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# REVIEW OF RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT IN THE GEF

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

1.      The approach paper for the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS-6) of the GEF specified RBM as one of the topics to be covered by the evaluation. This review of RBM has been undertaken within the framework of OPS-6 and is an input to the evaluation. The review assesses the extent to which the GEF RBM system captures key results of GEF activities and promotes adaptive management.

2.      The review was conducted from October 2016 to April 2017. It involves a survey of relevant GEF documents and literature, an analysis of PMIS and GEF IEO datasets, and semi-structured interviews of key informants. Those interviewed include GEF Secretariat's RBM team, program managers and focal area coordinators; GEF Partner Agency staff and consultants; the GEF Convention staff; and staff of select peer organizations.

3.      The review reached following conclusions:

(a)     The GEF RBM system has played a strong role in supporting reporting, accountability and communications. In comparison, so far, its role in supporting evidence based decision making and learning has been limited.

(b)     GEF has not articulated a clear theory of change nor timeframes for achievement of, and reporting on, the expected environmental results for its GEF-6 focal area programs.

(c)     Long duration of the feedback loop poses challenges to incorporation of information on actual results of GEF activities in development of future programs.

(d)     GEF is already addressing several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its programs. For GEF-7 it would need to incorporate the relevant SDG indicators in its RBM framework.

(e)     Although the burden for tracking results decreased during GEF-6, GEF is still tracking too much information.

(f)     There are gaps in the submission and availability of tracking tools, and the quality of submitted information is often poor.

(g)     The GEF Project Management Information System (PMIS) has not kept pace with the growing needs of, and expectations from, the partnership.

(h)     The GEF Secretariat has followed up on the GEF-6 Policy Recommendations by developing a work plan, although progress on measures specified in the RBM work plan has varied.


4.      Managing for results remains a stated priority of the GEF although it utilization has so far been primarily for accountability and communication purposes. With increased attention to RBM during GEF-6, including staffing and funding, several gains were made. For example, corporate results reporting has improved and several focal area tracking tools have been

streamlined. However, the GEF approach to RBM needs to be strengthened further for the GEF-7 period. The review has following recommendations:

   (a)    Update the GEF RBM Framework.

   (b)    Upgrade the PMIS system to facilitate reporting on achievement of targets.

   (c)     Address the shortcomings of the Focal Area Tracking Tools.

**Table 1: GEF Performance on key dimensions of Results Based Management**

| Dimensions[1] | Performance |
|---|---|
| A clear purpose for the RBM system | The stated purpose of the GEF RBM system is clear. |
| Quality of the RBM Framework | The RBM framework of 2007 is inadequate for the present needs of the GEF Partnership. It needs to be updated. The GEF-6 programming document and GEF 2020 Strategy implicitly discuss the GEF theory of change. However, a clear statement has not been made. |
| Support for RBM | During GEF-6 there was an increase in GEF Management's support for RBM. While Agencies are generally supportive of the GEF RBM system, the GEF requirements for RBM are over and above what GEF Agencies do on their own. Their support is likely to increase if learning is strengthened and they see the information they provide is being used. |
| Clear results set at the corporate level | GEF has set clear and relevant results at the corporate level. However, long term impacts and synergies between supported activities are not captured. |
| Program theories of change | Theories of change were not articulated for GEF-6 focal area programs. |
| Clear results set at the program level | Clear program outcome indicators have been specified in the GEF-6 programming documents. However, long term impacts were not addressed. |
| Balance between short-term and long-term results | When compared to GEF-4 and GEF-5, the balance improved during GEF-6. However, despite fair coverage of outcomes, indicators for long term impacts have not been adequately captured. |
| Manageable focal area results frameworks aligned to priorities | Focal area results frameworks are aligned to GEF priorities. However, too much is being tracked for the biodiversity and multi-focal area projects. |
| Data availability and reliability. | GEF Secretariat assessed and found gaps in availability and reliability of data through a diagnostic exercise. Some improvements in data and data related processes were made. Full upgrade of PMIS delayed. |

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[1] Several key dimensions related measurement included in the table have been adapted from OECD-DAC 2014.

| Use for reporting | RBM system used for reporting to the GEF Council, Conventions, Replenishment Group, and to the wider Partnership. Several improvements during the GEF-6 period, especially through introduction of the Scorecard. |
|---|---|
| Use for decision making | GEF Secretariat and Agency staff report low use of information from the RBM system for decision making although there are variations across focal areas. Potential for PMIS to play an increased role. |
| Use for learning | Less attention to promoting learning through RBM. The present reporting centers more on presenting successes and less on analysis of the challenges encountered and causes of failure. Candor in PIR reporting is low. |

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## I. BACKGROUND

1. GEF's approach to results based management (RBM) has evolved over time. During the pilot phase of GEF implementation progress was tracked through the *Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase* (1994). During the GEF-1 period, after GEF was restructured, and as the number of projects under implementation increased, ascertaining the quality of the GEF portfolio got more attention. An M&E unit was established in the Secretariat in 1996. Subsequently, the *Framework and Work Program for GEF's Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination Activities* (GEF/C.8/4) was approved in 1997. The GEF M&E Unit was made independent in 2003.

