for the SPA portfolio.

16. Considering that the SPA was a pioneer in the field of on-ground adaption funding, the evaluation focused on gathering lessons, identifying examples of learning and assessing the design of projects in the SPA portfolio. The data sets used in the evaluation are both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Furthermore, a mixed method approach strengthens the analysis through triangulation.

17. SPA projects were reviewed in order to assess elements related to (a) technical clarity and conceptual consistency, (b) scientific approaches and methodologies, and (c) learning mechanisms, as well as the (d) project and portfolio level results and outcomes, and a policy analysis attended to the overall relevance and effectiveness of the SPA strategy. The evaluation team conducted the reviews of all projects using a common Project Review Protocol, which consisted of 31 short or multiple-choice questions, most having space for detailed comments and organized into the following three sections:

- a. Project Information
- b. Evaluation of Results and Outcomes;
- c. Assessment of the overall relevance and effectiveness of the SPA Strategy.

18. The questions focused on key elements such as (a) project relevance to GEF mandate, (b) effectiveness of adaptation measures, (c) effectiveness of monitoring system, (d) links to National Policies and (e) basic project data. All the available project documents (PIF, project

document, CEO endorsement, Project Implementation Reports, Mid-Term Reviews, etc.) were reviewed in the process. While three field trips aimed at validating the contents of the project documents were initially planned, logistical difficulties in the host countries and an emphasis on evaluating project design led the evaluation team to limit itself to a visit of two SPA projects in Namibia (17-22nd of June 2010).

19. Interviews were conducted at several stages of the evaluation process to crosscheck and validate the documentation that was available. These were conducted with a wide range of stakeholders, including the GEF adaptation and natural resources task forces, STAP, GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies, National Governments, project implementers and other GEF stakeholders and beneficiaries.

20. A consultation workshop took place on September 27, 2010 to present the preliminary findings of the evaluation and receive feedback from key stakeholders on possible factual errors and analysis. Comments were reviewed and incorporated as appropriate into the final report.

21. The present document presents the main conclusions and recommendations. The full evaluation report, as published on the website of the GEF Evaluation Office (www.gefeo.org), includes a thorough portfolio examination as well as detailed assessments of each of the key elements of this evaluation. The full report and its annexes provide the evaluative evidence to support the conclusions and recommendations contained herewith.

Key Definitions

22. The key concepts and terms used in this evaluation are defined below:

23. **Adaptation:** *Adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities. Various types of adaptation can be distinguished, including anticipatory and reactive adaptation, private and public adaptation, and autonomous and planned adaptation (IPCC TAR, 2001 a).*

24. **Resilience:** *Amount of change a system can undergo without changing state. (IPCC, TAR, 2001). The capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. This is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organizing itself to increase its capacity for learning from past disasters for better future protection and to improve risk reduction measures. (UN/ISDR, 2004)*

25. **Maladaptation:** *Any changes in natural or human systems that inadvertently increase vulnerability to climatic stimuli; an adaptation that does not succeed in reducing vulnerability but increases it instead. (IPCC TAR, 2001)*

26. **Vulnerability:** *The degree to which a system is susceptible to, or unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes. Vulnerability is a function of the character, magnitude, and rate of climate variation to which a system is exposed,*

its sensitivity, and its adaptive capacity. Therefore adaptation would also include any efforts to address these components (IPCC TAR, 2001)

Limitations

27. A number of limitations were encountered during the evaluation preparation as well as during its implementation:

- a. The limited technical details available in project design document regarding adaptation measures, the fact that most SPA projects are just beginning implementation and the limited number of field visits prevented the evaluation from arriving at significant conclusions regarding implementation results or the effectiveness of adaptation measures.
- b. The efficiency of processing SPA projects was not a central part of this evaluation since this was already undertaken by other evaluations conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office, such as the Joint Evaluation of the Project cycle.
- c. This evaluation was not intended as an evaluation of “adaptation” in the GEF, although it considers the various adaptation measures implemented in SPA projects. The evaluation focused on the SPA alone, and did not consider or compare with other actors or mechanisms either. In addition, this evaluation’s consideration of mainstreaming of adaptation limited itself to institutional mechanisms for learning, which were constructed as the SPA’s main vehicle for promoting the integration of adaptation into GEF work. Finally, the scope of this evaluation did not allow for a full consideration of the impacts of the SPA within the individual GEF Agencies.

