

GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Moldova (1994–2009)



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The Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) carried out a country portfolio evaluation of GEF support to Moldova. Since 1994, the GEF has invested about \$22.5 million in Moldova, with \$23.8 million in cofinancing through 14 national projects. International waters and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) account for the largest shares of GEF funding in Moldova—45 and 29 percent of total support, respectively.

Findings

Results and Effectiveness

The GEF has provided support to Moldova to fulfill its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity; however, progress toward impact has been modest. Of particular importance is the first biodiversity enabling activity funded by the GEF which supported Moldova in building a robust foundation for meeting its obligations by developing key policy documents, including an action plan, and the country's first national report to the convention. Many of the activities included in the action plan have since been moved forward through national initiatives or international projects, including subsequent GEF-supported projects. Impact has been limited, however, due primarily to a low level of existing capacity and institutional conflicts.

Two global GEF projects played an important role in supporting the development of the National Biosafety Framework and interaction with the biosafety clearing-house mechanism. The results of these projects have been sustained through an ongoing project, Support to the Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework.

GEF support in the climate change area has had limited results, but with upcoming projects, there is a potential for meaningful impacts given successful replication. While the GEF has provided significant support to Moldova in fulfilling its obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, results have been modest. This can

be attributed to the fact that one of the two projects is still under preparation, and the second was completed less than two years ago. That project did lead to limited actual annual emissions reductions through greater efficiency and fuel switching from coal to straw biomass, and has been very successful in demonstrating the social and economic benefits of using renewable energy. Replication is taking place on a limited scale.

Through a mixed and staged combination of enabling activities and a full-size project, GEF support in the POPs area has been of strategic importance. Moldova successfully secured a full-size project, the results of which are reinforced and complemented by various other donors' projects, and led to significant additional results and sustainable outcomes. This POPs management and destruction project contributed to the environmentally safe management and disposal of pesticides and PCBs. It also strengthened capacity to enhance the POPs information management and reporting system, POPs monitoring capacity, and control; and provided support to improve the legal framework for POPs management.

It is too early to assess the results of two national projects in the **international waters** area, only one of which has been completed so far.

Relevance

GEF support has been relevant to national sustainable development and environmental priorities, international conventions, regional processes, and the GEF mandate, except with regard to combating land degradation. GEF support has addressed most of the country's main environmental priorities—water resources through regional projects, toxic substances and waste management with a focus on POPs, and biodiversity conservation. GEF projects and activities have also tackled climate change, which is recognized in various strategies as a main concern for Moldova, in combination with energy security issues, notably in terms of energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy. However, there are no GEF projects related to land degradation, a priority established by Moldova sectoral strategies.

Country ownership has been limited mainly because of a lack of coordination and of a clear strategy regarding GEF support. A lack of political leadership and coordination is the main obstacle preventing Moldova from having a decisive influence on GEF project development and implementation. Also, the quasi-monopoly of the Ministry of Environment as the GEF national executing agency prevents the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders—and possibly initiatives originating with other institutions. The need for coordination and strategic planning has been recognized at a high political level, and the government recently approved new legislation addressing the issue. The regulation on coordination of foreign assistance sets new procedures, allocation of responsibilities, and institutional restructuring; if well implemented, this may help the country play a more active role in initiating, implementing, and evaluating projects.

Efficiency

Total project processing time for Moldova is comparable to GEF averages. There are mixed perceptions on the complexity and duration of GEF project preparation and implementation procedures, although the general view is rather positive. Overall, the project preparation and approval process in Moldova has been relatively efficient compared to that in other countries.

Project offices set up under the Ministry of Environment, the GEF Agencies, and some convention focal points have played key roles in project preparation and implementation. The project offices created within the Ministry of Environment play a key operative role in project design and implementation. Support from the GEF Agencies is seen as critical, given their resources and knowledge of GEF rules and procedures. For their part, the convention focal points have occasionally played a driving role in project preparation, mainly in initiating a project concept and providing guidance to the project office.

Information dissemination and lesson sharing are limited. Dissemination of project outcomes and outputs to decision makers, stakeholders, and the general public helps ensure that projects produce effective results and reach their ultimate impacts. Although some projects have disseminated GEF project lessons and achievements—mainly through final seminars and end-of-project documentation—these measures have not been framed in a clear strategy, thus prevent-

ing replication and continued awareness raising beyond the project's lifetime. Until recently, information on results and lessons also has not been sufficiently disseminated by GEF Agencies, national executing agencies, and project teams.

The GEF focal point mechanism has not provided sufficient strategic guidance and coordination. In Moldova, both the political and operational roles of the GEF focal point are assigned to a single person, and since 2008 the minister of environment has held this position. Given the additional responsibilities of the GEF focal point, there are concerns about the efficiency and effectiveness of the focal point mechanism. A recent initiative may greatly improve the situation. Under the new regulation on the institutional framework and the mechanism of coordinating foreign assistance, the Ministry of Environment should designate a sector coordinator and a sector foreign assistance board; these will play a key role in planning foreign assistance, including that provided by the GEF.

Recommendations

To the GEF Council

- The GEF should fully support the introduction of the Small Grants Programme in Moldova.
- The GEF should provide guidance and establish requirements on dissemination of project results and lessons learned.

To the Government of Moldova

- Address issues of land degradation and climate adaptation in GEF projects.
- Strengthen the focal point mechanism, and develop a strategic approach to GEF support to ensure efficient coordination among key stakeholders, including other donors.

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 Country Portfolio Evaluation: Moldova (1994–2009)* (Evaluation Report No. 59, 2010) is available in the Evaluations and Studies section of the GEF Evaluation Office Web site, www.gefeo.org. Also available on the Web site is *GEF Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report 2010* (Evaluation Report No. 58), which presents a synthesis of the two country portfolio evaluations (for Moldova and Turkey) undertaken in 2009–10. For more information, please contact the GEF Evaluation Office at gefevaluation@thegef.org.