

GEF Council
June 18-20, 2013
Washington, D.C.

ANNUAL COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION REPORT 2013

(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Sixth *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report* (ACPER) provides a synthesis of the evaluative evidence contained in the Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPEs) and Country Portfolio Studies (CPSs) conducted in the Asia and Pacific region. These include one CPS finalized in April 2012 in Timor Leste, two ongoing CPEs in India and Sri Lanka and one ongoing portfolio evaluation covering both Vanuatu national projects and SPREP executed regional projects. Key preliminary findings and areas for recommendations were presented and discussed – and comments were received from GEF stakeholders – at consultation workshops in each country. Chapters 1 of the CPE reports include the main conclusions and recommendations. The report of the Timor Leste CPS is available on the GEF Evaluation Office website while the reports of the other three ongoing evaluations will be provided on the website once completed, by the end of the third quarter of 2013.

Support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to these countries started in 1991 in India, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu and SPREP, and in 2003 in Timor Leste.

Country	Type of evaluation	Number of projects included in the evaluation				National completed projects
		National FSPs & MSPs	SGP	Enabling activities	Regional/global projects	
Timor Leste	CPS	3	Yes	4	5	5
India	CPE	50	Yes	5	16	14
Sri Lanka	CPE	16	Yes	7	12	13
Vanuatu	Portfolio	5	Yes	8	10	9
SPREP	Evaluation*	-	No	2	11	-

* Data for this evaluation include the Vanuatu national projects portfolio and the SPREP regional projects portfolio.

This ACPER focuses on the result and sustainability of GEF support, particularly at the global environmental benefits level; the relevance of the GEF support to the GEF and to the countries; and the efficiency of GEF support.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were reached on the results of the GEF support:

- (1) In all the portfolios analyzed in the Asia and Pacific region the GEF foundational support to the establishment of national environmental priorities, policies and legislative frameworks has achieved good results.
- (2) While progress to impact through broader adoption mechanisms occurs in large portfolios, this is not yet happening in medium size, smaller and/or younger portfolios.
- (3) Effective communication and outreach as well as uptake of lessons facilitated broader adoption. Lessons from past interventions are being mainstreamed in the formulation of most recent GEF projects, with few exceptions.
- (4) Capacity, both individual and institutional, is an issue of concern in SIDSs and in fragile states.

On relevance of GEF support the following conclusions should be noted:

- (5) GEF support has been relevant to national needs and priorities in environmental conservation and sustainable development.
- (6) Relevance of GEF support to country priorities strengthened ownership in India, while in the other portfolios analyzed ownership is mixed.

The efficiency of the GEF support was assessed as follows:

- (7) Long preparation times and delayed implementation affected overall efficiency in all the portfolios analyzed.
- (8) Except for a few projects in Vanuatu/SPREP and Sri Lanka portfolios, monitoring and evaluation is not happening to its full capacity.
- (9) The introduction of resource allocation mechanisms since GEF-4 stimulated country programming with varying degrees of success in the respective countries.
- (10) Inadequate contractual arrangements between GEF Agencies and national executing agencies in India created a barrier to independent evaluation of projects by the GEF Evaluation Office.

Issues to be followed up

Three issues emerge from the findings and conclusions formulated here above. The first two issues will be followed up and integrated with other emerging evidence in the final report of the fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5) of the GEF:

- (1) The GEF should further promote country programming in GEF-6, to be steered by national focal point mechanisms and to be conducted paying more attention to the efficiency of the process.
- (2) The GEF should further strengthen knowledge management as an enabling factor for broader adoption, by encouraging the introduction of communication and outreach components in GEF projects.

The third is an important operational issue that is included in GEF/ME/C.44/02, “Work Program and Budget of the GEF Evaluation Office”:

- (3) GEF Agencies should ensure that their contracts with the executing agencies require that they provide support to evaluations undertaken by the GEF Evaluation Office without any conditions that would compromise the independence of the evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

1. The sixth *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluations Report* (ACPER) provides a synthesis of the main conclusions and recommendations emerged from the evaluative evidence contained in the Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPEs) and Country Portfolio Studies (CPSs) being conducted in the Asia and Pacific region. This includes one CPS completed in April 2012 in Timor Leste; two ongoing CPEs, one in India and one in Sri Lanka, and one ongoing portfolio evaluation covering the Vanuatu national portfolio and the portfolio of regional projects executed by the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).¹

2. Support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to these countries started in 1991 in India, Sri Lanka, Vanuatu and Pacific region, and in 2004 in Timor Leste. These countries were chosen for country-level evaluations based on a selection process and a set of criteria including the size, diversity and maturity of their portfolio of projects.² As with previous country-level evaluations, consultations were held with all major GEF stakeholders, particularly those residing in the countries. Several visits to project sites have also been undertaken.

3. The GEF Evaluation Office is preparing separate reports for each of these evaluations, except for Timor Leste CPS, as it was completed in April 2012.³ This study was conducted in parallel with the UNDP Assessment of Development Results (ADR) for Timor Leste (2003-2010). The lead consultant conducting the CPS was also responsible for coverage of the UNDP Energy and Environment portfolio within the ADR. Conducting parallel country portfolio evaluations in Timor Leste provided advantages for both the GEF and the UNDP evaluation offices, including a broader comparison of issues across sectors in a post-conflict country in the process of building state institutions, lower evaluation burden to the country and cost savings.

4. The evaluative phase of the India CPE was conducted between April 2012 and February 2013. India was chosen because of its diverse and mature portfolio of projects, and for the fact that it is one of the largest recipients of GEF funding. The draft report of the India CPE has been distributed for comments at the time of writing this report. Completion of this evaluation is scheduled for June 30, 2013.

5. The Sri Lanka CPE is being jointly managed by the GEF Evaluation Office and the Sri Lankan Ministry of Finance and Planning through a Joint Steering Committee (JSC). This is in line with the Office's drive toward joint evaluations started in fiscal year 11 with the El Salvador and Jamaica CPSs, conducted jointly with the UNDP Evaluation Office, and continued in fiscal year 13 with the Timor Leste CPS. In the Sri Lanka case, a solid and long-dated evaluation culture coupled with the existence of independent and credible national institutions dealing with Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) within the Government made the joint evaluation arrangement possible. It is expected that sharing responsibilities deriving from such an arrangement will greatly increase national ownership of the evaluation

¹ SPREP is an intergovernmental organization established in 1982 by the governments and administrations of the Pacific region. SPREP is composed of 25 countries, consisting of all the 21 Pacific island countries and territories, and four developed countries - <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/oes/ocns/rsp/cta/12179.htm> (accessed on April 15, 2013).

² http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/CPE_final_country_selection_note-0910_0.pdf

³ http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/GEFEO_East_Timor_CPS-unedited.pdf

conclusions as well as adoption and use of recommendations. The credibility of this evaluation is further strengthened by independent national quality assurance support being provided by the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association (SLEvA) through a Peer Review Panel (PRP), as well as by the fact that a team of national consultants from the Center for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) has been assembled to support the GEF Evaluation Office in the conduct of this evaluation.

6. The Vanuatu and SPREP Portfolio Evaluation provides an opportunity to explore in depth the issue of national versus regional GEF support modality in Small Island Developing States (SIDSs). This issue was analyzed during fiscal year 11 in the Cluster Country Portfolio Evaluation (CCPE) of GEF Beneficiary Countries of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (GEF Evaluation Office, 2012).

7. The Office has prepared a separate report for the *GEF Country Portfolio Study: Timor Leste: (2004–2011)*. Chapter 1 of this report includes the main conclusions and recommendations and is provided as a Council information document.⁴ The reports of the *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: India (1991–2012)*, the *Joint GEF/Sri Lanka Country Portfolio Evaluation (1991–2012)* and the *GEF Vanuatu and SPREP Portfolio Evaluation: (1991–2012)* will be completed during the third quarter of 2013. However, all the three evaluations completed the evaluative phase and had a final consultation workshop in the respective countries. These findings and conclusions, along with key areas of recommendations identified during the workshops, have been considered in this report.

