

49th GEF Council Meeting
October 20-22, 2015
Washington, D.C.

Agenda Item 7

**SEMI-ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT OF THE
GEF INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OFFICE: OCTOBER 2015**

(Prepared by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office)

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL DECISION

1 Regarding the Joint Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to Protected Areas and Surrounding Landscapes.

The Council, having reviewed the section on the Joint Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to Protected Areas and Surrounding Landscapes, in the “Semi-Annual Evaluation Report of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office: October 2015,” and GEF/ME/C.49/02, “Management Response to the Semi-Annual Evaluation Report October 2015”, takes note of the conclusions of the evaluation and endorses the recommendations.

2 Regarding the Knowledge Management Needs Assessment and the Review of Climate-Eval.

The Council takes note of the findings of the GEF IEO Knowledge Management Needs Assessment and the Review of Climate-Eval.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	iii
I. Introduction	1
II. Completed Evaluations	1
A. Joint Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to Protected Areas and Surrounding Landscapes ..	1
Background	1
Conclusions	3
Opportunities and Recommendations for achieving greater impact.....	3
B. Morocco Country Portfolio Evaluation (1997-2014)	6
III. Evaluation Work in Progress.....	9
CSO Network Evaluation	9
Tajikistan Country Portfolio Evaluation	10
Annual Performance Report	10
LDCF/SCCF Evaluation	10
Other Evaluations	10
IV. Knowledge Management Needs Assessment	11
V. Review of Climate-Eval.	13
VI. Update on Other Initiatives	15
M&E Policy	15
Mainstreaming Gender, Resilience, Private Sector Development and Partnerships in Evaluations.....	15
Application of multiple evaluation methods.	15
Terminal Evaluation Guidelines	16
ANNEX 1: Joint Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to Protected Areas and Surrounding Landscapes.....	17
ANNEX 2: Gap Analysis for the M&E Policy Revision (2015)	38
ANNEX 3: Addressing Gender in Evaluations Guidance for Approach Papers	44

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 This Semi Annual Evaluation Report (SAER) presents the findings and recommendations of the Joint Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to Protected Areas and Surrounding Landscapes. The SAER also includes the main findings of the Morocco Country Portfolio Evaluation, the Knowledge Management Needs Assessment, and the review of the Climate-Eval community of practice. An overview of the ongoing work on the thematic and country program evaluations, policies, tools and methodologies is also included. The full evaluation report of the Joint Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to Protected Areas and Surrounding Landscapes and the Knowledge Management Needs Assessment, are provided in the Information Documents GEF/ME/C.49/Inf.02 and GEF/ME/C.49/Inf.01 respectively.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This is the second Semi-Annual Evaluation Report (SAER) prepared for and presented to the Council by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO).
2. This SAER presents the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Joint Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to Protected Areas and Surrounding Landscapes completed by the IEO during the reporting period. The proposed Council decisions pertaining to this evaluation are included at the beginning of the SAER. In this SAER, we also report on the results of the Knowledge Management Needs Assessment, the main findings from the Morocco Country Portfolio Evaluation and the review of Climate-Eval community of practice. The full reports of the Biodiversity evaluation and the Knowledge Management Needs Assessment are provided to the Council as information documents. The full evaluation report of the Morocco Country Portfolio Evaluation will be available in December, but the findings have been discussed and finalized at a workshop held in Morocco. This SAER also provides updates on the progress of ongoing evaluations and other initiatives of the IEO.

II. COMPLETED EVALUATIONS

A. JOINT IMPACT EVALUATION OF GEF SUPPORT TO PROTECTED AREAS AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPES

Background

3. This evaluation assesses the impact of GEF investments in non-marine protected areas (PAs)¹ and PA systems on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. It is the fourth impact evaluation addressing a specific focal area. The GEF IEO and the UNDP IEO have undertaken this evaluation jointly, with the directors of both offices approving the approach paper in June 2013. The evaluation combines new methods and approaches to assess the impact of GEF support. Annex 1 includes more information of the different aspects of this report.

The evaluation had three over-arching questions:

- (a) What have been the impacts and contributions of GEF support (positive or negative, intended or unintended) in biodiversity conservation in PAs and their immediately adjacent landscapes?

¹ These include projects that had terrestrial PA components even if they also addressed marine issues. “Non-marine” is defined as including terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems, which have terrestrial components. Projects addressing only marine concerns were excluded from the analysis. Assessing biodiversity protection impacts in marine protected areas is also important, and was done as part of the [Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to International Waters in the South China Sea and Adjacent Areas](#). This has allowed the GEF IEO to identify the critical factors that contribute to and hinder the achievement of impact in coastal and marine ecosystems.

- (b) What have been the contributions of GEF support to the broader adoption of biodiversity management measures at the country level through PAs and PA systems, and what are the key factors at play?
- (c) Which GEF-supported approaches and contextual conditions, especially those affecting human well-being, are most significant in enabling and hindering the achievement of biodiversity management objectives in PAs and their immediately adjacent landscapes?

4. To answer these questions, data collection and analysis were divided into three components: portfolio analysis, global analysis and case study analysis. Each component used different methods and units of analysis to account for the multiple scales and interventions by which GEF support was delivered.

- (a) The portfolio analysis component included a total of 618 projects in 137 countries, from which 1292 GEF-supported PAs were identified. In-depth analysis was also undertaken on 191 completed projects.
- (b) The global analysis component measured outcomes using forest cover (geospatial analysis of 580 PAs in 73 countries), wildlife populations (88 species in 39 PAs), and Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores (2440 METTs from 1924 PAs in 104 countries) as indicators.
- (c) The case study analysis component included interviews and field visits were carried out in 7 countries across three regions, covering 17 GEF-supported PAs and 11 non-GEF PAs.

5. The evaluation encountered three main challenges and limitations: substantial information gaps on GEF support, limited time-series data, and difficulties in establishing the counterfactuals. To mitigate the gaps and systematic biases in the datasets, the evaluation used a mix of quantitative, qualitative and spatial methods in data collection and analyses. Evidence was also collected from a mix of sources, combining global datasets, field data, literature reviews, and statistical models. Broader conclusions were drawn only after comparing results from these different types of evidence and methods of analysis. Through the use of mixed methods and triangulation of findings, it was possible to identify directions and patterns regarding the extent of GEF's contribution towards biodiversity conservation, and its interaction with the larger social-ecological system.

6. From the start, the evaluation team also took a multidisciplinary approach and reached out to different institutions and individuals with the necessary capacities. A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was established, composed of a representative of the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, and three biodiversity and social science experts as peer reviewers of the

different analyses. A Reference Group consisting of members from the GEF Secretariat and GEF agencies working in the biodiversity focal area was convened at key stages of the evaluation to provide expert opinion and information, as well as technical feedback and verification. To ensure access to the most up-to-date global data and technology, analyses were performed in collaboration with the Global Land Cover Facility (GLCF) at the University of Maryland, the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the International Union for Conservation of Nature World Commission on Protected Areas-Species Survival Commission (IUCN WCPA-SSC) Joint Task Force on Biodiversity and Protected Areas, and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

Conclusions

7. The evaluation reached the following conclusions:

Conclusion 1: Loss of global biodiversity continues at an alarming rate, driven largely by habitat loss due to multiple development pressures. Since the pilot phase, GEF strategies have increasingly targeted these development pressures beyond the PAs.

Conclusion 2: GEF support is contributing to biodiversity conservation by helping to lower habitat loss in PAs as indicated by less forest cover loss in GEF-supported PAs compared to PAs not supported by GEF. GEF-supported PAs also generally show positive trends in species populations, and reduced pressures to biodiversity at the site level.

Conclusion 3: GEF support has helped to build capacities that address key factors affecting biodiversity conservation in PAs, mainly in the areas of PA management, support from local populations, and sustainable financing. Sustainable financing of PAs remains a concern.

Conclusion 4: GEF support is contributing to large-scale change in biodiversity governance in countries by investing in PA systems, including legal frameworks that increase community engagement. Through interventions at the PA level, GEF support is also helping catalyze gradual changes in governance and management approaches that help to reduce biodiversity degradation.

Conclusion 5: While sharing important characteristics with governments and other donors, GEF support allows adaptability and higher likelihood of broader adoption in cases where it pays particular attention to three key elements in combination: long-term investment, financial sustainability, and creation of links across multiple approaches, stakeholders and scales.

Opportunities and Recommendations for achieving greater impact

8. In addition to having identified areas of strength of GEF support to PAs, the evaluation also identified five areas of opportunities with corresponding recommendations that will help achieve and demonstrate greater impact of GEF projects. Some of these areas are straightforward, and thus recommendations are specific. But in other cases, the challenges are complex, with no one solution and with several dimensions that need to be tackled

simultaneously. In these cases, we focus on presenting some specific actions that could be initially taken. All were found to be critical for developing better ways to address the challenges driving biodiversity degradation, and to assess the extent to which GEF is supporting approaches that create global environmental benefits.

Recommendation 1: Ensuring that GEF support targets areas rich in global biodiversity

9. GEF must continue to pursue better ways to ensure that its support is targeted towards globally significant sites with high biodiversity values, and extends to more of these sites. As it has consistently demonstrated, GEF must also continue to adopt the most rigorous scientific criteria in selecting areas for investment, integrating new criteria as more appropriate ones are developed. Going forward, GEF should consider the following:

- (a) Include not only biodiversity values as criteria, but also increasingly important considerations such as climate change vulnerability and ecological impacts of climate change. Geospatial information and technology can be used when prioritizing and approving projects.
- (b) Use recently developed technologies that are capable of integrating multiple sources of data and types of criteria (e.g. Key Biodiversity Areas, species richness, climate change vulnerability), and that allow for more systematic and rigorous analysis for allocating investments in areas that are important for global environmental benefits.

Recommendation 2: Addressing the socioeconomic conditions that will ensure local community commitment to biodiversity protection

10. While GEF support has resulted in considerable benefits to some sectors of the local population living in and around PAs, at the project level, during design and implementation, GEF needs to have mechanisms to ensure that future projects reach full compliance with the GEF Social Safeguards. GEF needs to expand benefit-sharing across a wider cross-section of the impacted local populations, to better mitigate the unequal distribution of costs and benefits of PA management interventions, with the aim of reducing local pressures on biodiversity stemming from adverse local socioeconomic conditions.

Recommendation 3: Investing in broader governance issues to address large-scale drivers

11. GEF should invest more in interventions that enable dialogue and joint decision-making not only among multiple stakeholders in and around PAs, but also stakeholders representing different sectors and operating at different scales – PA, landscape, PA system, national ministries – that tend to have conflicting development priorities and management objectives with regards to biodiversity conservation. At the minimum, these would be stakeholders undertaking activities that involve environmental protection, natural resource use (e.g. water, land, energy), economic development, and infrastructure development.

Recommendation 4: Developing a more reliable and practical monitoring system to track and assess results at the project and portfolio levels

12. GEF needs to ensure that basic information on GEF support to PAs (where, what and when) historically and into the future is available. At the same time, GEF also needs to reduce the burden on projects, countries and agencies by adopting a mixed methods approach to results monitoring that draws on geospatial technology, global databases, and locally gathered information. Some of this information would still need to be generated by projects, but more attention should be given to opportunities where use of remote sensing information and other global databases is appropriate.

13. This is likely to be a complex process that will take time and consultation with the various GEF partners. The following are specific actions that could be taken in the short term that, when combined, could reduce reporting requirements, while making the data more useful to meet monitoring objectives at the global, country and PA levels:

- (a) Through documents submitted at project approval and completion, ensure that existing databases within the GEF Secretariat include, at the minimum, basic information on GEF support to PAs (where, what and when) is available historically and into the future.
- (b) Institutionalize the use of geospatial technology for project and portfolio monitoring when applicable.
- (c) Streamline Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) reporting requirements to focus on information that can be used in conjunction with existing global datasets and geospatial data to perform meaningful analyses on management effectiveness and biodiversity impacts at a global level. At the same time, support countries in adapting the METT to make it more appropriate to their capacities and information needs. This will help build country capacities in monitoring parameters that they find useful for improving biodiversity conservation management within their specific context, while still providing key information that can be compared and analyzed at a global level.
- (d) Establish long-term partnerships for biodiversity and socioeconomic monitoring with country institutions that already have this as their mandate. This will allow results of GEF projects within a country to be monitored consistently and analyzed periodically before, during and beyond the life of a project. Local and national databases developed through these partnerships can then feed into global databases. Focus initially on countries with the largest biodiversity STAR allocations and established capacities.

- (e) Establish partnerships with research institutes or agencies that specialize in biodiversity data management and can regularly provide geospatial information or other global information relevant to GEF support to biodiversity, including data on PA attributes and locations, species range maps, forest change data, and population time series.

Recommendation 5: Investing in understanding what works and why

14. The GEF partners, including the Independent Evaluation Office, the Secretariat, STAP, and the Agencies should jointly develop and implement a program that will generate evidence on what works, for whom, and under what conditions. An evidence base can be built by drawing on a mix of methods and approaches appropriate to the types of interventions and contexts in which GEF support is being delivered. This evaluation has identified three critical areas in which GEF has extensive experience over time, and in which better knowledge would significantly enhance the support that GEF provides to countries. These are:

- (a) How to more fully and equitably address local livelihood needs in ways that contribute to or do not undermine biodiversity conservation and sustainable use;
- (b) How to catalyze the changes needed for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use to take place at a large scale;
- (c) How to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in ways that produce multiple environmental and socioeconomic benefits.

B. MOROCCO COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION (1997-2014)

15. The Morocco CPE has reached its finalization phase, and the findings are now available. It covers the period 1997-2014. Over this period the GEF committed 128.5 million USD in 32 national projects, and 296 million USD in 33 regional and global projects. The final report containing the full set of evidence supporting the findings will be available in December 2015.

The Main Findings

Effectiveness

Finding 1: GEF support has contributed to the achievement of important results, including the creation of an enabling environment for renewable energy, the conservation of protected areas, the prevention of deforestation and the elimination of dangerous chemicals.