2. During the GEF-3 period, a tracking tool was introduced to track results of the projects focused on protected areas. During the replenishment process for the GEF-4 period (2006-2010) the Replenishment Group asked the Secretariat to develop results indicators for all GEF Focal Areas. The GEF-5 (2010-2014) programming document included a corporate results framework, which specified results and targets for the GEF-5 period to meet the GEF objectives. The GEF-6 (2014-2018) programming document also includes a corporate results framework, which builds on the framework for the GEF-5 period.

3. In 2006, with the approval of the *GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy* (2006), the monitoring function was transferred from the GEF IEO to the Secretariat. The transfer of the monitoring function led to establishment of an RBM team at the Secretariat. In 2007 an RBM Framework was adopted by the GEF Council with the objective of improving operations. Implementing an RBM system was seen as part of a process to equip GEF with the tools needed to assess how its interventions contributed toward the institution's overall goal of delivering global environmental benefits, to "better define the specific goals of the GEF and to design mechanisms to ensure the measurement of progress towards those goals."[2]

4. The GEF IEO's review of RBM, conducted in 2013 as part of the *Fifth Overall Performance Study* (OPS-5), found that the GEF RBM System was overly complex and imposed a considerable burden on the Agencies, which are responsible for tracking project results. The GEF-6 replenishment recommended that GEF strengthen its RBM System by "rationalizing the indicators in the focal area tracking tools, with particular focus on multi-focal area projects" (GEF/R.6/21/Rev.03). It also requested the GEF Council to consider a RBM action plan in its Fall 2014 meeting. In October 2014 the GEF Council approved a *Results-Based Management: Action Plan* (GEF/C.47/05), which outlined the key actions to be undertaken during the GEF-6 period. The action plan was later updated in 2016 (GEF/C.50/03).

5. The approach paper for the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS-6) of the GEF specified RBM as one of the topics to be covered by the evaluation. This review was undertaken as an input to the OPS-6 report. A draft version of this report was shared with the GEF Secretariat, GEF and Agencies for feedback. This report addresses the feedback received from them.

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[2] GEF, Results Based Management Framework, GEF/C.31/11, May 2007.

## II. KEY QUESTIONS

6.    This review seeks to answer the following questions:

    (a)    What is the role of RBM in the GEF partnership?

    (b)    To what extent is the GEF RBM system relevant, effective and efficient?

    (c)    To what extent, and how, is the information generated through the RBM system utilized?

    (d)    To what extent have the key concerns noted in OPS-5 and in the GEF-6 Replenishment Group policy recommendations been addressed?

## III. METHODOLOGY

7.    The *GEF Results Based Management Framework* (GEF/C.31/11, May 2007) adopted the definition of RBM proposed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD). The OECD defines RBM as a "management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts" (OECD, 2002). This review, however, uses the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) definition of RBM, which is more comprehensive and more consistent with the actual practice in the GEF Partnership. UNDG defines RBM as "a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes, products and services contribute to the desired results (outputs, outcomes and higher level goals or impact) and use information and evidence on actual results to inform decision making on the design, resourcing and delivery of programmes and activities as well as for accountability and reporting" (UNDG 2011).

8.    This review drew on information from both primary and secondary sources using document review and analysis and semi-structured interviews of key informants. The GEF documents relevant to RBM, including Council Documents, Replenishment Documents, Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs), Annual Performance Reports (APRs), Reports to the Conventions, and the GEF Corporate Scorecard, were reviewed (Annex 1). These provided information on the expectations from the GEF RBM System, the framework adopted to deliver on those expectations, and how the data generated through the RBM System is being reported and utilized. The PMIS and GEF IEO datasets were also analyzed to assess issues related to data gaps.

9.    Information from the document review was supplemented and triangulated through key informant interviews (Annex 2) using semi-structured interview guides, which were differentiated by the targeted informants. Key informants included GEF Secretariat's RBM team and program managers, focal area coordinators, GEF Agency staff and consultants. In all 38 key informants representing GEF Secretariat, four GEF Agencies, five GEF Conventions, and three other organizations, were interviewed. In addition, the review drew from the interview notes prepared for the review on tracking tools undertaken by the GEF IEO within the framework of Annual Performance Report 2015.

10.     The review focuses primarily on the RBM framework and its implementation. It does not fully address the knowledge management and learning dimensions, which are being addressed by GEF IEO through a separate review on knowledge management, which also is being undertaken within the framework of OPS-6.