SPA Portfolio Description

28. The SPA portfolio consists of 26 projects and programs amounting to \$48.35 million financed by the GEF. GEF SPA financed projects also received co-financing from other GEF Focal Areas, as well as from other sources. As outlined in Table 1, total project allocations covering the GEF SPA portfolio, financing from GEF focal areas and co-financing amounts to approximately \$777 million, of which GEF SPA financing consists of just 6%. The remainder includes GEF focal area financing (in 12 projects) amounting to \$79.28 million and additional co-financing amounting to \$649.64⁷.

29. The portfolio includes 17 Full Sized and 9 Medium Sized Projects. While all funding for the SPA was approved under GEF3, around 57% of the SPA funding was committed under GEF3 and the remainder; approximately \$20.8 million (43%) of the SPA funding was committed under GEF4.

⁷ The relatively high ratio of co-financing in these projects is explained by the fact that some of them belong to very large programs or regional projects, such as SLEM, MENARID, the Coral Triangle, the Plata Basin and the Amazon River Basin.

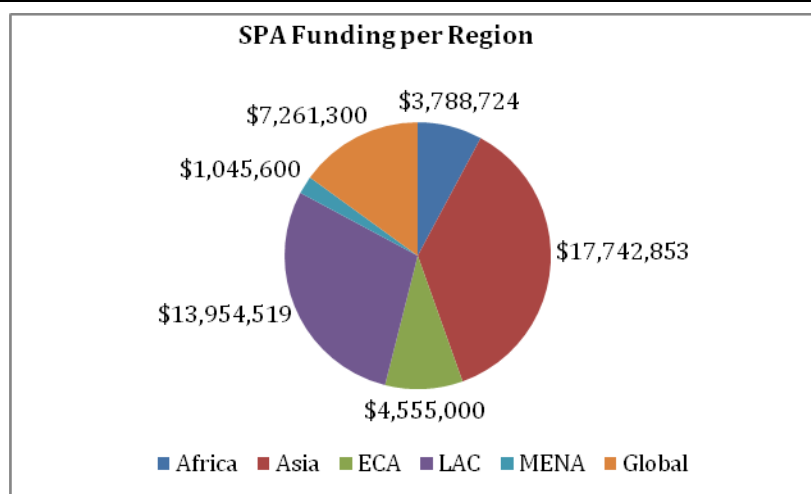
Table 1: Overview of SPA portfolio – Basic Data⁸

GEF Agency	Number of SPA Projects	SPA funding (\$ millions)	Other GEF funding (\$ millions)	Co-financing (\$ millions)	Total Project Cost (\$ millions)
ADB	2	\$ 2.00	\$19.36	\$ 91.15	\$112.51
FAO	1	\$ 1.00	--	\$ 2.88	\$ 3.88
IFAD	1	\$ 2.10	\$ 5.82	\$ 7.57	\$ 15.49
UNDP	11	\$17.69	\$ 8.37	\$142.19	\$168.25
UNEP	3	\$ 4.38	\$17.67	\$ 98.77	\$120.82
World Bank	8	\$21.17	\$28.07	\$307.09	\$356.33
	26	\$48.35	\$79.28	\$649.64	\$777.27

30. Seventeen (17) out of the 26 projects are implemented at national level (See Table 2). The remaining projects are either global (2 projects) or regional (7 projects) in nature. The regional projects cut across three regions: Asia (2), Latin America (3) and Africa (2). SPA funding was also proposed for 5 projects under the Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management Program in India⁹.

Table 2: Regional distribution of SPA projects¹⁰

Agency	National	Regional	Global	Total	%
ADB	0	2	0	2	8%
FAO	1	0	0	1	4%
IFAD	1	0	0	1	4%
UNDP	8	1	2	11	42%
UNEP	0	3	0	3	12%
World Bank	7	1	0	8	31%
	17	7	2	26	100%



Source: GEF Secretariat, Adaptation Team, June 30th, 2010.

⁸ GEF Secretariat, Adaptation Team, June 30th, 2010.

⁹ Under the SLEM partnership program, Project ID 3268

¹⁰ GEF Secretariat, Adaptation Team, June 30th, 2010.