16. Three of the five completed full-size projects have been rated as satisfactory or moderately satisfactory in the portfolio. In solar power, as a result of GEF assistance, in 2010, the Government created a new specialized agency, the Moroccan Agency for Solar Energy (MASEN), and a 160 MW Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) plant is being developed in

Ouarzazate with support from the World Bank and the German government. A consolidated analysis of ten protected areas having benefited from the GEF program concludes that the losses of forest cover inside the boundaries of protected areas have been relatively low, at about 0.9%, compared with national protected areas loss of 2%. Through the *Market Development for Solar Water Heaters*, the GEF supported the Moroccan Government to achieve 138,000 m² in solar power installations. A reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) of 358,000 tonnes of CO₂ has been achieved. GEF supported the establishment of a PCB National Commission, which is helping the government by drafting decrees and laws to deal with PCB issues. GEF also contributed to introducing national standards on PCB analysis, which became into force in the country in June 2014.

Finding 2: Some forms of broader adoption of project outcomes occurred and are leading to progress towards impact.

17. Some form of broader adoption – namely, mainstreaming, scaling up and market change – has occurred in four out of the five completed full-size projects, contributing to progress towards impact both in terms of environmental stress reduction and improvement of environmental status. Knowledge and information produced, institutional capacity created and country engagement are critical success factors. For example, with GEF assistance, a national program for solar water heating development in Morocco, *Shemsi*, was developed and is implemented by the *National Agency for the Development of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency* (ADEREE)². This has resulted in a surface installation of 440,000 m² of solar water heater systems in Morocco.

Finding 3: Knowledge generation and exchange has been most effective at local and regional levels. National knowledge sharing is more limited. Some GEF projects showed evidence of lessons learned from previous projects, but this has not happened systematically.

18. Frequent knowledge products are the GEF mandated reports and inputs into training curricula at forestry colleges, and are still active today. Other examples include diagnostic studies to inform management plans of national parks, manuals on flora and fauna species, now used across the country. Formal training in country has not been very effective, and the more appreciated regional programmatic approach was not followed in Morocco. Moreover, regional training was not coordinated with national training.

19. Knowledge sharing also occurred beyond the national boundaries. The GEF supported Ain Beni Mathar solar power plant is being used as a demonstration site by Morocco and the World Bank for launching similar initiatives in other countries. In 2014, the World Bank facilitated South-South knowledge sharing between Mexico and Morocco.

² The Agency main responsibility is to develop sectoral development programs for renewable energy and energy efficiency, enhance regional potential natural resources in different regions of Morocco and make proposals for regions entitled to host projects for the production of electricity from wind and solar energy.

Finding 4: Women benefited from GEF projects essentially through the income generating activities promoted by the SGP. Gender mainstreaming is not considered in the GEF portfolio.

20. Gender mainstreaming has been a challenge for national stakeholders involved in GEF projects and gender has not been mainstreamed in the portfolio. Many of the Biodiversity projects had income generating activities specifically targeting women such as training, tours, (on biodiversity, human health, commercialization and marketing of local products, among others), the use of domestic household energy, and promoting the collection of local seeds. The Small Grants Programme (SGP) more directly addressed female beneficiaries through supporting the setting up of community development associations, income-generating and capacity building activities.

Relevance

Finding 5: GEF support was aligned with the GEF mandate in all focal areas and permitted the Government of Morocco to address some of its international commitments.

21. Morocco is party to more than a hundred multilateral environmental agreements related to environmental protection and sustainable development. GEF support has been relevant to a number of these international environmental agreements, protocols and conventions. The conventions ratified by Morocco include the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the CBD, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Stockholm Convention, the Ban Amendment to the Basel Convention, the Rotterdam Convention. GEF enabling support was timely and contributed to the country's efforts in reporting and complying with these international obligations.

Finding 6: GEF support has been highly relevant to the Moroccan environmental priorities and sustainable development needs and challenges, and is in alignment with public policies of Morocco.

22. Morocco ownership of its GEF allocations to serve national environmental priorities increased in 2006 with the introduction of the GEF resource allocation systems, notably the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) in GEF-4 and the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) in GEF-5. Adaptation to climate change was more recently added to the portfolio and is in full alignment with national priorities. In many instances, GEF support contributed to the country's environmental legislation, policies and plans.

Finding 7: GEF support in Morocco is clearly nationally owned and country-driven. This has evolved over time, particularly in later GEF phases.

23. The Environment Ministry has encouraged strong ownership at the national level by developing a culture of consultation, communication and sensitization, which led to ownership

among local public and private stakeholders. This in turn has led to successful regulatory environmental reforms. For example, at the provincial level and associated with CBTHA (GEF ID 1), Law No. 113-13 on pastoral transhumance was adopted by the Government Council on March 15, 2015.

Finding 8: GEF has supported South-South cooperation on issues of environmental management.

24. South-South cooperation examples include the exchange of experience between Morocco and the countries of francophone Africa in the South of the Sahara on topics such as the diversification of energy sources and energy security, agro-industry, agricultural development and food security, and infrastructure.

Efficiency

Finding 9: The GEF project cycle in Morocco frequently overruns deadlines and is perceived as too long by stakeholders.

25. In Morocco, GEF projects take an average of two years from initial formulation to implementation. Average delays are respectively three years for full-size projects, 1.3 years for medium-size projects and 1.5 years for enabling activities. Stakeholders consider these timeframes too long as these negatively impact outputs and outcomes, primarily due to staff turnover. However, a three year time scale in Morocco is less than the average of 3.6 years for full-size projects in Brazil, or four years in Sri Lanka. Completion period extends by three years on average, which is on average one year more than other country portfolios analysed by the Office. Implementation timeframes in Morocco are influenced by a number of factors, including poor project design, ineffective approaches, overly-ambitious objectives, lack of qualified staff and lack of continuous monitoring mechanisms.

Finding 10: Monitoring and evaluation systems are not fully implemented.

26. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems mostly focus on administrative and financial monitoring. Historically, there has been little or no monitoring of impacts and no baseline reference established at the start of projects. In most recent projects, M&E systems have been designed with monitoring tools that generate regular data and information that can be used for adaptive management. M&E reporting includes project implementation reports and other forms of GEF Agencies' performance-related reporting, as well as independent mid-term and final evaluations. From GEF-4 onwards, logical frameworks have been applied more consistently to project planning, implementation and M&E.

III. EVALUATION WORK IN PROGRESS

CSO Network Evaluation

27. The GEF Council at its 47th meeting in October, 2014 requested the IEO to undertake an evaluation of the GEF Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Network, with focus on the role of the Network in the context of the GEF partnership. The main objectives of this evaluation are to

assess the extent to which the CSO Network is meeting its intended goals and strategic objectives and adding value to the GEF partnership and its membership. The IEO completed the approach paper for the Evaluation of the GEF CSO Network in August 2015. The paper considered feedback from the GEF partnership on the key questions and approaches to the evaluation, and launched a survey for the CSO Network member and non-member CSOs. Interviews with a variety of stakeholders are also underway. The evaluation will be completed and presented to the Council at the June 2016 meeting.

Tajikistan Country Portfolio Evaluation

28. The data gathering, analysis and consolidation for this CPE has been completed, the Aide Memoire containing the key preliminary findings is being written. The Aide Memoire will be presented and discussed at the final stakeholder consultation workshop that will be held in Dushanbe in early November 2015.

Annual Performance Report

29. The IEO has started preparing the APR2016, which will be presented to the GEF Council during the meeting in summer in 2016. The approach paper is currently under preparation and will become available by November 2015. The APR will present independent assessments on project outcomes and risks to sustainability, factors affecting achievement of project results, and quality of M&E arrangements. Weak monitoring of project results has been a consistent finding in previous APRs. One important component of the M&E system is the use of tracking tools. This year's APR will include a special thematic chapter on the use and effectiveness of the Tracking Tools. Finally, the APR will also include a summary of the Management Action Record (MAR) and an agency performance matrix.

LDCF/SCCF Evaluation

30. In addition to the evaluative work for the GEF Trust Fund, the IEO provides support at full cost recovery to the two adaption funds managed by the GEF: the LDCF and the SCCF. The IEO is conducting an evaluation of the LDCF that focuses on performance in terms of LDCF related outputs, principally the NAPAs, and LDCF support towards catalytic effects. The evaluation will provide evidence on the progress towards LDCF objectives, as well as the major achievements and lessons learned from LDCF implementation of more than 15 years. The draft approach paper will be shared with stakeholders for comment in November 2015. The final evaluation of the LDCF will be submitted at the June 2016 LDCF/SCCF Council meeting.

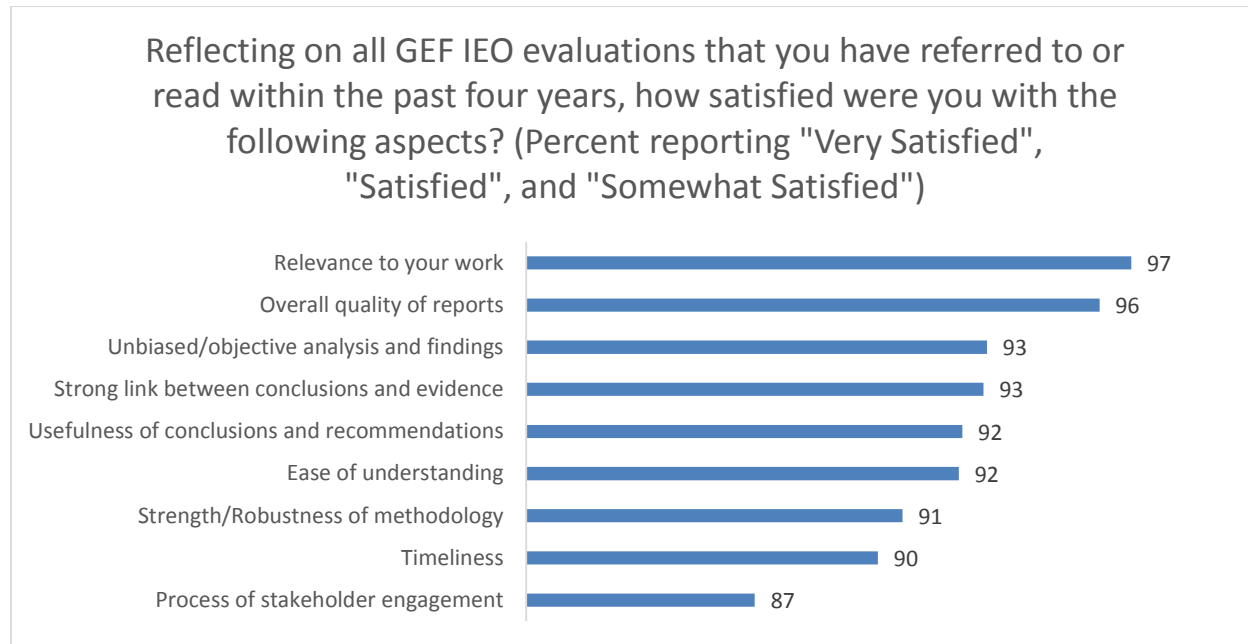
Other Evaluations

31. The IEO has begun work on the programmatic approaches and multiple benefits evaluations, which were included in the IEO work program and budget approved by the Council in its June 2015 meeting. The approach papers are currently being prepared and will be shared by December 2015. Cross cutting themes including gender, resilience, private sector development, and stakeholder engagement, will be addressed in both evaluations.

IV. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

32. The IEO is increasing its efforts to enhance the learning from evaluations and to better engage with stakeholders. A Knowledge Management Needs Assessment was recently conducted over this reporting period, to better understand the use of, and learning from, the GEF IEO evaluation reports and/or products. An external consultant was hired by GEF IEO to undertake the study. The study had two main objectives: 1) An assessment of the use of IEO evaluations by different groups of stakeholders; and 2) An assessment of knowledge needs and preferred forms and modes of communication to increase the use and influence of IEO evaluations.

33. Document reviews, surveys, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Surveys were administered to 1) GEF Council members and alternates; 2) the GEF partnership (GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies, STAP, country operational and political focal points, GEF CSO Network, and secretariats of International Environmental Conventions); and 3) external stakeholders. There were a total of 800 responses, covering all geographic regions, and all parts of the partnership. The survey results were triangulated with 50 semi-structured interviews and discussions with members of the GEF Council, Secretariat, Agencies, STAP, and CSO Network. More than 60 percent of the respondents had read 3 or more GEF IEO evaluations with 20 percent having read four or more.



34. In terms of overall satisfaction, more than ninety percent of respondents were satisfied with the relevance, quality, usefulness, ease of understanding, and timeliness. The process of stakeholder engagement was the only area with satisfaction levels below 90 percent. The percentage of those with high levels of satisfaction (very satisfied and satisfied), were above 60

percent in all categories, with the exception of stakeholder engagement (52%). By stakeholder group, the Council Members were most satisfied with the evaluations; the GEF Secretariat staff were the least.

35. In terms of usage of evaluations, more than 80 percent of respondents reported using evaluations to some extent, with more than 70 percent using it mainly as reference material, in designing projects/programs and for providing advice within the GEF partnership. The study showed varied levels of use between different stakeholder groups with the most consistent users being the GEF Council members. Council Members tended to use the reports to support their assessment of the GEF's performance, results and strategies which fed into their positions and decisions on strategic directions for the organization. Reports were also used to maintain support for the GEF by national governments and provide input into national environmental priorities and policies. Members of the GEF Partnership such as GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency staff, tended to use the reports as reference material but also for input into designing and adjusting programs and initiatives. External audiences using the evaluation reports and products were in the majority civil society organizations and government agencies and academia/research institutions to a lesser extent, based on responses to the survey and feedback from interviewees. These audiences tended to use evaluation reports as learning tools on environmental trends and issues, but also as an input into the design or modification of their own projects and policies, in addition to understanding the contribution and results of the GEF to the environment in their country or particular field of interest. Most commonly read or referred reports across all groups include the APR, and the OPS5. The Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)/Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) annual evaluation reports and thematic evaluations were used by external stakeholders.

36. An identified knowledge need was for the IEO to focus on drawing lessons, good practice and lessons from evaluation reports in different areas, such as project design and implementation, scaling-up, focal and thematic areas such as climate change and biodiversity; and to comparisons between conventional and integrated approaches. The need to target lessons for specific stakeholder groups, such as by agencies, was also highlighted. Stakeholders proposed that knowledge generated by evaluations should move away from being presented in static publications to dynamic forms such as online databases that could be re-used by stakeholders and packaged in various formats including thematic workshops, lessons notes and interactive features (e.g. maps displaying progress and results). In terms of products, the most useful for learning were seen as 4-page briefs and 2 page briefs (90 percent) and synthesis notes discussing lessons from several evaluations (more than 80 percent of respondents).