8. The ACPER 2013 begins with a short background section containing an update on progress to date of the GEF multi-annual cycle of country-level evaluations, followed by a description of GEF involvement in the Asia and Pacific region. The following chapter narrates the objectives, scope and methods used, the limitations encountered and how these have been addressed. Conclusions are presented according to the three dimensions of these evaluations: that is, in terms of the results of the GEF support, its relevance, and its efficiency. Three issues for follow up emerging from these conclusions are presented in the closing chapter of the report.

Background

9. The Office continues to conduct its multi-annual cycle of country-level evaluations during GEF-5. After completion of the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region reported last year in the ACPER 2012, the Office plans to complete by the 3rd quarter of 2013 at the latest the coverage of country-level evaluations in the Asia and Pacific region, which started during the last quarter of 2011. In fall 2012 the Office started country-level evaluations in the Sub-Saharan Africa region with Tanzania and Eritrea. The Tanzania CPE, launched in September 2012, is expected to be completed by October 2013, while the Eritrea CPE, launched during the 2th quarter of 2012, will be completed in October 2013. In May 2013 a CPS has been launched in Sierra Leone in partnership with the UNDP Evaluation Office. The Office plans to report to Council on the Sub-Saharan Africa region in the ACPER 2014.

⁴ Two additional information documents are provided to Council, presenting the conclusions and recommendations of the two CPEs completed during the third quarter of 2012 in the LAC region: the *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Brazil (1991–2011)* and the *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Cuba (1992–2011)*.

10. The Asia and Pacific region began participating in the GEF program during the GEF pilot phase in 1991. Since then, the GEF has invested around \$1.8 billion with an additional \$15.8 billion in co-financing through 742 active or completed national projects in the region. The active national projects represent 73% of the total portfolio or \$11.7 billion (including GEF amount and co-financing) while the completed projects represent the remaining 27 % (\$5.9 billion). Most of these projects belong to the biodiversity and climate change focal areas (271 and 244 projects respectively), followed by multifocal area projects (100 projects), Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) (79 projects), land degradation (33 projects) and international waters (15 projects). UNDP is the GEF Agency responsible for implementation of 53% of the national projects in the region, followed by the World Bank (22%), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) (11%) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) (7%). The Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the GEF Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) account for 3%, 1%, 1% and 1% projects respectively. China and India are the biggest country portfolios, representing 60.7% of the total funding committed for national projects in the entire Asia and Pacific region.⁵

11. This ACPER compiles the information obtained through the CPS conducted in Timor Leste as well as the ongoing India and Sri Lanka CPEs, and the Vanuatu and SPREP Portfolio Evaluation. The country portfolios in focus for this ACPER include 109 national projects allocated in all GEF focal areas (30 in biodiversity, 55 in climate change, 3 in land degradation, 13 multifocal, 7 in POPs and 1 in international waters). In biodiversity the national portfolios analyzed total approximately \$107.2 million in GEF financing and around \$229.2 million in co-financing. In climate change, the sum of all national portfolios analyzed totals approximately \$333.6 million in GEF financing and \$ 2,992.9 million in co-financing. The GEF has invested approximately \$54.8 million with \$438.4 million co-financing in multifocal area projects. In land degradation, the GEF has invested around \$ 10.2 million with \$0.99 million co-financing. In POPs, the GEF financing was equivalent to approximately \$47.8 million and \$126.3 million co-financing. In international waters GEF financing was \$12.3 million and \$9.2 million co-financing. UNDP is the main channel for GEF support with 59 projects, followed by the World Bank and UNEP with 20 and 12 respectively.

12. The GEF portfolios included in this ACPER are briefly described here below:

- i. *Timor Leste*: Participation with the GEF began in 2003, after Timor Leste independence. Since then, Timor Leste has been involved in 7 national projects totaling \$7.7 million in GEF support and \$32.69 in co-financing. The national portfolio, exclusively implemented by UNDP, is small and focuses on enabling activities. The portfolio includes four projects in climate change, one in biodiversity, one multifocal area and one land degradation project.
- ii. *India*: India's participation with the GEF began during the GEF pilot phase in 1991. Until July 2012, the GEF had allocated US\$ 416.2 million through 55 approved

⁵ The Asia and Pacific region includes Middle East and South Asia as well as East Asia and the Pacific countries: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Cooks Island, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kiribati, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Laos, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Niue, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, the Palestinian Authority, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Vanuatu, Vietnam and Yemen.

national projects (31 climate change, 12 biodiversity, 4 POPs, 1 land degradation and 7 multifocal). These activities involved aggregated co-financing commitments of US\$ 3,215 million. 14 of these projects have been completed and 22 are under implementation. In addition, India is involved in 16 regional and global projects supported by GEF.

- iii. *Sri Lanka*: Since 1991, the GEF has invested \$60.9 million (with about \$338.12 million in co-financing) through 23 national projects, namely 9 in biodiversity, 9 in climate change, 4 multifocal area projects and 1 POPs. The projects are evenly spread within the GEF project cycle with 15 completed; the majority of them on biodiversity and climate change, 6 ongoing and 2 at the approval stage. UNDP, with 12 projects totaling \$14.2 million, has been the main channel for GEF support in Sri Lanka to date, followed by the World Bank (3 projects totaling \$18.81 million) and UNEP (2 projects totaling \$2.04million). In addition, Sri Lanka is also a participant country in 3 regional and 9 global projects.
- iv. *Vanuatu and SPREP*: In Vanuatu, the GEF supported a portfolio totaling \$17.9 million with \$70.0 million in co-financing through 13 national projects. These include five climate change projects, five projects in biodiversity, one in land degradation, one in POPs and one multifocal area project. Nine projects have been completed, one is ongoing, and three are in the pipeline. Eight of the 13 national projects are enabling activities. UNDP has five projects totaling \$10.2 million in GEF funding with co-financing of \$35.6 million. The World Bank has two projects with \$6.6 million in total GEF funding and co-financing of \$34.2 million. UNEP has six projects with total GEF support of \$1.1 million and co-financing of \$0.2 million.

Since 1991 SPREP has been involved with the GEF as a regional executing agency through various GEF Agencies (UNDP, World Bank, UNEP and FAO). SPREP involvement occurred in 11 regional projects totaling over \$63.1 million in GEF financing and \$141.3 million in co-financing. These include six climate change projects, three biodiversity projects, one international waters project and one POPs project. Eight of the 11 SPREP regional projects are FSPs, one is an MSP and two are enabling activities. UNDP has been implementing seven projects with \$45.1 million in GEF grants and \$79.7 million in co-financing; UNEP has two projects totaling \$5.0 million in GEF funding with \$6.5 million co-financing; the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) are jointly implementing one project with a \$9.5 million GEF grant and \$49.0 million in co-financing; and UNEP and FAO are jointly developing one project with \$3.5 million in GEF support and \$6.1 million in co-financing.

