



GEF/ME/C.41/01
October 13, 2011

GEF Council Meeting
November 8–10, 2011
Washington, D.C.

Agenda Item 7

GEF Evaluation Office: Progress Report from the Director

(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed document GEF/ME/C. 41/01, *GEF Evaluation Office: Progress Report from the Director*, takes note of the on-going work of the Office and the outlines of the Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF that the Office is preparing, and requests the Office to prepare draft terms of reference for OPS5 for approval at the Council meeting of June 2012, taking into account comments made.

Executive Summary

1. The Progress Report of the Director is meant to provide the Council with important information on on-going work, on top of the other reports that are presented to this Council meeting, i.e. the first Annual Thematic Evaluations Report and the Evaluation of the SCCF (which is presented to the LDCF/SCCF Council). Furthermore, the Annual Report on Impact is available as an information document to Council. This report's main focus is to start up a first discussion with Council on the scope and key questions of the Fifth Overall Performance Study.
2. On on-going work special attention is asked for the emerging strong collaboration with STAP, especially on impact work, and for the fast growing Climate-Eval community of practice on evaluating climate change and development, which is a global community that delivers M&E products that are highly relevant to the work of the GEF.
3. The Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF is the key element in the overall work plan of the Office for GEF-5. It will deliver two concrete products to the replenishment process. First a synthetic report that will provide an overview of trends in performance, achievements, results and impact of the GEF as evident in the four evaluation streams of the Office. The second report will be presented in the final stage of the replenishment and will contain additional studies that tackle specific questions and issues that Council would like to see in OPS5, for example following up on key questions that were present in OPS4 or on issues that would be specially relevant to the replenishment process, given changes in the international context. The final report will also update the data on trends in ratings, impact, and thematic and country portfolio achievements of the GEF as reported on in the first report, where appropriate, as it may arrive a year later than the first synthesis report.
4. This report contains concrete suggestions on issues that will be addressed in the first synthesis report (see paragraph 11) and on issues that will be further explored in the final report (see paragraph 12). It describes the consultative processes that will be followed to prepare the terms of reference and in OPS5 itself. Council members may wish to raise additional issues that they feel should be explored in OPS5 that would be of specific relevance to their constituency. The consultative process leading up to the draft terms of reference will also provide further opportunities for interaction.
5. The draft terms of reference in a first version will be shared with Council members in March 2012 and Council members will be invited to comment. It is proposed that a revised version of the terms of reference will be a working document of the June 2012 Council meeting.

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Introduction

The Progress Report of the Director is meant to provide the Council with important information on on-going work. As such this report will not contain a full overview of all activities of the Evaluation Office, but focus on a few issues that require the Council's attention, on top of the other reports that are presented to this Council meeting, i.e. the first Annual Thematic Evaluations Report and the Evaluation of the SCCF (which is presented to the LDCF/SCCF Council). Furthermore, the Annual Report on Impact is available as an information document to Council. This report's main focus is to start up a first discussion with Council on the scope and key questions of the Fifth Overall Performance Study.

The Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF

1. The Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF is the key element in the overall work plan of the Office for GEF-5. It will deliver two concrete products to the replenishment process. First a synthetic report that will provide an overview of trends in performance, achievements, results and impact of the GEF as evident in the four evaluation streams of the Office. The second and final report will be presented in the final stage of the replenishment and will contain additional studies that tackle specific questions and issues that Council would like to see in OPS5, for example following up on key questions that were present in OPS4 or on issues that would be specially relevant to the replenishment process, given changes in the international context. The final report will also update the data on trends in ratings, impact, and thematic and country portfolio achievements of the GEF as reported on in the first report, where appropriate, as it may arrive a year later than the first synthesis report.
2. Some initial work has already started for OPS5: the Office has joined an initiative to learn lessons from recent comprehensive evaluations of funds, agencies and global programs, to ensure that OPS5 will be managed and implemented according to the best international standards. This initiative will lead to a workshop in early 2012 in which lessons from several case studies will be discussed, which should lead to the identification of best practices. These can be incorporated into the second phase work of OPS5 when undertaking the special studies that will be included in the final report.
3. A consultative process with stakeholders has started, but will be broadened after the first discussion in Council. Key issues for OPS5 have been raised and will be raised with GEF and convention focal points in Extended Constituency Workshops in Senegal, Liberia, Solomon Islands, Uzbekistan, Kenya and South Africa. However, on the draft terms of reference for OPS5 a more formal process of consultation is envisaged, which will entail posting an approach paper for OPS5 on the Evaluation Office website, with an invitation to send in comments and suggestions, as well as a direct approach to GEF constituencies and partners to send in their comments.
4. The draft terms of reference in a first version will be shared with Council members in March 2012 and Council members will be invited to comment. A revised version of the terms of reference will be a working document of the June 2012 Council meeting.

5. The first synthesis report of OPS5 is envisaged to include overviews of the evaluative findings up to the end of 2012 on:

- a) Relevance of the GEF to the guidance of the conventions, as emerging from the evaluations in the period 2009-2012 and compared to the relevance judgments of OPS4;
- b) Ratings on outcome and sustainability of finished GEF projects, both for the period 2009-2012 and for the full cohort of all finished GEF projects for which terminal evaluations are available;
- c) Ratings on progress toward impact of finished GEF projects for the period 2009-2012 and for the full cohort of OPS4 and OPS5 finished projects;
- d) Trends in the catalytic role of the GEF, as characterized by projects that focus on foundation, demonstration and/or investment;
- e) Trends in ownership and country drivenness, as emerging in the country portfolio evaluations of the Office;
- f) Better understanding of the longer term impact of the GEF as emerging from impact evaluations in the period 2009-2012;
- g) Trends in performance issues, including for example co-funding, management costs and fees, quality at entry, supervision, in the GEF as emerging from the annual performance report and related performance evaluations in the period 2009-2012, as well as in other evaluations of the Office;
- h) Trends in the implementation and achievements of the focal areas of the GEF, synthesized from thematic, country portfolio and impact evaluations in the period 2009-2012.

