

GEF Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation 2010: Moldova and Turkey



The third *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report* provides a synthesis of the main conclusions and recommendations of the country portfolio evaluations finalized in fiscal year 2010 in Moldova and Turkey. These

countries were selected for portfolio evaluation based on their long history with the GEF, their large and diverse portfolios, the nature of their GEF country allocation under the Resource Allocation Framework, and their participation in numerous regional international waters projects. The evaluations focused on the relevance and efficiency of GEF support in the respective country, and the effectiveness and results of completed and ongoing projects.

Findings

Results

GEF support in biodiversity has built robust foundations for the achievement of significant results. Further progress toward impact is limited by unresolved institutional barriers and socioeconomic factors. In both countries, institutional strengthening and capacity building was of strategic importance in moving forward the national biodiversity strategies and action plans elaborated with GEF support. However, progress toward impact remains limited. In Moldova, many impact drivers—including an adequate and regularly updated information database, continued interaction among stakeholders, extensive dissemination of project results—have not been achieved. In Turkey, challenges are associated with people's participation, government inertia, institutional conflicts, poverty, and threats to conservation from various economic activities.

GEF support in climate change has produced limited but promising results. Enabling activities in climate change have helped countries to comply with the reporting requirements of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change. As a

result, climate change has been put higher on the government agenda in both Moldova and Turkey, and is shaping ongoing action and debate, as well as future climate change policy, strategy, and planning decisions. Turkey ratified the Kyoto Protocol in October 2009.

International waters initiatives strengthened country commitments to regional cooperation for reducing nutrient discharge and overexploitation of fish stocks. It is too early for observable improvements in the water bodies to materialize. GEF support has been a major contributor to the countries' involvement in agreements for coordinated regional and international management of marine resources and has helped in developing cooperative networks for coherent regional response and action. The support provided by the GEF in this focal area has a clearly regional dimension, as it has been provided through projects targeting the Danube River and the Black and Mediterranean Seas. Given that the national components of the regional projects are ongoing or only just finished, it is too early for results to materialize.

GEF support to POPs has been of strategic importance in both countries and facilitated up-scaling in Moldova. In Turkey, this catalytic support was instrumental in the recent country ratification of the Stockholm Convention. In Moldova, a mixed and staged combination of further enabling activities and a full-size project supported by the GEF facilitated up-scaling and was complemented by projects financed by various other donors leading to significant additional results, with sustainable outcomes achieved.

Land degradation did not receive the attention and support countries were expecting, including through multifocal area projects. In Turkey, land degradation mostly entails a high exposure to soil erosion and desertification risks; in Moldova, huge land degradation problems are linked to overexploitation of soils from agriculture with a consequent decline in soil fertility. Even though both countries are eligible for GEF funding in this area and have established land degradation as a priority in their national strategies and action plans, the limited

GEF resources in this focal area did not allow support during GEF-4.

Relevance

GEF support in Moldova and Turkey has been relevant to national sustainable development and environmental priorities, to international conventions, and to regional processes as well as to the GEF mandate. Other national priorities, such as land degradation, have not been addressed. As concluded in previous country portfolio evaluations, GEF support was found to align with national sustainable development needs and challenges, and to the environmental priorities of the countries reviewed, except for land degradation.

National ownership of the GEF portfolio is limited, but is improving in both countries. In both country portfolio evaluations, evidence was found of slow appropriation of project objectives by national stakeholders. In Turkey, GEF Agencies usually come up with the initial idea; while at first not well understood, support and understanding grow over time. In Moldova, project offices, convention focal points, and GEF Agencies have been—to varying extents—projects' main drivers.

Efficiency

Duration of project processing and implementation compares well to average figures for GEF projects. However, mixed perceptions on the complexity and length of the GEF project cycle remain in both countries. On the whole, and in comparison to other countries, both Moldova and Turkey have done remarkably well in getting projects through the GEF project cycle. This finding is in opposition with most, if not all, of the evaluative evidence collected by the Evaluation Office so far on this thorny issue.

The GEF focal point mechanism has not been fully effective in its coordination and strategic guidance roles, including information sharing and monitoring and evaluation. In Moldova, the environment minister holds the dual position of GEF political and operational focal points, which might negatively affect the efficiency of the focal point mechanism. In both countries, monitoring and evaluation (M&E)—an important element for learning—mostly occurred at the project level, and to date was mainly carried out by GEF Agencies. Completed enabling activities have neither been evaluated nor closed by

a completion report. M&E information does not always flow from GEF Agencies to national partners and vice versa. In Turkey, M&E is a matter of concern for the national stakeholders, and many explicitly asked the evaluation team to look into M&E issues. The evaluation found that Agencies often have not fully involved the focal point mechanism in project-level M&E activities.

Recommendations

- Operational focal point involvement in M&E should be increased by sharing M&E information, supporting country portfolio-level M&E, and providing M&E training.
- GEF Agencies should be encouraged to give stronger support to environmental issues outside their GEF-supported projects and promote up-scaling with partner governments.

Follow-Up

The GEF Council has asked

- the GEF Agencies to systematically involve the operational focal points in M&E activities by sharing M&E information with them in a timely manner;
- the Secretariat to consider providing M&E training to the national focal points through the Country Support Program;
- the Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the Secretariat, to strengthen the role of operational focal points in M&E in revising the M&E policy.

The Council also encouraged the GEF Agencies to give stronger support to environment issues outside their GEF-supported projects, and to promote up-scaling with partner governments. The Evaluation Office was requested to keep this general issue under review.

The GEF Evaluation Office is an independent entity reporting directly to the GEF Council, mandated to evaluate the focal area programs and priorities of the GEF.

The full version of *GEF Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation 2010* (Evaluation Report No. 58, 2010) is available in the Evaluations and Studies section of the GEF Evaluation Office Web site, www.gefeo.org. For more information, please contact the GEF Evaluation Office at gefeo@thegef.org.