

## Approach Paper

### Evaluation of GEF Support to Mainstreaming Biodiversity

#### Context

1. Terrestrial protected areas (PAs) are an essential tool for delivering conservation, but development activities and land use change outside of these areas continue to undermine biodiversity both within and outside of these systems. Of all human activities, agricultural expansion and intensification have the most profound impacts on habitats, biodiversity, and soil conditions. In fact, globally, agriculture has already cleared or converted 70% of the grassland, 50% of the savanna, 45% of the temperate deciduous forest, and 27% of the tropical forest biome.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, infrastructural development and mining pose significant threats to biodiversity.<sup>2</sup> Unless the foot-prints of these production and economic sectors (agriculture, forestry, mining, infrastructure, tourism, fisheries etc.) are managed, sectors that directly depend on natural resources will not be economically sustainable and remaining natural ecosystems will suffer further degradation, leading to reduced economic growth, loss of biological diversity and limiting the ecosystem services they provide.<sup>3</sup>
2. According to the Global Biodiversity Outlook 4, the drivers of biodiversity loss are ‘often embedded deep within our systems of decision-making, financial incentives and patterns of production and consumption.’<sup>4</sup> While mainstreaming biodiversity is needed to address both the pressures and the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, it is most critical for the latter. This means that the mainstreaming biodiversity into economic development and planning, and across sectors is essential for conservation of ecosystems and for the provision of important goods and services, and for keeping the impacts of natural resource use within safe ecological limits.
3. The CBD has mandated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) as its overall country-level instrument to promote biodiversity planning and these provide guidance on how a country will meet its obligations under the CBD (CBD and UNEP, 2008). Integrating biodiversity objectives into mainstream development is a complex challenge that is at the core of the CBD, and a key objective of NBSAPs. As of 2011, although the majority of the Parties adopted their plans or equivalent instruments, 77%<sup>5</sup> acknowledge that mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations are limited.<sup>6</sup> Parties identified disjointed decision

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbs et al. 2010

<sup>2</sup> Benítez-López et al. 2010

<sup>3</sup> Chapin et al 2000 & Tilman et al. 2001

<sup>4</sup> Global Biodiversity Outlook 4

<sup>5</sup> Of 193 parties

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-78-en.pdf>

making and lack of communication as the main reasons for lack of progress. 61% of the Parties identified paucity of economic valuations of biodiversity as a deterrent to the utilization of resources to support biodiversity conservation actions.

4. Mainstreaming biodiversity is captured explicitly in two of the five strategic goals of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Strategic Goal A: address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society, and Strategic Goal B: reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use. In GEF-6, the objectives and programs directly related to mainstreaming aim to embed biodiversity conservation and sustainability objectives into production landscapes/seascapes and in sectors and to address at least 10 of the 20 Aichi Targets.
5. Goals Twelve and Fifteen of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in 2015 are also relevant to biodiversity mainstreaming. A number of targets under these two goals have particular relevance, namely:
  - 12.2: By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
  - 12.8: By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature
  - 15.9: By 2030, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.

## Mainstreaming Biodiversity and the GEF

6. *Definition of Mainstreaming.* This evaluation will use the definition applied in the GEF-6 strategy document, according to which biodiversity mainstreaming is “the process of embedding biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies, and practices of key public and private actors that impact or rely on biodiversity. Mainstreaming enables biodiversity to persist across entire landscapes and seascapes” (GEF2014b, 5).
7. *The GEF* began to incorporate biodiversity considerations first in the agricultural sector through Operational Program 13 in GEF-3.<sup>7</sup> This was aligned with a COP 3 Decision on conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity and in line with guidance provided by the CBD. The focus on Protected Areas of the early years of GEF funding produced results within the locations targeted. However, it became clear that a much broader approach would be necessary to consider biodiversity needs in production landscapes. In response to this global challenge, the GEF has become progressively more involved in mainstreaming biodiversity. Mainstreaming Biodiversity later became a strategic objective in GEF-4. The GEF-6 Biodiversity Strategy states that “affecting the

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<sup>7</sup> Although earlier projects might have mainstreaming components it is difficult to identify them. Therefore this portfolio analysis will look only at projects since GEF3 and identified 358 projects with mainstreaming BD components.

drivers of biodiversity loss will require a combination of protection, sustainable use, and mainstreaming.” In GEF-6, the objectives and programs directly related to mainstreaming aim to embed biodiversity conservation and sustainability objectives into production landscapes/seascapes and in sectors, and address at least 10 of the 20 Aichi Targets. Within this approach, GEF has aimed to support the development of various types of mainstreaming projects.