11.     The review was conducted from October 2016 to April 2017. The review was led by Neeraj Kumar Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer at the GEF IEO. Pamela Branch, Senior Consultant, was the other member of the team that conducted the review.

## IV.     FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

### 1.  The Role of RBM

**Conclusion 1: The GEF RBM system has played a strong role in supporting reporting, accountability and communications. In comparison, so far, its role in supporting evidence based decision making and learning has been limited.**

12.     The purpose of RBM in GEF is to "improve management effectiveness and accountability" by "defining realistic expected results, monitoring progress toward the achievement of expected results, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and reporting on performance."[3] (GEF 2007).  The stated purpose of RBM in GEF is consistent with what is generally expected across the international development community.  Rist and Kusek (2002) see RBM's role in identification of the goals of the organization, the extent to which these are being achieved, and in proving achievement. Other scholars see its role in promoting learning, facilitating evidence based decision making, and fostering accountability for results (World Bank 2011, Van Dooren et al 2015).

13.     Although GEF support during GEF-6 is provided through focal area programs, the theories of change for these programs have not been articulated clearly. In terms of tracking of results, while expected outputs and outcomes of supported activities are clearly specified, less attention has been given to tracking of the long term impacts and environmental trends relevant to GEF's work. Given the challenges in tracking long term impacts, the absence of impact indicators and arrangements to track them are likely to constrain future assessments of GEF impact. This is also not in sync with international good practice. Multilateral development banks such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank have specified several indicators to track the long term impact of their activities and to know whether their activities continue to be relevant (ADB 2012).

14.     GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency staff generally opine that GEF RBM system has so far not lived up to its potential. RBM in GEF is perceived as an exercise focused on reporting to the Council and Conventions, whereas its role in evidence based decision making is perceived to have not received as much attention. Up to the GEF-6 period, the GEF Secretariat had not devoted sufficient staff to RBM activities. As a result, the systems to facilitate use of RBM in decision making – especially for operational decisions – are not fully developed.

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[3] The second part of the statement is adopted from CIDA, 1999.

15.    The GEF RBM system facilitates reporting on progress in utilization of GEF resources, on efficiency and effectiveness of GEF activities and processes, and on environmental results. The system provides information for the two key instruments for regular reporting to the Council: the Annual Portfolio Monitoring Report (APMR) and Corporate Scorecard. The system also allows the Secretariat to respond to ad hoc requests from the GEF Council, the Replenishment Group, and the Conventions, for reporting on specific topics. Most of the GEF Agency and Secretariat staff that were interviewed, indicated that RBM should play a greater role in supporting learning across the Partnership. Several Agency staff noted that RBM reporting does not provide useful feedback on Agency performance, identify areas where an Agency may improve, and lessons that may be drawn from good practices in, and experience of, other Agencies. Several interviewees noted contributions of the International Waters focal area's IW-LEARN initiative in supporting learning within its community of practitioners as an example of what could be done.

## 2.  RBM Framework

**Conclusion 2: GEF has not articulated a clear theory of change, timeframes for achievement of, and reporting on, expected environmental results for its GEF-6 focal area programs.**

16.    *The GEF-6 Programming Directions[4]* discusses the goals and objectives of GEF activities, and specifies the expected focal area impacts and expected outcomes of its programs. The corporate results framework included in the document specifies six environmental results along with 10 targets and several process indicators. There are, in all, 43 focal area programs through which the corporate environmental results are to be achieved. *The GEF-6 Programming Directions* provides some information on each of the 43 programs. However, causal linkages and underlying assumptions have not been clearly articulated for these GEF-6 programs. A clear expression a program's theory of change is necessary to identify appropriate indicators to track outcomes and impact, and to monitor change.

17.    Based on the outcomes of the replenishment negotiations, there may be changes in the GEF programs from one replenishment period to the other. Without continuity in GEF activities, comparison and aggregation of results across replenishment periods may be difficult. *The GEF 2020 Strategy* (2015) provides a broad basis for continuity in GEF activities across replenishment periods. A comparison of the activities supported during the GEF-4, GEF-5 and GEF-6, also shows that despite changes and shifts in strategies, there is considerable continuity in the supported activities and expected results.

18.    The environmental results and targets listed in the results framework for the GEF-4 period were primarily outputs. The results framework for GEF-5 included some outcome indicators, but most indicators tracked outputs of GEF supported activities.  Compared to the results framework for the preceding two replenishment periods, most corporate environmental results and targets for GEF-6 track outcomes of GEF supported activities. The GEF-6 corporate results framework tracks a lower number of core environmental results indicators that the framework

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[4] (Annex A/GEF/R.6/Rev.4)

for GEF-5. However, non-specification of indicators of long term impacts and environmental trends remains a gap.