37. The main channels through which stakeholders learn about IEO evaluation reports and products was through direct contact with the IEO (e.g. preparation for Council Meetings), email and the website. The latter was notably the main channel for external audiences to become aware of IEO reports and products. The results suggest that going forward, the most useful channels for stakeholders to learn about evaluation reports and learning products would be email announcements, the GEF website, newsletter and thematic workshops/webinars.

38. This assessment will be followed by the implementation of an Action Plan on Knowledge Management and Communications that will be based on the findings of this assessment.

V. REVIEW OF CLIMATE-EVAL

39. In 2008 the GEF IEO established a Community of Practice (CoP) named Climate-Eval (www.climate-eval.org) for evaluators and researchers in the fields of climate change and development. Climate-Eval is a virtual CoP where practitioners active on climate change and development can exchange, access and seek current information related to effective evaluation practices in this field. The first phase of Climate-Eval was finalized in October 2012, and a second phase continued for an additional 2.5 years until June 2015.

40. GEF IEO management completed an in-depth self-assessment of Climate-Eval since the second phase is now coming close to completion. The overall purpose of the review is to assess the extent to which the original objectives have been reached and to examine the relevance and effectiveness of Climate-Eval as a CoP.

41. In the course of implementation, Climate-Eval has had a number of achievements including the development of a CoP, launch of an electronic library on climate change and development, completion of well-regarded technical studies related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, leverage of social media, and the organization of important face-to-face learning events.

42. Data analytics convey a steady stream of activities, membership and online presence for Climate-Eval during its years of implementation. The Climate-Eval website currently has 1,722 members, and the membership base has grown over the last four years. Survey and stakeholder feedback suggest a strong appreciation of the value-added of the overall initiative. Surveyed members identified evaluation as the most relevant topic to them (82% rated it as relevant or useful), followed by Climate Change Adaptation (78% rated it as relevant / useful). Climate Change Mitigation and Natural Resource Management were identified as less relevant according to half of survey respondents.

43. Members highlighted the learning from Climate-Eval, and its contribution to key knowledge activities. There has been an appreciation for the quality of information available on Climate-Eval in the form of studies and the eLibrary. Members have also reported important networking benefits from Climate-Eval, with seventy four per cent (74%) of survey respondents reporting that Climate-Eval had increased their network of professional contacts in the area of climate change and evaluation.

44. On the Climate-Eval website, 871 items of content have been uploaded since it was first launched. Some of the most influential uploads have concerned the six technical studies commissioned under Climate-Eval, as well as information on the 2014 Second International Conference on Evaluating Climate Change and Development, organized by the office. A book based on the conference, attended by over 300 participants in 2014, will be published in Fall 2016.

45. In terms of assessing overall effectiveness the review acknowledges the unique contribution of knowledge products that have been made by Climate-Eval in recent years. Eighty three per cent (83%) of survey respondents reported that Climate-Eval had strengthened their knowledge of climate change and evaluation, particularly in capturing and diffusing both new and existing information in these topical areas. In addition, Climate-Eval had been effective in enhancing specific technical knowledge in the areas of guidelines (70%), indicators (72%) and methodology (72%). The use of multiple dissemination channels has proved particularly effective in ensuring the update and usage of generated knowledge products.

46. Climate-Eval's most visible and most important knowledge contribution has been the establishment of an online presence at www.climate-eval.org. As part of the review process, web grading performance results highlight Climate-Eval's relatively higher grading compared to other CoPs. An important premise of Climate-Eval has been to broaden partnership arrangements in climate change and evaluation and in this realm Climate-Eval has been proactive e.g. SEA Change and the African Evaluation Association (AfREA).

47. In summary, Climate-Eval is a unique CoP that has been successful in creating a space for practitioners to acquire and share technical knowledge related to climate change and evaluation, and has achieved the objectives set at the outset, building a strong base. The key conclusions from this review are:

- (a) Climate-Eval has a strong relevance with substantial outreach
- (b) Knowledge generation has been the hallmark of Climate-Eval's success. 83% of respondents noted that Climate-Eval had strengthened their knowledge of Climate Change and Evaluation.
- (c) Climate-Eval has helped in promoting learning and strengthened professional networks
- (d) Membership engagement has been limited, but strengthened by face to face learning and social media interventions.
- (e) Climate-Eval has built a number of successful partnerships, which would benefit from clear plans for future direction.
- (f) Key stakeholders see strong opportunities for Climate-Eval going forward, with an appropriate redefinition of strategic direction and objectives, enhanced partner and donor engagement.
- (g) Technology platforms will play an important role going forward and would be a priority in future development plans.
- (h) The recommendations of improved governance, developing a clear strategic plan, establishing a results framework, ensuring adequate moderation and facilitation, would strengthen this CoP.

48. With future designated resources, Climate-Eval can maintain and further build its value proposition. In addition to being a good medium for dissemination of evaluation evidence, it has very good potential for building evaluation capacity through development of training tools that can be integrated into the current platform.

VI. UPDATE ON OTHER INITIATIVES

M&E Policy

49. In collaboration with the GEF Secretariat and the GEF agencies, the IEO is working on a revision and update to the current M&E policy. The IEO completed an analysis of Council decisions since the last M&E Policy was published in 2010. This analysis, included in Annex 2 of this document, identifies the current gaps that are to be addressed in the revised M&E policy, such as gender mainstreaming, the integration of safeguards standards, private sector engagement and the role of public-private partnerships, among others. The revisions to the current M&E policy will be completed by December 2015.

Mainstreaming Gender, Resilience, Private Sector Development and Partnerships in Evaluations

50. The IEO is developing methodologies to evaluate gender, resilience, partnerships and private sector development across all evaluations in a consistent manner, and these will be applied in the strategic country, multiple benefits, LDCF/SCCF and programmatic approaches evaluations. Annex 3 incorporates the methodology for addressing gender in IEO evaluations. These evaluative questions are also being shared with the Evaluation Cooperation Group of the International Financial Institutions and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

Application of multiple evaluation methods.

51. As presented in the IEO work program document to the Council in June 2015, the country level evaluation processes, methods and tools are being refined and aligned with the other thematic evaluations on multiple benefits and programmatic approaches to increase in-house synergies and provide strategic focus. Stakeholder engagement with GEF stakeholders at global and country level are being deployed through online consultation platforms, webinars and social media. Country level impact analysis has been strengthened by the use of GIS and remote sensing data, and the system level theory of change on broader adoption mechanisms for progress to impact have been applied in Morocco and in Tajikistan.

52. The Biodiversity impact evaluation used a mix of geospatial and quantitative methods in data collection and analyses. Advanced statistical methods such as propensity matching analysis, difference in difference, machine learning algorithms, generalized additive models, principal components analysis, and mixed and fixed effects modeling were used. The main tools used for conducting these analyses are R, C, Python, ArcGIS and Google Earth Engine.

53. GEF IEO will continue to apply the best evaluative approaches in the work program to explain progress towards impact.

Terminal Evaluation Guidelines

54. The terminal evaluation guidelines have been updated to reflect gender mainstreaming, private sector development, and progress towards impact. These guidelines have been shared with the evaluation units of the agencies, and will be finalized by January 2015. Workshops are being planned for agency staff involved in project implementation, and the revised guidance will also be incorporated into the ECW training material.

ANNEX 1: JOINT IMPACT EVALUATION OF GEF SUPPORT TO PROTECTED AREAS AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPES

BACKGROUND

1 This evaluation assesses the impact of GEF investments in non-marine protected areas (PAs)³ and PA systems. This evaluation adopts the OECD-DAC (2002) definition of impact as the “positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended”. The evaluation analyzes the extent to which the management and governance approaches supported by GEF have led to the achievement of GEF objectives on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. The evaluation probes into how future support can best contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by assessing the factors and conditions that affect the interaction between human livelihood objectives and biodiversity objectives. In addition, it looks at the extent to which GEF support has promoted human well-being as a key contribution to the effective management of PAs and their immediately adjacent landscapes. When information was available, the analysis included evidence comparing supported areas with those lacking such support, or receiving other types of intervention. The evaluation also explored new methods and approaches to assess the impact of GEF support, several of which have been incorporated into other GEF IEO evaluations. It is so far the most comprehensive global evaluation undertaken on the impact of protected areas on biodiversity, in terms of the diversity of methods used and the scope of inquiry.

2 The GEF IEO and the UNDP IEO have undertaken this evaluation jointly. The approach paper was approved by the directors of both offices in June 2013. From the GEF IEO perspective, this is the fourth impact evaluation addressing a specific focal area. For the UNDP IEO, this constitutes the first impact evaluation of UNDP programming, and builds on the findings and conclusions of a thematic evaluation focused on the nexus of issues linking UNDP poverty and environmental protection support to countries. Different analyses were performed in collaboration with the Global Land Cover Facility (GLCF) at the University of Maryland, the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the International Union for Conservation of Nature World Commission on Protected Areas-Species Survival Commission (IUCN WCPA-SSC) Joint Task Force on Biodiversity and Protected Areas, and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was established, composed of a representative of the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, and three biodiversity and

³ These include projects that had terrestrial PA components even if they also addressed marine issues. “non-marine” is defined as including terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems, which have terrestrial components. Projects addressing only marine concerns were excluded from the analysis. Assessing biodiversity protection impacts in marine protected areas is also important, and was done as part of the [Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to International Waters in the South China Sea and Adjacent Areas](#). This has allowed the GEF IEO to identify the critical factors that contribute to and hinder the achievement of impact in coastal and marine ecosystems.

social science experts as peer reviewers of the different analyses. A Reference Group consisting of members from the GEF Secretariat and GEF agencies working in the biodiversity focal area was convened at key stages of the evaluation to provide expert opinion and information, as well as technical feedback and verification.

EVALUATION APPROACH

Objective and key questions

The evaluation had three over-arching questions:

- (a) What have been the impacts and contributions of GEF support (positive or negative, intended or unintended) in biodiversity conservation in PAs and their immediately adjacent landscapes?
- (b) What have been the contributions of GEF support to the broader adoption of biodiversity management measures at the country level through PAs and PA systems, and what are the key factors at play?
- (c) Which GEF-supported approaches and contextual conditions, especially those affecting human well-being, are most significant in enabling and hindering the achievement of biodiversity management objectives in PAs and their immediately adjacent landscapes?

Evaluation scope

3 The evaluation focused on PAs that include terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems, and excluded purely marine ecosystems. For the purpose of this evaluation, we are referring to these as “non-marine PAs”. These types of PAs were selected because more information was available for assessing changes in biodiversity over the long term. Both biodiversity focal area and multifocal area projects are considered in the evaluation. While the evaluation spans the entire period of GEF support, projects included in most of the analyses are completed or well under implementation, to allow sufficient time for impact to have taken place and be measurable. The majority were therefore designed before the formulation of GEF-5 Biodiversity Strategies and the GEF-6 Program Directions. Nonetheless, there has been sufficient continuity in the strategies and the support provided by GEF to warrant the examination of the extent to which GEF support since 1991 has contributed to GEF’s current strategies, and to draw lessons relevant to these future directions.

4 GEF support to biodiversity conservation has historically been complex in nature, with different types of interventions delivered at multiple scales, and often through several projects over time. As such, assessing the impact of interventions on biodiversity presents evaluative challenges related to multiple causal chains interacting across geographic and administrative scales which are often mismatched. There are also differences in time scales between the implementation of GEF-supported interventions, and the corresponding responses in human

behavior and natural systems. As a consequence, attribution of outcomes to GEF-supported interventions is difficult. Also affecting the ability of the evaluation to determine attribution is the effect of other actors that contribute to the same outcomes. To address these challenges, the evaluation adopted a framework to help identify the key contributions of GEF-supported interventions in relation to the interactions with other elements, processes, and conditions affecting biodiversity in PAs.

Theory-based framework for assessing impact

5 Within the context of the evaluation of GEF support, OPS 5 emphasizes the need to go beyond project boundaries to assess how GEF has made an impact in the larger scheme of things, and to identify both positive and negative unintended consequences of GEF-supported interventions. Based on a review of literature, the evaluation team's previous field experience, and consultation with biodiversity scientists, the evaluation adopted a theory of change (TOC) as a heuristic to trace the extent to which GEF support contributes to conditions that lead to an improved protection of biodiversity by restoring, stopping or reducing the loss of biodiversity.⁴

The evaluation's TOC assumes that improvements in biodiversity conservation will take place when:

- (a) Adequate and appropriate capacities for PA management are in place and operational;
- (b) Local communities in or around PAs are engaged in decision-making and natural resource management activities that meet conservation and livelihood goals;
- (c) There is in place a robust PA governance system that ensures compliance across scales, and which can influence drivers stemming from larger scales, as well as the pressures operating at the local level.

⁴The TOC adopted by the evaluation is based on the general framework for GEF's theory of change (TOC) developed by the GEF IEO during the course of the [Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to International Waters in the South China Sea and Adjacent Areas](#). The TOC framework is currently being used by other evaluations carried out by the office. The GEF IEO also developed a TOC delineating the chains of causality contained in Objective 1 of the GEF 5 biodiversity focal area as part of OPS 5. This TOC also draws from recent approaches to biodiversity conservation, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which point at the need to integrate social and ecological dimensions..