CONCLUSIONS

31. The following pages present the main conclusions and recommendations, in a summarized form. As indicated above, full data, analysis and evidence can be found in the full evaluation report, available in the GEF Evaluation Office website (www.gefeo.org).

Conclusion 1: All SPA projects fulfilled the GEF requirement regarding Global Environmental Benefits and explicitly included climate change impacts on these, and are relevant to the GEF mandate.

32. All SPA projects succeeded in identifying global environmental benefits (GEBs), although some projects contained clearer definitions than others. The types of GEBs identified in SPA projects were similar to those that are identified in regular GEF projects, in line with Focal Area strategies, strategic objectives and operational programs in force at the time of project design. All SPA projects are well anchored within GEF practice, guidance and policies.

33. Project documents provide an assessment of the potential impacts of current climate variability and future climate change on GEBs and development, in varying degrees of detail, depending on the availability of information on climate scenarios, and vulnerability assessments.

34. The evaluation also notes that the type of GEBs to be expected from projects that respond to possible climate change are not different than that of general GEF projects, indicating a potentially strong linkage (and potential operational convergence) between resilience and global environmental benefits.

35. Most SPA projects (21) claim GEBs in the biodiversity area, whereas 14 projects claim GEBs in the Land Degradation area. The following table presents a sample among the most cited GEBs in SPA projects:

Table 3 - Sample of most cited Global Environmental Benefits/ Reduction of Threats in SPA projects

Examples of most cited GEBs / Reduction of threats
“Conservation of plant agrobiodiversity”, “conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, species conservation in biodiversity hotspots (plants and animals)”, “conservation of species available for crop improvement”, “maintenance or restoration of habitat integrity”, “reduction of losses in coral reefs, sea grass beds and islands”, “wetland species conservation”, “improved management of protected areas”.
“Maintenance of forest resilience”, “avoided deforestation”, “avoided fragmentation”, “avoided fire or fire control and management”, “carbon sequestration”, “ecosystem integrity”, “watershed integrity”, “maintenance of ecosystem services such as water retention, filtration, agricultural productivity and habitat”, “protection of coral reefs and marine biodiversity”, “key ecosystems integrity (forests, coral reefs, mangroves) and services”, “maintenance of ecological buffer zones”.
“Maintenance of soil fertility”, “reduced land degradation”, “reduced erosion”, “carbon sequestration in biomass”, “improved land productivity”, “reduced coastal erosion”, “carbon stocks in soil and biota”.

Conclusion 2: The \$50 million SPA initiative has the potential, to varying degrees, of providing climate resilience to \$780 million of investments.

36. The SPA components showed clear linkages to the overall objectives of the projects and as such have the potential to provide climate resilience to the rest of the project. As capacity building was a cross-cutting component in the SPA projects, this potential could be further realized in these projects. Some replication of lessons from the SPA is also possible as several of these projects belong to larger programs.

37. The set of interventions and major outcomes found in SPA project designs can be divided into three categories and two cross-cutting elements (knowledge management and capacity building).

38. Policy, regulatory and institutional components including training, policy revisions and regulatory activities to ensure that climate change considerations are taken into account into future planning. These can be said to be activities targeted at establishing enabling conditions for immediate as well as long-term adaptation.

39. Technical capacity and assessments including vulnerability assessments, climate models or climate impact assessments, which are designed to provide technical tools for adaptation. While targeted towards government institutions, they are pragmatically focused and usually allow for the transition towards on-the-ground measures.

40. On-the-ground pilot adaptation measures most SPA projects contain pilot demonstrations of adaptation measures (practices, technologies, approaches) on the ground, working with vulnerable communities and ecosystems. These activities, although most often broadly defined in SPA projects, are also usually comprised of modifications to natural resources management, ecosystem rehabilitation and some light infrastructural works. Given the relative weight of SPA contributions as compared to total project budgets (6%), the adaptation portions of SPA projects are quite limited in scope. Hence the pilot demonstrations are usually also localized, and the “investment-type” activities are limited.

41. Knowledge management: as a first cross-cutting element, all SPA projects contained a plan for learning, lessons gathering and dissemination, which corresponds to an objective of the SPA itself as well as to current practice in project development. Measures included in the Knowledge management components of projects were either limited to the project itself (a project website or an awareness campaign) or extended to regional and global audiences (adaptation learning mechanism, regional forums).

