

Concept Note

Evaluation of the Global Wildlife Program

I. Introduction

1. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) supports addressing global environmental concerns related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, chemicals, and waste. Since its inception in 1991, the GEF has provided over US \$ 23 billion in grants and mobilized US \$ 129 billion in co-financing for more than 5,000 national and regional projects in 170 countries. These grants are implemented through a network of 18 accredited agencies. The GEF receives its funds through a four-year replenishment.
2. The GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO) has a central role in ensuring the independent evaluation function within the GEF. The GEF IEO is based in Washington, DC. It is administered by the World Bank but is independent of its management as well as the management of the GEF. The IEO Director reports directly to the GEF Council, the GEF governing body. All contracts with the IEO are World Bank contracts. More information about the GEF IEO can be found at the IEO website: www.gefio.org
3. The IEO undertakes independent evaluations on issues relevant to GEF's performance. These cover issues related to GEF policies, processes, projects, and programs funded by the GEF. The GEF IEO is undertaking the Eighth Overall Performance Study (OPS8) to inform the replenishment process for the GEF-9 period. The audience for the OPS8 comprises replenishment participants, the GEF Council, the GEF Assembly, members of the GEF, and external stakeholders. This evaluation will be included in OPS8 and presented to the GEF Council in June 2024.
4. The GEF began a concerted effort to address illegal wildlife trade (IWT) through the Global Wildlife Program (GWP) approved during the sixth replenishment cycle (GEF-6) in June 2015. This initiative, formally known as the Global Partnership on Wildlife Conservation and Crime Prevention for Sustainable Development, encompasses various national child projects alongside a global project. The global project's primary role is to facilitate coordination, offer technical support, and foster knowledge exchange among the national or "child" projects. The focus of the first phase of GWP was primarily to conserve wildlife and habitats by addressing the drivers and impacts of wildlife poaching, trafficking, and demand. Phase 2 of the GWP was approved in the seventh replenishment cycle (GEF-7) in 2019. The GEF-7 phase continues to focus on IWT issues with an emphasis on enhancing the benefits of wildlife for local communities through ecotourism and wildlife-based enterprises. During the eighth replenishment cycle (GEF-8), the GWP continued and expanded to the Wildlife

Conservation for Development Integrated Program. This recent phase of the GWP has a broader focus and expanded to explicitly address issues such as human-wildlife conflict and co-existence and reduce zoonotic spillover along with the integration of wildlife conservation into development planning and policies.

II. Problem Description

5. Illegal wildlife trade (IWT) is the illicit sale or exchange of biological resources (animals and plants) without appropriate legal permission. This trade ranges from local, small-scale illegal trade of wildlife (such as bushmeat) to international trafficking of high-value products (such as ivory). The global value of IWT is significant, estimated to be \$8–10 billion annually.
6. IWT is one of the leading threats to biodiversity globally. The illegal trafficking and unsustainable trade in wildlife commodities are causing unprecedented declines in wildlife species populations, pushing certain species toward extinction. The 2021 update to the IUCN Red List includes 134,425 species, of which 37,480 are threatened with extinction. IWT also generates novel biosecurity and human health risks through the transport and introduction of alien and invasive species—as well as their pathogens and diseases, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. These risks are exacerbated by human encroachment into previously unexplored habitats and increased exposure to diseases in wildlife populations due to habitat and biodiversity loss. Biodiversity conservation, including addressing IWT, is therefore framed as the first line of defense against the next pandemic.
7. IWT is driven by both supply and demand factors and has root causes in systemic governance issues. One driver is the growing demand for illegal wildlife products, particularly from expanding economies in Asia. On the supply side, increased poaching, often due to poverty and the absence of sustainable livelihood alternatives, drives IWT. Additional factors enabling IWT include governance failures and corruption, and a lack of consistent coordination makes it difficult to address IWT in a sustained manner. In source and transit countries, corruption continues to be a major facilitator of IWT. And yet, in most countries, there have been no cases prosecuting corruption related to IWT. Where there are cases, delays in prosecution proceedings have posed challenges to prosecutors bringing credible evidence and reliable witnesses to trial.
8. Despite national and international protections for some species, many countries have

lax systems for prosecuting wildlife crimes at the national level (including the lack of a minimum sentence for wildlife crimes). A lack of awareness of IWT among law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, police, and judges, combined with scarce prosecutions, allows IWT to flourish in many countries without severe consequences for the perpetrators. These weak disincentives often contrast with the strong economic incentives driving IWT, which can produce profits similar to arms or human trafficking. International IWT is often facilitated by transnational criminal networks, which also illegally traffic weapons, drugs, and humans. Very little is known about the financial aspects of these operations, as financial investigations into organized crime groups are lagging behind efforts to crack down on poaching and seize illicit wildlife parts in transit. Enforcement is often focused on agents on the ground, which targets low-level poachers but not the kingpins and gang bosses who control the trade and make the real profit.

