

Reference Group Meeting on draft evaluation report for Evaluation of Community-Based Approaches at the GEF

11/9/2023

Chaired by Juha Uitto, Director GEF IEO

Attendees: Renae Stenhouse, WWF; Sano Akhteruzzaman, GEF CSO Network; Geeta Batra, Chief Evaluation Officer GEF IEO; Carlo Carugi, Senior Evaluation Officer, GEF IEO; Anna Viggh, Senior Evaluation Officer GEF IEO; Kate Steingraber, Evaluation Officer GEF IEO.

Written comments were received ahead of the meeting from UNDP and from IPAG, representatives from each group were unable to attend but their feedback is appended to the end of these meeting notes.

Comments from CSO Network:

- Linked comments on the CBA evaluation to previously provided comments on knowledge and learning. Highlighted the importance of evaluation in the learning and KM process within the GEF.
- Expressed the desire for new and innovative evaluations at GEF IEO and more visibility for IEO's work. Sees a lot of value in the evaluation mechanism.
- Wanted to know more about how IEO addresses the need for community participation both through the GEF's Evaluation Policy and through its own work.

Comments from WWF:

WWF brings the perspective of working on the operational side, developing and implementing GEF projects.

Main points:

- WWF notes that often recipient governments (and WWF) are very interested in making sure that communities are central in the project, in working with communities they have been focusing on making sure that CBA in GEF projects are linked to delivering GEBs. In the context of CBA this means linking the community support or livelihoods activities to the environmental outcomes. From that perspective, interested in what the report can say about how CBA is delivering environmental outcomes versus generating support.

IEO Response: Pointed to analysis of performance ratings, GEBs, and environmental status change.

- Appreciated discussion around six good practice dimensions, found it to be a useful framework, would like to think about more. Next step is how to make that operational – project level guidance or examples would be helpful.

IEO Response: We hope that this will be taken up by GEFSEC as it is part of Recommendation 1.

- Regarding the recommendation to the GEF allow for participative processes in the first year, agrees in principle, but wants to recognize the tradeoffs. To allow for this flexibility would mean there is a slower first year and a longer project duration, which could be okay if the budget will cover this. There is a tension between this recommendation and the current GEF practice of tracking the metrics of time elapsed between certain milestones (MTR, TE, etc).

IEO Response: We note the disconnect as well and will discuss further with GEFSEC during the review meeting.

- Question related to the recommendation on tracking funds or technical resources reaching communities (tied to GBFF aspirational target). Wanted more clarity on what would be tracked and pointed out anticipated challenges. Noted that direct funding to communities depends on the capacity of those groups, there are GEF fiduciary requirements that must be followed. Definition of 'what reaches the ground' may be complicated. Key that the GBFF states that support to IPLCS has to be within the national policies and regulations – national policy and enabling environment has a big influence on what can be done.

IEO Response: The good practice dimension of devolved financial and technical resources to communities was the area where decline was noted between the older and newer cohort of projects – this recommendation speaks to that decline. While it is up to GEFSEC to decide what is feasible to track, we saw an aspirational target of 20% of funds to IPLCs as an opportunity to broaden the exercise to track a similar indicator for the rest of the portfolio. It is acknowledged that not all governments want to devolve financial resources directly to communities and that it may be challenging to measure.

- WWF has been thinking about how to engage community in governance, especially for CBA projects and would like examples. Sees the Inclusive Conservation Initiative in GEF-7 but would like to know of any other examples.

IEO Response: We did not look at this in the evaluation, but it would be interesting to look at.

- When WWF hires consultants for MT or TE, they are encouraged to talk to communities directly if there has been CBA. It would be useful to hear about good practice around independent data gathering associated with MTRs and TE, which MTRs especially because it would allow for some course corrections.

IEO Response: IEO uses participatory approaches in its evaluation fieldwork within the limits associated with global evaluations. We use good practice, maintaining independence from project staff, hiring our own transport and translation, we include an ethics statement and avoid direct attribution of comments, etc. We could consider putting together a good practice note on this.

Comments from Anna Viggh, internal reviewer:

- Noted that we took her earlier recommendation to look at GEF adaptation strategy, noted that there are some projects in report that need to be labeled according to their funding source (LDCF/SCCF).

- Confusion on paragraph 144, may require more supporting evidence or linkages to findings earlier in the report.
- Will send detailed comments in writing.

Juha closed the meeting, reminding participants that notes from this meeting will be circulated then posted, and there will be an audit trail that shows how these comments were addressed, this will also be posted to the evaluation website.