8. *Types of mainstreaming interventions*<sup>8</sup>. According to the GEF-6 BD strategy, the mainstreaming biodiversity portfolio includes four main sets of activities:

- developing policy and regulatory frameworks
- spatial and land use planning
- encouraging biodiversity-friendly production practices
- piloting financial mechanisms to incentivize change in current practices that maybe detrimental to biodiversity conservation

The current strategy aims to support these activities, and seeks to ensure that “interventions are spatially targeted and thematically relevant to conserving or sustainably using globally significant biodiversity.”<sup>9</sup>

9. A preliminary analysis shows that the mainstreaming portfolio has increased substantially in GEF-6 from previous replenishment periods and is in 51 percent of projects with 55 percent of the funding. It is the largest portfolio, comparable in size to PA and PA systems. So far in GEF-6, the majority of biodiversity mainstreaming projects are focused on planning and policy (82 percent); 11 percent focus on financing. The most common combinations of biodiversity mainstreaming projects are in the forestry and agriculture sectors.

## Evidence from Previous Evaluations, Studies and Reviews

10. Previous studies have been undertaken by the GEF Secretariat and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) to better understand the practice of ‘biodiversity mainstreaming’, and generate some early lessons. The earliest substantive guidance<sup>10</sup> on mainstreaming biodiversity from 2005 was based on a collection of case studies from a narrow set of countries and the experiences of the stakeholders engaged in the review exercise. This Working Paper built mainly on case study evidence from diverse non-GEF sources. The next significant body of evidence relevant to GEF mainstreaming was presented in a STAP advisory document, *Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Practice*,<sup>11</sup> based on papers presented at a Workshop in Cape Town in October 2013. This review introduced a mix of GEF and non-GEF evidence. In 2016, the GEF released a review of mainstreaming in practice in its projects which is the first assessment of mainstreaming based on a sound platform of GEF-specific project evidence. This assessment<sup>12</sup> notes that between “2004 and 2016, the GEF supported a total of 427 biodiversity mainstreaming

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8 According to classification used by GEFSEC 2016 report.

9 Biodiversity Mainstreaming in Practice: A Review of GEF Experience. GEF 2016, P4.

10 Achieving Mainstreaming Outcomes: Guidelines for Effective Interventions, Section 14 of GEF Working Paper 20. 2005.

11 GEF STAP 2014.

12 Biodiversity Mainstreaming in Practice: A Review of GEF Experience. GEF 2016, P10.

programs and projects, totaling US\$ 2,719,882,760 in GEF funding and US\$ 16,842,483,011 in co-financing.” The evolution of the evidence base is summarized in Annex 1.

11. All reviews highlight the long time-scale to achieve results from mainstreaming biodiversity interventions therefore requiring either longer project time frames or phasing project investments over time after sufficient enabling conditions are established. Overall the studies recognized that there is lack of scientific evidence and documentation of replicable good practices of mainstreaming interventions. The 2016 Review reports good results from spatial and land use planning, particularly where these projects blend work on Protected Areas and surrounding landscapes.

## Purpose, Objectives

12. *Nature of the Evaluation.* This is the first independent evaluation of GEF support to mainstreaming biodiversity and will be conducted by the GEF-IEO. The primary objective is to evaluate the effectiveness, results and progress towards impact of the biodiversity mainstreaming portfolio.
13. Recognizing the current BD strategy, the evaluation will consist of two components:
  - Independent assessment of the closed projects from GEF 3 through GEF-5.
  - A quality at entry review of GEF-6 projects to assess the application of lessons learned from previous assessments on Biodiversity mainstreaming undertaken.