19.     The reporting arrangements provided for in *The GEF-6 Programming Directions* are focused on reporting on the aggregate of the environmental results targets promised in the Project Information Form (PIF) and CEO Endorsement/Approval forms. Less attention has been given to how progress on actual results of GEF-6 projects will be reported on during the subsequent replenishment periods when the GEF-6 projects will be under implementation or would have been completed. The *GEF Results Based Management Framework* (2007, GEF/C.31/11) and '*RBM System: Process to Ensure the Quality of Objectives, Baselines, and Results Indicators*' (2010, GEF/C.40/Inf.9) suggest that the results would be tracked beyond the replenishment period. In actual practice, the Secretariat has so far reported on the aggregate of results targets of the GEF-6 projects, but has not yet reported on actual results of GEF-4 and GEF-5 projects against their respective targets.

**Conclusion 3: Long duration of the feedback loop poses challenges to incorporation of information on actual results of GEF activities in development of future programs.**

20.     After the start of a replenishment period, the proposals for the GEF activities for that replenishment period are submitted on a rolling basis. Analysis of PMIS data shows that the median time taken by the GEF-5 projects from first submission of Project Information Form (PIF) to CEO Endorsement is 27 months for GEF-5 projects (36 months for the 75th percentile). *The Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF* (OPS-5) indicates that the median of the time taken from CEO Endorsement to start of project implementation is five months (10 months for the 75th percentile). The data for completed projects shows that for most projects implementation duration may range from 4 years to 10 years. Thus, it takes long time before activities approved during a replenishment period are completed. Figure1 depicts this duration for projects from different replenishment periods. It shows that it takes about 9-10 years after end of a replenishment period for implementation of at least 90 percent of the full size projects to be complete. During calendar year 2016, a significant number of projects from four replenishment periods (GEF-3 to GEF-6) were under implementation. It may take two more replenishment periods before actual outcomes of the approved activities of a replenishment period can be assessed against the targets for the period. Most of the long term impacts will become evident much later.

**Figure 1: GEF Period and Implementation Duration – More than 10% Projects under Implementation**

| Period\Year | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 00 | 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 08 | 09 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pilot Phase | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| GEF-1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| GEF-2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| GEF-3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | →|
| GEF-4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | →|
| GEF-5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | →|
| GEF-6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | →|

21.     The long duration during which projects of a replenishment period are under implementation poses constraints to reporting on actual results on the ground against the targets and use of this information in future work. The challenge of a long time lag in manifestation of results is not unique to GEF. Other organizations that address environmental concerns also seem to struggle with using information on actual results of supported activities in decision making. While some of these have long experience in RBM, e.g. UNDP, or have integrated RBM in their institutional design from their start, e.g. Climate Investment Fund (CIF), use of information on actual results on ground in real time decision making is a challenge for them too.

22.     Although information on long term impacts on GEF activities may not be available in real time to support management decisions, in some situations scientific evidence on the impact of similar activities undertaken by others may be available and useful in shaping future GEF strategies and programs.  Within GEF, STAP has the mandated role in making scientific and technical knowledge more accessible to support decision making. It has prepared several knowledge products targeted at the GEF Partnership and has provided advice to the GEF Council and also the Secretariat to aid decision making.

23.     The GEF IEO plays an important role in documenting and reporting on impacts of GEF activities through impact evaluation, country portfolio evaluations, and other thematic and programmatic evaluations. Similarly, the GEF Secretariat has also in the past undertaken learning missions to review completed projects to assess their results on the ground. Although information on long term impacts of GEF activities will not be available in real time to support decision making, given that there is some continuity in GEF activities in several situations the information may still be useful for designing better programs and strategies. To facilitate drawing of lessons on long term impacts of GEF activities, specification of a clear theory of change for the programs, indicators that measure long term impacts, and arrangements to measure at appropriate intervals, is necessary.

**Conclusion 4. GEF is already addressing several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its programs. For GEF-7 it would need to incorporate the relevant SDG indicators in its RBM framework.**

24.     GEF programming is consistent with and contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets for 2030. Several of the SDGs, targets, and indicators, are congruent with the outcomes of the GEF programs. *The GEF and the Sustainable Development Goals* (2015) reports on the support that GEF has provided so far to address the SDGs, with GEF contributions reported primarily in terms of the aggregate of expected project results targets.

25.     In its 48th Session in March 2017 the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted the global indicator framework for the SDGs and targets. Several of the indicators listed in the framework are relevant to GEF work. While several of the GEF environmental results indicators already respond to the SDG targets, they may need some adjustments to make them fully compatible with the indicators listed in the global indicator framework[5]. Adoption of some of the SDG indicators or tweaking the GEF indicators to make them compatible with the framework, would be necessary to make the GEF RBM framework better aligned with the global efforts. Further, given that multilateral organizations and UN member countries have already committed to measuring and reporting on the SDGs, it is likely that this may be done without additional burden on the GEF Agencies. The GEF Secretariat is already cognizant of these opportunities and is identifying the SDG goals and indicators that it may address through its RBM framework for GEF-7.