III. Objective and methodology

9. The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the Global Wildlife Program (GWP) supported by the GEF. It examines the program's relevance, coherence, and results from ongoing and recently completed projects in supporting wildlife conservation efforts. Additionally, evaluation delves into the GWP's evolution, its programmatic additionality, governance structure, management arrangements, coordination mechanisms, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. Particular emphasis is placed on assessing the program's relevance in addressing illegal wildlife trade (IWT), which was the primary objective during the pilot GEF-6 phase and has remained an important area of focus through the three GEF phases (GEF-6 through GEF-8). Since several projects from the first phase in GEF-6 are either completed or nearing completion, both global and child projects associated with IWT are closely examined to assess the program's effectiveness in achieving this goal. In addition, this evaluation also reviews the portfolio of ongoing projects under the GWP GEF-6 and GEF-7.
10. This evaluation builds upon the foundation laid by the Independent Evaluation Office's (IEO) 2017 formative assessment¹, which concentrated on the GWP's design and structure. Since the 2017 evaluation, many GWP GEF-6 child projects have produced midterm reports or terminal evaluations. Additionally, several GWP GEF-7 child projects have reported on their initial implementation efforts, and those in GEF-8 have started designing their projects. Furthermore, the Global Wildlife Program has expanded and evolved into the Wildlife Conservation for

¹ It produced eleven findings and five recommendations, which fed into the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS6) - GEF IEO, OPS 6 Final Report: The GEF in the Changing Environmental Finance Landscape (2018), <https://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops6-report>.

Development(.WCD) IP, with a shift in the role of IWT in the Program. The closure of early projects and these recent changes in the program present a timely opportunity to assess GEF's support for wildlife conservation through the GWP. The evaluation addresses the following key aspects:

- (a). Relevance, efficiency, performance, and coherence of the program.
- (b). Governance, management arrangements, additionality, coordination, and M&E of the Program
- (c). The extent to which GWP projects address policy coherence.
- (d). Incorporation of learning and knowledge sharing
- (e). The ways in which GWP projects assess and address risks.
- (f). Stakeholder engagement, including women, IPLCs, and the private sector.

IV. Methodology

- 11. The evaluation will use a mixed-methods approach, combining desk reviews, portfolio analysis, and interviews with key informants. The assessment will utilize complementary quantitative and qualitative analytic approaches—including portfolio analysis, in-depth analyses (including field verifications), geospatial analysis, and interviews for triangulation.
- 12. The evaluation will draw on multiple sources of information, including (1) portfolio reviews, (2) country and/or site visits, and (3) information gleaned during earlier evaluation research, including that derived from interviews with key informants.
- 13. The portfolio review will cover documents related to Phases 1 and 2 of the Global Wildlife Program, such as project and program documents, implementation reports, midterm evaluations, and completion reports. These project and program documents will be evaluated according to the criteria listed below (Table 1) to track whether projects in subsequent phases incorporated feedback from the 2017 report into their work. The quality at entry assessment will include documents from the recently approved GEF-8 integrated program 'Wildlife Conservation for Sustainable Development.'
- 14. The evaluation will identify six countries to analyze in greater depth. The chosen

countries will reflect the variety in location, project cycle, and project focus and activities. Local experts, as part of the IEO evaluation team, will provide support during field missions, conducting interviews, and in the preparation of country case studies.

15. Key stakeholders, program and project staff, experts, and officials from governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are involved in addressing illegal wildlife trade will be interviewed. The study will build on the existing data collected through the interviews conducted for the first evaluation of GEF support to combat IWT, as well as identify new interviewees as needed. The evaluation team will also gather information at the Wildlife Program knowledge exchange in Bangkok in December 2023.