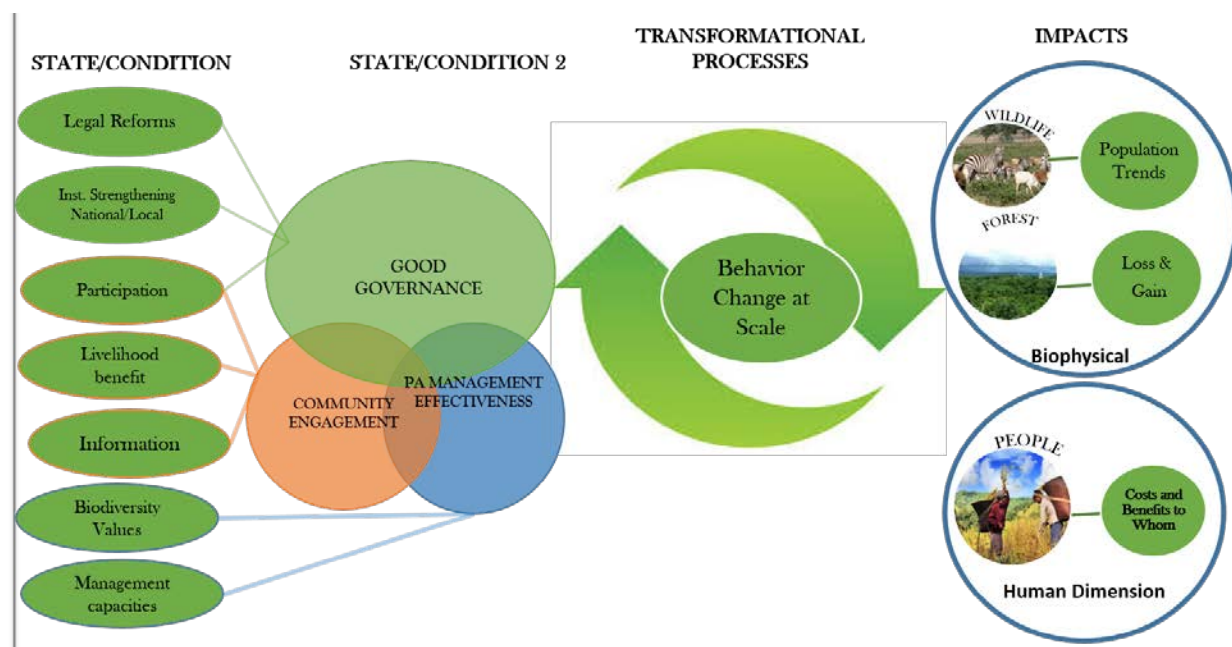


Figure 1. Framework for assessing the impact of GEF support to PAs and PA systems

6 The task of the evaluation is to analyze the extent to which these three conditions are leading to biodiversity conservation, and assess the contributions that GEF support has made to bring about these conditions, as well as assess other consequences of GEF support. The TOC centers its analysis on the extent to which GEF support contributes to these three main conditions.

- (a) The first condition pertains to the extent to which GEF support has targeted PAs in zones of high biodiversity value, and has strengthened management capacities that have ultimately resulted in improved management effectiveness.
- (b) The second condition pertains to the extent and effects of GEF-supported activities targeting people in and around PAs, and the related social systems.⁵ The effects of GEF support in this category are examined through the nature of interactions taking place between local communities and the PA. This includes factors such as information-sharing, community engagement in management of biodiversity, as well as issues such as the distribution of costs and benefits of conservation, and the extent to which these issues affect people's support for biodiversity conservation.
- (c) The third condition pertains to the ways in which GEF inputs target the governance systems that establish roles and responsibilities across sectors, and ensure compliance in biodiversity uses across scales, including local users and larger-scale

⁵ Social systems refer to any system within the human dimension, such as economic, political and cultural.

users. This includes an assessment of the extent to which GEF support has helped build effective PA systems, but also considers the policies and institutional arrangements that must be set in place to address the large-scale drivers affecting biodiversity outcomes both in PAs and their adjacent landscapes, where GEF also supports the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation. Large-scale drivers are understood to be mainly anthropogenic factors and processes with causes and effects beyond the local scales, for example, the expansion of extractive industries in high biodiversity areas. The framework assumes that actions to ensure the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity must take place at different scales of the social-ecological systems that are targeted ⁶. Thus, drivers and institutions at larger scales are also considered a part of the system that the evaluation looks at, as they affect the actions taken by local people, PA management, and other relevant agents.

7 A key consideration underlying GEF strategies and projects is that GEF support is intended to assist countries in meeting their commitments to global environment conventions. While PA projects often generate some livelihood benefits, they are not expected to directly support national economic development strategies. It is also important to consider that some GEF projects supporting PAs, particularly those in the early replenishment phases, do not intend to address large-scale factors or to support livelihood benefits. Thus the evaluation does not hold GEF support accountable in the case of such omissions. Nevertheless, given that these are important factors affecting biodiversity conservation, these were also considered in the evaluation to assess any unintended and indirect effects of GEF support.

8 Impacts on biodiversity are assessed in this evaluation through changes in wildlife population trends and trends in forest cover changes. Transformational processes involve the adoption of GEF-supported interventions at scale--such as through mainstreaming, replication, and scaling-up--thus also extending the reach of these interventions. As signified by the circular arrow, the framework assumes a positively reinforcing cycle, i.e. as more inputs are provided, the greater the likelihood that interventions are more broadly adopted, the more likely that the conditions leading to transformative biodiversity impacts are achieved, and these visible positive effects in turn catalyze more support to provide inputs. However, the circular arrow also signifies that all elements interact and influence each other in iterative ways, which may result from feedback loops, response time lags to interventions, and other complex systems dynamics. Underlying all these interactions are both project-related and contextual factors that

⁶ Social-ecological systems are “linked systems of people and nature” (Stockholm Resilience Centre 2015). Coined by Berkes and Folke (1998), the term emphasizes that humans must be seen as a part of--not apart from--nature, and that the delineation between social and ecological systems is artificial and arbitrary.

contribute to or hinder progress improvements in biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, which the evaluation seeks to uncover.

Evaluation components

9 The evaluation had three major analytical components: portfolio analysis, global analysis and case study analysis, corresponding with the three main sources of evidence used to derive the evaluation findings. Each component used different methods and units of analysis to account for the multiple scales and interventions by which GEF support was delivered. Part of the evaluation involved the construction of databases, particularly on information specific to GEF-supported PAs, as information in the GEF Project Management Information System (PMIS) database was not tailored to answer the evaluation questions. In addition to these, the evaluation drew on supplementary information sources, such as peer-reviewed literature, news articles, and local monitoring data.

(a) Portfolio Analysis Component

Three main methodological approaches were used in conducting portfolio analysis.

- (i) First, the GEF PMIS database was analyzed to determine the extent of non-marine GEF support to PAs and PA systems, and thus identify the set of projects that would be part of the evaluation's scope. A total of 618 projects in 137 countries were identified. From these 618 projects, a database of 1292 PAs supported by GEF was created, which served as the reference for analyses in the other components.
- (ii) Second, an analysis was done to assess how GEF's approach to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use has evolved over time through support to PAs and their adjacent landscapes.
- (iii) Third, a more in-depth analysis was undertaken on a subset of completed projects included in GEF IEO's Fifth Over-all Performance Study (OPS5). Using standardized forms, terminal evaluations of 191 projects involving non-marine PAs and PA systems were analyzed for progress towards impact at project completion.

(b) Global Analysis Component

Three indicators were used to measure outcomes at a global scale: forest cover, wildlife populations, and Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores.

- (i) The first indicator of biodiversity conservation was assessed through analyzing change in forest cover. A total of 580 GEF-supported PAs in 73 countries met the criteria for this analysis. A spatial database on forest cover loss and gain in more than 30,000 GEF and non-GEF PAs, and in their respective 10-km and 25-km buffer areas, was created as part of the evaluation. Forest cover loss in GEF-supported PAs was compared to a) the country-wide aggregate loss that

included both protected and non-protected forest areas, b) loss within their 10-km buffer area, and c) loss in the non-GEF PAs and their 10-km buffers within the same country and biome. Forest cover gain in GEF-supported PAs was compared to that in non-GEF supported PAs. Differences in forest loss rates before, during and after GEF support were also compared. Additionally, Mexico was selected as a case study for a more in-depth analysis of forest cover change using propensity score matching and high-resolution satellite imagery up to 50 cm.

- (ii) To compare differences in wildlife population trends before, during and after GEF support, the Living Planet Index (WWF 2014) dataset was used to match GEF-supported PAs with wildlife monitoring time-series data covering the period from 1970 to 2010. Links between GEF interventions and biodiversity outcomes were made using information collected from project documents. A total of 88 cases of species population time-series from the Living Planet Index were matched with the objectives of 29 GEF projects implemented in 39 PAs.
- (iii) The Management Tracking Tool (METT) is an instrument to monitor progress towards more effective PA management over time. It consists of 32 indicators addressing different aspects of PA management. A total of 2440 METTs from 1924 PAs in 104 countries were used to assess management effectiveness in GEF-supported PAs. To measure change in METT scores over time, 275 PAs in 75 countries with at least two METT assessments over time were analyzed. The reliability of the METT as a monitoring tool was also analyzed. A database of METTs for GEF-supported PAs was created as part of the evaluation.

For all three indicators, publicly available global datasets were used to assess the effect of contextual and project-related variables on the outcomes using mixed effects and exploratory models.

(c) Case Study Analysis Component

10 While global data provided breadth in the analysis through average values on forest cover and wildlife populations in GEF-supported PAs, field visits and review of peer-reviewed literature provided information on the effects of GEF's multiple-scale approach, and the mechanisms at work between the interventions, the larger social-ecological system⁷, and the observed outcomes. Interviews and field visits were carried out in 7 countries across three regions, covering 17 GEF-supported PAs and 11 non-GEF PAs. Interviews and focus group discussions explored trends and causal factors for environmental stress reduction, management effectiveness, and interactions between PAs and the adjacent communities. Qualitative

⁷ Ibid.

Comparative Analysis (QCA) was used as a systematic way to identify combinations of factors leading to some of the observed outcomes. QCA is a theory-driven approach that bridges the gap between qualitative and quantitative methods by assessing multiple combinations of factors using Boolean algebra rather than conventional statistics.

11 Countries for case studies were selected according to the following criteria developed jointly with key stakeholders: 1) presence of species or ecosystems within the country with high global biodiversity significance; 2) importance of biodiversity to local economies (whether directly or indirectly); 3) stability of country, where access was possible and relatively safe; 4) existence of PAs without GEF support; and 5) long-term and extensive GEF engagement--as shown by the number of completed GEF-supported biodiversity projects and high amount of GEF investment--to allow for the assessment of cumulative impacts over time. Both GEF-supported and non-GEF PAs were visited to identify and compare factors affecting the extent of biodiversity outcomes. The PAs selected included a mix of those considered to be more successful and less successful in terms of the extent to which conditions assumed to lead to biodiversity protection were present. This helped mitigate the potential bias of selecting only best cases. While extensive effort was made to select comparable PAs within each country and across regions using objective criteria, lack of comparable information was a key limitation, and the final PAs were selected based on the expert opinion of task team leaders of GEF projects and relevant government agencies within each country.

Mitigating methodological challenges and limitations

12 Given the global scope of the evaluation, as well as the long period of GEF support and complex nature of the interventions, the evaluation encountered several methodological challenges. These included having to create usable databases out of differently formatted, incomplete, and sometimes inconsistent data from various sources that needed to be standardized, validated, and matched with each other. This challenge was anticipated in the approach paper and was addressed by the GEF and UNDP IEOs by pooling resources and sharing management of the evaluation. While the comprehensive use of global and GEF-related databases helped mitigate some challenges and allowed the evaluation to confidently address some issues, big data gaps remained that were beyond the scope of the evaluation, and that limited the extent to which the evaluation questions could be answered. The three main challenges in assessing impact were: substantial information gaps on GEF support, limited global time-series data, and difficulties in estimating the counterfactuals.

(d) Substantial information gaps on GEF support

13 The main challenge in the evaluation was the lack of information on which PAs GEF had supported, how long and when GEF support took place, and what type and extent of support was provided. In many cases, project documents did not provide the names of PAs supported.

(e) Limited global time-series data

14 The number of GEF-supported PAs documented and available for analyses was further constrained by the global time-series data available for these PAs. While the period of GEF support spans from 1991 to the present, forest loss and gain data, for example, cover only the latter part of these 24 years of support. Not all GEF-supported PAs are documented in global databases, as many sites receiving GEF support are not registered by the countries in the WDPA. The set of PAs analyzed therefore do not represent the global extent of GEF support, but rather that which fits the constraints imposed by the global datasets.

(f) Difficulties in estimating the counterfactuals

15 The counterfactual, or what would have happened without GEF support, is difficult to estimate given the complexity of GEF-supported interventions and the absence of a pre-defined “control”. The lack of information on where and when GEF support took place made it difficult to identify with certainty the sites and time periods without GEF support that could serve as comparable units. In some cases, PAs that did not directly receive GEF support in some way benefited from the outcomes of GEF-supported interventions, as revealed in field interviews. Furthermore, while the evaluation design included a comparative assessment between successful and less successful PAs, this turned out to be difficult to distinguish, as all cases had significant achievements but also faced challenges.

(g) Multidisciplinary and mixed methods approach

16 To mitigate the gaps and systematic biases in the datasets, the evaluation used a mix of quantitative, qualitative and spatial methods in data collection and analyses. Evidence was also collected from a mix of sources, combining global datasets, field data, literature reviews, and statistical models. Methods were selected by matching them to the evaluation questions and the available data sources and technology. Various quasi-experimental methods and units of comparison were used to approximate the counterfactual and rule out alternative explanations for the outcomes, rather than just relying on one type. The findings of each analysis are deemed relevant to the specific set of PAs or countries that were included in that particular analysis. Broader conclusions were drawn only after comparing results from these different types of evidence and methods of analysis. Through the use of mixed methods and triangulation of findings, it was possible to identify directions and patterns regarding the extent of GEF’s contribution towards biodiversity conservation, and its interaction with the larger social-ecological system.

17 From the start, the evaluation team also took a multidisciplinary approach and reached out to different institutions and individuals with the necessary capacities, including the TAG, Reference Group, and institutional partners. The core evaluation team itself was multidisciplinary in composition, with skills in quantitative, qualitative and spatial analyses, and specializations in the natural and social sciences.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: Loss of global biodiversity continues at an alarming rate, driven largely by habitat loss due to multiple development pressures. Since the pilot phase, GEF strategies have increasingly targeted these development pressures beyond the PAs.