42. Capacity Building: the second cross-cutting element also appears in all projects and takes various forms according to whether it is being applied at the policy, technical or on-the-ground level. Measures include training, policy revisions, local mobilization, measures designed to strengthen livelihoods for adaptive capacity.

Conclusion 3: The portfolio of projects represents diversity in sectors, themes and focal areas, with an emphasis on biodiversity and land degradation.

43. The SPA portfolio review reveals that out of the 26 SPA projects, 21 were classified as biodiversity projects, 14 were addressing land degradation and 5 were addressing international waters. This classification is linked to the GEBs as shown in Table 3 above. The POPs focal area was not represented within the SPA portfolio, and only a few projects made linkages to climate change mitigation. A further analysis of project objectives reveals that, regardless of the focal area under which projects were formally classified, a number of themes appeared recurrently in the portfolio, most often related to land management, biodiversity or species conservation, water management and agriculture.

44. From a regional perspective, the SPA portfolio also represents diversity with all regions represented, but with a strong accent on Asia – a fact that is at odds with the original expectations that most projects would occur in Africa due to its greater vulnerability, but that most likely reflects the state of demand and capacity among countries and regions at the time.

Conclusion 4: Projects were developed in accordance with the elements and requirements of the SPA Operational Guidelines, with some exceptions.

45. The Operational guidelines provide basic definitions of the concepts and the various issues to be addressed through the SPA, basic requirements for project design and eligibility, review criteria and indicators. Basic requirements and eligibility criteria for SPA projects were the same as are applied to all GEF trust fund projects, with regards to GEBs, country ownership, sustainability, replicability and stakeholder participation.

46. All projects were found to be consistent with the objectives of the SPA guidelines, in that they all proposed pilot demonstration activities designed to test adaptation options or technologies. In keeping with the spirit of the SPA as a learning program, all projects also include specific plans for learning and replication. Projects also demonstrated a high degree of country ownership, thorough understanding of baseline conditions, and linkages to national policies and priorities.

47. All projects were also consistent with the objectives of the SPA to reduce vulnerability and increase adaptive capacity. The majority of projects referred to available information on vulnerability, such as National Communications or NAPAs, however most of the project documents indicate that a vulnerability assessment would be conducted during the project's implementation. In most cases, there is no evidence of participatory vulnerability assessment being undertaken as part of project design. The evaluation found that although this could have enriched the portfolio, it would have also entailed much longer project design phases, and potential delays in implementing the SPA.

48. The operational guidelines for the SPA outline the principle of a 'double increment' where the activities designed to produce or protect GEBs would consist in the first increment, and the second increment came from the requirement to "ensure the robustness and resilience of

the GEBs”¹¹. The agreement was that costs associated with the first increment would be funded by the GEF focal areas and those associated with the second increment would be funded by the SPA pilot.

49. This element of the SPA guidelines, the articulation of incremental reasoning, proved more difficult to operationalize. Project contributions to GEBs, although relatively well articulated, are often not readily measurable and many projects reported difficulties with the design of the ‘double increment’ requirement. According to many of those who were interviewed during this evaluation, this requirement was a constraint on project design, as well as on the selection of adaptation measures, because it appeared as a limitation on the scope of possible activities as well as because of the noted limited capacity in the system to deal with adaptation issues. However, most projects made the effort to link adaptation measures to potential global environmental benefits, at least theoretically.

50. Projects therefore dealt with the double incrementality reasoning in a number of different ways. In some projects, the adaptation measures were applied directly to the activities targeting GEBs (to make the GEBs more resilient), and in some other cases the logic of the project required that the adaptation measure focus on increasing local adaptive capacity or on removing a human-induced threat to the GEBs. In a few cases, some projects included a few adaptation measures that bore no link to global environmental benefits (though as mentioned before, all projects contained at least a theoretical articulation of GEBs).

51. Thinking on incremental calculations has evolved since the creation of the SPA guidelines towards a more flexible interpretation of incremental reasoning. Not surprisingly, in the large majority of cases in the SPA portfolio, the double increment was not calculated since the activities and components designed to enhance the GEBs became mixed with the activities designed as adaptation measures.