Table 1: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Indicator	Information Source / Methodology
1. As the GWP has evolved, how is IWT relevant to projects?	1.1 Is there an explicit anti-IWT mission in the project's objectives?	1.1.1 Inclusion of anti-IWT mission at programmatic level	Review of GWP projects Interviews
		1.1.2 Inclusion of anti-IWT mission in child project objective	Review of GWP projects Case studies
	1.2 Are there specific measures for addressing IWT trafficking?	1.2.1 Inclusion of combating IWT trafficking as a pillar at the programmatic level	Review of GWP projects Interviews
		1.2.2 Specific measures to address IWT trafficking included in project documents	Review of GWP Projects Case Studies
	1.3 Are there specific measures for addressing the demand side of IWT?	1.3.1 Inclusion of demand reduction as a pillar at the programmatic level	Review of GWP Projects Interviews
		1.3.2 Specific measures to address demand reduction in project documents	Review of GWP Projects Case Studies
2. What are the different ways that GWP projects monitor	2.1 Are projects using a tracking tool for arrests, prosecutions, convictions, penalties,	2.1.1 Tracking tool included in project design 2.1.2 Evidence of use of	Review of GWP projects Case studies

project progress, particularly as it relates to IWT efforts?	sentences, and seizures?	tracking tool in project implementation	Review of GWP Projects
	2.2 Are qualitative techniques used in addition to quantitative measurements in monitoring and evaluation?	2.2.1 Evidence of use of qualitative techniques in child project M&E	Review of GWP Projects
3. How are GWP projects addressing policy coherence?	3.1 Have GWP projects assessed the policy context of their projects?	3.1.1 Evidence of policy analysis at design stage	Review of GWP projects Interviews
	3.2 Have GWP projects analyzed possible incoherent policies?	3.2.1 Evidence of identified potential policy coherence and incoherence at design stage	Review of GWP Projects
	3.3 Have GWP projects promoted regional frameworks that promote policy coherence?	3.3.1 Reference to existing regional frameworks in project documents 3.3.2 Working with or through existing regional frameworks during project implementation 3.3.3 Creation of new regional frameworks during project implementation	Review of GWP Projects
			Review of GWP Projects
			Review of GWP Projects
	3.4 What is the scope of project engagement with other relevant authorities?	3.4.1 Number of ministries identified as stakeholders in project design 3.4.2 Evidence of involvement of other relevant authorities during project implementation	Review of GWP Projects

			Review of GWP Projects Case Studies
4. How are GWP projects incorporating learning and participating in knowledge sharing, in particular as it relates to IWT?	4.1 Are countries and projects engaging with the global coordination grant and associated resources?	4.1.1 Evidence in reports on the global knowledge grant regarding engagement of child projects and other stakeholders	Review of GEF projects Annual report on GWP global knowledge platform Ratings in MTRs and TEs of global coordination grant Interviews
		4.1.2 Evidence in child project reports of engaging with the global coordination grant	Review of GEF projects
		4.1.3 Evidence of staff attending conferences and/or the GWP Annual Meeting	Interviews Annual report of global knowledge platform
	4.2 Are projects incorporating lessons learned from other projects?	4.2.1 Evidence of implementation of lessons learned	Review of GWP projects
5. What are the ways that GWP projects are assessing and addressing risks?	5.1 Were appropriate risks recognized beforehand?	5.1.1 Completed risk analysis in project design	Review of GWP projects Interviews
	5.2 How have projects addressed risks?	5.2.1 Analysis of risks throughout project implementation	Review of GWP Projects
		5.2.2 Evidence of new and innovative approaches to addressing risk	Review of GWP Interviews

6. How are GWP projects engaging stakeholders, particularly women, IPLCs, and the private sector?	6.1 How does the GWP engage with key stakeholders on a programmatic level?	6.1.1 Evidence of gender analysis at programmatic level	Review of GWP Projects, including program-level PFDs
		6.1.2 Engagement of a gender advisor at programmatic level	
		6.1.3 Evidence of engagement with women, IPLCs, and private sector at the programmatic level	Review of GWP Projects, including program-level PFDs Interviews
	6.2 How do individual child projects engage with relevant stakeholders?		Review of GWP Projects, including program-level PFDs and global grant activities Interviews
		6.2.1 Gender analysis at child project level	Review of GWP Child Projects
		6.2.2 Inclusion of an Indigenous peoples' plan or completion of FPIC 6.2.3 Evidence of child project engagement with women, IPLCs, and private sector	Review of GWP Child Projects
			Review of GWP Child Projects Case studies

V. Timeline

Action/Deliverable	Deadline
Case Study Drafts	March 1 st , 2024
Draft of Evaluation	April 2 nd , 2024
Final Evaluation	April 10 th 2024

VI. The Evaluation Team

The evaluation team consists of GEF IEO staff and expert consultants. Anupam Anand (Senior Evaluation Officer and Team Lead), Eki Ramadhan (Evaluation Analyst, GEF IEO), Carl Bruch (Senior Consultant, ELI), Jarryd (Senior Consultant, ELI), Susannah Dibble (Consultant, ELI), and Geeta Batra (Chief Evaluation Officer, IEO).