18 Over the past several decades, approaches to biodiversity protection have become more comprehensive and directed to drivers of biodiversity loss. Yet, the loss of biodiversity continues at an alarming rate. Assessing the state of biodiversity is a complex undertaking as, by definition, biodiversity encompasses all life on Earth. Despite the existing gaps in our knowledge on biodiversity, recent studies on changes in species abundance, population trends and the risk of extinctions all show significant declines. The available estimates on the global species extinction rates indicate that the present extinction rate is in the range of 100 to 10,000 times higher than the natural rate of extinction. The deterioration of the world's biodiversity is projected to continue or even to increase in the future. The anthropogenic causes of biodiversity loss, especially anticipated demographic changes, and climate change, will continue to place unprecedented stress on the Planet's resources. Unless threats to biodiversity are comprehensively addressed, the possibility exists that some ecosystems may undergo abrupt and substantial changes to their structures and functioning. Globally, a core conservation strategy has been the establishment of PAs, with evidence showing that, on balance, they have been effective at slowing the rate of biodiversity loss. Increasingly, PAs are becoming the places of last refuge for many species, especially for charismatic megafauna, while also provisioning ecosystems services such as water and air purification, and contributing benefits to local human populations. Nonetheless, the coverage of those areas significant for biodiversity and those that are ecologically representative has not advanced as much as the increase in the total area covered. Moreover, PAs remain woefully under-resourced, and recent large expansion in PAs globally risks widening current financial shortfalls. Mainstreaming biodiversity and its funding into development planning through the national policy and decision-making frameworks is crucial. Equally as important is that PAs are strengthened through strategic expansion, effective management, and sustainable financing to support biodiversity conservation. If strengthened to a level where they can adequately address the variety of challenges facing them, PAs can continue to serve as pillars of conservation efforts in the 21st century. As the largest funder of PA systems in the world, the GEF plays a vital role in this regard.

19 Since the pilot phase starting in 1991, GEF has adopted a comprehensive approach to biodiversity conservation that has included financing to help reduce pressures by providing economic and social benefits to communities in adjacent landscapes. Over time, GEF strategies have evolved in tandem with CBD strategies by focusing not only on key factors affecting PA management, but also on large-scale governance issues and root causes of biodiversity loss. This is seen in the shift in priorities from the establishment of individual PAs during the pilot phase, towards the sustainability of PA systems and networks, and mainstreaming of biodiversity in productive landscapes and production sectors starting in GEF-4, and now towards interventions targeting very specific drivers through the integrated approach pilots in GEF-6.

Conclusion 2: GEF support is contributing to biodiversity conservation by helping to lower habitat loss in PAs as indicated by less forest cover loss in GEF-supported PAs compared to PAs not supported by GEF. GEF-supported PAs also generally show positive trends in species populations, and reduced pressures to biodiversity at the site level.

20 Over the past 24 years, the GEF has directly invested US\$ 3.4 billion in 137 countries, and leveraged an additional US\$ 10.6 billion in co-financing towards non-marine interventions in PAs, PA systems, and their adjacent landscapes⁸. GEF has helped protect at least 2,785,350 km² of the world's non-marine ecosystems. Of the 1,292 GEF-supported PAs identified by the evaluation⁹, 58% have been classified as Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), currently the highest scientific standard used to assess global biodiversity significance. Thirty-one percent of the PAs, while not classified as KBAs, have received one or more international designations for high biodiversity and/ or cultural value¹⁰. The evaluation faced significant challenges to assess the impact of this support provided by GEF due to data gaps in the GEF information systems, and in existing biodiversity and geospatial global databases. Nevertheless, by adopting mixed methods that used multiple datasets pertaining to different scales (PA, country and global levels), the evaluation was able to identify trends indicating that GEF support is contributing to lower habitat loss in PAs, especially when considering the findings that forest cover loss in GEF-supported PAs is lower than in PAs not supported by GEF.

21 From 2001 to 2012, the time period for which geospatial information was available for this analysis, GEF-supported PAs lost up to four times less forest cover than the country-wide aggregate, and at least two times less than PAs that were not supported by GEF in the same biomes and countries. Choosing a country where highly reliable data on GEF support was available, analyses show that GEF-supported PAs in Mexico avoided up to 23% forest loss from 2001 to 2012 compared to PAs that did not directly receive GEF support during this period, with results varying across biomes and ecoregions. Analysis of forest cover loss over a five-year period using high-resolution SPOT satellite data in the Mesoamerican Corridor in Mexico also indicate that two GEF-supported *ejidos* had less forest loss and more forest gain when compared with two *ejidos* that did not get support¹¹. Another analysis carried out on 88 cases of species in 39 GEF-supported PAs, supported by 29 projects, where conservation of these species was linked with project objectives shows that 45% of these cases had a positive trend in

⁸ Adjusted for inflation at 2015 values

⁹ These were identified from METTs submitted as of January 2013, and project documents CEO-endorsed or approved as of April 2015.

¹⁰ These are: WWF priority area, CI biodiversity hotspot, Important Bird Area, Ramsar site, Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) site, and/or UNESCO World Heritage Site. The remaining 11% of PAs were found to have various levels of local or national designation, indicating high biodiversity value to their respective countries.

¹¹ An *ejido* is an area of land owned and worked by a group of small farmers in accordance with the Agrarian Reform Law.

wildlife abundance, 39% presented no change, and 16% showed negative trends. In PAs where conservation of a particular species was not strongly linked with the GEF project objectives, there was a greater incidence of the species population trend not changing or becoming worse. Information obtained through field visits indicates that GEF support was helping to reduce threats to biodiversity at the site level. In all visited GEF-supported PAs for which information was available, biodiversity protection activities were taking place. Ten of these 14 PAs reported reduction of destructive activities, where in six, clear links were established between these reductions and GEF support. The evaluation also carried out an assessment of environmental impacts of 191 completed projects included in OPS 5. This study found that at project end, 71% had reported positive environmental impacts. While none of these findings alone present conclusive evidence, when taken as a whole they indicate that GEF support is making important contributions to biodiversity conservation.

Conclusion 3: GEF support has helped to build capacities that address key factors affecting biodiversity conservation in PAs, mainly in the areas of PA management, support from local populations, and sustainable financing. Sustainable financing of PAs remains a concern.

22 Information gathered through the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) indicates that GEF-supported PAs tend to have well-established legal status, boundaries and design. Improvements over time were greatest in process-related aspects such as management planning, law enforcement, PA regulations, and resource inventory. The least improvements over time were apparent in aspects related to community participation in PA decision-making. Increased management effectiveness was reported in 13 of the 17 GEF-supported PAs visited in the form of improved law enforcement and compliance with PA regulations. Key contributing factors to improved law enforcement and compliance with regulations were found to be a combination of strong management capacities and community engagement activities, which GEF has supported to a significant extent in the majority of PAs. In the case of the 17 visited PAs, in 11, GEF support was assessed as having contributed to the development of key factors such as dedicated PA staff and leadership, perception of concrete benefits from the PAs by adjacent communities, and synergistic relationships with other donors and local government. Stronger management capacities were seen in the form of expanded PA staff skills, upgraded equipment and infrastructure, stable funding for PA operations, and monitoring & reporting systems for both management and biodiversity targets. Resources from GEF, national and local governments, NGOs and bilateral donors in combination played a key role in strengthening these capacities. The evaluation found that key to the effective operations of PAs is a consistent source of funding. PAs that benefited from sustainable financing mechanisms or relatively stable sources of revenue were able to fund operational costs without being highly dependent on national government budget allocations. Yet financial sustainability of PAs remains a critical concern. Only in a few of the visited PAs did governments increase official PA budgets. GEF was reported to have a moderate or high contribution towards securing adequate funding for PA operations in 9 of the 17 PAs (53%), where in 5, this led to financial sustainability.

23 Community engagement through the adoption of co-management approaches in visited PAs has resulted in increased community participation in management activities, such as ecosystem restoration and law enforcement. In many cases, PA management activities have produced social and economic benefits, which have helped improve community attitudes towards the PA, and their willingness to cooperate with PA staff. Sixteen out of 17 GEF-supported PAs visited for this evaluation reported increased community participation in PA management, with 14 indicating that GEF support made a direct contribution to improved community engagement. Generally, in the PAs visited, a combination of civil society, government and GEF support have contributed to the mainstreaming of community participation in PA management. Governments had an important role by enacting legislation or regulations, and allocating budgets to PAs for community engagement. Two other prominent factors were the shift in community perspectives regarding the role of PAs in providing resources and opportunities for improved well-being, and the shift in societal perspectives regarding the role of communities as capable stewards of natural resources.

Conclusion 4: GEF support is contributing to large-scale change in biodiversity governance in countries by investing in PA systems, including legal frameworks that increase community engagement. Through interventions at the PA level, GEF support is also helping catalyze gradual changes in governance and management approaches that help to reduce biodiversity degradation.

24 As previously mentioned, GEF strategies have become more comprehensive in addressing biodiversity concerns beyond individual PAs through its mainstreaming interventions, and through the current integrated approach pilots. One of the earliest ways that GEF support has dealt with systemic challenges to governance at the PA level is by helping strengthen the country's PA system. As of 2008, GEF has invested in the PA systems or sub-systems of 57 countries. These investments have supported policy development and management capacities, and promoted the implementation of innovative management approaches and sustainable financing mechanisms. In the four visited countries that received support at this scale, GEF was credited for having contributed to policymaking grounded in scientific research and broad stakeholder consultation, improved human resource management, and greater financial transparency and efficiency. Sustainable financing mechanisms established with support from GEF in three of the countries continue to function at present. These have allowed the national government to eventually take on the costs of sustaining the PA system and to leverage funds from other donors. Innovative management approaches introduced through pilots at the PA level have also been adopted system-wide.

25 In many cases, interventions implemented at PA level are part of a larger system-wide intervention. An analysis of 191 completed projects¹² indicates that 95% of these projects reported some broader adoption or positive environmental impact in the form of threat reduction or improvement of biodiversity in PAs by project end. Nonetheless, the type, extent and speed of changes vary greatly. The most common factors affecting the extent of broader adoption of the outcomes of GEF support were: extent of government support, extent of engagement of stakeholders, deficiencies in project design, and the extent to which projects carried out activities supporting broader adoption. Of the 17 visited PAs that received GEF support, 14 reported some form of broader adoption taking place. All PAs that reported mainstreaming, replication or scaling-up of GEF-supported interventions also continued or sustained these interventions within the PA. The types of intervention most commonly sustained or mainstreamed were management approaches, community participation in PA management activities, and community livelihoods.

26 Changes in legal framework in the visited PAs have resulted in stricter protection and increased community participation. GEF and CSOs have contributed to these national government initiatives by supporting activities facilitating new legislation. Changes to the legal framework led to stricter protection of all or parts of 7 PAs, in 3 of which GEF played an important role. GEF contributed to some of these changes by facilitating communication between stakeholders, and by supporting the development of new legislation. In Mount Kenya, GEF orchestrated the first meeting of all the relevant agencies, and supported the implementation of the first Community Forest Associations.

27 Changes in the legal framework for communities to access or manage land and resources were often found to coincide with increased community participation, even in non-supported PAs. In 11 of the 17 PAs, community participation has been formally mainstreamed through the PA's adoption of a co-management approach or through broader legislation. GEF support in Nairobi National Park is credited with influencing the devolvement of responsibilities for wildlife to local people in Kenya's new Wildlife Act of 2013, while a series of GEF-funded projects in Namibia funded technical assistance to develop new policies, which permitted multiple use zones, and outlined guidance on working with neighboring communities.

Conclusion 5: While sharing important characteristics with governments and other donors, GEF support allows adaptability and higher likelihood of broader adoption in cases where it pays particular attention to three key elements in combination: long-term investment, financial sustainability, and creation of links across multiple approaches, stakeholders and scales.

28 In all visited countries, GEF support often complemented existing initiatives of government, CSOs and other donors by funding types of interventions and geographical areas that had received less support. More important, GEF support was said to have delivered

¹² These projects were part of the cohort analyzed for OPS5, and consisted of those with terminal evaluations submitted between 2005 and 2012.

interventions in a way that allowed greater adaptability to changing circumstances, and higher likelihood of interventions being sustained or scaled up, such as through longer-term projects implemented directly by government staff. This was seen especially in Namibia, Uganda and Mexico, where this type of support allowed the creation of robust PA systems that continue to remain functional beyond GEF support. Longer-term projects enabled the testing and scaling-up of innovative management approaches that other funders, especially governments, found too risky to invest in. One notable type of intervention that most funders have shied away from are sustainable financing mechanisms, especially in the form of trust funds. In addition, GEF invests in promoting the adoption of multiple innovative approaches that have been introduced by different stakeholders, rather than any single approach.

29 GEF funding was also found to give greater attention to creating links between different scales and among different stakeholders that otherwise would not interact over a longer period of time. This was accomplished mainly through process-oriented activities that would yield benefits in the long term such as training, consultations and planning processes, and exchange workshops, which were credited for facilitating dialogues that sped up the adoption of innovative management approaches. As mentioned earlier, GEF support often linked PA-level interventions with higher-scale initiatives, facilitating the exchange of lessons across the system. While CSOs and bilateral donors also supported similar interventions directed towards building capacities and promoting dialogue, typically shorter project durations coupled with less flexible project implementation arrangements often meant that these activities did not continue beyond the project, especially when this type of support was not implemented directly by government staff. Furthermore, GEF co-financing requirements often served to attract investments by other funders towards more tangible outcomes such as infrastructure and equipment in biodiversity-related projects, which complement GEF projects that focused more on process-oriented activities. In general, co-financing requirements by GEF projects also helped catalyze collaboration between different stakeholders, which helped coordinate GEF spending with the funding of governments and other donors.

30 However, in cases where GEF did not provide long-term support directly to government agencies or give sufficient attention to financial sustainability, links between scales or among stakeholders tended to become weaker once the project ended. This was seen particularly at the PA level in Indonesia and Vietnam, as well as in other impact evaluations undertaken by the GEF IEO. In cases where countries do not request support at the system level, GEF is also unable to deliver interventions in this manner.

OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACHIEVING GREATER IMPACT

31 In addition to having identified areas of strength of GEF support to PAs, the evaluation also identified five areas of opportunities with corresponding recommendations that will help achieve and demonstrate greater impact of GEF projects. Some of these areas are straightforward, and thus recommendations are specific. But in other cases, the challenges are complex, with no one solution and with several dimensions that need to be tackled

simultaneously. In these cases, we focus on presenting the opportunities to address such challenges, and some specific actions that could be initially taken. All were found to be critical for developing better ways to address the challenges driving biodiversity degradation, and to assess the extent to which GEF is supporting approaches that create global environmental benefits.

Ensuring that GEF support targets areas rich in global biodiversity

32 As indicated earlier, the great majority of PAs financed by GEF have international designations indicating global biodiversity value. The GEF 6 Programing Document also indicates that GEF will adopt a more systematic and rigorous approach to selecting areas for investment through the use of KBA criteria. Nonetheless, other considerations are also important. Climate change, PA downgrading, downsizing, and degazettement (PADD), and the inadequacy of existing PA networks in representing species richness have made PAs highly dynamic. PAs therefore cannot be assumed to have permanent boundaries, or to have boundaries that always coincide with biodiversity values.

