

India Country Portfolio Evaluation: Scoping Meeting with National Stakeholders

Report on the Meeting Discussions

11th of April 2012

New Delhi

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Introduction

Country portfolio evaluations (CPEs) conducted by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Evaluation Office (EO) use **country as the unit of analysis** to examine the totality of GEF support across all GEF agencies and programs. The CPE for India will assess the relevance, results, and efficiency of GEF support at the country level—that is, how GEF activities perform in producing results, and how the results are linked to national environmental and sustainable development agendas as well as to the GEF mandate of generating global environmental benefits in its focal areas. The process for the India Country Portfolio Evaluation started in October 2011, when the Director of the GEF Evaluation Office proposed this evaluation to Mr. Hem Pande, the GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) for India. In Nov-Dec 2011, an Evaluation Office team, comprised of Mr. Carlo Carugi (team leader of the Country Portfolio Evaluation Team) and Mr Neeraj Negi (Task Manager for the India CPE), undertook a pre-scoping mission to explore potential institutional, quality assurance and management arrangements for implementing this evaluation in India. Based on the feedback received during this mission and the GEF EO experience in other countries, a process was initiated to identify and bring on board experts for the quality assurance panel, and to select a national firm to execute the evaluation.

The constituted quality assurance panel comprises of Dr. Kirit Parikh and Dr. Vinod Mathur. Winrock International India was selected as the firm to execute the evaluation. The members of the Winrock team include Dr. Kinsuk Mitra (lead consultant); senior consultants Mr. Shankar Haldar, Dr. K.M. Jayahari, Mr Rishu Garg and Dr. Sumana Bhattacharya, and junior consultants Mr. Mohd. Aatish Khan, Ms. Sunpreet Kaur, and Ms. Monolisa Sen.

At the request of the GEF Evaluation Office, the Operational Focal Point called for a meeting of the national stakeholders of the GEF to discuss the standard terms of reference (TORs) for the evaluation and to identify additional issues and concerns that need to be addressed to make the TORs more suited to the specific context of India. The meeting was also to seek cooperation of the participants in helping the evaluation team in finalizing the list of the GEF projects in India and in helping the team undertake the evaluation.

The meeting was organized in Hotel Taj Ambassador, New Delhi, on 11th of April 2012. The meeting sessions were chaired by Mr. Hem Pande and Dr L M Palni, Director G B Pant Institute. On behalf of the operational focal point, Dr. Nayanika Singh thanked the participants for their contributions in enriching the discussions of the meeting. Ms Rima Sukhija, World Bank, assisted in making logistical arrangements for the meeting.

This report presents a summary of the highlights of the presentations and ensuing discussion, and the action points.

Presentations

There were four presentations during the meeting. The first presentation was made by Mr. Hem Pande, the GEF Operational Focal Point for India. In his address he briefly discussed the purpose of the evaluation, its utility for the Indian government and requested the participants to enrich the process by

providing feedback on the standard terms of reference for the evaluation. He requested the participants to send the feedback to the task manager by 20th of April 2012. Mr. Pande also described the progress made so far in the evaluation and the process through which the quality assurance panel and evaluation team was constituted. He introduced the evaluation team to the participants. The focal point also raised several substantive issues during his presentation. These include:

- Whether cofinancing is well integrated in GEF projects – is cofinancing really there or whether focus is on implementing projects primarily through the GEF grant?
- The time lag between conceptualization of project and its operationalization needs to be understood better. This time lag leads to a situation where a project may have been conceived by one team but implemented by another. Often this results in lack of understanding of the original motives by the team that eventually executes the project.
- GEF has reduced project administration costs from 10 percent to 5 percent. Has this made GEF operations more efficient or is this hampering operations because the allocated resources are insufficient?
- Is the 10 percent agency fee adequate for the GEF agency staff to supervise the projects and manage it in instances when project extensions are required sufficient?
- Is the communication and outreach component of GEF projects utilized in a cost effective manner? How are GEF policies on enhancing the visibility of GEF being followed?