### 3.   Effectiveness and Efficiency

**Conclusion 5. Although the burden for tracking results decreased during GEF-6, GEF is still tracking too much information.**

26.     The GEF Corporate Scorecard reports on 32 indicators. It includes the 22 indicators specified in the corporate results framework included in *The GEF-6 Programming Directions*, of which 10 indicators track environmental results and 12 track corporate efficiency and effectiveness. The GEF Corporate Scorecard tracks 10 additional indicators, which include three indicators on programming and resource utilization and seven indicators on corporate efficiency and effectiveness. For comparison, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) uses 98 indicators for reporting at the corporate level. The Carbon Investment Funds (CIF) at the World Bank uses 15 core indicators for its four programs, while the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has about 60 indicators that together cover its 60 programs. Thus, in terms of indicators tracked and reported on at the corporate reporting, GEF seems to be in line with the practices in other organizations. In fact, there may be some scope for a limited increase in environmental results and trends indicators at this level.

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[5] This would include SDG indicators such as: proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation (6.5.2); progress towards sustainable forest management (15.2.1); proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels (14.4.1)

27. At another level, there are seven strategic focal area outcomes, and 68 strategic program level outcomes, that the GEF RBM system needs to track. Each of these outcomes has at least one agreed indicator for measuring progress, for a total of 117 indicators. Table 2 summarizes the number of results and indicators contained in the GEF-6 replenishment document. Given the number and complexity of the GEF programs, collection of data against 117 indicators seems reasonable.

**Table 2: Number of Outcomes and Indicators for GEF-6**

| Area | Strategic Programs Level | | Focal Area Level | | Corporate Level | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Outcomes | Indicators | Outcomes | Indicators | Outcomes | Indicators |
| Biodiversity | 14 | 14 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Climate Change | 3 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Chemicals and Waste | 11 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| International Waters | 11 | 21 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Land Degradation | 12 | 12 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Forests | 7 | 6 | 1 | 3 | | |
| Support to Countries | 5 | 7 | n/a | n/a | 1 | 2 |
| Secretariat Operations[6] | 5 | 11 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Total | 68 | 90 | 7 | 16 | 6 | 11 |

28. The data for corporate results and outcome indicators is gathered from different sources. Data on indicators for GEF outreach and diversity of GEF staff is not linked with projects and may be reported independent of the data stream on GEF projects. Other indicators require aggregation of data on individual projects. Of these the data on indicators for the project cycle, utilization of replenishment resources, and promised co-financing, has been maintained by the GEF for a long time and will continue to be easily available. However, several other indicators, mostly indicators for environmental results of GEF activities, need to be tracked by the GEF Agencies and their executing partners on the ground.

29. The GEF Secretariat uses the Project Information Form (PIF) and CEO Endorsement / Approval forms submitted by the Agencies during the project preparation process to gather information on how and to what extent a proposed GEF project would contribute to the corporate environmental results targets. During GEF-6, a table was incorporated in these forms (Table F in the PIF template and Table E in the CEO Endorsement/ Approval template). Further, Agencies are also required to submit focal area tracking tools that incorporate a larger number of environmental results indicators during the CEO Endorsement/Approval stage, at the mid-term of project implementation, and at project completion.

30. While corporate indicators track results at the institutional level, at the focal area level more granular information on program results is tracked through the focal area tracking tools. These tools are updated based on implementation experience and to capture results of the new

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[6] The results and indicators for Secretariat efficiency are contained in GEF.C.46.07. Rev.01, table 3 and reported in the Corporate Scorecard.

programs. OPS-5, which reviewed the GEF focal area tracking tools, found these tools to be too complex and burdensome. It, therefore, called for simplification of the GEF tracking tools. Annual Performance Report 2015 (APR2015), followed up on the extent to which the OPS-5 recommendation had been implemented. APR2015 reported that although significant progress had been made for most focal areas, the GEF-6 tracking tools for the biodiversity focal area continue to be complex and burdensome. Further, APR2015 reported little progress for the multi-focal area projects as a streamlined and integrated tracking tool has not yet been developed for such projects. For the three Integrated Approach Pilots (IAPs) a customized tool that drew only the relevant indicators from the focal area tracking tools was prepared. While this does not decrease the number of indicators that the IAPs will report on, it may decrease the effort required in preparing tracking tools for the IAPs.