Recommendation 1: GEF must continue to pursue better ways to ensure that its support is targeted towards globally significant sites with high biodiversity values, and extends to more of these sites. As it has consistently demonstrated, GEF must also continue to adopt the most rigorous scientific criteria in selecting areas for investment, integrating new criteria as more appropriate ones are developed. Going forward, GEF should consider the following:

- (a) Include not only biodiversity values as criteria, but also increasingly important considerations such as climate change vulnerability and ecological impacts of climate change. Geospatial information and technology can be used when prioritizing and approving projects.
- (b) Use recently developed technologies that are capable of integrating multiple sources of data and types of criteria (e.g. KBA, species richness, climate change vulnerability), and that allow for more systematic and rigorous analysis for allocating investments in areas that are important for global environmental benefits.

Addressing the socioeconomic conditions that will ensure local community commitment to biodiversity protection

33 Through its work in the visited PAs, GEF has struck an appropriate balance in its engagement with local communities. The trajectory of PA projects over the past 20 years shows a shift towards greater interaction and increased social and economic benefits accruing to impacted communities within and adjacent to these PAs. Such benefits have increased without overwhelming the core focus of GEF towards biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, especially since GEF support has frequently helped attract government funding and support from other donors to address basic community needs, improve infrastructure, and increase economic opportunities in local communities. Efforts supported by GEF, including co-management arrangements, the leveraging of resources for infrastructure, small-scale job

creation, and environmental awareness-raising, have been reported to increase community cooperation and compliance with PA regulations, and in some instances have been linked to the reduced overexploitation of PA resources. While socioeconomic benefits have been generated for some sectors of the local population, in many cases there has been an unequal distribution of benefits due to geographic and socioeconomic differences among adjacent communities and their residents. Even within areas where community benefits are evident, field visits showed that the extent to which different groups benefit from the same intervention varies. This is an area of concern that relates to the GEF Social Safeguards that were put in place in 2013, as community perceptions that PAs undermine livelihoods can contribute to the persistence of local pressures on biodiversity.

Recommendation 2: At the project level, during design and implementation, GEF needs to have mechanisms to ensure that future projects reach full compliance with the GEF Social Safeguards. GEF needs to expand benefit-sharing across a wider cross-section of the impacted local populations, to better mitigate the unequal distribution of costs and benefits of PA management interventions, with the aim of reducing local pressures on biodiversity stemming from adverse local socioeconomic conditions.

Investing in broader governance issues to address large-scale drivers

34 Despite the progress made as a result of GEF contributions to management and governance, high demand for wildlife products and lack of livelihood options for growing local populations continue to threaten biodiversity in visited PAs. The recent upsurge in wildlife poaching in Africa and forest clearing in Latin America to support terrorism and drug trafficking activities are examples of how transnational economic drivers are able to overpower the large strides made in improving law enforcement capacities, governance frameworks, and global environmental awareness. Apart from these, legally sanctioned activities such as tourism, agriculture, timber production, and mining within or adjacent to PAs, when not aligned with the PA's management objectives, in many cases also act as large-scale pressures with the similar effect of reversing or limiting the positive impacts of such interventions. Some of these pressures--such as those that are legally sanctioned--are the result of conflicting priorities and lack of effective coordination among government agencies that are concerned with distinct sectors yet have administrative jurisdictions over the same geographical areas or natural resources. This was seen particularly in the visited countries where PA systems were managed by different government units, and at different scales of governance, such as in Uganda, Indonesia and Vietnam. In other instances, lack of appropriate interagency coordination prevents the mitigation of large-scale, transnational drivers, such as those involving illicit activities.

35 GEF support was found to have contributed the least in helping to coordinate mandates such as those between national and local governments, and between biodiversity conservation-oriented and resource exploitation-oriented government units. However, in at least two instances (Sierra de Manantlan and the Mesoamerican Biodiversity Corridor), GEF support in Mexico was found to have formed intersectoral bodies at the PA and landscape levels through

which decisions on public investments successfully coordinated conservation priorities and economic development priorities. Similarly, much of the accomplishments in recent years in curbing illicit logging in Mariposa Monarca are related to effective interagency coordination. While GEF's role was not central in this latter case, it does illustrate the importance of interagency coordination in reducing such pressures. Intersectoral coordination is also being used as an intervention at a global scale through the GEF-6 integrated approach pilots, albeit for very specific biodiversity drivers rather than a discrete ecological unit.

Recommendation 3: GEF should invest more in interventions that enable dialogue and joint decision-making not only among multiple stakeholders in and around PAs, but also stakeholders representing different sectors and operating at different scales – PA, landscape, PA system, national ministries -- that tend to have conflicting development priorities and management objectives with regards to biodiversity conservation. At the minimum, these would be stakeholders undertaking activities that involve environmental protection, natural resource use (e.g. water, land, energy), economic development, and infrastructure development.

Developing a more reliable and practical monitoring system to track and assess results at the project and portfolio levels

36 Collecting, storing and analysing the data required to meaningfully assess the impact of biodiversity projects is often seen as mission creep: the spending of resources outside of essential areas. PA managers are often reluctant to divert scarce resources away from management actions to monitoring and evaluation (Kapos et al. 2008). The GEF has provided considerable support to biodiversity monitoring using the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), which is required as part of a project's regular reporting processes. But use of the METT has seen mixed results, with some countries modifying the questions to suit their purposes, others preferring to use different tracking instruments, and still others saying that they use it only to comply with GEF project requirements. Capacities to fill out the METT also vary across PAs, making the quality of the data collected uncertain, or uneven at best. Of the 2440 METTs submitted between 2004 and 2014, approximately 20% had only half or less than half of the 30 questions answered. The composition of stakeholders present during the completion of the METT was found to affect the total score; the presence of PA managers and staff were correlated with higher METT scores, and the presence of local community members, CSOs and external experts with lower scores. Furthermore, while the METT was designed to assess improvements in management effectiveness over time, only 14% of the 1924 PAs that had submitted METTs could be analyzed for this purpose, as the rest of the PAs completed a METT only once during the course of the GEF project.

37 On the other hand, many of the documents submitted at project approval or completion, including terminal evaluations, did not provide the basic information on which PAs were supported by the project, through which types of interventions, and over which time periods. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, this made the task of assessing impact more difficult, as the evaluation could not always identify the specific areas that GEF had supported. Assessing the extent to which GEF support produced change is in itself challenging

given the multiple factors affecting such processes. Part of the problem is also related to the inherent complications in measuring the outcomes and impacts of long-term, process-oriented activities that link different scales. In many cases, it takes time for change to become evident.

38 GEF has the opportunity to strengthen its monitoring system and its databases in the Secretariat to improve the information on results of GEF support to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Changes over the last 10 to 15 years open up opportunities to address some of GEF's challenges in results monitoring and assessment by drawing on multiple information sources, and building partnerships with competent institutions at the global and country levels. While the METT has been adapted over time to make it more robust and allow assessment of outcomes, GEF now has the opportunity to streamline monitoring requirements placed on projects by identifying a few key indicators that are useful for global analyses, and at the same time can be reliably provided by project and PA managers. Other information such as that having to do with changes in biophysical conditions can be obtained globally through partnerships with multilateral institutions, research and academic institutions or NGOs who are already compiling information relevant to GEF, and have the capacity and mandate to continue the work beyond the duration of a GEF project. Opportunities also exist to establish partnerships with national institutions for monitoring in GEF projects on aspects such as species population trends, which can also feed into specialized global databases. In this way, GEF would ensure access to more reliable field information (such as species population, biodiversity richness, or socioeconomic conditions). It would also support country institutional capacities, and in so doing would help build strong national advocates of biodiversity conservation. These changes will not necessarily require additional resources; a reduced monitoring burden to projects would allow financing partnership with country institutions.

Recommendation 4: GEF needs to ensure that basic information on GEF support to PAs (where, what and when) historically and into the future is available. At the same time, GEF also needs to reduce the burden on projects, countries and agencies by adopting a mixed methods approach to results monitoring that draws on geospatial technology, global databases, and locally gathered information. Some of this information would still need to be generated by projects, but more attention should be given to opportunities where use of remote sensing information and other global databases is appropriate.

39 This is likely to be a complex process that will take time and consultation with the various GEF partners. The following are specific actions that could be taken in the short term that, when combined, could reduce reporting requirements, while making the data more useful to meet monitoring objectives at the global, country and PA levels.

- (a) Through documents submitted at project approval and completion, ensure that existing databases within the GEF Secretariat include, at the minimum, basic information on GEF support to PAs (where, what and when) is available historically and into the future.
- (b) Institutionalize the use of geospatial technology for project and portfolio monitoring when applicable.

- (c) Streamline METT reporting requirements to focus on information that can be used in conjunction with existing global datasets and geospatial data to perform meaningful analyses on management effectiveness and biodiversity impacts at a global level. At the same time, support countries in adapting the METT to make it more appropriate to their capacities and information needs. This will help build country capacities in monitoring parameters that they find useful for improving biodiversity conservation management within their specific context, while still providing key information that can be compared and analyzed at a global level.
- (d) Establish long-term partnerships for biodiversity and socioeconomic monitoring with country institutions that already have this as their mandate. This will allow results of GEF projects within a country to be monitored consistently and analyzed periodically before, during and beyond the life of a project. Local and national databases developed through these partnerships can then feed into global databases. Focus initially on countries with the largest biodiversity STAR allocations and established capacities.
- (e) Establish partnerships with research institutes or agencies that specialize in biodiversity data management and can regularly provide geospatial information or other global information relevant to GEF support to biodiversity, including data on PA attributes and locations, species range maps, forest change data, and population time series.

Investing in understanding what works and why

40 The GEF has made important contributions to biodiversity conservation by helping countries improve their PAs and by supporting the development of PA systems. Given the vast engagement in PA support around the world over the last 20 years, GEF is in a privileged position to draw from this extensive experience to improve its approaches to PA and PA systems support. One important lesson derived from this evaluation is that GEF has enabled country adaptability to changing contexts, and contributed to broader policy and institutional changes in support of biodiversity conservation through PAs when its support takes place over a long period of time (in some cases, decades), when it gives attention to financial sustainability, when it supports processes linking stakeholders and scales, and when all of these take place in the context of direct support to government agencies. But knowledge gaps on key areas of GEF support to PAs remain in several key areas affecting biodiversity conservation in PAs and adjacent landscapes, and in which a better understanding would increase the impact of GEF.

Recommendation 5: The GEF partners, including the Independent Evaluation Office, the Secretariat, STAP, and the Agencies should jointly develop and implement a program that will generate evidence on what works, for whom, and under what conditions. An evidence base can be built by drawing on a mix of methods and approaches appropriate to the types of interventions and contexts in which GEF support is being delivered. This evaluation has identified three critical areas in which GEF has extensive experience over time, and in which better knowledge would significantly enhance the support that GEF provides to countries. These are:

- (a) How to more fully and equitably address local livelihood needs in ways that contribute to or do not undermine biodiversity conservation and sustainable use;
- (b) How to catalyze the changes needed for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use to take place at a large scale;
- (c) How to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in ways that produce multiple environmental and socioeconomic benefits.

ANNEX 2: GAP ANALYSIS FOR THE M&E POLICY REVISION (2015)

1. Gender Mainstreaming

The GEF project proposals, as well as monitoring and evaluation reports submitted by GEF Agencies, often lack gender-specific information due partially to the absence of gender specific guideline and criteria in the GEF project templates and guidelines¹³. As stated in the GEF Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP): “In order to facilitate comprehensive project design, reporting, and analysis that are gender responsive, the GEF will review and incorporate a specific section on gender mainstreaming in the templates and/or guidelines for the Project Identification Form (PIF), CEO Endorsement Request Form, Project Implementation Report, Mid-term Evaluation Report, Terminal Evaluation Report and other relevant documents.”

Further, the GEF will emphasize the use of gender analysis as part of socioeconomic assessments to ensure that intervention design is gender sensitive. Moreover, gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data will be used in GEF projects to demonstrate concrete results and progress related to gender equality¹⁴.

Policy needs to include gender responsive elements.

2. Safeguard Standards

On November 18, 2011, the GEF Council approved eight minimum standards that all GEF Partner Agencies will be expected to meet in order to implement GEF projects. These are: (1) Environmental and Social Impact Assessment; (2) Natural Habitats; (3) Involuntary Resettlement; (4) Indigenous Peoples; (5) Pest Management; (6) Physical Cultural Resources; (7) Safety of Dams, and (8) Accountability and Grievance Systems. According to the *GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguard*, the GEF Partner Agencies will need to document that they have policies and systems that comply with all eight minimum safeguard standards. No exceptions for safeguard standards 1 (Environmental and Social Impact Assessment), 2 (Natural Habitats), and 8 (Accountability and Complaint) will be allowed¹⁵.

The safeguard standards are not integrated into the M&E policy.

3. New GEF Agencies

In May 2011, the GEF Council decided to broaden the GEF partnership through the operationalization of paragraph 28 of the GEF Instrument through the implementation of a pilot

¹³ Council document: Gender Equality Action Plan (GEF/C.47/09.Rev.01), p.4-5.

¹⁴ Council document: GEF2020: Strategy for the GEF (GEF/C.46/10/Rev.01), p.24.

¹⁵ Council document: GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguard (GEF/C.40/10/Rev.1), p.9.

program to accredit up to ten GEF Project Agencies¹⁶. In order to be accredited as a GEF Project Agency, applicants will need to demonstrate to the GEF Accreditation Panel that they fully comply with the GEF's Fiduciary Standards, including GEF environmental and social safeguard standards as well as gender mainstreaming. As of June 2015, 8 new institutions were entitled to receive GEF Trust Fund resources¹⁷.

The role and responsibilities of GEF Agencies (2.5, p.18) should be updated.

4. Programmatic Approach (PA)

The GEF PA aims “to secure larger and sustained impact on the global environment through integrating and mainstreaming global environmental objectives into a country's national strategies and plans through partnership with the country”¹⁸. In October 2014, the Council approves 8 changes to refine the GEF PA¹⁹. It has been pointed out that program-level results monitoring, rather than monitoring only at the child project level, should be considered. Hence, efforts need to be made to emphasize the importance of program level results and impacts in the context of the Result-based Management Work plan. In May 2015, the programmatic approaches including three Integrated Approach Pilots (IAPs) programs have been approved as part of the GEF-6 replenishment process.