Table 1.1: Portfolio Resource Allocation by Focal Area

Country	Type of Evaluation	Biodiversity		Climate Change		Land Degradation		Multifocal		POPs		International Waters		Total	
		GEF	Co-financing	GEF	Co-financing	GEF	Co-financing	GEF	Co-financing	GEF	Co-financing	GEF	Co-financing	GEF	Co-financing
Timor Leste	CPS	0.28	0.02	6.74	31.89	0.47	0.56	0.22	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.71	32.69
India	CPE	65.90	178.90	251.60	2,485.90	9.20	0.00	46.10	428.90	43.40	120.20	0.00	1.10	416.20	3,215.00
Sri Lanka	CPE	24.74	38.64	27.49	290.19	0	0	8.27	9.26	0.49	0.02	0	0	60.99	338.11
Vanuatu	Portfolio	1.24	0.84	15.53	68.68	0.50	0.43	0.22	0.06	0.39	0.02	0.00	0.00	17.88	70.03
SPREP	Evaluation*	15.00	10.84	32.33	116.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.50	6.05	12.29	8.12	63.12	141.29
Total		107.157	229.238	333.692	2992.941	10.175	0.987	54.815	438.45	47.78	126.29	12.29	9.22	565.9	3797.12

Table 1.2: Projects by GEF Agencies

Country	Type of evaluation	WB	UNDP	UNEP	UNIDO	WB/UNDP	IFAD	ADB	UNEP/FAO	WB/IFC	WB/ADB	UNDP/FAO	UNIDO/UNEP	GEF Sec	Total
Timor Leste	CPS	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
India	CPE	15	28	2	6	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	55
Sri Lanka	CPE	3	12	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	23
Vanuatu	Portfolio	2	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
SPREP	Evaluation*	0	7	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	11
Total		20	59	12	7	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	109

Table 1.3: Projects by Focal Area

Country	Type of evaluation	Biodiversity	Climate Change	Land Degradation	Multifocal	POPs	International Waters	Total
Timor Leste	CPS	1	4	1	1	0	0	7
India	CPE	12	31	1	7	4	0	55
Sri Lanka	CPE	9	9	0	4	1	0	23
Vanuatu	Portfolio	5	5	1	1	1	0	13
SPREP	Evaluation*	3	6	0	0	1	1	11
Total		30	55	3	13	7	1	109

* Data for this evaluation include the Vanuatu national projects portfolio and the SPREP regional projects portfolio.

Objectives, Scope, Methods, and Limitations

13. Evaluation work in the Asia and Pacific region is being conducted by staff of the Evaluation Office and consultants with extensive experience with each individual country. The India, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu and SPREP evaluations follow country-specific Terms of Reference (TORs) developed from the standard CPE TORs⁶ and adapted to each country using the information collected and the feedback received during the scoping phase. The Timor Leste CPS followed the standard CPS TORs.⁷ In compliance with the standard TORs for these evaluations, the CPEs and CPSs included in this ACPER were all conducted with the following objectives:

- evaluate the **effectiveness** and **results** of GEF support in a country, with attention to the sustainability of achievements at the project level and progress toward impact on global environmental benefits;⁸
- evaluate the **relevance** and **efficiency** of the GEF support in a country from several points of view: national environmental frameworks and decision-making processes; the GEF mandate and the achievement of global environmental benefits; and GEF policies and procedures;⁹
- provide additional evaluative evidence to other evaluations conducted by the Office; and
- 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, or collaboration with the GEF; and (3) the different agencies and organizations involved in the preparation and implementation of GEF funded projects and activities.

14. The main focus of the CPEs and CPSs included in this ACPER was the projects supported by the GEF at all project stages (preparation, implementation and completion) within the national boundaries. The Small Grants Programme (SGP) was assessed against the respective national strategy and not on the basis of each individual SGP grant. Project ideas from either the governments or GEF Agencies included in the respective pipelines were not considered in the analysis. In addition to national projects, the GEF portfolios assessed include a selection of regional and global projects selected according to a set of criteria, including the presence in the country of a project coordination unit and/or project sites; the importance of the project focal area to the country; and the existence of a clear connection to national projects. The Vanuatu and SPREP Portfolio Evaluation focused specifically on regional projects as the main modality of GEF support to SIDSs in the Pacific region.

⁶ <http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Standard%20CPE%20TORs%20-%2010%20December%202012.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Standard%20CPS%20TORs%20-%2013%20December%202012.pdf>

⁸ **Effectiveness:** the extent to which the GEF activity's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance; **Results:** in GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes, and progress toward longer term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects, and other local effects..

⁹ **Relevance:** the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national environmental priorities and policies and to global environmental benefits to which the GEF is dedicated.; **Efficiency:** the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.

15. The stage of each project determined the evaluation focus. For example, completed projects were assessed against the usual three evaluation criteria, namely effectiveness and results (outputs, outcomes and impacts), relevance and efficiency. Ongoing projects were assessed in terms of relevance and efficiency. Projects under preparation, i.e. those with an approved Project Identification Form (PIF) or Project Preparation Grant (PPG), were assessed primarily in terms of relevance, with some eventual limited assessment of efficiency. The results and sustainability of GEF support, particularly at the global environmental benefits level, were given special attention. Table 1.4 presents the portfolios of projects covered in the CPEs and CPSs included in this ACPER.

Table 1.4 Project Coverage of each Country Portfolio Evaluation and/or Study

Country	Type of evaluation	Number of projects included in the evaluation				National completed projects
		National FSPs & MSPs	SGP	Enabling activities	Regional/global projects	
Timor Leste	CPS	3	Yes	4	5	5
India	CPE	50	Yes	5	16	14
Sri Lanka	CPE	16	Yes	7	12	13
Vanuatu	Portfolio	5	Yes	8	10	9
SPREP	Evaluation*	-	No	2	11	-

* Data for this evaluation include the Vanuatu national projects portfolio and the SPREP regional projects portfolio.

16. The Office's country-level evaluations team continues to strive to update and further develop the set of quantitative and qualitative methods and tools used in these evaluations. These include traditional methods such as desk reviews, portfolio analyses and interviews as well as specific ones such as the Country Environmental Legal Framework (CELf) analysis. During fiscal year 13¹⁰ the standard TORs for CPEs and CPSs have been updated to incorporate the lessons learned from the meta-evaluation of the Office's country level evaluation work conducted in early 2012, which purpose was to improve its methods and processes for the GEF-5 period. While fine-tuning the terms of reference to take into account recent developments, care was taken to maintain comparability of country-level evaluations throughout GEF-5.

17. This fiscal year, further to the update of the standard TORs, an analytical framework containing a set of indicators extracted from the second phase of the evaluation of the Paris Declaration has been developed and used for assessing country ownership and drivenness in the GEF for inclusion in the first report of the Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS5).¹¹ The country-level evaluations team plans to further refine and use this framework of analysis to assess country ownership in future CPEs and CPSs. All country-level evaluations methods and tools can be found on the Office website.¹²

18. As for previous country-level evaluations, also for the CPEs and CPSs reported in this ACPER statistical data and scientific sources were consulted, particularly with regard to national environmental indicators. Interviews were conducted with representatives of all GEF stakeholders, and a conspicuous number of field visits were made. As mentioned, each of the CPEs and CPSs included a national consultation workshop to discuss and receive feedback on the respective key preliminary findings. The quantitative analysis used indicators to assess the

¹⁰ July 2012 to June 2013.

¹¹ http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/EO/6_CountryOwnership.pdf (pages 10-11)

¹² <http://www.thegef.org/gef/CPE>

efficiency of GEF support using projects as the unit of analysis (e.g., analyzing projects preparation and implementation durations and costs). Progress toward impact was assessed through a sizeable number of Review of Outcome to Impact (ROtI) field studies: nine studies were completed in the India CPE, three in the Sri Lanka CPE and two in the Vanuatu and SPREP Portfolio Evaluation.

19. Triangulation of evaluative evidence continues to be applied consistently in all CPEs and CPS conducted by the Office. The application of triangulation ensures that the cross-analysis of information results in better understanding of the contributions of the GEF initiatives in the country portfolios analyzed. The method has been further improved by including in the triangulation matrix the key indicators extracted from the evaluation matrix, and by triangulating vertically the evidence and emerging findings across key evaluation questions.

20. Joint work with GEF member countries and Agencies continues to be pursued in the conduct of country-level evaluations. Two out of four evaluations included in this ACPER are joint efforts (Timor Leste and Sri Lanka). Furthermore, national independent quality assurance / peer review panels continue to support country portfolio evaluations. In fact, the setting up of such panels has become a standards practice. These panels not only provide scientific / technical and methodological support to these evaluations, but also increase their credibility, ownership and potential use, in the sense of facilitating follow-up action, especially concerning the recommendations addressed to the countries themselves.

