

Summary of Document GEF/ME/C.43/02

Annual Thematic Evaluations Report 2012

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having considered document GEF/ME/C.43/02, *Annual Thematic Evaluations Report 2012* and document GEF/ME/C.43/03, *Management Response to the Annual Thematic Evaluations Report 2012*, requests the Secretariat to ensure that:

- a) An explicit discussion of envisaged causal linkages and chains of causality in line with current scientific knowledge forms the basis for the formulation of GEF-6 Strategies.
- b) GEF-6 Strategies enable a more flexible and strategic approach to Multi-Focal Area projects, which would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.
- c) GEF-6 Strategies include a strengthened articulation of potential pathways from activities to the broader adoption of results to maximize the GEF's catalytic role.
- d) GEF-6 Strategies revisit the GEF's overall approach to capacity development in response to concerns voiced by the conventions.

Given the impact of convention guidance on the Focal Area Strategies the GEF will continue dialogue with CBD to further define the relationship between guidance and strategies in a way that allows for responsiveness as well as strategic coherence in GEF-6.

Executive Summary

1. This is the second *Annual Thematic Evaluations Report* (ATER) presented by the Evaluation Office to the GEF Council. The ATER 2012 reports on the progress of the *GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation* and presents the main conclusions and recommendations for the *Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies*.

2. The Evaluation Office has made significant progress in the implementation of the *GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation* which started in May 2012 with the approval of the approach paper. The evaluation aims to provide the GEF Council with lessons learned from implementing Enabling Activities and evaluative evidence on their role in the overall catalytic effect of the GEF. Activities covered will only be those that are funded through the Enabling Activity modality. The first phase of the evaluation entails a meta-evaluation to collect evaluative evidence from previous evaluations conducted by the Office, GEF Agencies, conventions and other stakeholders. The second phase will build on the findings of the meta-evaluation and explore further issues or gaps of evaluative evidence identified by the meta-evaluation. The main findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be incorporated into OPS5.

3. The *GEF Focal Area Strategies Evaluation* was conducted between February and September 2012. The evaluation's main objective is to collect and assess information related to the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies to gain a systematic understanding of the elements and causal links each strategy envisions. The analysis provides the foundation for a subsequent assessment of the implementation of Focal Area Strategies in GEF projects, which will be conducted in the context of OPS5. In preparation for OPS5, the Office has developed a General Framework for the GEF theory of change (TOC) drawing on a large amount of evaluative evidence gathered over years. Using the General Framework, the

evaluation team developed the TOC behind each Focal Area Strategy in consultation with the GEF Secretariat. The full Focal Areas evaluation report is provided as a Council information document and technical documents for each Focal Area are available on the GEF Evaluation Office Web site (www.gefeo.org).

4. The evaluation reached the following eight conclusions:

- 1) The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies fulfill an important function for GEF programming by defining areas of GEF activities, providing a general rationale for GEF engagement in these areas and identifying the types of activities to receive GEF support.
- 2) The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies are not based on a systematic identification of envisaged causal relationships between the strategies' elements as well as the causal chains between GEF activities and expected results.
- 3) The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies recognize the potential for broader adoption of results but in most cases do not systematically consider the pathways that could maximize the catalytic role of GEF activities.
- 4) The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies do not include a comprehensive approach to the creation and utilization of synergies between Focal Areas through Multi-Focal Area activities.
- 5) GEF activities regardless of Focal Area employ a certain "tool box" of elements and causal links that fulfill different purposes in each Focal Area Strategy, but are similar in their design.
- 6) Many types of GEF activities identified in the GEF Focal Area Strategies build on creating local benefits for achieving Global Environmental Benefits.
- 7) GEF Focal Area Strategies are largely responsive to and shaped by convention guidance. CBD guidance has been detailed and restrictive and this has made it difficult for the GEF to formulate a strategic approach in the biodiversity focal area.
- 8) Based on results of the Real-Time Delphi process, the elements of GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies are with few exceptions in correspondence with current scientific consensus. However, room for improvement from a scientific perspective exists in terms of relative prioritization of specific aspects and the selection of elements.

5. The evaluation makes the following recommendations for GEF-6:

- 1) An explicit discussion of envisaged causal linkages and chains of causality in line with current scientific knowledge should form the basis for the formulation of GEF-6 Strategies.
- 2) GEF-6 Strategies should enable a more flexible and strategic approach to developing Multi-Focal Area projects which would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.
- 3) GEF-6 Strategies should be based on systematic considerations of potential pathways from GEF activities to the broader adoption of GEF results to further define and strengthen the GEF's catalytic role.
- 4) Given the impact of convention guidance on the Focal Area Strategies the GEF should continue the dialogue with CBD to further define the relationship between guidance and strategies in a way that allows for responsiveness as well as strategic coherence in GEF-6.
- 5) GEF-6 Strategies should revisit the GEF's overall approach to capacity development in response to concerns voiced by the conventions.