PA is referenced in section 1.2 Evaluation in the GEF, pp.17 and section 1.3 Monitoring in the GEF pp.22. These should be updated to reflect the changes.

5. Public Private Partnership (PPP) Program

A PPP Program is a GEF programmatic initiative, implemented by a Multilateral Development Bank, using non-grant instruments and GEF funding from the private-sector set-aside. They should be designed to address barriers to private sector engagement in projects that promote global environmental benefits²⁰. According to *Revised Strategy for Enhancing Engagement with*

¹⁶ Broadening the GEF partnership under paragraph 28 of the GEF instrument (GEF/C.40/09).

¹⁷ Progress Report on the Pilot Accreditation of GEF Project Agencies (GEF/C.48/10/Rev.01), p.1.

¹⁸ The GEF Programmatic Approach: Current Understandings (GEF/C.17.Inf.11), p.3

¹⁹ Council document: Improving the GEF Project Cycle (GEF/C.47/07), p.11-12.

²⁰ Operational Modalities for Public Private Partnership Programs (GEF/C.42/Inf.08), p.2.

the Private Sector, approved by Council on November 10, 2011, each PPP Program will include a Monitoring and Evaluation ("M&E") component.²¹

The M&E policy needs to be updated to include PPP program.

6. Private Sector Engagement

As suggested in the Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS5), the GEF Project Management Information System should explore possibilities to systematically gather evidence on elements of the GEF's private sector engagement without further increasing the reporting and monitoring burden in the GEF²². The extent and type of engagement should also be a standard evaluation question included in project concept forms (Project Identification Form) and terminal and higher portfolio level evaluations.

Section 2.8 on Other Stakeholders needs to be updated

7. Public Engagement (Civil Society, Indigenous people)

The GEF Public Involvement Policy states that effective public involvement is critical to the success of GEF-financed projects²³. The GEF2020 Strategy presented to Council in May 2014 indicated that, as one of its core operational principles, the GEF will seek a stronger engagement with civil society organizations in the global environment arena²⁴. Hence, the GEF Mid-Term Evaluation and Terminal Evaluation of each project as well as the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) should include and analyze the participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders, including indigenous populations²⁵. The GEF Project Management Information System should explore possibilities to systematically gather evidence on elements of the GEF's civil society engagement without further increasing the reporting and monitoring burden in the GEF²⁶.

Section 2.8 Other Stakeholders will need to be updated. In addition, the Mid-Term Evaluation, Terminal Evaluations, the AMR and the GEF Project Management Information System should

²¹ Council document: Revised Strategy for Enhancing Engagement with the Private Sector (GEF/C.41/09/Rev.01), p.20-21

²² OPS5 Technical Document #13: Review of GEF Engagement with the Private Sector, November 2013, p.7.

²³ Policy on Public Involvement in GEF Projects (GEF/PL/SD/01), paragraph 2.

²⁴ GEF2020: Strategy for the GEF (GEF/C.46/10/Rev.01), p.23.

²⁵ Guidelines for the Implementation of the Public Involvement Policy (GEF/C.47/Inf.06), p.9 and Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples (GEF/C.42/Inf.03/Rev.1), p.14.

²⁶ Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF: final report (GEF/ME/C.46/Inf.01), p.58.

reflect public involvement, including engagement with civil society organizations and indigenous peoples.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

In October 2013, the Council approves the name change of the GEF Evaluation Office to GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEFIEO) to emphasize the functional and structural independence of the Office²⁷. As to the types of evaluations conducted by the IEO, Strategic Country-Level and Cluster Evaluations (SCCEs) have been introduced in GEF-6 with the specific objective of assessing the multiple benefits of GEF support and whether GEF projects and portfolios in countries have addressed and are addressing the driving forces of global environmental change²⁸.

Updates are needed in the section 1.2 Evaluation in the GEF pp.17, and the section 2.3 on The GEF Evaluation Office.

9. Results-based Management (RBM) and Tracking Tools

As pointed out in the OPS5, the RBM framework for GEF-6 should include a limited number of outcome indicators that can be measured through existing or easily generated data. The tracking tools should also be simplified, especially, the burden of the tracking tools on multifocal area projects should be reduced²⁹. “Measure what matters” and “close the feedback loop” are the critical issues that should receive special attention in order to strengthen the GEF results framework³⁰.

Policy needs to reflect the progress of RBM and provide clear guidelines on M&E and application of tracking tools.

10. Knowledge Management

During GEF-6, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) will focus on mainstreaming knowledge management in its evaluations to increase their utility for the GEF Council and a wider range of stakeholders. To mainstream knowledge management, every IEO evaluation will have a

²⁷ Council Document: Progress Report of the GEF Evaluation Office Director, including the OPS5 Progress Report (GEF/ME/C.45/03 Rev.01).

²⁸ Council Document: Four-Year Work Program and Budget of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF/ME/C.48/01), p.5.

²⁹ Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF: Final Report (GEF/ME/C.46/Inf.01), p.12.

³⁰ GEF2020: Strategy for the GEF (GEF/C.46/10/Rev.01), p.25

knowledge management and communication plan to engage stakeholders at key points during and after the conduct of the evaluation, to the extent possible³¹.

Section 1.5 on knowledge sharing, p.9 and section 2.3 GEF Evaluation Office, pp.45. will need to be updated.

11. Small Grants Program (SGP)

As suggested in the Joint GEF/UNDP SGP Evaluation in 2015, the existing M&E framework for SGP describes evaluation at the level of the grant project, but gives little attention to evaluation at the country program level. In addition, it is generally accepted by stakeholders that the demands placed on the current M&E system are far too ambitious and unrealistic, and that there is a need to develop new, innovative, practical approaches³².

SGP monitoring and evaluation should be considered in the M&E policy revision.

12. Climate Change Mitigation

The Climate Change Mitigation Program has been introduced in GEF-6 to support developing countries and economies in transition to make transformational shifts towards a low emission development path³³. A monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) system will be included in the mitigation projects to assess the expected results with regard to global environmental benefits. The MRV systems will contribute information that may be used for the M&E analysis, and vice versa³⁴.

The MRV systems will need to be included in the M&E policy.

13. Climate Change Resilience

Given the magnitude of the potential adverse impacts of climate change, the GEF Council has encouraged the GEF to reflect resilience in its projects³⁵. Hence, the GEF has increased the supports to multi-focal and multi-trust fund projects that combine funding from the Least Developed Countries Fund and Special Climate Change Fund with that of various GEF focal areas.

The climate-resilience needs to be reflected in the policy revision.

³¹ Council document: Four-Year Work Program and Budget of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF/ME/C.48/01), p.10

³² Joint GEF/UNDP Small Grants Programme Evaluation: Final Report (GEF/ME/C.48/Inf. 02), p.50-52.

³³ Replenishment Document: GEF-6 Programming Directions (GEF/R.6/20/Rev.04), p.49

³⁴ Replenishment Document: GEF-6 Programming Directions (GEF/R.6/20/Rev.04), p.58.

³⁵ Replenishment Document: GEF-6 Programming Directions (GEF/R.6/20/Rev.04), p.2.

14. Streamlining Measures

In October 2012, the Council agrees to increase the Medium-sized Project grant ceiling to \$2 million from \$1 million with delegated approval authority to the CEO³⁶. In October 2013, the Council then decides that the CEO's delegated approval authority of up to \$2 million for medium-sized projects will also cover the expedited approval of enabling activities³⁷. As to the Project Cycle, the standard for project preparation has been set at a maximum of 22 months for GEF-4 projects and 18 months for GEF-5 projects³⁸.

The M&E policy needs to reflect the changes.

³⁶ Council Document: Streamlining of Project Cycle (GEF/C.43/06)

³⁷ Council Document: Progress Report on the GEF Project Cycle Streamlining Measures (GEF/C.45/04)

³⁸ Ibid.

ANNEX 3: ADDRESSING GENDER IN EVALUATIONS GUIDANCE FOR APPROACH PAPERS

History

The Rio Conventions – namely the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) – for which the GEF serves as financial mechanism – recognize the important linkage between gender-related issues and achievement of the Conventions’ goals and objectives.ⁱ Gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW) considerations can be found in a selection of UNFCCC convention texts, conclusions and decisions,ⁱⁱ ⁱⁱⁱ the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),^{iv} as well as the convention text and Advocacy Policy Framework on Gender of the UNCCD.^v

The 2012 GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming requires GEF Partner Agencies to have policies or strategies that satisfy seven minimum requirements to ensure gender mainstreaming:

1. **institutional capacity** for gender mainstreaming,
2. consideration of gender elements in **project review and design**,
3. undertaking of **gender analysis**,
4. measures to **minimize/mitigate adverse gender impacts**,
5. **integration of gender sensitive activities**,
6. **monitoring and evaluation** of gender mainstreaming progress, and
7. **inclusion of gender experts** in projects.^{vi} ^{vii}

The 2014 GEF Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) aims to operationalize GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming.^{viii} The GEF-6 focal area strategies incorporate gender responsive approaches and indicators, and the related Project Information Form (PIF) now requests information on how gender consideration will be mainstreamed in project preparation. The GEF reports on results of gender mainstreaming to the GEF Council in the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR). A separate information paper on GEAP implementation is also provided to the Council on a yearly basis.

Conceptual clarity and consistence on gender terminology is important when explaining gender objectives. A glossary of gender-relevant terms can be found in annex 1.

GEF-6/IAP CORE GENDER INDICATORS

The GEF will further strengthen GEF-wide accountability for gender mainstreaming by enhancing gender-specific performance targets at all levels. At the corporate level, the GEF Results-based Management Framework will include a set of five core Gender Indicators to examine concrete progress on gender related processes and outputs within the GEF-6 Focal Area Strategies and Integrated Approaches Pilots (IAPs).

Adjustments may be made to the indicators based on initial implementation experiences. An overview of the core indicators is provided in Annex 2, which translates at the project level into the following evaluative questions:^{viii}

1. Was a **gender analysis** conducted during project preparation?
2. Has a **gender responsive project results framework** been incorporated?

3. What was the **share of women and men as direct beneficiaries** of project?
4. What was the **share of convention related national reports** (e.g. NBSAP, NAPA, TDA/SAP, etc.) **that incorporated gender dimensions?**
5. What is the **percentage of M&E reports** (e.g. Project Implementation Reports, Mid-term Evaluation Reports, and Terminal Evaluation Reports) **that incorporated GEEW issues, progress and results?**

While the first three questions primarily relate to project level analysis, the fourth and fifth question also relate to the high-than-project level evaluations the GEF IEO is often involved in.

GENDER CONSIDERATIONS AND UN-SWAP

UN-SWAP (UN system-wide Action Plan) constitutes the first accountability framework for gender mainstreaming in the UN system. It includes a set of 15 common system-wide Performance Indicators towards gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW), one of them being Evaluation.^{ix x}

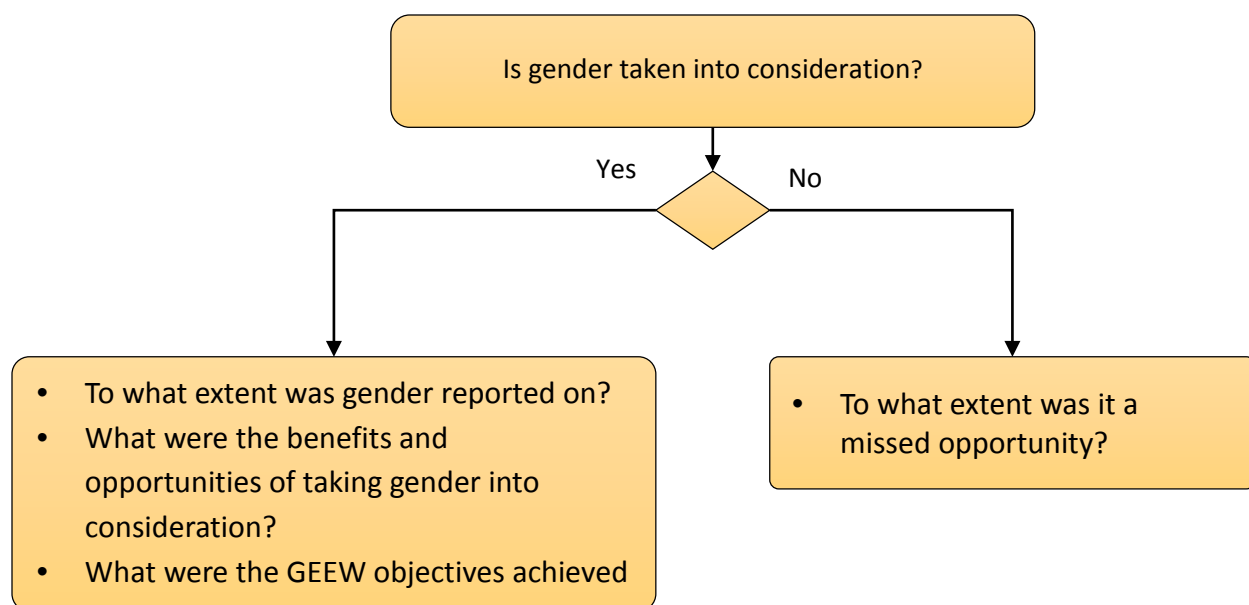
To report on progress against the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator the GEF IEO conducts a meta-analysis of evaluations managed and/or conducted during each calendar year, which assesses the level of integration of gender dimensions in our evaluations. For each evaluation managed and/or conducted the IEO reports on the following 4 criteria:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GEEW is integrated in the Evaluation Scope of analysis and Indicators are designed in a way that ensures GEEW-related data will be collected. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions specifically address how GEEW has been integrated into the design, planning, implementation of the intervention and the results achieved. |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. A gender-responsive Evaluation Methodology, Methods and tools, and Data Analysis Techniques are selected. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The evaluation Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations reflect a gender analysis. |

In 2014 the GEF IEO reported voluntarily for the first time on these criteria and the IEO did not meet the minimum requirements.^{xi} We certainly need to do better in the years to come. A more extensive explanation on the four criteria can be found in annex 3, and further guidance can be found in the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator Technical Note.^{xii}

EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS

Irrespective of the replenishment period, financial mechanism or focal area of a project, program or portfolio of projects and programs, there are some basic evaluative questions that can form the starting point for evaluating gender:



Based on previous resources mentioned, taking into account the UN-SWAP criteria, the GEF-6/IAP core gender indicators as well as the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy^{xiii} and related main evaluation criteria, a selection of guiding questions for consideration include:

Relevance	To what extent was the program aligned with the needs and priorities of both men and women? How have different needs and priorities of men and women been taken into account in reaching the global environmental benefits to which the GEF is dedicated?
Effectiveness	Was gender integrated into programmatic goals and objectives (direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes as well as longer term impacts envisaged)? Was a gender responsive results framework been incorporated into the project design and implementation consistent with the objectives? Were gender-disaggregated targets set and were gender-disaggregated indicators used? Was the benchmark survey or baseline study gender sensitive? Which GEEW principles were used (e.g. equality, participation, social transformation, inclusiveness, empowerment, etc.) in the design, planning, implementation of the intervention and the results achieved? Was gender mainstreaming an explicit requirement in all job descriptions, job responsibilities, and terms of reference for the project implementation, studies, consulting work, and training?