21. GEF country-level evaluations face a number of limitations and challenges. The following includes the ones found in the CPEs and CPS summarized in this report:

- Hurricane Sandy occurring in November 2012 delayed the Vanuatu and SPREP Portfolio Evaluation by 2 months. While the Office and the consultants' team could maintain the 13th of March for the final workshop date, at the time of writing the evaluative phase still needed to be completed.
- Three months delay occurred in the Sri Lanka CPE due to the change in the consulting firm initially selected to support the Office in conducting the evaluation. The final workshop was delayed until April 29, 2013.
- The India CPE was delayed through lack of access to two POPs projects, which added to the delay in the finalization of the draft report.
- Difficulties in defining the portfolio prior to the evaluations continue to be a limitation in country-level evaluations as well as in many other evaluations conducted by the Office. To address this limitation portfolios are carefully cross-checked with GEF Agencies and national stakeholders at the early stages of the evaluation.
- Lack of institutional memory due to travel, transfer, lack of staff or high-turnover posed limitations in the Vanuatu and SPREP Portfolio Evaluation concerning the progress to impact analyses with the ROtI methodology. Especially for projects completed long for several years, staff involved in implementation was often no longer available for interviews.

CONCLUSIONS

22. The countries covered in this ACPER were not selected to be representative of the vast and diverse Asia and the Pacific region, but their experience could be relevant to other countries as well. While acknowledging experiences and conclusions from previous country-level evaluations, the ACPER 2013 identifies common elements emerging from the four evaluations considered and brings overarching conclusions to Council. The conclusions are presented here according to the three dimensions of results of the GEF support, as well as its relevance, and its efficiency.

Results

23. Results are presented in terms of the aggregate outcomes and impacts of GEF support. Achievements are presented in terms of GEF contribution toward addressing global and national environmental issues as well as national level priorities, including raising awareness and building national institutions and capacities. The use of the ROtI methodology allowed looking at progress toward impact, this including impact drivers and external assumptions.

Conclusion 1: In all the portfolios analyzed in the Asia and Pacific region the GEF foundational support to the establishment of national environmental priorities, policies and legislative frameworks has achieved good results.

24. GEF successfully supported the creation of an enabling environment in all the countries reviewed. In small and recent portfolios (Timor Leste and Pacific countries) this support extended mainly to helping the countries to comply with their obligations toward the international environmental conventions as well as in producing environmental information (baselines and inventories, among other) as well as creating capacities. In India and Sri Lanka GEF foundational support went beyond that and introduced more sophisticated approaches such as the establishment of environmental conservation trust funds, proposing agro-biodiversity initiative, and promoting the removal of market barriers as well as the establishment of transparent tariff mechanisms in the renewable energy sector.

25. The GEF assisted Timor-Leste's participation and accession to the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (UNCBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Without GEF support this would have probably been delayed or still pending. GEF enabling activities resulted in the development of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and the National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA), which have been presented, discussed and approved by the Council of Ministers, thus promoting cross-sectoral consideration of environmental issues.

26. The Indian environmental legal framework is complex in nature, as it results from the interaction of several diverse actors and institutions. However, some major contributions from GEF projects to its development are worth mentioning. The eco-development strategy, formulated with support from the India Eco Development Project (GEF ID 84) had an influence on the national Five-Year Plan document¹³ and on the national laws regulating

¹³ The eco-development strategy was also included in the 10th national Five-Year Plan.

wildlife management.¹⁴ The Mainstreaming Conservation and Sustainable use of Medicinal Plant Diversity in Three Indian States Project (GEF ID 1156) is reported to have provided inputs for development of the National Forest Working Plan Code. The Coal Bed Methane Recovery and Commercial Utilization project (GEF ID 325) contributed to increasing the profile of the addressed concerns and motivated the government in identifying nodal agencies and establishing mechanisms for further work on the issue. The Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve's Coastal Biodiversity project (GEF ID 634) established the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust (GOMBRT), which has become a statutory body of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

27. In Vanuatu, GEF supported the formulation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), the NAPA and Climate Change Policy Framework (CCPF), the National Implementation Plan (NIP) for POPs and the National Action Plan (NAP) for land degradation. This also provided the baseline information and assessment of threats at the country level, as well as the priority actions for each focal area. Further, The Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Program (PICCAP) (GEF ID 336) executed by SPREP assisted the participating countries in establishing multi-sectoral country teams that continue to spearhead the implementation of climate change actions at the national level as well as their effective participation at international climate change forums.

28. In Sri Lanka, some of the earlier Full Size Projects (FSPs) and Medium Size Projects (MSPs) had important foundational components. The Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants (GEF ID 95) and the Development of Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management (GEF ID 352) projects focused on capacity building and institutional development. These projects dealt with information gathering, stock taking and management plans such as the Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan (BCAP), which includes the sustainable use of medicinal plants. More recently, enabling activities such as the communication to UNFCCC (GEF ID 309) and the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) (GEF ID 2417) have compiled existing information on issues related to climate change which provided background papers that have been used for the climate change policy and climate change adaptation strategy done more recently (2010 onwards). GEF also supported the creation of an enabling environment for renewable energy uptake through a multi-pronged approach that focused on issues such as long-term finance, policy and tariff issues, technology and capacity. The connections between GEF projects and the continued support through the years (1997-2011) with subsequent project phases enabled the outcomes to be sustained and improved on. The market orientation of these projects and the community organizations that were created enabled the policy and related initiatives to be taken forward independently after the GEF support was over.

Conclusion 2: While progress to impact through broader adoption mechanisms occurs in large portfolios, this is not yet happening in medium size, smaller and/or younger portfolios.

29. Significant scaling-up of project results is observed in India, where the technologies and approaches promoted through GEF climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and chemicals projects have generated global environmental benefits. Several of these projects have been able to catalyze adoption of the promoted technologies and approaches at

¹⁴ An amendment (Amendment no. 38X) in 2006 in the Wildlife Act made it mandatory for all the tiger reserves in the country to establish a foundation for its management.

a higher scale. In Sri Lanka, uptake beyond GEF support is observed in the renewable energy sector through removal of market barriers, although this has not yet happened at a large scale. No replication and scaling up is observed in Vanuatu and the Pacific countries involved in SPREP-executed GEF projects, and support to Timor Leste is still of an enabling nature.

30. Several completed projects in India have been able to catalyze adoption of the promoted technologies and approaches at a higher scale. For instance, in the biodiversity focal area the India Eco-development project (GEF ID 84) pioneered the community-based approach to protected area management, which has gained widespread acceptance across the whole country. Technologies and approaches promoted through projects such as the Coal Bed Methane Capture and Commercial Utilization project (GEF ID 325) and Optimizing Development of Small Hydro Resources in Hilly Areas project (GEF ID 386) have been adopted at a higher scale. These experiences confirm that broader adoption of promoted technologies and approaches is aided by successful demonstrations along with proper dissemination, mobilization of appropriate partners, an enabling legal and regulatory context, country ownership, and project's relevance to the national priorities.

31. The continued GEF support to Sri Lanka energy sector over a long period enabled the creation and strengthening of community-based organizations that are able to lobby for policy changes and for continuation of support. This continued support happened through the Renewable Energy for Rural Economic Development project (GEF ID 1545) that followed on the Energy Services Delivery project (GEF ID 104), the experience of which have catalyzed projects that are presently under implementation or planned for implementation. These include the Portfolio Approach to Distributed Generation Opportunity (PADGO) project - Phase 1 (GEF ID 2996) and the Promoting Sustainable Biomass Energy Production and Modern Bio-Energy Technologies project (GEF ID 4096). Training to individuals provided by these projects on demand-side management of energy has led to the establishment of several Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) that continue to provide these services while working with the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA).