## Evaluation Questions and Coverage/Scope

14. The evaluation design will be structured around four specific evaluation questions:  
**Question 1: What has been the nature and extent of GEF support to mainstreaming biodiversity?**
  - What has been the GEF’s main modalities for mainstreaming biodiversity?
  - How has the GEF strategy to mainstream biodiversity evolved over time and in response to what?
  - How has GEF’s support to mainstreaming biodiversity evolved in response to the CBD guidance, the drivers of biodiversity loss and country priorities?
  - To what extent and in what ways does GEF support to Mainstreaming Biodiversity distinguish itself from support provided by other institutions?**Question 2: What are the needs and challenges in mainstreaming biodiversity through GEF support?**
  - How has GEF incorporated the lessons from its systematic review and STAP’s findings?
  - What are the missed and potential opportunities for GEF’s engagement with key public and private sectors?**Question 3: Theory of Change. Is the current theory of change for mainstreaming**

### **biodiversity valid?**

- Are key lessons drawn from scientific literature and knowledge from project implementation adequately reflected in the theory of change? Why?
- Are GEF mainstreaming projects having their intended outcomes and impacts based on this theory of change? Why?

### **Question 4: Is the Monitoring & Evaluation systems for mainstreaming biodiversity adequate and useful?**

- For each specific sector, is the current results framework and the indicators sufficient for assessing the outcomes of mainstreaming efforts? Why?
  - Do current modalities of mainstreaming biodiversity result in maintaining globally significant biodiversity and the ecosystem goods and services that it provides?
  - Do current mainstreaming efforts result in establishing systems and processes that are likely to produce these intended results?
15. The evaluation will combine different data collection and analysis methods to answer the proposed evaluation questions. The portfolio of this study will include GEF support to mainstreaming biodiversity projects since its pilot phase. The specific methods and sources of data that will be used in the evaluation can be classified under the following main methodological approaches:

## **Evaluation Design and Sources of Evidence**

16. *Desk review.* Review of literature including relevant published and peer-reviewed scientific literature, CBD publications, previous evaluations and new information from analytical work, will help understand the nature and extent of GEF support to Mainstreaming Biodiversity including the evolution of its strategy and projects. The review will help synthesize the main issues and objectives addressed by the GEF over time, illustrating the development of GEF approaches to mainstreaming at the strategic level. This will include mapping of GEF mainstreaming approaches to synthesize how the strategies have evolved over time and primarily to assess how the strategy reflect CBD guidance and priorities. In addition the study will also look at how the strategy respond to the Post 2015-Development Agenda and Aichi targets priorities.
17. *Portfolio analysis.* A portfolio analysis would look at the mainstreaming BD projects based on PMIS data, Annual Performance Reports (APR), and terminal evaluations of the GEF projects focusing on OPS3 to present (OPS 6). Progress toward impact analysis will look at terminal evaluations of mainstreaming projects and their reviews, thematic evaluations of GEF IEO or other non-GEF independent assessments, country portfolio evaluations, learning missions and studies undertaken for the Overall Performance Study since GEF-3. All the findings will be compiled with other evidence and synthesized to understand the factors that enable or impedes the mainstreaming biodiversity through GEF investments.