31.    The relative complexity of the Biodiversity focal area tracking tools and the reporting burden that they entail does not mean that the information being gathered is not useful. In fact, the Biodiversity focal area performs well compared to other focal areas in terms of the extent to which Agencies comply with the tracking tools related reporting requirements and use of the gathered information by the focal area team and other stakeholders. However, challenges in easy availability of the information from the Biodiversity focal area tracking tool and its aggregation remains a challenge. Much of the burden in reporting is from the management effectiveness tracking tool (METT) and the financial sustainability scorecard tool. While the METT was streamlined for GEF-6, the financial sustainability scorecard was not revised. Both tools still involve reporting on a high number of data fields, more so for the METT which is prepared per protected area covered by a given project.

32.    It is unlikely that the biodiversity focal area tracking tools will retain their full utility if they were cut drastically. However, there are other approaches such as the use of remote sensing and undertaking targeted learning missions that may help in tracking results on ground and understanding the causal linkages better. Use of these approaches may mitigate/obviate the need to have complex tracking tools for the biodiversity focal area. Interviews with the Biodiversity focal area staff suggest that these options are being considered for the GEF-7 period.

**Conclusion 6. There are gaps in the submission and availability of tracking tools, and the quality of submitted information is often poor.**

33.    It is easier to ensure the submission of tracking tools during the CEO Endorsement / Approval stage as compliance may be verified as part of the project appraisal process and in absence of compliance the project may not get CEO's Endorsement / Approval. However, incentives for submission of tracking tools during project implementation are not as well aligned. During implementation, ensuring compliance with the submission of agreed reports requires tracking project implementation progress, alerting the Agencies on approaching mile stones, and following up with the Agencies in instances of delays in submission and/or submission of incomplete information. Once full compliance is ensured, the submitted tracking

tools need to be uploaded to the database and made available for use for analysis in a machine readable form.

34. An internal review conducted by the RBM team in 2016 showed substantial gaps in the submission of tracking tools and overall poor quality of information in the submitted tracking tools for several focal areas. APR2015 also found gaps in submission of tracking tools and concluded that at least a part of the problem was that the tracking tools submitted by the Agencies had not been properly uploaded. During the interviews conducted for this review, several Agency staff observed that the project managers are willing to put more effort in filling up the tracking tools and submitting them when there is proper follow up, i.e. tracking of submission and feedback on quality of submission. This observation is supported by empirical evidence – the internal review conducted by the RBM team found that compared to the other focal areas, the biodiversity focal area fared better in terms of compliance with the submission requirements and quality of information provided in the submitted tracking tools despite the complexity of, and high effort required from Agencies in preparing, the tracking tools.

35. The Corporate Scorecard reports on some indicators such as time taken from CEO Endorsement to first disbursement; ratings on progress towards development objectives and implementation; and ratings on outcomes of completed projects. Of these, the ratings on outcomes of completed projects is sourced from the GEF IEO. The information on first disbursement, and ratings on progress towards development objectives and implementation, are based on the annual reporting through the PIR process coordinated by the RBM team. The processes for terminal evaluation and PIR submission are well-established, as a result there are fewer submission gaps.

36. The RBM team was established in the Secretariat is 2006 when monitoring function was transferred from the GEF IEO to the Secretariat. Despite RBM being given a central place in GEF2020 Strategy and also the policy recommendations of the GEF-5 and GEF-6 replenishments, before GEF-6 the resources, i.e. number of staff and consultants, devoted to strengthening it were inadequate. Further, changes in the leadership of the RBM team also affected continuity. This limited the extent to which the RBM team could engage with the focal area teams and the Agencies, and also the extent to which it could put in place systems to ensure compliance with the requirements. During the GEF-6 period the GEF Secretariat brought on board a Lead RBM Specialist to lead the RBM team. As a result, the team has been able to get greater management attention and additional resources for RBM activities. An internal self-assessment indicated several gaps in the processes for tracking, following up, and managing tracking tools. The team is now addressing these weaknesses by strengthening its processes for tracking submission and follow up on tracking tools. It has developed a dashboard to facilitate tracking of project implementation progress and tracking tools submission. These are steps in the right direction.

**Conclusion 7. The GEF Project Management Information System (PMIS) has not kept pace with the growing needs of, and expectations from, the partnership.**

37.    The discussion to create a PMIS first took place in the December 1999 meeting of the GEF Council. The Secretariat wanted to develop a project data system to help track GEF projects and commitments. The PMIS eventually became operational in 2001 as an internal platform accessible only to users at the GEF Secretariat. Over the years, the role of and expectations from the PMIS have increased. It is now accessed by the GEF IEO, Agencies, STAP, the Council, and Operational Focal Points, for their information needs. It is now expected to provide support for real time decision making across the GEF Partnership, and to be an information reservoir for monitoring, evaluation, and for learning.

