

Water security evaluation: reference group meeting notes

Meeting date: 3/14/2022

Main topic: officially launch the evaluation and discuss reference group member feedback on the evaluation approach paper

Participant list	
Sano Akhteruzzaman	CSO Network
Sarah Davidson	WWF
Lorenzo Galbiati	FAO
Astrid Hillers	GEF Secretariat
Andrew Hudson	UNDP
Anya Onysko	UNIDO
Gmelina Ramirez	IDB
Blake Ratner	STAP
Mauricio Velasquez	CAF
Geeta Batra	GEF IEO
Carlo Carugi	GEF IEO
Malac Kabir	GEF IEO
Gabriel Sidman	GEF IEO
Juha Uitto	GEF IEO
Glen Hearn	GEF IEO consultant

Juha Uitto (GEF IEO): Introduction to the evaluation and the main tasks of the reference group members.

Lorenzo Galbiati (FAO): Notes the focus on older projects back to GEF-4. Question on how to engage colleagues from these older projects and if the evaluation will look at projects currently in design and implementation. Response from **Juha Uitto** and **Gabriel Sidman (GEF IEO)**: We will address older projects through case studies and will ask for support reaching old project teams and stakeholders as best we can. Ongoing projects will also be included through a portfolio review and case studies.

Astrid Hillers (GEFSEC): Appreciates the broad scope of the evaluation that goes beyond only IW. Notes the lack of a freshwater security strategy across the GEF, which would be a good topic to explore in the evaluation. Cautions against using one common blueprint or best practices to assess all the diverse water security situations that GEF works in—different situations call for different solutions. Most tools and models look only at water quantity—not enough data on water quality—so it can be hard to assess which areas are most in need. GEF often tries to preempt issues and setting up transboundary management is a long process that doesn't always yield concrete results within the timespan of a project. Success is defined more as developing a trajectory for future management such as assisting basin organizations, legislation, policies, etc.

Gmelina Ramirez (IDB): Notes IDB's work in water security, climate adaptation and infrastructure in Latin America and interest in providing inputs for the evaluation. Question on the timeline of the evaluation. Response from **Gabriel Sidman (GEF IEO):** current timeline has most data collection between now and August with presentation to GEF Council in December 2022.

Sarah Davidson (WWF): Echoes Astrid's point on the overall role and objectives of GEF in water security—it would be great to flesh this out through this evaluation. Looking at GEF's role in addressing declines and missed opportunities in water security is important. Decline in species and role of aquatic ecosystems are also important. Question on why impact and efficiency evaluation criteria are not included in the approach paper. Response from **Geeta Batra (GEF IEO):** at the strategic level, we can look at the impact of policy work—this will be harder at the project level because counterfactuals are hard to establish. In GEF, efficiency is usually looked at in the length of the project cycle but OECD DAC looks at efficiency in terms of value for money. We could assess the feasibility of doing value for money as have done in previous evaluations on land degradation and sustainable forest management.

Sano Akhteruzzaman (CSO Network): Notes the importance of both quantitative and qualitative methods for monitoring and evaluation. Also the importance of looking at what did not work in addition to what did and the importance of establishing baselines for monitoring purposes.

Blake Ratner (STAP): Appreciates the integrated focus of the approach paper, intersecting IW with other focal areas. Suggests three points: 1) look at adaptive management of interventions—especially in fragile areas, 2) consider policy coherence between water management and other sectors such as energy policy and urban planning and the missed opportunities for such coherence, and 3) look at how knowledge management and cross-country collaboration can be improved.

Andrew Hudson (UNDP): Highlights the importance of using not only terminal evaluations for evaluative evidence but other sources as well such as project websites, IW Learn, etc. Echoes Astrid's point on the long-term process and large scale of IW projects that often do not result in on the ground water security benefits in the short project life. Need to look at long term impacts. Urges the evaluation to include more than one multi-country basin as a case study. **Response from Geeta Batra (GEF IEO):** evaluations are always a balance between working quickly to meet council deadlines and gathering the most evidence possible. We may add more case studies and thus would likely need to extend the deadline of the evaluation.

Geeta Batra (GEF IEO): Stresses that the OECD DAC talks about objectives-based evaluation (are the objectives set realistic), which will be a focus of this evaluation. Unintended impacts will be assessed. Traditional M&E frameworks do not capture policy coherence well, so we may need to develop a framework for assessing this.

Astrid Hillers: Question on how multi-country case studies will be selected and notes they can help identify basins where GEF has a long history of working. Response from **Gabriel Sidman (GEF IEO):** countries and basins with more completed projects will be prioritized. Welcomes input on identifying basins with large GEF presence.

Mauricio Velasquez (CAF): Notes CAF's specialized water team and points to several errors in the list of projects—projects implemented by CAF that are not correctly identified. Will send corrections via email.

Sano Akhteruzzaman (CSO Network): Notes importance of looking at worst practices in addition to good practices. Recommends having gender representation across evaluation interviews and interviewing stakeholders not directly involved in the projects.

Action Items:

1. Reference group members should send any written comments on the approach paper by Monday, March 21. IEO will then finalize the approach paper.
2. IEO will draft meeting notes and circulate to reference group members for any additions or amendments before posting on the IEO website.