18. A Quality-at-entry review of the BD projects with mainstreaming objectives will assess the extent to which current project design (GEF-6) respond to key issues including moderators identified by previous work by GEF and scientific literature.
19. *Stakeholder interviews.* Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with GEF staff, global stakeholders and GEF country-level partners, as relevant. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques will be used to cover appropriate stakeholder groups relating to the different (in-depth) analyses included in the evaluation. The interviews will help identify and represent perceptions of key institutions with regards to GEF support to Mainstreaming Biodiversity at in selected country contexts. Criteria driving the sampling include the following: the overall diversity of GEF support in terms of: geographical distribution; country characteristics (long-term BD mainstreaming engagement); institutional diversity within countries; and other issues arising during the evaluation, including practical considerations. See Annex 3 for the Evaluation Matrix for the interviews.
20. *In-depth Case studies.* Case study analysis of biodiversity mainstreaming efforts in selected GEF supported countries will be conducted. One or two selected sectors from among agriculture, forestry, energy and mining, including how mainstreaming is conducted in the IAP on Commodities and the new Impact Program approaches will be considered for in-depth analysis. The selection of countries and intervention types will be informed by the overall portfolio analysis and is guided by the following criteria: contribution to the biodiversity conservation, the frequency of occurrence of particular intervention types in the portfolio, geographical distribution, and the innovative and/or emerging nature for specific kinds of interventions. The final selection will be made in consultation with the GEF Secretariat. Social network analysis (Scott 2009), in conjunction with interview data will be used to analyze GEF's role in cross-sectoral coordination and enhancing stakeholder engagement for mainstreaming biodiversity.

## Strengths and Limitations

21. The strength of the evaluation lies in the multiple sources of evidence discussed above which will be compared and mapped to the concepts within the TOC and assessment questions. The suggested sources of evidence and subsequent triangulation will provide a sound evidence base to understand GEF's approach to mainstreaming BD, the evolution of the strategies and ideas, and its strategic role. It will also help draw lessons from completed interventions and recent support and potentially help guide GEF's approach, function, and position in future phases and project investments involving mainstreaming biodiversity, valuation of biodiversity and sustainable use, delivery of ecosystem services, and generation of global environmental benefits.
22. In terms of addressing limitations, the evaluation team will have to be selective in analyzing the number and types of mainstreaming interventions while capturing the differences and similarities in the cohorts of projects in different sectors, within various



countries, institutional and governance contexts. A desk review of the portfolio will help identify the issues that will require further study. Consultation with practitioners will also help the evaluation team to identify the countries and specific projects that are more likely to generate quality information and data. The TOC for mainstreaming biodiversity has been recently developed and provide only a simplified framework for tracking intended changes through project interventions. As mentioned in previous GEF reports (2016), just a few first generation mainstreaming projects have well-developed theories of change and therefore data collection, analysis and establishing (causal) linkages between project activities and outcomes might be a challenge.

## Quality Assurance Process

23. In accordance with the GEF's M&E policy, the evaluation will adopt various quality control measures including soliciting feedback and inputs from relevant stakeholders before, during and on completion of the evaluation. These stakeholders include GEF Secretariat, STAP, subject matter experts, and practitioners in government, non-profit and implementing agencies, and country clients. Initially the Approach Paper would go through IEO's management team and peer reviewers from the Secretariat to ensure that evaluation questions and issues covered are relevant, the scope of the evaluation is adequate and the tools and methodology are appropriate. The feedback process will continue during data collection and analysis, as well as on completion of the report. The team will identify independent external peer reviewers and subject matter experts for review of the draft evaluation report.

## Expected Outputs

24. The primary output will be in the form of a written report to be presented during the GEF Council in June 2018. The final report, in addition to the findings and lessons will seek to address comments received from GEF IEO, GEF Secretariat, GEF council, the CBD, representatives of GEF Agencies and STAP. A detailed outreach plan, including KM strategy, will be developed closer to completion of this evaluation, when the findings are more concrete.