52. The focal area co-funding expectations, as spelled out in the SPA guidelines, were not entirely fulfilled. Fourteen (14) projects mobilized funding from the SPA only, whereas the rest (12) mobilized funding from other focal areas (some in more than one focal area), reflecting an evolution through time in Focal Area interest in adaptation and resilience issues.

53. In relation with the difficulties presented by the double-increment reasoning, many projects presented some difficulties in articulating the corresponding set of ‘double indicators’ expected in the SPA guidelines. In general, the quality and elaboration of M&E frameworks varied greatly amongst the SPA portfolio projects. Some frameworks were highly developed and detailed, including information of baseline data, sources of verification, precise indicator measurement, target values and dates, assumptions and risks; others remained at a high, summarized level. There is limited information on what works well in terms of M&E frameworks and indicators, and what presents difficulty during project implementation.

¹¹ GEF/C.27/Inf.10, 2005, Page 7.

Conclusion 5: Adaptation measures proposed in SPA projects were found to be generally “no-regrets” measures, dealing with management of natural resources.

54. A large number of adaptation measures contained in SPA projects could be considered as “no-regrets” measures, meaning that they would deliver development or environmental benefits regardless of the manifestation of climate change.

55. The table below provides a snapshot of activities cited in the projects presenting the top four themes (agriculture, land management, coastal zone management and water management), and classified according to three general types of interventions (policy, technical and on-the-ground).

Table 4: Sample of most cited adaptation measures linked interventions and major outcomes found in SPA projects design

Category	Most cited adaptation measures¹²
Policy, planning and regulatory	Local development planning, land use planning that integrates CC, inter-ministerial coordination, awareness raising, local risk management and planning, mainstreaming, policy analysis and review, bottom-up planning processes, ICZM planning, land use planning, zoning, coordination
Technical Capacity	Extension services, training, seasonal forecast and climate predictions, seed insurance schemes, climate modeling, inventories (agro-biodiversity), early warning, risk mapping, hazard mapping (droughts and floods), remote sensing, construction guidelines, zoning, manuals and guidelines on adaptation, disaster risk management, awareness raising, mainstreaming, sand extraction bans, flora and fauna inventories, methodology development and vulnerability assessments, modeling, research, protected area management and extension, risk assessment, global ocean observing system and SLR monitoring, hydrological assessments and models, including groundwater assessments, decision support tools,
On the Ground	Water harvesting, improved grazing, improved post harvest management, improved tillage, terracing, stress resistant varieties (crops and livestock), reforestation, afforestation and revegetation, irrigation, crop rotation, watershed management, fuel wood plantation, alternative energies, economic diversification, fire management and alert, invasive species eradication, mangrove restoration, agro-forestry, sand beach restoration, structural protection measures, climate monitoring and analysis, construction guidelines, risk analysis methods, beach nourishment, groynes and revetments, sand dune stabilization through revegetation, soil conservation, mangrove reforestation, waste management, coral reef co-management, integrated water management, irrigation

56. On their own, these measures could be found in regular GEF projects as well as in regular development projects, especially the “on the ground measures”. It appears therefore that it is mostly the intention with which the measure is being implemented that differentiates adaptation measures from other, non-adaptation measures (e.g. if it is applied with a climate change perspective or not).

¹² These are extracted from project documents are reproduced without any editing.

57. Due to the general way in which the adaptation measures are formulated in SPA projects, another conclusion that can be drawn is that at the time of project design, knowledge of adaptation measures remained at a theoretical level. The lack of technical precision provided in project documentation at design stage also supports this conclusion if compared to design documents for later adaptation projects outside the SPA.

58. The adaptation measures were also found to be similar across focal areas and themes, which could be attributed to the fact that projects in the SPA have tended to blend multiple themes together, or could be the result of a set of underlying assumptions regarding the root causes of vulnerability to climate change. Indeed, most adaptation measures in SPA projects have targeted natural resource uses and management practices at different levels (local, community level to policy level). This indicates that the assumption is that an optimal way to reduce vulnerability is by changing human behavior.

59. Based on the analyzed sample of non-SPA projects undertaken during this evaluation, similar approaches appear to have been implemented for other GEF projects where the single objective was the protection or creation of Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs). Furthermore, similar activities can be found under SPA and non-SPA projects portrayed as “pilot adaptation measures” in one case, and not in the others. This is especially true for the adaptation measures “on the ground”.