Efficiency	How was the assessment of gender integration into the design, planning, implementation of the intervention and the results achieved included in the M&E?
Results and Sustainability	What were the GEEW objectives achieved (or likely to be achieved) and mainstreaming principles adhered to by the intervention? To what extent has GEEW inclusion led to better results? (outcome and impact) Do the intervention results respond to the needs of all stakeholders, men and women, as identified at the design stage? Were the results achieved equitably distributed among the targeted stakeholder groups? Is the level of stakeholder ownership sufficiently gender sensitive or gender specific to allow for project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? What are the assumptions about gender roles, norms and relations that supported or hindered the project? And how will these factors affect the sustainability of the results?

GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN EVALUATION METHODOLOGIES

Major IEO evaluations would benefit from the inclusion of an external gender specialist to assist in the development of the evaluation approach paper, the implementation of the evaluation as well as the reporting of evaluative findings. The inclusion of gender experts would also be in line with the minimum requirements of the 2012 GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming.

Gender relevance is a complex term, given that different GEF Agencies make use of different gender screening or gender marker systems. One of the action points in the GEAP is to further “explore the most efficient way to categorize the gender relevance of the GEF projects by building on the practices, expertise, and experiences of the GEF Agencies and other relevant partners.” In anticipation of a more streamlined GEF categorization of gender relevance it is currently advised to not aim for hard conclusions towards an intervention’s gender relevance.

Ensure a focus on gender, not just women; Gender equity is the process of being fair to men and women, boys and girls. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity and heterogeneity of different groups of women and men. A full glossary of terms is added in annex 1.

A document worth mentioning is the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Guidance Document on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation.^{xiv} The document provides further guidance on conducting ‘gender equality responsive evaluations’. One chapter is dedicated to data collection, analysis, interpretation, validation and reporting. Keep in mind that in the end we evaluate interventions against GEF policies and strategies, and some of the guidance – and examples of GEF Agencies – go beyond what is currently demanded by the GEF policies.

Document Review/Portfolio Review/Meta-Review

Evaluations often start with a desk review element, looking into the paper trail of an intervention. Keep in mind that requirements for reporting on gender have only been added recently to GEF templates and only apply for focal area projects under the GEF-6 replenishment. Also keep in mind that some of the GEF Agencies might do more than what is or has been reported. Apart from a simple word search in documents, always ask agencies whether a gender assessment has taken place and to share the details of such analysis.

- Have gender-related goals and priorities been identified? Was a gender analysis conducted during project preparation? What is the number/percentage of M&E reports that incorporated GEEW issues, progress and results?
- Was the institutional capacity of the implementing and partner agent(s) reviewed for integrating gender into development activities? Did capacity development take place in order to address knowledge gaps on gender issues? Were progress and outcome of these activities monitored, evaluated and reported upon?

Selecting Key Evaluation Stakeholders

The selection of key evaluation stakeholders is not a methodology per sé, but an integral part of the evaluation's field research element, for example to select interviewees, the target groups for surveys, or the development of focus groups, reference groups or peer review groups. Gender sensitive identification and selection of key evaluation stakeholders should take into account the following points:

- Identify and select key female and male stakeholders and their interests, positive or negative, in the project. Who has been involved? Who was most dependent? Who has had an economic stake? Brainstorm on all possible stakeholders using the above questions as a guide, talking with various stakeholders and asking them who they would see as potential key evaluation stakeholders. The list of stakeholders may grow or shrink as the analysis progresses and the understanding deepens.
- Marginalized key evaluation stakeholders may lack the recognition or capacity to participate on an equal basis, and particular effort must be made to ensure and enable their participation.
- Keep in mind the literacy levels, language skills, and time and logistical constraints of key evaluation stakeholders identified, especially of marginalized stakeholders.
- It may not be possible to have all identified stakeholders involved; Use an inclusive and transparent approach in the identification and selection of key evaluation stakeholders, informing key stakeholders about the process and reasons for their inclusion, or exclusion from actual engagement.

Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder mapping / stakeholder analysis under this header focuses on the mapping and analysis that took place (or is planned to take place) in the intervention that is being evaluated.

- To what extent did the stakeholder mapping take into account different activities, capacities, access to resources, roles, needs and priorities of both men and women?
- Did a gender analysis take place to identify the potential negative impacts of project intervention on women as well as men?
- Did a gender-sensitive social analysis or assessment take place?

Interviews/Focus Group Discussions/Consultation Workshops

- Stakeholder consultations with all key groups, including women's groups, and with the appropriate women (the ones directly affected by an intervention as beneficiary as well as implementer) at the table.

Surveys

When developing and administering surveys please do take into account the earlier mentioned GEF-6/IAP core gender indicators, UN-SWAP gender considerations, evaluative questions, and pointers towards the identification and selection key evaluation stakeholders.

Gender Considerations in Data Analysis

Taking gender considerations into account during data analysis and interpretation should go beyond simple counts of participants or tallying mentions of 'gender', 'women', 'female', etc. How have different needs and priorities been realized? What have been key enabling factors and deterrents from reaching GEEW objectives and/or mainstreaming related principles into the intervention? Have the GEF-6/IAP core gender indicators and UN-SWAP gender considerations been covered? The evaluation report should indicate the extent to which gender issues and considerations were incorporated where applicable.

ANNEX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

All definitions of terms are coming from the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)^{viii}:

Gender analysis: is the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated information. Men and women both perform different roles. This leads to women and men having different experience, knowledge, skills and needs. Gender analysis explores these differences so policies, programs and projects can identify and meet the different needs of men and women. Gender analysis also facilitates the strategic use of distinct knowledge and skills possessed by women and men.

Gender equality: refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

Gender equity: is the process of being fair to men and women, boys and girls. It refers to differential treatment that is fair and positively addresses a bias or disadvantage that is due to gender roles or norms or differences between the sexes. It is about the fair and just treatment of both sexes that takes into account the different needs of the men and women, cultural barriers and (past) discrimination of the specific group.

Gender mainstreaming: is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities. Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

Gender relevant: or a gender relevance assessment states that depending on the type of intervention and scope of activities, the degree of relevance of gender dimensions may vary. Once it has been assessed that gender plays a role in the planned intervention, a gender perspective should be integrated in all phases of the project cycle. The UNDP Gender Marker questions whether it is legitimate to have initiatives where gender equality and/or women's empowerment issues can be considered, not applicable, or relevant at all.

Gender responsive results: are changes that respond to the inequities in the lives of men or women within a given social setting and aim to remedy these inequities.

Gender sensitive: considers gender norms, roles and relations but does not address inequality generated by unequal norms, roles or relations. While it indicates gender awareness, no remedial action is developed.

Gender specific: considers gender norms, roles and relations for women and men and how they affect access to and control over resources, and considers men and women's specific needs. It intentionally

targets and benefits a specific group of women or men to achieve certain policy or program goals or meet certain needs.

Sex-disaggregated data: is data that is collected and presented separately on men and women. Sex describes the biological and physiological differences that distinguish males, females and intersex.

Women's empowerment: has five components: (1) women's sense of self-worth; (2) right to have and determine choices; (3) right to have access to opportunities and resources; (4) right to have power to control own lives both within and outside the home; (5) ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

ANNEX 2: OVERVIEW OF GEF-6/IAP CORE GENDER INDICATORS

Outcomes	Gender Indicators	Source of Verification
Project design fully integrates gender concerns.	1. Percentage of projects that have conducted gender analysis during project preparation. 2. Percentage of projects that have incorporated gender responsive project results framework (e.g. gender responsive output, outcome, indicator, budget, etc).	Project Document at CEO endorsement
Project implementation ensures gender equitable participation in and benefit from project activities.	3. Share of women and men as direct beneficiaries of project. 4. Share of convention related national reports incorporated gender dimensions (e.g. NBSAP, NAPA/NAP, TDA/SAP, etc.).	Project Implementation Reports, Mid-Term Evaluation Reports, and Terminal Evaluation Reports.
Project monitoring and evaluation give adequate attention to gender mainstreaming.	5. Percentage of monitoring and evaluation reports (e.g. Project Implementation Reports, Mid-term Evaluation Reports, and Terminal Evaluation Reports) that incorporates gender equality/women's empowerment issues and assess results/progress.	Project Implementation Reports, Mid-Term Evaluation Reports, and Terminal Evaluation Reports.

ANNEX 3: EXPLANATION OF UN-SWAP GEEW EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criteria	Annotation
1. GEEW is integrated in the Evaluation Scope of analysis and Indicators are designed in a way that ensures GEEW-related data will be collected.	If gender responsive, the evaluation will analyze how GEEW objectives and GEEW mainstreaming principles were included in the intervention design and how GEEW results have been achieved. Gender responsive evaluation requires an assessment of the extent to which an intervention being evaluated has been guided by organizational and system-wide objectives on GEEW. Indicators for the evaluation of the intervention should include GEEW dimensions and/or additional indicators are identified specifically addressing GEEW; mixed indicators (including quantitative and qualitative indicators) are preferred.
2. Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions specifically address how GEEW has been integrated into the design, planning, implementation of the intervention and the results achieved.	GEEW dimensions are integrated into all Evaluation Criteria and questions as appropriate and/or criteria derived directly from GEEW principles are used (e.g. equality, participation, social transformation, inclusiveness, empowerment, etc.).
3. A gender-responsive Evaluation Methodology, Methods and tools, and Data Analysis Techniques are selected.	Triangulation of data is done to ensure that the voices of both women, men, boys and girls are heard and used; additional time or resources (time, staff, funds) to implement a gender-responsive approach is considered and planned for, etc. mixed-method approach are preferred to make visible diverse perspectives and promotes participation of both women and men, boys and girls from different stakeholder groups Data collection methods including, desk reviews, focus groups, interviews, surveys, etc. are identified and accompanying tools, e.g. questionnaires, observational tools, interview guides etc. developed integrating GEEW considerations (e.g. interview guides ensure that women and men are interviewed in ways that avoid gender biases or the reinforcement of gender discrimination and unequal power relations, etc.). During data screening and data analysis, special attention is paid to data and information that specifically refer to GEEW issues in the intervention, and making the best possible use of these in the overall assessment of the intervention.
4. The evaluation Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations reflect a gender analysis	The evaluation report's findings, conclusion and recommendations should reflect a gender analysis. The evaluation report should also provide lessons/challenges/recommendations for conducting gender-responsive evaluation based on the experience of that particular evaluation.

ENDNOTES: RELEVANT GENDER GUIDELINES, POLICIES AND CONVENTION TEXT

- ¹ [Mainstreaming Gender at the GEF, February 2013.](#)
- ¹ [UNFCCC Decisions and Conclusions: Existing Mandates and Entry Points, October 2014.](#)
- ¹ [UNFCCC/CP/2014/10/Add.3, Decision 18/CP.20 Lima Work Programme on Gender, December 2014.](#)
- ¹ [CBD COP 12 Decision XII/7, Mainstreaming Gender Considerations, October 2014.](#)
- ¹ [UNCCD Advocacy Policy Framework on Gender, September 2013.](#)
- ¹ [GEF IEO OPS5, TD16, Sub-Study on the GEF's Policy on Gender Mainstreaming, October 2013.](#)
- ¹ [GEF POLICY:SD/PL/02, Policy on Gender Mainstreaming, May 2012.](#)
- ¹ [GEF/C.47/09.Rev.01, Gender Equality Action Plan \(GEAP\), October 2014.](#)
- ¹ [UN-SWAP A plan to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women \(GEEW\) across the UN system, November 2014.](#)
- ¹ [UN System-Wide Action Plan \(SWAP\) for the Implementation of the CEB Policy and the Empowerment of Women: Performance Indicators Technical Notes, December 2014.](#)
- ¹ [UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator: 2014 Reporting Cycle Results, July 2015.](#)
- ¹ [UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator Technical Note, August 2014.](#)
- ¹ [GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, November 2010.](#)
- ¹ [UNEG Guidance Document Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, August 2014.](#)

-
- ⁱ [Mainstreaming Gender at the GEF, February 2013.](#)
 - ⁱⁱ [UNFCCC Decisions and Conclusions: Existing Mandates and Entry Points, October 2014.](#)
 - ⁱⁱⁱ [UNFCCC/CP/2014/10/Add.3, Decision 18/CP.20 Lima Work Programme on Gender, December 2014.](#)
 - ^{iv} [CBD COP 12 Decision XII/7, Mainstreaming Gender Considerations, October 2014.](#)
 - ^v [UNCCD Advocacy Policy Framework on Gender, September 2013.](#)
 - ^{vi} [GEF IEO OPS5, TD16, Sub-Study on the GEF's Policy on Gender Mainstreaming, October 2013.](#)
 - ^{vii} [GEF POLICY:SD/PL/02, Policy on Gender Mainstreaming, May 2012.](#)
 - ^{viii} [GEF/C.47/09.Rev.01, Gender Equality Action Plan \(GEAP\), October 2014.](#)
 - ^{ix} [UN-SWAP A plan to improve gender equality and the empowerment of women \(GEEW\) across the UN system, November 2014.](#)
 - ^x [UN System-Wide Action Plan \(SWAP\) for the Implementation of the CEB Policy and the Empowerment of Women: Performance Indicators Technical Notes, December 2014.](#)
 - ^{xi} [UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator: 2014 Reporting Cycle Results, July 2015.](#)
 - ^{xii} [UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator Technical Note, August 2014.](#)
 - ^{xiii} [GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, November 2010.](#)
 - ^{xiv} [UNEG Guidance Document Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, August 2014.](#)