## Annex 1 - Overview of Findings from Key STAP and GEF Review Documents

Overview of Findings from Key STAP and GEF Review Documents				
	2005 <sup>13</sup>	2014 <sup>14</sup>	2014	2016 <sup>15</sup>
Findings	<p>Effective Mainstreaming requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Political awareness and will</li> <li>● Leadership and dialogue</li> <li>● Respect between biodiversity and development stakeholders</li> <li>● Focus on role of economic sectors affecting biodiversity and development of sector-specific tools</li> <li>● Economic and regulatory tools favoring biodiversity</li> <li>● Need for behavior change at all levels and measurement of effects of these changes</li> <li>● Realizing win-win scenarios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Little systematic evidence of lessons from mainstreaming practice.</li> <li>● Projects not well-assessed or used to develop learning and inform policy-making</li> <li>● Disconnect between implementers and scientists. Little scientific evidence from projects.</li> <li>● Relationship between ecosystem services and biodiversity not well-defined.</li> <li>● Research needed to understand what and how programmes have contributed to impact.</li> <li>● Few “win-win” situations, but trade-offs not well managed – leading to poor results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CBD-mandated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans should be major national level instrument for delivering biodiversity mainstreaming.</li> <li>● Although 172 of 193 countries have adopted plans or equivalent, few countries have used their plans for biodiversity mainstreaming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All mainstreaming approaches are iterative and take a long time. These aspects often under-estimated.</li> <li>● Good results achieved by spatial and land use planning projects blending work on PAs and surrounding landscapes.</li> <li>● Overall, spatial and land use planning investments have produced good results, providing sound basis for future mainstreaming. Important aspect of this success has been increased capacity to generate science-based biophysical and socio-economic spatial information for land use planning.</li> <li>● Improving production practices in forest and agricultural sectors has not been a major focus of GEF support.</li> <li>● GEF struggles to engage with large-scale agriculture or forestry production sectors or with policy makers regulating these sectors.</li> </ul>
Sources	Literature review, workshop case studies of non-GEF approaches and interventions.	Literature, workshop on GEF and non-GEF approaches.	Literature, workshop on GEF and non-GEF approaches.	Review of 66 Final Evaluations of Mainstreaming Projects.

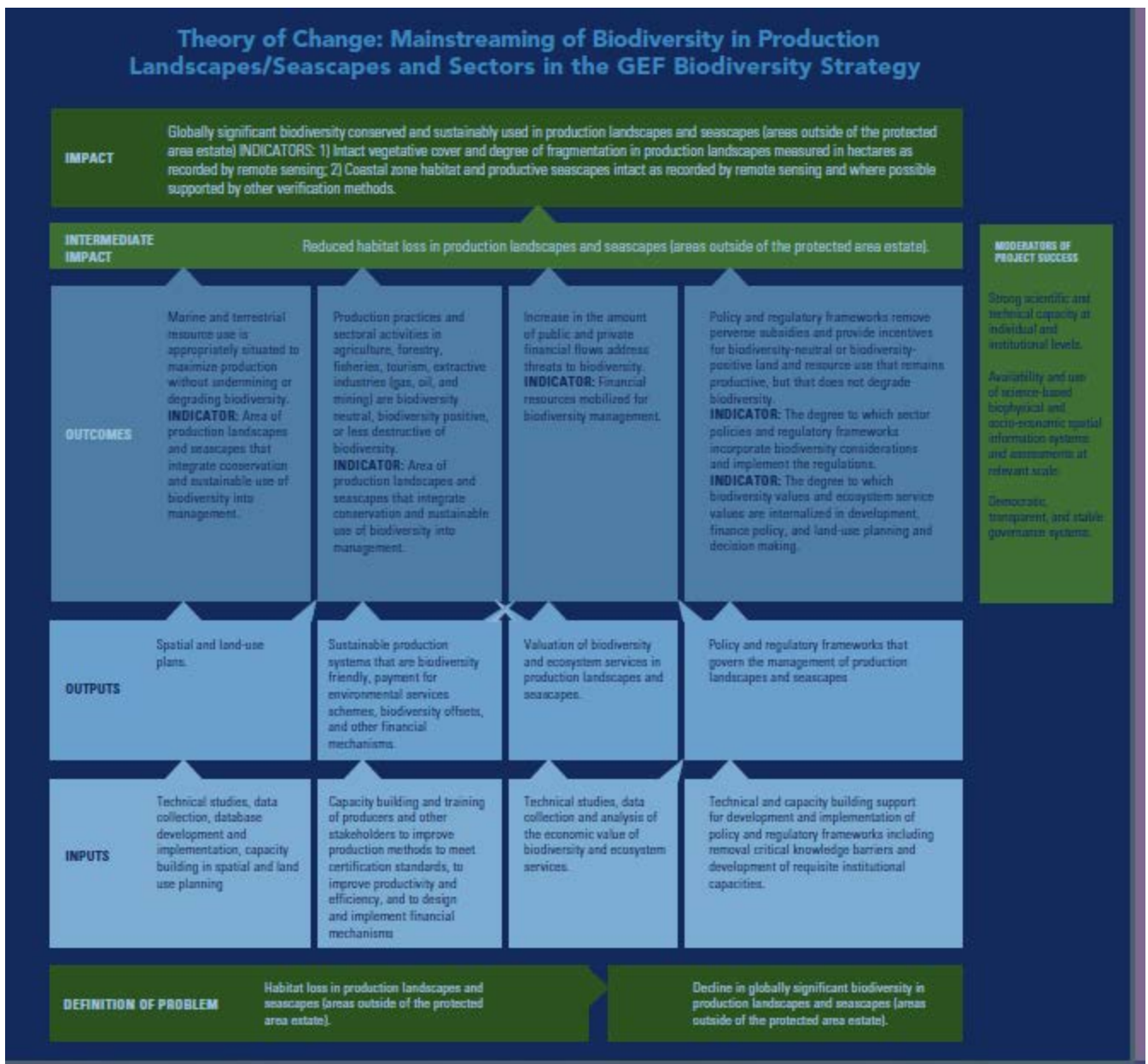
<sup>13</sup> GEF Working Paper 20. Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Production Landscapes.