The second presentation was made by Mr Neeraj Negi, the task manager of the India CPE. In his presentation he briefly described the GEF and its institutional arrangements and the role of M&E within GEF. He discussed the new M&E policy and role of the GEF Evaluation Office as a custodian of the evaluation function within the GEF partnership. He discussed the evaluation streams of the Evaluation Office and how these, through the overall performance study, inform the GEF replenishment process. The purpose of country portfolio evaluation and the rationale for selecting India for the CPE was also discussed.

The third presentation was given by Dr. Kinsuk Mitra. He introduced Winrock International India, the consultant firm selected to execute the evaluation, to the participants outlining its institutional strengths, evaluation capacities, and congruence of the India CPE with the objectives of the firm. He briefly discussed the concerns related to conflict of interest and how these will be addressed so that evaluation is credible.

The fourth presentation was made by Mr Neeraj Negi. In this presentation various aspects of the India Country Portfolio Evaluation and key questions covered in the terms of reference for the evaluation were addressed. In order to facilitate the ensuing discussion, the presentation also reflected the feedback received during the pre-scoping mission to the participants. The feedback at that time had stressed the need to:

- Adequately address regional projects in the evaluation
- Compare GEF supported projects with those undertaken by the GOI independently for project cycle comparisons

- Understand how projects are conceived and developed, the rationale for project endorsement by the government, and how these activities are related to other activities of the government.
- Assess the innovativeness of the GEF projects
- Assess whether co-financing is a facilitating or a hindering factor
- Assess quality of the baseline information provided in the proposals
- Assess the extent to which replication and upscaling (and in some instances duplication) is taking place
- Understand how GEF projects are promoting traditional knowledge and sharing of this knowledge
- Understand the effects of the federal structure of the Indian Union on project execution and results

Issues, concerns and suggestions

The issues and concerns that were raised and suggestions given during the discussion have been organized to facilitate the GEF EO, and where relevant the evaluation team, in addressing them at appropriate places.

CPE Terms of Reference related comments and suggestions

- Give more attention to impact of GEF activities on policies and legal framework.
- Need to assess the extent GEF supported activities are achieving long term impacts and the processes through which these are being achieved. Mechanisms such as replication, upscaling, mainstreaming and market transformation need to be addressed.
- Given that several interventions require a long time before the long term impacts become evident (for example for biodiversity related projects). This requires attention to understanding the progress being made to the long term objectives, i.e. identifying intermediate states and the extent these states are being achieved.

Evaluation matrix related comments and suggestions

- The extent to which an exit strategy is in place for arrangements to follow up after the project ends should be assessed. Forward and backward linkages with government programs and initiatives should also be taken into account.
- Cofinancing: The evaluation should assess the extent to which different agencies are contributing in a coordinated manner. Its role and usefulness, to what extent it materializes and the factors important in ensuring its materialization, and its effect on impact achievements.
- Un-intended – both positive and negative - impacts should also be covered.
- SGP requires a slightly different treatment than other projects of the GEF. Given the small size of SGP grants, the focus should be more on how these grants are building capacities for generation of global environmental benefits and strengthening of local livelihoods, and less on mobilization of cofinancing and ability of NGOs/CBOs to leverage other resources.

- How projects are conceived, how implementing agencies select proposals for further development, and how projects were designed should be assessed.
- Role of an agency at different points in a project's life cycle should be studied: in preparation, during implementation, and post completion.
- Funds flow related constraints affect timely delivery of outputs and other dimensions of project performance. This should be covered.
- Adequate attention should be given to the ownership and interest demonstrated by relevant national actors. Especially, by the government departments that are involved in project implementation.

Methodology related comments and suggestions

- For projects covered through field visits, the evaluation should not duplicate the work already carried out through mid-term and terminal evaluations.
- The criteria for selection of projects should be transparent.
- The team that assesses individual projects should have adequate expertise related to that subject area.
- Some participants expressed concerns that the task – since India has a reasonably large GEF portfolio – may be difficult to accomplish given the resources.