38.    Over the years there have also been several updates to the system. In 2009 the system changed from a Microsoft Access platform to a Structured Query Language platform. The updated system provided web-based access, was more secure, minimized errors, and facilitated better tracking of the project progress through the project cycle (GEF IEO 2010). After 2009, there have been several minor updates in the system. However, these updates have so far not kept up with the changing expectations, as the PMIS design primarily caters to the GEF Secretariat whereas needs of other users are not fully addressed. For example, it is not convenient for the other users to prepare and download customized reports.

39.    In June 2012 the GEF Council approved an upgrade of the system. The GEF Trustee was tasked with the upgrade that was expected to be delivered by the end of FY2014. The upgrade, among other things, was expected to automate the work flow and facilitate easy self-service reporting. Delivery of the full upgrade was delayed. In May 2015 the GEF Secretariat reported that it has assumed the responsibility of the upgrade. The work on upgrading of the system is still under progress.

40.    Quality of information provided by the PMIS is another area of concern. Part of this is because of the gaps in information on projects approved during the Pilot Phase to GEF-2 period, when PMIS was not operational. Another reason for the errors is that most of the decisions that are recorded take place outside the PMIS platform. The information is then manually entered. In the absence of quality assurance processes, such as double entry of data, mistakes creep in and may not be noticed for a long time. In addition to errors made at the Secretariat in data entry, the data provided by Agencies on project cycle mile stones after CEO Endorsement / Approval and project status may also contain errors and may be difficult to identify and correct.

41.    Past evaluations and reviews undertaken by the GEF IEO show that the tracking tool data is especially problematic.[7] Given the submission gaps, gaps and mismatches in uploading,

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[7] See *Impact Evaluation of GEF Support to Protected Areas and Protected Areas Systems* (GEF IEO, 2016) and APR2015 for details.

concerns related to quality of information, and inconsistent format in which tracking tools have been prepared, it is difficult to use this information for reporting. The RBM team reported that through their internal assessment exercise they have identified data that are of adequate quality and have recorded this data in the PMIS in a machine readable format for future use. It also reported putting in place measures to ensure improved quality of data including operationalization of a PMIS dash board to track project implementation progress and tracking tools submission. The GEF IEO did not verify the reported progress.

42.    The upgrade of the PMIS remains a work in progress. The GEF Secretariat needs to complete the upgrade of the PMIS with urgency so that it may provide support to decision making and learning across the Partnership.

### 4.  Utilization

43.    The information gathered through the RBM system is used for reporting through the APMR, Corporate Scorecard, reports to the GEF Conventions, GEF website, and analysis that may be requested by the GEF Council. Among these, the APMR, earlier referred to as the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), is the most important tool for formal reporting to the Council. It provides information on the overall health of the GEF Trust Fund's active portfolio of projects and provides an overview of the portfolio approvals in any given fiscal year. In addition, it may include an in-depth analysis on a theme, aspect, or part of the portfolio.

44.    Much of the reporting in APMR is based on the ratings provided in the PIRs. A high percentage of projects (90%+) obtain ratings in the satisfactory range for implementation progress and for development objectives. Annual cohorts of the mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations for a given year form the basis for discussion on actual results of activities presented in the APMR. So far these have not been discussed vis-a-vis progress towards achieving results targets of the given replenishment periods.

45.    The Corporate Scorecard was introduced during the GEF-6 period. It has been included as part of the APMR (2016) and is also being published by the Secretariat as a standalone document. The Scorecard facilitates focus on 32 key performance and results indicators. It is widely perceived to be useful information tool by a wide array of GEF stakeholders, especially the GEF Council.

46.    The GEF Conventions find the GEF reporting to be useful in providing information on GEF funding and co-financing for the relevant focal area activities, and in demonstrating how GEF has responded to the Convention guidance. In addition, some Conventions find that the annexes to GEF reports on specific areas of work – especially knowledge products – are useful to some of their working groups and are discussed during the COPs.

47.    As noted earlier, gaps in submission of tracking tools at mid-term and project completion, inconsistency in formats, and data quality, limit their usefulness. Nonetheless, there is evidence to suggest that the data is used although the extent of usage varies across focal areas. Focal areas such as Biodiversity and International Waters use it for aggregation and analysis. The

Biodiversity focal area team reported some use of the tools in tweaking their programs. International Waters focal area team prepares a portfolio review on an annual basis, which is then shared with the International Waters focal area task force and Agencies to foster learning. The Chemicals and Waste focal area found the tools useful in tracking intervention costs over time so that they are able to develop cost benchmarks.

48.     Most respondents – including respondents from Partner Agencies, Secretariat, and Conventions – indicated that the information generated through the RBM system is not being used for decision making and for strategy development to the extent it could be. Further, they feel that the RBM system is underutilized for promoting learning. Users of the PMIS perceive that it is difficult to extract the information, and often they find the information to be incomplete and unreliable. Agencies and Conventions report that although the GEF website provides a wealth of information, it is difficult to access it in a readily usable form.