32. In Vanuatu and the Pacific – both at the national level and at the regional level – replication and scaling up of community based project outcomes have generally faced constraints linked to limited financial resources, land tenure issues and to the lack of integration of environmental concerns in community livelihood initiatives. However, lower scale replication of project outcomes happened locally through the establishment of community conservation areas, which are managed by traditional communities. Several projects contributed to these results, including the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP) (GEF ID 403), the International Waters Project (IWP) (GEF ID 530), the Vanuatu Local Conservation Initiatives (LCI) project (GEF ID 1682) and the Small Grants Programme (SGP). The community-based conservation approach piloted in the SPBCP is now widely adopted throughout the Pacific, in various forms and scales. Many of the 17 SPBCP-supported conservation areas spread over 12 Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are still operating; some as part of new larger-scale initiatives while others are maintained by local communities at a low level of activities, i.e. enforcing resource bans. The Vanuatu LCI project established six new conservation areas in three islands that are still maintained by the traditional communities and also at a community level with support from the provincial government offices, but at a much lower scale than during the GEF financing period.

Conclusion 3: Effective communication and outreach as well as uptake of lessons facilitated broader adoption. Lessons from past interventions are being mainstreamed in the formulation of most recent GEF projects, with few exceptions.

33. Evidence from 11 terminal evaluations confirms that GEF project experiences and lessons in India are disseminated through publications, conferences, project websites, research papers, books, workshops, compact disks, toolkits, handbooks and publications. The information gathered through field visits and stakeholder interviews indicates that those communication and outreach efforts, as well as the publications developed by some GEF projects have been effective. Examples include the materials developed for promoting environment friendly life styles (Low Carbon Campaign for Commonwealth Games 2010 Delhi project (GEF ID 4215)); the documentation of the biodiversity richness (Conservation and Sustainable use of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve's Coastal Biodiversity project (GEF ID 634)); the establishment of long term mechanisms including e-libraries for information sharing (Coal Bed Methane Capture and Commercial Utilization project (GEF ID 325)); and the publications aiming at sharing good practices (Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management Partnership program (GEF ID 3468). Final output documents from several GEF supported enabling activities have become important documents for that specific sector to build upon. The national communication reports and the data contained in these reports is widely referred to by practitioners and cited by academics.

34. Available evidence suggests that lessons from GEF projects are being incorporated by Indian agencies and institutions in projects and activities that are not supported by the GEF. In the case of Financing Energy Efficiency at Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSME) project (GEF ID 3551), the Institute of Industrial Productivity (IIP) and the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) have funded and invested in demonstration projects in other sectors (i.e. foundry) that are not covered through the GEF support, as a result of the awareness and interest generated by the GEF SME project. The Tea Board of the Government of India has taken up the lessons learnt from the Energy Conservation in Small Sector Tea Processing Units in South India project (GEF ID 2500) and initiated a replication of the project in Assam under the 12th Five Year Plan of the Government of India.

35. In Sri Lanka, lessons from past interventions have not been fully utilized in the early GEF phases. Recent projects (GEF-4 and later) refer to experience from earlier projects in their design and include budget lines for disseminating lessons learned both locally and internationally. Three recent projects, i.e. Strengthening Capacity to Control the Introduction and Spread of Alien Invasive Species project (GEF ID 2472), Promoting Sustainable Biomass Energy Production and Modern Bio-Energy Technologies project (GEF ID 4096) and Mainstreaming Agro-biodiversity Conservation and Use in Sri Lankan Agro-ecosystems for Livelihoods and Adaptation to Climate Change project (GEF ID 3808) have specific activities/budgets allocated for the dissemination of lessons learned. These projects also include cross-fertilization between key topics (i.e. combining agriculture and land use with climate change, and energy with biodiversity) and institutional links that foster greater sharing of lessons. However it is too early to say what the impact of this greater attention to lessons learning and dissemination will be, as implementation of these projects just started.

36. Available project terminal evaluations produced some very useful lessons and recommendations for future action in the Vanuatu and SPREP portfolios. Unfortunately, these lessons do not appear to have been incorporated into the design of subsequent projects or taken up by governments in their daily work programs. Examples include the recommendations from

the LCI project to enact the Conservation Area Regulation (CAR) in Vanuatu and providing support for the communities to maintain their established conservation areas. The terminal evaluation of that project found that neither of these has been addressed. The recent recommendation from the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) (GEF ID 3647) terminal evaluation highlighted the need for improvements of the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation (DEPC). This is similar to the recommendations that also came out of the terminal evaluation of the LCI project, and the NBSAP projects as well as the IWP project. Unfortunately, this has not happened, mainly due to the lack of political commitment to raising the profile of environmental issues at the national level.

Conclusion 4: Capacity, both individual and institutional, is an issue of concern in SIDSs and in fragile states.

37. GEF projects invested heavily in building capacity of individuals involved with projects to alleviate one of the main problems faced by Vanuatu and SPREP member countries in implementing projects and scaling up the results and outcomes to achieve long-term impacts. Examples in Vanuatu include the strengthening of DEPC staffs by means of trainings during the LCI project; the establishment of multi-sectoral country teams used in the implementation of PICCAP; and the preparation of NBSAP, NAP and NIP documents. Unfortunately, these country teams have been dormant since the completion of these activities, thus most of the actions identified in the plans and reports produced have not been used or mainstreamed by the relevant government agencies into their sectoral work. The DEPC, supposed to coordinate these committees, does not have the resources or staff to sustain them.

38. Since the Government of Vanuatu has not been able to retain the individuals beyond project end, the organization's capacity goes back to zero. Staff not retained after completion of GEF projects move to other organizations where they utilize the skills gained while working for GEF projects. This was the case with the former national coordinator of the Vanuatu IWP project who is now the National Coordinator for the SGP. Through her new post, she is able to continue support to former IWP project communities, as well as LCI project communities. Other examples include the former LCI coordinator who is now the coordinator of Special Projects for the Ministry of Lands, and a former staff of LCI who is now the Director of Community-based Conservation Program for the Church of Melanesia.

39. The only exception to this general trend is in climate change. The national climate change country teams established during the PICCAP project continue to function effectively, despite staff transitions, due to the mainstreaming of such committees into national frameworks. These same country teams have been used for subsequent GEF projects, namely the Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Programme (PIREP) project (GEF ID 1058), the Pacific Islands Greenhouse Gas Abatement through Renewable Energy (PIGGAREP) project (GEF ID 2699) and the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) project (GEF ID 3101). This ability to retain the country teams and working together at the national level proved to be effective in the sustainability of activities and also engaging in international forums on climate change.

Relevance

40. Relevance of GEF support was assessed against the country's national development and environmental agendas, the GEF mandate, and the country's responsibilities and obligations toward the global conventions.

Conclusion 5: GEF support has been relevant to national needs and priorities in environmental conservation and sustainable development.

41. GEF support has been relevant to Timor Leste constitution and strategic development plan and priorities, as well as to the country's effort to fulfill its obligations under the international agreements to which it is signatory. GEF support to, climate change, biodiversity and land degradation has been aligned with government policies and plans for the environment, and gave impetus to the development of plans and strategies that have further sharpened priorities for climate change adaptation, biodiversity and land degradation. Gaps exist in the chemicals and international waters focal areas where the GEF support has not yet come. Besides, Timor-Leste has yet to ratify the Stockholm Convention as well as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), both addressing international waters issues.

42. Although in India the scale of GEF support is quite small compared to the country's size and needs, GEF support relates well to the development challenges of the country. Overall, GEF support has been relevant to India's sustainable development agenda and environmental priorities of supporting energy efficiency, biodiversity conservation, land and water ecosystem management, protected area management, and addressing land degradation. GEF projects are also linked to the agenda of the ministries involved in project execution. Of the 65 projects that were reviewed, 51 were assessed to be relevant and in line with the country's environmental and sustainable development priorities. Examples include the projects developed within the framework of Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management (SLEM) program (GEF IDs 3869, 3870, 3871, 3872, 3873), alongside generation of global environmental benefits, focus on income generation activities for the local community members and, thus, contribute directly to one of the main development objectives of the country. This is particularly evident from the Sustainable Rural Livelihood Security through Innovations in Land and Ecosystem Management project (GEF ID 3470) – sub-projects at Sundarbans and Andamans – whereby the local community involvement into the project activities is being ensured to deal with the newly emerging challenges of soil salinity in paddy fields in the respective areas.