60. The most significant difference between SPA and non-SPA projects was that activities in the SPA had to be articulated according to climate change vulnerabilities and impacts. However, very few SPA projects explicitly demonstrate that this thinking was the basis for the selection of adaptation measures. In this regard, the evaluation found limited evidence to indicate that adaptation options were selected on the basis of dedicated vulnerability assessments or on the basis of broader lists of options from which to choose.

61. Some adaptation measures were however different in SPA projects than those used in usual approaches, in each of the categories of activities, whether at the policy, planning, regulatory frameworks and technical capacity. For example, activities targeting participatory vulnerability assessments and mapping, climate modeling and technology applications, as well as the demonstration of specific adaptation mechanisms and the early integration of climate change in planning frameworks, were all specific to SPA projects, or to SPA components within broader projects and programs. This indicates that the SPA did provide added value in terms of climate change consideration, albeit at an earlier stage of adaptation than originally expected – focused on capacity building, and enabling environments.

62. Finally, SPA projects presented good opportunities for creating synergies among activities that promote good environmental practices, and those that aim at resilience. This indicates that there is a strong convergence and a high potential for achieving ‘win-win-win’ scenarios (that achieve benefits in development, environment and resilience) with marginal additional investments.

Conclusion 6: Results achieved so far have been at the output level; most projects are either in early stages of implementation or have not started yet.

63. More than half of the portfolio is still in its early stages. At the beginning of this evaluation, eleven (11) projects had not yet started, four were still in an early start up phase, while the remaining eleven projects had come somewhat further (nine are mid-way and two are completed). As a young portfolio, the SPA has so far generated limited lessons on implementation of adaptation measures. Therefore, this evaluation can only draw limited conclusions regarding the achievement of the SPA's objectives.

64. The majority of project results delivered to date were output oriented. Key results achieved in the policy, regulatory and institutional components included the development of technical studies and vulnerability assessments, national consultations, awareness raising, and the production of technical guidelines. Projects also reported a number of tangible outputs in the technical capacity components, such as for example the deployment of technologies related to climate monitoring and the convening of technical training workshops on specific thematic issues including climate monitoring, coastal erosion, or health monitoring. Many projects also reported achieving revisions of policy documents to include climate change issues, indicating good progress towards individual projects' mainstreaming goals.

65. Given the limited amount of details provided in implementation reports, it was not possible to derive a consistent understanding of progress in implementation of on-the ground adaptation activities. However, among the few projects that report such results, these are focused on the delivery of outputs on the ground. For example, project 2915 (Namibia) notes that 70 water harvesting tanks were distributed, 11 drip irrigation sites were established, and 100 farmers were trained in conservation agriculture. In other cases, (2019 – Colombia, 2774 - CBA) results documentation reports state that "several pilot adaptation activities are running including 2 communal systems benefitting 165 people". In some cases, results included progress in delivering some of the physical works envisaged by the projects, such as "dune replanting and stabilization, mangrove rehabilitation, construction" and the dissemination of alternative livelihoods tools and technologies (i.e., 2614-ACCC).

66. Project implementation documentation and interviews also noted some challenges specific to the SPA – in addition to regular project challenges - such as coordination difficulties, particularly in the case of multiple partners and multiple countries. Some project stakeholders highlighted the fact that, because adaptation was a new area of work for many national institutions, projects required more intensive capacity building and awareness raising from the start, as compared to regular projects. Among the key challenges mentioned in project documentation or in interviews, the lack of localized and applicable climate data and models has been perceived as an obstacle in many projects.

Conclusion 7: There was evidence of mainstreaming of adaptation at the GEF - mainly at strategic level and to some extent in project design - but some limitations are preventing this integration from becoming fully effective.

67. The evaluation found evidence of gradual mainstreaming of adaptation and resilience concepts and measures in focal area strategies as they evolved from GEF3 to GEF5. For example, the biodiversity, land degradation and international water focal area strategies all integrate climate change issues in a more and more explicit manner in GEF3, 4 and 5. Some of the GEF4 projects have also begun to integrate adaptation and resilience concepts in their designs. Climate change is increasingly being recognized as a threat to the GEF portfolio, from a sustainability perspective, and addressing it is also now increasingly recognized as an intrinsic part of protecting or creating global environmental benefits.

