

GEF Annual Impact Report 2007



The Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) initiated a program of impact evaluation aimed at identifying the long-term results, sustainability, replication, and lessons learned from GEF interventions. The evaluation looked to trace cause-and-effect linkages from interventions to outcomes and impacts in order to determine the extent to which projects achieved what they were designed to achieve and how they did so.

The first GEF *Annual Impact Report* deals with protected areas and relies on two major evaluation approaches:

- **Theory-based approach.** This methodology developed detailed case studies of three protected area projects in East Africa—the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park Conservation Project in Uganda (implemented by the World Bank); the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy project in Kenya (implemented by the World Bank); and the regional project based in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda on Reducing Biodiversity Loss at Cross-Border Sites in East Africa (implemented by the United Nations Development Programme).
- **Quasi-experimental review.** This approach consisted of a statistical analysis of existing time-series data applied to deforestation and protected areas in Costa Rica. Comparisons were made between protected and unprotected areas over several years to determine differences in the respective extent of their deforestation. Within the protected areas, additional comparisons were made between GEF-assisted projects and those supported through other sources.

Findings

Measurable and recorded improvements were discovered in the status of two key threatened species in Bwindi and Lewa—the mountain gorilla and black

rhino, respectively. The GEF Bwindi-Mgahinga project has contributed to the stabilization and later increase of a globally significant mountain gorilla population. The Lewa Conservancy project has had similarly substantial impacts on the black rhino population of East Africa, reversing a dramatic historical decline and promoting an increase of the population within its area to such an extent that it has been able to relocate rhinos to other sites.

Two of the three GEF East Africa protected area projects evaluated have contributed to a sustained reduction in threats to key conservation targets. The above-noted achievement of stable gorilla and rhino populations is a major impact in view of their substantial historical decline and the well-publicized poaching in neighboring regions. Key to this success are protection of the animals and their habitat, improved relations between local communities and the parks, enhanced conservation research capacity (which enabled monitoring), and sustainable financing (particularly for Lewa).

The regional protected area project has been unable to continue its threat-reduction mechanisms effectively after GEF support ended. At project conclusion, outcomes had been achieved with regard to enhanced forest management, largely through community-based means and an improved institutional environment for forest protection.

Impact was achieved in two of the three East African protected area projects because an explicit plan for institutional continuity was built into the projects from the start. The Lewa Conservancy is a private organization, which must generate income to support its activities. It therefore has a strong interest in ensuring the continuation and geographical expansion of improvements made possible with external funding. The Bwindi-Mgahinga Conservation Trust was established as a mechanism to ensure continued funding for activities to secure the support of local communities for protection of forests and their animal population, as

well as to conduct research, which is an important contribution to monitoring intervention outcomes and impacts.

The Bwindi and Lewa projects have both contributed toward substantial additional benefits through catalytic effects. In the Bwindi-Mgahinga Conservation Trust project, the GEF inputs contributed to a much larger intervention involving the government of Uganda, international and national donors, and several nongovernmental organizations. The Lewa Wildlife Conservancy had great success in disseminating the concepts and practices of conservation to neighboring community-owned land, enabling and supporting the creation of several community protected areas and game lodges.

The Bwindi project has not yet satisfactorily resolved certain negative impacts of its protected areas on the indigenous Batwa. An element of the Bwindi-Mgahinga Conservation Trust's work specifically funded by the GEF was the reorientation of the Batwa livelihood and lifestyle. Fieldwork showed that this initiative was only partially successful.

Costa Rica achieved a measurable impact by avoiding deforestation of about 110,000 hectares between 1960 and 1997, even though its protected area policy was not primarily focused on avoiding deforestation within a specified time frame. GEF-supported protected areas in Costa Rica were between 2 and 7 percent more effective at achieving avoided deforestation than similar projects funded by other sources. The evaluative experience in Costa Rica demonstrates that opportunistic analysis of existing data sets can produce a general assessment of the GEF contribution to specific environmental trends at the national level. More precise results would require the incorporation of evaluation data needs into project design, implementation, and monitoring.

The most cost-effective and realistic approach to impact evaluation for the GEF Evaluation Office is a combination of opportunistic quasi-experimental analysis, using available data, with targeted case studies utilizing a theory-based approach. At a scaled-up level, the most cost-effective and realistic approach is a combination of opportunistic counterfactual analysis, using available

data, with targeted case studies utilizing a theory-based approach. This would enable the strengths of one approach to be used to offset the weaknesses of another.

Recommendation

Protected area projects should include a specific plan for institutional continuity. This plan should be included in the GEF biodiversity tracking tools or developed through an alternative system under the direction of the GEF Secretariat. The absence of a specific plan for institutionalized continuation of the global environmental benefits generated by project interventions directly led to their reduction over time. In contrast, projects implemented by the GEF and others that created and followed institutional sustainability plans experienced sustained impact and even scaling up through replication or geographic expansion.

Follow-Up

The Evaluation Office concludes that a mixed-method evaluative approach that includes macro-level statistical analysis and satellite imagery, where these are available, as well as project case studies offers the best prospect for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of GEF-supported activities.

The *GEF Annual Impact Report 2007* was presented to the GEF Council in November 2007. Having reviewed the document, the Council asked the GEF Secretariat to incorporate its recommendations into project preparation and to ensure adequate monitoring of progress toward institutional continuity. It also asked the Evaluation Office to continue its program of impact evaluation as proposed.

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 trilingual version of the *GEF Annual Impact Report 2007* (Evaluation Report No. 46, 2009) is available in the Publications section of the GEF Evaluation Office Web site, www.gefeo.org. For more information, please contact the GEF Evaluation Office at gefevaluation@thegef.org.