43. GEF support has been relevant to the sustainable development agenda and development needs in Vanuatu and the PICs involved in SPREP-executed projects funded by the GEF. The GEF had a strong catalyst role in helping move the environmental and sustainable development agenda into the national forefront of SPREP member countries. For instance, the GEF-supported enabling activities that produced the NBSAP and the PICCAP were catalytic in finally getting the Environmental Management and Conservation Act (EMCA) passed, integrating the concept of sustainable development into the national development plans of SPREP member countries. Furthermore, the outcomes of the LCI project formed part of the National Council of Chiefs Land Summit Resolution promoting sustainable land management and conservation practices on traditional lands in Vanuatu. The Pollution and Waste Management Acts were enacted following the development of the NIP. Elsewhere in the Pacific region there is more evidence on the relevance of GEF support in accelerating national sustainable development agendas as the outcomes of the PICCAP with the national greenhouse gas assessments and the vulnerability assessments helped frame the Pacific Forum Leaders Communiqué of the past 10 years stressing the importance of actions to combat climate change and priorities adaptation measures. The evaluation team also found strong evidence on the

development of national sustainable development plans after GEF-supported projects such as NBSAP in Fiji. In Samoa, the outcomes of GEF projects have been instrumental to the mainstreaming of climate change, biodiversity and land degradation into the Samoa Development Strategy 2012-2014.

44. GEF projects in Sri Lanka have largely addressed Sri Lanka's environmental and sustainable development objectives. The initial projects were aligned to sectoral plans such as the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), the BCAP, the Coastal Zone Management Plan (CSMP) and the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP). In addition to addressing the objectives of these plans, the GEF projects that came after mid 2000 also address objectives of the national programmes such as the Ten Year Horizon Development Framework (2006-2016); the National Physical Planning Policy and Plan (2006-2030); and the National Action Plan for Haritha Lanka (Green Lanka) Programme 2009.

Conclusion 6: Relevance of GEF support to country priorities strengthened ownership in India, while in the other portfolios analyzed ownership is mixed.

45. While in India ownership of GEF support is strong at central as well as provincial level, in Sri Lanka externally driven project design, capacity issues and inadequate stakeholder consultation during implementation weakened ownership. Vanuatu and SPREP member countries showed good ownership only for enabling activities. Weak ownership was observed in Timor Leste.

46. Country ownership in India is not only visible at the central government level but also in terms of ownership demonstrated by the relevant provincial governments. Up to GEF-3, the involvement of the national government in shaping the country portfolio was largely passive. However, when the GEF introduced a Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) for GEF-4, India was among the few countries that started a country-driven national portfolio planning exercise on their own. Thereafter, the central government's involvement in planning of GEF support has increased. While government institutions have played an important role in execution of GEF projects, the role of civil society organizations and private sector has also been equally important. Government has been supportive to the participation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), especially through the SGP. In addition to GEF funding, the government has provided funding to SGP to increase the level of grants made by the program. Government support to SGP is indicative of a high level of ownership.

47. The materialization of US \$ 3,215 million in co-financing against US\$ 408 million of GEF grants for national projects further strengthens the evidence of country ownership in India. For 10 completed projects, 100 percent or more of the committed co-financing is reported to have materialized in the case of 10 projects in the portfolio. Two of these are reported to have achieved more than three times co-financing of that originally planned. There is only one project where less than 50 percent of the committed co-financing materialized. The remaining 5 projects materialized 50 to 100 percent of the committed co-financing. The SGP has also mobilized significant co-financing amounting, at the height of US\$ 12.1 million against a total GEF grant of US\$ 8.2 million.

48. In Vanuatu, the evaluation found strong ownership for the enabling activities funding window, thanks to its expedited procedures and absence of the co-financing requirement; eight of the ten completed Vanuatu national projects are enabling activities. The only two MSPs in Vanuatu were both initiated by GEF Agencies: the LCI project was initiated and driven by

UNDP while the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) MSP, which is part of the global UNEP SLM project, was initiated by UNEP. SPREP regional projects including SPBCP, IWP and PACC were based on SPREP Council resolutions. Those projects tend to address more common issues throughout the Pacific region rather than national priorities. The other regional and global projects Vanuatu participates in are driven by GEF Agencies and national involvement happens around issues that are common to the various participating countries.

49. In Sri Lanka ownership of GEF support is mixed. The Ministry of Finance and Planning as well as the Ministry of Power and Energy were keen on developing renewable energy sources in the early 1990s, as the power generation was inadequate and the electricity grid's penetration was only 40 percent. Given this commitment the support extended by the government to overcome issues related to tariffs and power purchase agreements was already high and GEF support was easily taken advantage of. On the other hand, GEF projects related to protected area management were largely designed by external consultants. This led to resistance from within the government (i.e. from the Department of Wild Life Conservation) and also by concerned members of civil society, who filed legal cases against the implementation of certain components of these projects. In the case of the Conservation of Globally Threatened Species in the Rainforests of Southwest Sri Lanka project (GEF ID 818), a more participatory process was adopted for the design phase, which generated ownership. The Participatory Coastal Zone Restoration and Sustainable Management in the Eastern Province of Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka project (GEF ID 2753) was designed by a team assembled by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Mixed government ownership in Sri Lanka is evidenced by the low in kind contribution to MSPs and FSPs. Sri Lankan Government's funding commitment at the project approval stage amounts at 19 percent of the total project costs. The evaluation of the Conservation of Biodiversity through Integrated Collaborative Management in Rekawa, Ussangoda, and Kalametiya Coastal Ecosystems project (GEF ID 802) found that staff time of government officials to be contributed to the project (in kind) did not sufficiently materialize, as they continue to have commitments to their parent organization.

50. The GEF Timor Leste portfolio has been mainly designed by UNDP. The Government and other stakeholders have been consulted during design and have been involved at appropriate points in implementation. However, most if not all of the key documents have been produced by international experts and United Nations Volunteers (UNV). The extremely limited national capacities have greatly constrained the extent to which national ownership could be effectively built – in short it has been challenging to give Timorese a leadership role in the preparation and drafting of key enabling activities reports when they lack the skills to produce reports that will meet convention requirements. This has resulted in the decision to rely on external expertise, however in doing so the ownership and capacities have remained lower than expected. The Operational Focal Point (OFP) has the individual capacity to become more involved, but with minimal resources possibilities for an enhanced ownership will be difficult to attain.

Efficiency

51. Efficiency of GEF support was assessed in terms of time, effort, and financial resources needed to prepare and implement GEF projects; the different roles and responsibilities of the various GEF stakeholders (national, international, and local) and the synergies between projects and these stakeholders; and the role and functioning of the national GEF focal point mechanism.

Conclusion 7: Long preparation times and delayed implementation affected overall efficiency in all the portfolios analyzed.

52. Several factors affected efficiency in the portfolios analyzed, including weak capacity in Timor Leste; a tradition of heavy bureaucracy in India; loss of institutional memory, changes in staff and changing national priorities in Vanuatu and SPREP. While in Sri Lanka the GEF cycle was efficient in early phases, it slowed down during GEF-4, and is largely on track in GEF-5.

53. In Timor Leste, at independence in 2002 the government's capacity was close to zero. In the last 10 years considerable progress has been made to improve skills, education and knowledge of government officials across all sectors. However, the level of education, skills and work experience within the government is not yet sufficient to move project ideas from design to implementation. Almost all the GEF projects implemented so far have been delayed because of lack of skilled nationals to fill vacant project management or team member positions. The lack of capacity is widely reported in other sectors and is not specific to the environment sector. On a positive note is the approach being developed under the first national communication to the UNFCCC, which is based on a national team complemented with expertise coming from within the region (Indonesia and the Philippines).