68. It is not possible to determine the extent to which this can be attributed to the SPA. However, it is possible to affirm that the SPA has provided some incentive to do this, at least at the strategic level, since it has contributed to building capacity within the GEF, Focal Areas and among Agencies on adaptation and climate change.

69. A number of factors may prevent the integration or mainstreaming from becoming fully effective:

- Tangible mechanisms for operationalization, such as the climate change screening tools, are not yet in place, even though this was decided upon already in GEF4;
- There are still remaining gaps in scientific knowledge related to potential climate change impacts and possible adaptation measures in the areas of the GEF global environmental benefits, as well as capacity gaps in applying available science
- There are few incentives in the GEF system to take climate change impacts and adaptation issues into account, and resources are already limited to deal with the demand in each of the focal areas.
- There are still difficulties in determining the incrementality of adaptation, and in conceptualizing an operational link between adaptation and GEBs.
- There is limited collaboration and cooperation between the different GEF “managed” funds regarding adaptation and the possibilities of cofinancing for example.

Conclusion 8: Although the portfolio is still in the early stages of implementation some lessons could be extracted for the GEF as a whole.

70. Funding made available through the SPA provided a financial incentive for project proponents to explicitly consider climate change impacts, assessments and adaptation options. SPA projects have allowed for the deployment of early adaptation measures, particularly in the capacity building and enabling frameworks areas of work.

71. Most SPA projects had not achieved the mid-term goals they had set for themselves. The duration of their project was too short and, in many cases, the project strategies too ambitious, taking into account the limited levels of knowledge and capacity, thereby limiting opportunities for success. Several SPA projects reported that projects lifespan were too short, and that they

experienced start-up delays, for reasons that are also common in other development or GEF projects. SPA projects also tended to involve an added degree of complexity, for example by blending interventions in several GEF focal areas and themes with complementary indicative activities that need be implemented simultaneously at multiple organizational levels and scales.

72. Clear and coherent Monitoring & Evaluation frameworks are essential to the determination of objective lessons from a project given the pilot nature of the SPA. Projects that failed in providing a strong M&E system have also reported difficulties with regards to project management.

Conclusion 9: There were weaknesses in the management of the SPA portfolio but there is still time to correct them.

73. The expectations for management of the SPA as indicated in the guidelines may have been unrealistic, considering the level of available resources within the GEF Secretariat, particularly in the early days of adaptation work. A possible shortcoming on the part of the GEF Secretariat and Council may have been to create a pilot program without providing it with the appropriate level of support to operate according to its guidelines

74. Some shortcomings were found with regards to the monitoring of projects beyond approval, gaps in the operationalization of Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks, as well as shortcomings in terms of formal approval, selection, coordination and approval mechanisms within the Adaptation unit.

75. Regular GEF procedures for selection, review and approval were followed for the SPA. SPA operational guidelines provided little added guidance on the selection and approval of projects from a technical point of view. There did not appear to be any institutionalized mechanism for SPA funding distribution among focal areas, regions or projects; nor any clear and explicit technical selection criteria and procedures (such as project review committees). Although the approach appears to have been to allocate funds on a demand-driven, ‘first-come, first-served’ basis, the delays in committing SPA funds (two projects are still in late approval stages) are in apparent contradiction with the high demand for adaptation funds.

76. Project review and project design also appears to have been conducted with varying degrees of technical input, with no explicit process for systematic sharing through STAP, for example, or for coordination among GEF Secretariat teams. This collaboration was found to be sporadic and not formalized and this may have represented a lost opportunity to promote integration between the focal areas, one of the SPA pilots’ main purposes. Coordination occurred informally; however this may not have been sufficient to ensure the necessary integration of adaptation into the focal areas.

77. As a coordination mechanism for the GEF partnership as a whole, the Adaptation Task Force (ATF), a group comprised of representatives from Agencies and chaired by the GEF Secretariat Adaptation team, has achieved an impressive number of functions, although operating with few resources, especially in the early years. However, the TORs for the ATF also identify a number of management functions that have yet to be fulfilled, such as the development of

internal policies to manage the GEF adaptation pipeline and portfolio, or the collection of results from projects. However, when taking into consideration the resources available at the time of the establishment of the ATF, the evaluation found that it was potentially unrealistic to expect the number of tasks outlined above to be implemented.

