Signposts

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# Cluster Country Portfolio Evaluation: GEF Beneficiary Countries of the OECS (1992–2011)

**(Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines)**

In 2011, the Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) carried out a country portfolio evaluation of GEF support to six member countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS): Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Since 1992, these countries have received approximately $12.32 million from the GEF, and $10 million through cofinancing, for 42 national projects. They have also participated in 17 regional projects and received about $1.6 million for 57 projects under the Small Grants Programme (SGP).

## Findings

### *Results and Effectiveness*

**To date, GEF support in the OECS region has produced mixed results; positive achievements include regional-level results on climate change adaptation and in reporting to conventions.** The majority of GEF funding in the region has supported early-stage demonstration and enabling activities to develop planning capacity and national policies and strategies. The most significant results have come from adaptation initiatives that have raised the issue's profile, established planning committees, and strengthened institutional capacity. Other initiatives have been less successful, with limited progress in achieving planned impacts and outcomes. Although some projects now under way are promising, others face challenges in achieving their anticipated objectives.

**While regional approaches are appropriate for the OECS, they have not adequately incorporated tangible national-level activities. On-the-ground results, catalytic up-scaling, and replication have been limited.** Similar national resources and capacities make regional approaches appropriate for OECS countries. To date, most regional initiatives have focused on developing enabling environments and policy. Relatively few GEF-supported activities have delivered on-the-ground results, and there has not yet been a significant catalytic influence. A few adaptation projects have delivered significant national-level demonstration activities with up-scaling. SGP projects have also delivered practical activities at the community level.

**GEF support has expanded in scope, but there has been limited progression in scale. There has been insufficient focus on long-term sustainability of initiatives, with the exception of adaptation activities.** National and regional projects have covered an increasingly wide range of focal areas. However, average project size shows limited progression in scale from enabling activity to demonstration and investment projects. A long-term strategic approach is apparent with climate change adaptation activities, which show good continuity and progression in building capacity.

**Institutional and individual capacity for environmental management remains a critical issue in the region.** National capacity strengthening is a priority in the OECS region to ensure that national agencies can engage in developing and managing GEF projects. Only Antigua and Barbuda is implementing a full-size GEF project, which is strongly country driven. Limited capacity has restricted the ability of civil society organizations to engage with environmental management and GEF support.

### *Relevance*

**GEF support has been relevant to OECS countries' national environmental priorities, but regional approaches have diluted relevance on efforts that are not a direct output of country-driven initiatives.** Most funding in the portfolio is implemented through regional projects; these often exhibit limited country ownership due to difficulties in aligning project objectives to national and local priorities, low visibility at the national level, and insufficiently comprehensive local stakeholder involvement.

**GEF support has been relevant to global environmental benefits in the OECS region and to GEF operational policies, strategies, and procedures.** The OECS GEF portfolio covers all GEF focal areas, except ozone, which is not a priority here. Since the start of GEF support in the OECS, there has been a tension between securing global environmental benefits and national environmental priorities. The present suite of Caribbean GEF projects reflects a balance between these objectives.

### *Efficiency*

**On average, greater time has been required to develop and approve projects in the OECS region than in other countries receiving GEF support.** Project cycle times are significantly longer than for projects in other recently assessed countries, including Turkey, Costa Rica, Moldova, and Nicaragua.

**There has been inadequate communication and coordination among different levels of the GEF partnership (the global conventions; the GEF Secretariat; the GEF Agencies; the GEF focal points; and regional, national, and local stakeholders).** Limited face-to-face communication, capacity, resources, and personnel make for an inadequate flow of information related to the GEF as an institution, the nature and status of activities undertaken with GEF support, and the operating environment for GEF-supported activities. Some country focal points are attempting to include a broad range of stakeholders in decision-making processes through national coordination mechanisms; others have not yet done so.

**Implementation arrangements for regional approaches have not been fully designed and supported to ensure efficiency, communication, and execution.** Various project implementation arrangements have shown varying degrees of success. For one regional biodiversity project, national government staff were expected to support project management alongside their regular work. In practice, the staff have been overloaded and not been able to provide the commitment needed to achieve efficient results. Identification of synergies between projects and focal areas has helped increase resource availability.

**GEF support in the region has leveraged an increasing proportion of resources over time.** Cofinancing increased from an overall ratio of 0.5 in GEF-1 to 2.0 in GEF-4. In particular, cofinancing of regional international waters projects has been substantial, as has national cofinancing of land degradation activities. Countries have leveraged grants and concessional loans from the Climate Investment Fund for demonstration and scale-up activities in climate change adaptation.

**The evolution of the SGP from a subregional program to a more nationally based approach presents opportunities but needs to be properly managed.** Several OECS countries have agreed to transition their SGP involvement for the GEF-5 period to national programs, with a full-time national coordinator. This transition should help improve country understanding of SGP requirements and procedures, and enhance uptake of GEF resources. In order for civil society organizations to absorb the increased amount of resources available to them, investments in capacity development will likely be needed.

**Project-level monitoring and evaluation has supported adaptive management in the portfolio, but tracking impact-level results is hampered by a lack of environmental monitoring data.** Project-level monitoring in the GEF OECS portfolio has improved, with four of five regional full-size projects demonstrating adaptive management as a result of monitoring and evaluation activities. Solid baseline and trend data on environmental resources are lacking, and impact-level results are typically anecdotal or limited to small geographic sites.

## Recommendations

### *To the GEF Council*

- The design and implementation of future regional projects in small island developing states should be based on a participatory, stakeholder-driven process and include tangible, on-the-ground activities in participating countries as well as adequate resources for coordination.
- Provided cost-effectiveness is ensured and risks have been fully assessed, OECS countries should be supported in their efforts to increase the scope for national projects with their System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) allocations.
- GEF support in the OECS region should include adequate attention for the capacity of environmental civil society organizations at the systemic and institutional levels.

### *To National Governments*

- In countries where public sector environmental agencies have inadequate institutional capacities, modalities should be explored that will ensure stronger engagement of national stakeholders—including civil society—beyond the focal point mechanism.

### *To the Small Grants Programme Steering Committee*

- When the SGP shifts from subregional to nationally based programs, resources should be allocated to ensure support from the subregional node at least during the transition period.

*Photo:* Greggs Village Ecotourism Development Association on an eco-trail rehabilitated with support from an SGP grant in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, by Carlo Carugi, GEF Evaluation Office.

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 *Cluster Country Portfolio Evaluation: GEF Beneficiary Countries of the OECS (1992–2011) (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines)* (Evaluation Report No. 72, 2012) is available on the GEF Evaluation Office website, www.gefeo.org. For more information, please contact the GEF Evaluation Office at gefevaluation@thegef.org.