**Conclusion 8. The GEF Secretariat has followed up on the GEF-6 Policy Recommendations by developing a work plan, although progress on measures specified in the RBM work plan has varied.**

49.     The GEF-6 replenishment document recommended that GEF improve its RBM System by "rationalizing the indicators in the focal area tracking tools" and requested the Secretariat to develop a comprehensive work plan to strengthen the RBM System. The *Results-Based Management Action Plan* (GEF/c.47/05) was approved by Council in October 2014 and revised in 2016 to broaden its scope. Key measures of the work plan are:

   (a)    Review and upgrade of results frameworks

   (b)    Strengthening of corporate level results reporting

   (c)    Review and upgrade of the IT platform for RBM

   (d)    Review and strengthening of the capacity for RBM in the GEF Secretariat

   (e)    Improving data quality, increase learning, and enhance use of geo-spatial information

50.     The corporate results framework presented in the *GEF-6 Programming Directions* is being used for reporting on the environmental results and processes.  The Corporate Scorecard not only reports on the indicators listed in the framework presented in the *GEF-6 Programming Directions*, but also reports on several other indicators. The Secretariat, in consultation with the GEF Agencies, reviewed the focal area tracking tools. It updated the tools and in general made them simpler and technically more robust. While tracking tools for the biodiversity focal area were made technically robust, they continue to be complex. The revision of the GEF approach to tracking tools for multi-focal area projects was not addressed. Areas where more work needs to be done for the GEF-7 period include update of the *GEF Results Based Management Framework* (2007), specification of indicators for tracking long term impact of GEF supported activities, clear articulation of the theory of change for the GEF focal area programs, and streamlining of the approach to tracking tools for the biodiversity and multifocal area projects.

51.    During the GEF-6 period the Secretariat overhauled its RBM reporting. It is now presenting performance on key indicators through a Corporate Scorecard, which is presented on a bi-annual basis. The Annual Portfolio Monitoring Report (APMR) combines the two reports of AMRs. Currently, APMR reports based on the annual cohorts of projects that conducted the mid-term review or were completed during the preceding year. The APMR needs to also incorporate reporting on actual cumulative results by replenishment period so that progress against the replenishment period targets may be ascertained. The Secretariat has also advanced its work on geo-location of the GEF projects, which may facilitate tracking of the GEF portfolio on ground and may provide a useful input for future programming.

52.    Full upgrading of the PMIS, which should have completed at the start of GEF-6 replenishment period, has been delayed by several years. This is a source of frustration across the GEF Partnership. The upgrade needs to take into account the varied needs of its users spread across the Secretariat, the GEF IEO, Agencies, STAP, Operational Focal Points, and others. The upgrade needs to be accomplished with urgency.

53.    Compared to the preceding periods, staff devoted to RBM increased during GEF-6. A Lead RBM Specialist was recruited to coordinate the RBM activities, which has provided the team greater access to the GEF Management. The RBM team was also able to hire consultants to assess quality of tracking tools data and identify bottlenecks. The RBM team has identified measures to improve quality of information and have established processes to improve follow up with the agencies. However, the extent to which these have been implemented was not ascertained by this review.

## V.    RECOMMENDATIONS

(a)    **Recommendation 1: Update the GEF RBM Framework.** The GEF RBM framework of 2007 needs to be updated to reflect the evolved understanding of RBM across the GEF Partnership. During GEF-6, the focus has been on inputs, outputs and in some cases outcomes of GEF activities. The updated framework needs to address the indicators for drivers of environmental degradation and long term impacts of GEF activities so that these are also tracked systematically. GEF should also incorporate the relevant SDG indicators in its results framework for GEF-7 (and beyond).

(b)    **Recommendation 2: Upgrade the PMIS to facilitate reporting on achievement of targets.** Reporting on results also needs to give adequate attention to past results. Given that GEF-4 and GEF-5 Programming Directions documents had specified targets for those replenishment periods, there is a case for reporting on the actual achievement of these targets. It may be the case that past gaps in the submission of tracking tools, availability of tracking tool data, and data quality, is a constraint. Therefore, it is imperative that measures are put in place to ensure that these bottlenecks are mitigated. Upgrading of the PMIS has been delayed by several years; this upgrade needs to be completed with urgency.

(c)    **Recommendation 3: Address the shortcomings of the focal area tracking tools.** GEF needs to rethink the approach to tracking tools for the biodiversity and multiple focal area projects. Although streamlining of the biodiversity tracking tools may be challenging, GEF may consider alternatives such as tracking changes in the protected areas through GIS and remote sensing based tools, coupled with targeted learning missions. Streamlining of the approach to tracking results of the multifocal projects was recommended by OPS-5 and by the GEF-6 Policy Recommendations. However, no direct progress has been made on this front. Given that multifocal projects have emerged as an important modality, the burden for tracking of the results needs to be rationalized.

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