<sup>14</sup> Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Practice. STAP.

<sup>15</sup> Biodiversity Mainstreaming in Practice: A Review of GEF Experience. 2016



## Annex 2 – Theory of Change (Source: GEF 2016)



### Annex 3 - Evaluation Matrix Elements to be covered By Interviews

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Key Informant Interviews Categories</b>
<b><i>Relevance</i></b>	<p>How is GEF support to mainstreaming projects and programs responding to the CBD guidance and decisions?</p> <p>How have the biodiversity mainstreaming typologies of projects and programs evolved in the GEF through different strategies?</p> <p>To what extent has biodiversity mainstreaming been reflected in the priorities of GEF eligible countries?</p>	<p>1, 2</p> <p>1</p> <p>1,2,3</p>
<b><i>Effectiveness and Results</i></b>	<p>What are the synergies and trade-offs that mainstreaming brings?</p> <p>What are the trends in performance and implementation of the GEF biodiversity mainstreaming portfolio?</p> <p>How have the outcomes of different approaches towards mainstreaming been measured?</p> <p>Has any particular approach towards biodiversity mainstreaming been more successful than other approaches in achieving its stated goals?</p> <p>To what extent have the sectoral and biodiversity indicators in the results framework been effective in measuring project outcomes?</p> <p>* Which particular results framework and what are the “sectors”? Is this for specific projects and programs in countries?</p>	<p>1,2</p> <p>1,2</p> <p>1,2,3</p> <p>1,2,3</p> <p>1,2,3</p>
<b><i>Sustainability</i></b>	<p>Is the level of stakeholder ownership sufficient to allow for project and program outcomes/benefits to be sustained?</p> <p>Was sufficient time provided within the duration of the projects and programs to achieve their objectives as well as ensure its sustainability?</p>	<p>1,2,3,4</p> <p>2,3,4</p> <p>2,3,4</p>

	Was the project or program designed with the idea of ensuring its sustainability from project inception?	
<i>Progress Towards Impact</i>	Has mainstreaming been scaled up after GEF projects and programs have ended?	1,2,3,4
	Looking at the GEF portfolio, have mainstreaming lessons been replicated?	1,2,3,4
	What were the enabling factors for best practices?	1,2,3,4
<i>Impact</i>	What are the impacts of biodiversity mainstreaming and what factors influence their achievement?	1,2,3,4

### Categories of Key Informant Interviews

1 = GEF SEC Biodiversity Team

2 = Implementing Partner HQ Team

3 = Implementing Partner Country Office Portfolio Manager or Task Team Leader

4 = National Government Counterpart (OFP, Ministry Officials)

## References

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