78. As a learning pilot, the SPA was expected to generate lessons for future adaptation programming in and outside the GEF. The Adaptation Learning Mechanism, which was intended as the key mechanism for achieving this function, did not focus on the SPA projects and lessons specifically as originally intended, effectively leaving the SPA without a dedicated learning mechanism. Beyond project-level monitoring, conducted at the Agency level, no portfolio level monitoring has been conducted of on-going or completed projects. There is no effective mechanism whereby Agencies project-level monitoring can inform GEF Secretariat portfolio-level mechanism.

79. However, although no formal process of knowledge sharing was developed, there is evidence of learning and information sharing as a result of the SPA. For example, Agencies and GEF Secretariat personnel all testify to having learned from SPA development and implementation.

Conclusion 10. As a learning pilot within the GEF, the SPA has yet to achieve its full effectiveness.

80. The SPA had yet to fulfill its potential as a learning pilot within the GEF, mainly because of the lack of dedicated and established learning and coordination mechanisms. First, this is because the Adaptation Learning Mechanism has evolved into a broader initiative. Second, there has been no SPA portfolio monitoring inside the GEF and third, the Adaptation Task Force has – due to resource constraints - thus far been focused on pipeline management.

81. However, because of the relative youth of the portfolio, there is still time and opportunity to begin a process of extracting lessons on how to integrate resilience and adaptation into GEF focal area work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The GEF should continue providing explicit incentives to carry on the mainstreaming of resilience and adaptation into the GEF focal areas, as a means of reducing risks to the GEF portfolio

82. As a first step, recognizing that resilience is an intrinsic part of protecting or creating global environmental benefits and the strong convergence between global environmental benefits, development and adaptation, the GEF should provide the necessary non-financial incentives and tools to operationalize the integration of resilience in its programming. These could include screening tools applicable at project design and approval, as well as safeguarding methodologies that will help identify multiple benefits and ensure climate risks to the GEF portfolio are properly managed. This should be accompanied by additional technical guidance

on the articulation of the links between resilience, adaptation and GEBs, with particular attention on the links and synergies among the various adaptation funds and the Trust Fund.

83. A second step could involve the mobilization of financial incentives, such as by creating Strategy Priorities within Focal Areas that explicitly deal with climate change impacts, vulnerability assessments and adaptation options, to ensure that the risks and opportunities identified through the mechanisms above are addressed operationally as well as clear synergies with the LDCF and SCCF.

Recommendation 2: To continue to manage the implementation of the SPA, the GEF needs to provide sufficient resources to the GEF Secretariat, beyond resources dedicated to the processing of a pipeline of projects.

84. The relative youth of the SPA portfolio indicates that the SPA – although fully committed – still needs to be managed from within the GEF, particularly if it is to deliver the learning results it was intended. Therefore it is recommended to:

- Develop and implement a full learning framework or strategy to capture lessons, experiences and progress regarding climate change impacts, vulnerability assessment and adaptation options to be shared and incorporated into GEF focal areas. This learning framework should include appropriately resourced functions of results-based management, portfolio level monitoring and knowledge sharing and dissemination.
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework at the portfolio level for the SPA and other funds that facilitate tracking and monitoring of adaptation results throughout the GEF.

Recommendation 3. Given that adaptation measures in SPA projects are still under implementation, further evaluations could provide opportunities to learn from outcomes and progress toward impact.

85. GEFO, STAP and the GEF Adaptation Task Force should work on developing guidelines for conducting midterm or final evaluations with specific emphasis on how to review, select and improve adaptation measures, how to screen for risks of maladaptation, and how to identify co-benefits between adaptation, development and environment.

86. The Evaluation Office should compile information from the evaluations from SPA projects for future evaluations on the adaptation topic.

Observation

87. Despite ongoing work to elaborate screening tools for climate change, GEF Council decision¹³ requesting the development of a climate screening tools is yet to be fulfilled.

¹³ GEF Council Document, May 2007. Business Plan FY08-10 and FY08 Corporate Budget (GEF/C.31/9).