6. The full report of OPS5, which is envisaged at an appropriate moment near the end of the replenishment process, possibly at the end of 2013 or early 2014, should contain at least additional information on:

- a) Trends in global environmental problems and the relevance of the GEF to these problems, as well as the emergence of new financing channels;
- b) A more in-depth look at focal area strategies, including sustainable forestry management and including impact evidence where available;
- c) The reform processes in the GEF, focusing on the STAR and the support for National Portfolio Formulation Exercises and reporting to the conventions (for which two mid-term evaluations will be presented to Council separately as well), but also identifying progress in improving the activity cycle as well as improvements in modalities (such as direct access) and operational guidelines;
- d) Special attention for the role of the private sector and of civil society organizations;

- e) Attention for cross-cutting policies like gender, participation, as well as for information and knowledge sharing strategies;
- f) An update of the SGP evaluation: trends and developments in SGP since 2009.

7. Council members may wish to raise additional issues that they feel should be explored in OPS5 that would be of specific relevance to their constituency. The consultative process leading up to the draft terms of reference will also provide further opportunities for interaction.

8. OPS5 will include a stakeholder consultation process. The possibilities for a more structural exchange with stakeholders have increased over time. In the Third Overall Performance Study stakeholder consultations had to be budgeted and implemented by the OPS3 team. During OPS4 a lower number of meetings needed to be budgeted as sub-regional meetings of GEF focal points had emerged as an important means to interact directly with the Evaluation Office. With the current Extended Constituency Workshops the Evaluation Office could have an even broader interaction with stakeholders in the GEF and no special meetings would need to be budgeted in OPS5.

9. On top of the ECW workshops, special interaction will need to be set up with representatives of civil society organizations, the private sector, and representatives of staff and beneficiaries involved in projects. The Evaluation Office will consult with partners (most notably the NGO network) to ensure that a broad and inclusive interaction will take place during OPS5. However, the expectation is that new media, like skype and adobe connect, as well as instruments like surveymonkey.com will be sufficient to ensure wide engagement.

Recent Developments

10. The Annual Report on Impact is presented to the Council as an information document, as at this stage no major findings can be reported on and thus no Council decision is proposed or required. The evaluation on GEF support to the South China Sea is proceeding according to plan. Work on assessing progress toward impact in the portfolio of finished projects of the GEF is continuing, and the trends that were reported on in OPS4 are confirmed in these assessments. Mainstreaming impact evaluations in the other streams of the Office is continuing as planned and a strong collaboration with STAP is emerging on the scientific and methodological aspects of impact.

11. The STAP member for the International Waters focal area participates in the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for the South China Sea (SCS) impact evaluation. Seeking STAP's inputs through TAG is likely to become a more regular feature in impact evaluations, including the upcoming impact evaluations of Climate Change and Biodiversity. The Office has also initiated an assessment of quality at entry of arrangements for impact measurement in collaboration with STAP. The focus in this assessment is more on "quality" related concerns than on "compliance". Given the importance of science in assessing the arrangements for impact measurement, the Evaluation Office is drawing on the capacities and expertise of the STAP. This allows the Office to draw upon the latest scientific knowledge to undertake the assessment and also lends greater credibility to the exercise and to the Evaluation Office ongoing efforts to

strengthen the scientific dimensions of its impact evaluations by drawing on resources available within the GEF partnership.

12. The next Annual Report on Impact, to be presented to the GEF Council in November 2012, will be a Working Document of the Council, as it will contain substantive recommendations emerging from the evaluation of GEF support to the South China Sea.

13. The work in the Country Portfolio Evaluations stream and the Performance Evaluations stream is proceeding as planned and agreed upon by Council in May 2011. The thematic stream is presenting its first annual report to the Council in the November 2011 meeting.

14. The Evaluation Cooperation Group of the International Financial Institutions is preparing a note on evaluative findings on the support of the multilateral banks and the GEF to increase energy efficiency and reduce green house gas emissions. This note will be presented to COP 17 in Durban. This is the second note of the group on environmental issues. In 2010 an ECG note on biodiversity was presented to the CBD COP in Nagoya, Japan.

15. Climate-Eval, the community of practice on evaluating climate change and development, is growing and producing interesting and promising results. Two products are ready for publication: a meta-evaluation of mitigation evaluations, gathered from all over the world, and a framework for evaluating adaptation. These products have already informed and enriched the input of the Evaluation Office into for example the ECG note and the Office's work on adaptation. New products that are currently being developed are guidelines for mitigation evaluations and indicator development for adaptation projects.

16. The work of Climate-Eval is currently supported by the governments of Sweden and Switzerland, as well as the GEF Council through the budget of the Evaluation Office. But most importantly it is supported by its members, who volunteer their comments and suggestions and help ensure the quality of the products. The community is becoming increasingly interactive through webinars and other electronic and virtual means of interaction. Partnerships with other communities of practice have also enhanced the work of Climate-Eval.

17. The current sponsors of Climate-Eval ensure the basic support structure of the community, such as the website and the moderator of the community, as well as funding of the studies that take place. The funding is channeled through the Special Initiative Trust Fund of the GEF Evaluation Office. More voluntary funding is encouraged to enable widening of the scope of the community to biodiversity issues, but may also focus on specific studies that would benefit from interaction with the global community of evaluators on climate change and development.