54. GEF projects in India have involved a long preparation time. The majority of the national FSPs (57 percent) took more than 2 years from first submission of a proposal to CEO endorsement/approval. The processing time taken for MSPs is almost similar with 60 percent of them having taken more than 2 years to move from first submission of a proposal to CEO endorsement/approval. There is, nonetheless, wide variation among projects in terms of project preparation time. Its ranges from six months taken by the Low Carbon Campaign for Commonwealth Games 2010 Delhi project (GEF ID 4215) to eight years for the Mainstreaming Conservation and Sustainable use of Medicinal Plant Diversity in Three Indian States project (GEF ID 1156) from their first submission to disbursement. For what concerns efficiency of implementation, 12 projects in the portfolio required extensions to complete project activities. Reasons include slow start-up, overly optimistic estimation of the time required for implementation of activities, inadequate support from some critical stakeholders, unexpected delays by technology suppliers, issues related to inter-agency and intra-agency coordination, among other.

55. The approval process takes 636 days (1.7 years) on average for Vanuatu national projects and 881 days on average for SPREP-executed regional projects (2.4 years). There is substantial variation across different project modalities: Vanuatu FSPs have a longer approval process (1,582 days or 4.3 years) than SPREP-executed regional FSPs (915 days or 2.5 years). Furthermore, the approval process for Vanuatu national MSPs takes on average 984 days (2.7 years) compared to 371 days (just over one year) for the one SPREP-executed regional MSP. Enabling activities have been approved somewhat faster, on average, for Vanuatu national projects (431 days or 1.2 years) compared to SPREP-executed regional enabling activities (501 days or 1.4 years). As projects take longer to prepare, by the time the project is approved, the actual priorities and commitments as identified in the project document may have changed, which has consequences on the efficiency of implementation. In most of the regional projects, a complete reworking of the project documents was undertaken after the GEF Council and GEF Agency approvals due to changes that occurred in some countries concerning national priorities, the institutional memory of the national focal points, staff movements and budgetary

constraints, where co-financing initially allocated to those projects had to be shifted to newly emerging national needs such as natural disasters when they occur. This was the case for the IWP and PACC projects and the Vanuatu LCI project.

56. Nationally-executed projects in Vanuatu experience more implementation delays and extensions than SPREP-executed projects. The reasons for such delays were found to be that the regional project coordinators provide additional assistance to national coordinators in the preparation of project reports and implementation of project activities, while for nationally-executed projects, the coordinators do not have the institutional mechanisms to provide such support. This is highlighted in the enabling activities for preparing the POPs NIP and the NAP, which have not been closed yet. Proper records and financial acquittals have not been completed despite the project activities having been completed since several years. SPREP on the other hand now has a fully functioning technical staff to backstop regional projects and to support countries on climate change and biodiversity projects. These technical support teams have been used extensively in the implementation of the PIGGAREP and the PACC projects, as well as the Island Biodiversity and Invasive Species (IBIS) project (GEF ID 3664) just starting implementation.

57. Sri Lankan FSPs take an average of 4 years from entry in the pipeline to project start-up. The process of project solicitation changed with the introduction of the RAF in GEF-4, where projects were expected to be submitted directly by identified national stakeholders to the OFP. The process however did not happen as expected and hence GEF Agencies got involved in the development of project ideas. As a result, new projects started registering in the GEF Project Management Information System (PMIS) only 3 years later, in 2009. In some cases project approval is getting delayed by a slow government approval process, as for example in the case of the Strengthening Capacity to Control the Introduction and Spread of Alien Invasive Species project (GEF ID 2472). GEF-5 project development and approval is largely on track.

58. Concerning the efficiency of implementation, 11 projects have been completed up to 2012 in Sri Lanka, with an average implementation period of 5 years. Climate change projects have all been implemented on time except for the first enabling activity. The first communication to UNFCCC, which took ten years to complete. All biodiversity projects have been extended. Reasons for extension include issues related to design, management, staffing and funding issues and external factors. In the case of the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants (GEF ID 95) and the Protected Areas Management and Wildlife Conservation (GEF ID 878) projects the time planned for involving communities in conservation activities had been underestimated in the project design and caused delays in implementation. In other cases, changes in laws affected negatively implementation. The Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation project (GEF ID 878) estimated that the changes to the Fauna and Flora Ordinance can be made by government within the first year of the project, but it ultimately took seven years to complete.

59. Insufficient technical capacity, delegation of tasks and responsibilities within the partner government entities and frequent organizational changes are among other reasons for the observed implementation delays. The lack of technical staff within the Department of Wildlife Conservation and its reluctance to recruit external staff had an impact on progress of the Development of Wildlife Conservation and Protected Areas Management project (GEF ID 352) and the subsequent Protected Area Management and Wildlife Conservation project.

Staff recruitment was also hampered by a government moratorium against recruitment to permanent government positions in 2001.

Conclusion 8: Except for a few projects in Vanuatu/SPREP and Sri Lanka portfolios, monitoring and evaluation is not happening to its full capacity.

60. In India, although improving, the quality of M&E in the GEF portfolio remains an area of weak performance. A desk review undertaken as part of the India CPE team revealed that the indicators used to track results for 8 projects out of the 14 completed projects for which sufficient information was available, were assessed to have not been appropriate given the project objectives and activities. This appraisal is consistent with the ratings provided by the Office through its terminal evaluation review process. The quality of M&E was assessed to be in the satisfactory range in only 3 out of the 7 completed GEF projects in India for which the Office provided ratings. Overly optimistic reporting of progress of GEF activities through the Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) has emerged as one of the concerns. Even though aware of the problems being faced on ground, GEF Agencies do not communicate this through the PIRs submitted to the GEF.

61. Evidence from the India CPE shows that the quality of M&E arrangements is improving. Project that were both ongoing and pre-implementation stages have been assessed to have a relatively better M&E design. Appropriate performance and impact indicators have been included along with their corresponding means of verification. Appropriate emphasis was given to reporting requirements, external evaluations, and inclusion of M&E costs in the project budget. An improvement in recent years has been in terms of greater involvement of the OFP in tracking the status of projects and proposals that are at different stages of the GEF cycle. However, attention is primarily focused on projects that are under preparation and less on tracking progress of projects that are under implementation or have been completed.

62. In Vanuatu and SPREP portfolios, GEF projects M&E produced important information and lessons both for institutional capacity building and actions to address environmental concerns. GEF projects regularly produce PIRs, Mid-Term Reviews (MTRs) and terminal evaluations. The M&E systems in place are used effectively during the project life. All the completed regional and national projects include examples of adoption of MTR recommendations. Some good examples of adaptive management include the adjustments UNDP and SPREP have initiated to address delays in fund disbursement for the PACC project. This issue was there since UNDP and SPREP have started working together on GEF projects in the mid-90s. The new approach allows disbursement of funds only to those countries that have submitted the necessary reports in time, rather than waiting until all countries have submitted their reports before funds are disbursed to SPREP. Also, SPREP now only has to submit progress reports on a six-month basis rather than quarterly.

63. In Sri Lanka many projects do not have PIRs. In completed projects, evaluation reports indicate that the quality of the logical framework matrix has impacted on the quality of project monitoring and outcomes. The logical framework matrix of the Conservation of Globally Threatened Species in the Rainforests of Southwest Sri Lanka project (GEF ID 818) had to be revised at mid-term, and was subsequently not used for project monitoring. The evaluators of the Development of Wildlife Conservation and Protected Areas Management project (GEF ID 352) felt that the project objectives mentioned in the logical framework matrix were task-oriented (i.e. development of human-elephant conflict resolution techniques) instead of being outcome/impact-oriented (i.e. fewer cases of human-elephant

conflicts in buffer zones of protected areas). The completion report on the first phase (2002-2007) of the Renewable Energy for Rural Economic Development done in 2011 is the only report that provides information on the level of environmental stress reduction (i.e. estimation of the reduction of emissions due to the use of the renewable energy technology introduced). Arrangements or institutions in place to monitor stress reduction or improvement in the environment and/or socio-economic conditions at the systemic level after project completion are weak.