Analysis related comments and suggestions

- Project approval process takes time. In addition, once a project is approved it takes time to mobilize the requisite human resources and capital to get the project running. Given the nature of GEF partnership these delays are to be expected. Delays should, therefore, be assessed based on whether these are in line with the expectations or whether these are considerably beyond what may be perceived as “normal.”
- GEF's effectiveness in transforming CCM relevant markets should also be seen in terms of the size of the Indian market. Even small systemic changes, may deliver greater global environmental benefits given that these changes are taking place in a huge market. This needs to be kept in mind when comparing results in India with those in other smaller economies.

Clarifications

During the discussion several other points were raised that required clarifications. The task manager provided clarifications on the following:

- GEF EO approach to addressing long term environmental stress reduction and status change given that the environmental impacts take a long time in expressing themselves: it was explained that the theory of change and complexity theory based tools used by the Evaluation Office address these concerns.
- GEF EO builds on the evidence base already present so as to minimize duplication of effort. Thus, mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations become a point of reference for verification.

During the field visits in addition to verification, the effort is on collecting additional information on developments that have taken place after the mid-term review or terminal evaluation was completed.

- Focus of the CPE is more at the country level achievements; it is not a collection of project evaluations. Projects are covered but primarily to inform what is being achieved at the country level, the processes through which these achievements materialize and the factors that affect the processes and achievements.
- GEF approach to addressing sustainability is primarily based on taking stock of the risks that are being faced or are foreseen that would hinder progress to long term impact, and durability of existing achievements.
- The suggestions received during the pre-scoping mission and during the meeting, and later through emails, will be discussed with the quality assurance panel members, and with the team leader of the Country Portfolio Evaluations to identify ways in which these could be addressed.

Action Points

- The Operational Focal Point requested the participants to provide their **comments on TORs and on GEF India project list by 20th of April 2012**.
- GEF EO will reflect the inputs from the country stakeholders in the revised TORs, evaluation matrix, and tools used for gathering of information. Revised TORs and related documents will be shared with the meeting participants by early May 2012.

Annex 1:

Agenda: Scoping Meeting for GEF India Country Portfolio Evaluation

Time: 09:30 to 14:00 hours on 11th April 2012

Hotel Taj Ambassador, New Delhi

09:30 – 09:45 hr:	Registration
09:45 – 10:15 hr:	Welcome; Introduction by the Participants; Indian Perspective on GEF and India CPE <i>By Mr Hem Pande, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests and GEF Operational Focal Point for India</i>
10:15 – 10:30 hr:	Introduction to GEF's Monitoring & Evaluation Policy/ Practices <i>By Mr Neeraj Negi, Evaluation Officer, GEF Evaluation Office</i> <i>Chaired by: Dr L M Palni, Director, G B Pant Institute</i>
10:30 – 10:45 hr:	Introduction to Winrock International India <i>By Dr. Kinsuk Mitra, President, Winrock International India</i> <i>Chaired by: Dr L M Palni, Director, G B Pant Institute</i>
10:45 – 11:10 hr:	Terms of Reference for GEF India Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) <i>By Mr Neeraj Negi, Evaluation Officer, GEF Evaluation Office</i> <i>Chaired by: Dr L M Palni, Director, G B Pant Institute</i>
11:10 – 11:30 hr:	Tea break
11:30 – 12:55 hr:	Identification of India specific issues for CPE <i>Chaired by: Dr L M Palni, Director, G B Pant Institute</i>
12:55 – 13:00 hr:	Vote of Thanks <i>By Dr. Nayanika Singh, MoEF</i>
13:00 – 14:00 hr:	Lunch

Annex 2: List of Meeting Participants

S. No.	Name	Organization	Contact
1.	Dr. A. P. Srivastava	National Agricultural Innovation Project Indian Council for Agricultural Research Room No 513, Krishi Anusadhan Bhawan II, Pusa Campus, New Delhi 110012	09818701559
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