Signposts

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GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Turkey (1992–2009)

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The Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) conducted a country portfolio evaluation of GEF support to Turkey from 1992 to 2009. The evaluation covered all national projects plus two components of global projects implemented within Turkish boundaries; these national efforts represented $36.33 million in GEF support. Eleven regional projects focusing on the Black and Mediterranean Seas were also reviewed because of Turkey's significant involvement, as was the country's Small Grants Programme (SGP).

Findings

Relevance

GEF support has been relevant to Turkey's sustainable development agenda and its environmental priorities, except in the area of land degradation. The GEF successfully supported Turkish efforts to conserve forest biodiversity in gene management zones. Later, synergies were built among local livelihood incentives, local-level development, and improved environmental management. However, despite its being one of the most pressing environmental problems in Turkey, land degradation has received almost no support from the GEF.

The GEF paved the way for implementing environmental aspects of Turkey's European Union accession process. Turkish initiatives in this regard will now increase the sustainability of impacts started under the GEF. The prospect of accession to the European Union has been a key initiator in the recent ongoing updating of Turkey's sustainable development and environmental agenda.

GEF support in Turkey has neither been fully nationally owned nor fully country driven, but this has improved in recent years. The evaluation found evidence of slow appropriation of a project's objectives by Turkish stakeholders. National stakeholders—mostly from government, but also from civil society—eventually take on GEF-initiated projects, adapting them to their needs and context, and owning and driving them.

Efficiency

Although the GEF Agencies have worked in a complementary manner, there are few synergies and little cross-Agency learning; this situation looks to be improving. The World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been the two most important GEF Agencies in Turkey, with the former implementing three full-size projects, the last of which is still ongoing; and the latter active in Turkey since 1992 with the SGP and the Black Sea regional projects. Although GEF projects and Agencies in Turkey have often worked in a complementary way, many GEF projects operate as islands, and little evidence exists of Agencies being institutionally involved in their GEF activities. The situation is gradually improving in the climate change and international waters focal areas, where various GEF Agencies have been working together to prepare projects.

The traditionally top-down approach to forest management in Turkey makes for insufficient coordination, which in turn caused delays; these have decreased recently. The first GEF biodiversity project was formulated and implemented largely without public participation. A second biodiversity project involved local people in nature conservation by including their needs and resources in protected area management plans. This initiative proved to be particularly challenging due to a lack of traditional participation in Turkey, severely delaying the project. Nevertheless, it introduced local involvement in nature conservation, and today the situation is improving.

The complexity of the GEF project cycle has not been a barrier to project development in Turkey. On the whole, and in comparison to other countries, Turkey has done remarkably well in getting projects through the GEF project cycle. National full-size projects took an average of 2.1 years to move from project entry to implementation; this is less than half the GEF global average of 5.5 years.

There is little evidence that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is contributing to increased efficiency. M&E of GEF support in Turkey is primarily performed by the GEF Agencies at the project level; some portfolio-level monitoring is conducted by Turkey's Ministry of Environment and Forestry, but this does not cover the regional or global GEF projects in which Turkey participates, since the ministry has no information on these. At both levels, monitoring only involves basic information, some of which is aggregated by focal area and Agency. Substantive data such as actual achievements at completion and lessons learned are not maintained, and M&E information is not consistently exchanged between the GEF Agencies and the national partners.

Effectiveness

GEF support to biodiversity in Turkey has contributed to the achievement of significant results, including raising awareness and building capacity. The proportion of land under some form of protection for nature conservation has increased from 4 percent to about 6 percent since 2000. An in-situ conservation project made important contributions, with impacts still relevant 12 years after project closure. And the GEF II project, despite having faced a number of challenges—regarding public participation and government inertia; local-level poverty; and threats to conservation from tourism, road construction, forest extraction, grazing activities, water resource use, and other economic activities—broke new ground, introducing participatory approaches to protected area management in Turkey.

GEF support of marine international waters projects has contributed to strengthening Turkey's commitments to global and regional cooperation to reduce the overexploitation of fish stocks and land- and sea-based pollution in the region. With GEF support, Turkey has helped to shape and become a signatory of protection treaties covering the Black and Mediterranean Seas. Over the past 15 years, the water quality of the Black Sea has improved considerably—mainly because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent closure of livestock production units along the Danube—and GEF support has contributed to these positive changes. Turkey prepared several studies related to the Protocol for the Control of Land Based Pollutants to protect the Black Sea, some of which were prepared with GEF support; these are awaiting implementation.

The SGP has been a major success in Turkey, providing many examples of how to meet both global and local objectives. Despite challenges, the GEF has helped develop the concept of, and capacity for, local-level natural resource management in Turkey. The potential of the SGP has been fully realized, specifically in exploring how best to build links between the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainable development at the local level.

Results in other focal areas are limited, but in some cases, limited funding has had important catalytic effects. The GEF-supported initial national communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has been and continues to be significant in shaping ongoing action, debate, and future climate change policy in Turkey. And the GEF-supported analysis for dealing with persistent organic pollutants, which led to a first draft of a national implementation plan, contributed to Turkey's January 2010 signing of the Stockholm Convention.

Recommendations

To the GEF Council

- The GEF should increase focal points' involvement in M&E activities by sharing M&E information, supporting country portfolio–level M&E, and providing M&E training.
- The GEF Agencies should be encouraged to provide stronger support to GEF issues outside the GEF-supported projects in which they are involved, and promote up-scaling with partner governments.

To the Government of Turkey

- National legal instruments should be approved, and the implementation of national strategies and participatory protected area management plans should begin.
- Turkey should formulate multifocal area projects and programs reflecting the GEF-5's proposed ecosystem approach in order to address land degradation issues.

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: Turkey (1992–2009)* (Evaluation Report No. 60, 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 gefeo@thegef.org.