Conclusion 9: The introduction of resource allocation mechanisms since GEF-4 stimulated country programming with varying degrees of success in the respective countries.

64. In India the RAF stimulated country programming which reduced as a consequence the amount of dropped/canceled projects in the national portfolio. 51 projects are listed in PMIS as dropped or canceled in India. From GEF-2 onwards,¹⁵ there has been a decline in the project proposals that were dropped or cancelled. Of the proposals that pertain to GEF-2, 15 projects were dropped or cancelled, i.e. more than twice the number of project proposals that made it to the implementation stage. For GEF-3, although the number of dropped or cancelled projects increased to 21, the number of approved projects also increased to 14. In GEF-4, 9 projects were dropped or cancelled whereas 28 were endorsed or approved. The GEF-5 project portfolio is still developing. Till now, 5 projects have been dropped or cancelled, whereas 11 project proposals have been endorsed or approved. Regardless of how trends for GEF-5 would eventually turn out, it is unlikely that the rate of dropped or cancelled project proposals would be as high as it was for GEF-2 or GEF-3.

65. In Sri Lanka a country programming exercise was conducted in 2006 with support from UNDP to identify priorities and projects to be funded by GEF-4 resources. Later on, in 2011, the opportunity given by the introduction of the voluntary National Portfolio Formulation Exercises (NPFs) in GEF-5 was taken up by the GEF Sri Lanka OFP. Both exercises benefited from wide stakeholder consultation that included experts, state and civil society representatives. Both had participation of GEF Agencies, with the difference that in 2006 two of the three GEF Agencies – UNDP and the World Bank – were included as they were present in the country, while in 2011 consultations included also FAO, ADB, IFAD, IFC and UNIDO. Both processes had line ministries/departments representatives based on the GEF focal areas and in both cases the identified projects were taken back to the respective ministries, either through one-to-one consultations in 2006 or through workshops in 2011, to prioritize the proposed activities.

66. Both in 2006 and in 2011 the project proposals formulated are not consistent with the country programming documents that were produced. In GEF-4, the slowness of the GEF cycle observed in GEF-4 highlighted in Conclusion 7 added to delays encountered at the national level. Clearance by the National Planning Department (NDP) of the Ministry of Finance and Planning was delayed due to doubts expressed on the national importance of the proposals submitted, causing the proposals to miss the national budget cycle and have to wait for another year. According to stakeholders interviewed, one of the reasons the existing proposals are not aligned with the NPFE document is due to changes in the national interest

¹⁵ The information on the period before GEF-2 is not complete because the PMIS started operating during GEF-2. While the information on projects from the earlier cycles (Pilot Phase and GEF-1) was uploaded, in several cases, the information on project proposals that were dropped or cancelled without implementation was not uploaded. As a result, an analysis of drop out and cancellation rate is appropriate only from GEF-2 onwards.

and to new emerging circumstances while waiting for proposals to go through the GEF approval cycle (i.e. the Strengthening the Resilience of Post Conflict Recovery and Development to Climate Change Risks in Sri Lanka project (GEF ID 4609), not mentioned in the NPFE).

Conclusion 10: Inadequate contractual arrangements between UNIDO and the national executing agency in India created a barrier to independent evaluation of 2 projects by the GEF Evaluation Office.

67. During the course of the GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation in India the Evaluation Office was not able to conduct field verification for two POPs projects implemented by UNIDO, namely the completed Development of a National Implementation Plan in India as a First Step to Implement the Stockholm Convention on POPs project (GEF ID 1520), and the ongoing Environmentally Sound Management and Final Disposal of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) in India project (GEF ID 3775). At first access was denied because the contractual arrangement between UNIDO and the national executing agency did not specify that access should be granted to the Office. In November 2012, after intervention from the GEF India Operational Focal Point, the national executing agency agreed to facilitate field verification. However, when concrete steps were taken to initiate the field verification, the national executing agency added the condition that representatives from UNIDO and the national executing agency should be present to “oversee” the field work being conducted. This condition was unacceptable as it would have compromised the independence of the evaluation. The evaluation team could have requested another intervention from the GEF India OFP, but it had to drop the field verification for these two projects to avoid adding further delays to ensure a timely finalization of the India CPE.

ISSUES FOR FOLLOW UP

68. The findings and conclusions emerging from the CPEs and CPS conducted in the Asia and Pacific region provide three issues for follow up. The first two issues will be followed up and integrated with other emerging evidence in the final report of OPS5. The third is an important operational issue that is included in GEF/ME/C.44/02, “Work Program and Budget of the GEF Evaluation Office.”

Issue 1: The GEF should further promote country programming in GEF-6, to be steered by national focal point mechanisms and to be conducted paying more attention to the efficiency of the process.

69. Evidence from Timor Leste, India, and Sri Lanka shows the importance of the way country programming is conducted for it to be effectively used by project proponents. In Timor-Leste the portfolio of individual projects adds up to less than the sum of its parts as projects lack a cohesive approach and longer timescale of engagement, required to build capacities in a country coming out of a conflict situation. Developing a program with the country may enable more predictable longer-term support to government priorities, rather the ‘start-stop-start’ approach of individualized enabling activities, FSPs or MSPs. As has been evident in India, country focused programming since GEF-4 has helped foster greater country ownership of GEF activities and increased efficiency, thanks to the OFP’s Office taking the lead in bringing various national stakeholders together to identify priority areas for GEF programming in the country and activities that may be undertaken in the identified areas. During GEF-5 India was able to further strengthen the national portfolio formulation process.

In Sri Lanka, two inclusive and comprehensive country programming exercises had been conducted, but their effective use was hindered by the delays experienced both from the GEF cycle and at the national level.

70. The evaluation of the NPFE initiative and the Mid Term Review of the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) being presently conducted by the Office to inform OPS5 will provide further information on the effectiveness of country focused programming. The evidence that will emerge from these evaluations will have to be taken into account in programming for GEF-6.

Issue 2: The GEF should further strengthen knowledge management as an enabling factor for broader adoption, by encouraging the introduction of communication and outreach components in GEF projects.

71. GEF has provided considerable support for activities that generate and disseminate knowledge. In India, several examples of learning from past GEF activities being mainstreamed in to new activities – both GEF and non-GEF – came to light. Several projects were able to catalyze further action from other stakeholders through effective dissemination. However, systematic tracking of the long term impacts of activities supported by the GEF by relevant national stakeholders is limited. The Sri Lanka, Vanuatu and SPREP portfolios showed that lessons from past interventions have not been fully utilized. Even though the situation seems to be improving since GEF-4 with a few projects that include specific budget lines for disseminating lessons learned both locally and internationally, there is certainly room for further improvement in this regard.

Issue 3: GEF Agencies should ensure that their contracts with the executing agencies require that they provide support to evaluations undertaken by the GEF Evaluation Office without any conditions that would compromise the independence of the evaluation.

72. Inadequate contractual arrangements between UNIDO and the Indian executing agency was a barrier to the GEF Evaluation Office in undertaking field verifications for the sampled projects of the POPs focal area. When the problem surfaced, UNIDO acknowledged this as a gap in its contractual arrangements with the executing agencies and committed to rectify them accordingly. This is the second evaluation in which such a situation arises, after the recently completed South China Sea Impact Evaluation (2012), which formulated a similar recommendation that goes in the same direction.¹⁶ This situation needs to be addressed so that various GEF partners fulfill their roles in M&E of GEF activities as outlined in the GEF M&E Policy.¹⁷ The GEF Evaluation Office has received information from UNIDO and UNDP that contractual arrangements for future projects now include the requirement to provide access of the GEF Evaluation Office to these projects.

¹⁶<http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/SCS%20IE%20Report%20FINAL%20FOR%20EDITION%2010Dec2012.pdf> (see recommendation 7, page 17)

¹⁷ http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/ME_Policy_2010.pdf (Paragraph 57).