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GEF COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION: MOROCCO (1997-2015)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Background

1. Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPEs) are conducted by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) to capture aggregate portfolio results and performance of the GEF at the country level. They provide useful information for both the GEF Council and the countries. Morocco was selected as it has a comparatively large, diverse and mature portfolio composed of 32 projects, 13 of which are completed. The portfolio has an emphasis on climate change (12 projects) and biodiversity (9 projects) and has significant co-financing amounts. Furthermore, it includes several on-going projects (18).

2. The purpose of the Morocco CPE is to provide the GEF Council with an assessment of results and performance of the GEF supported activities in the country, and of how the GEF supported activities link into the national strategies and priorities as well as within the global environmental mandate of the GEF. Based on this purpose, the evaluation has the specific objectives of: (i) evaluating the *effectiveness, results* and *sustainability* of GEF support in Morocco, with attention to the sustainability of achievements at the project level and progress toward impact for global environmental benefits; (ii) evaluating the *relevance* and *efficiency* of GEF support in Morocco; and (iii) Provide *feedback* and *knowledge sharing* both to the GEF Council and to Morocco.

1.2. Objectives, scope, and methodology

3. The Morocco CPE covers all types of GEF supported activities in the country at all stages of the project cycle (pipeline, on-going and completed) and implemented by all active GEF Agencies in all active focal areas. It also includes applicable GEF corporate activities such as international workshops and conferences. However, the main focus of the evaluation is the projects implemented within the country boundaries (i.e. the national projects), being them full-size, medium-size or enabling activities. Regional and global projects of particular relevance to Morocco have also been covered¹.

4. The evaluation has been conducted following a mixed methods approach that includes a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and tools. The quantitative analysis used indicators to assess the relevance and efficiency of GEF support (i.e., linkages between GEF support and national priorities, time and cost of preparing and implementing projects, etc.) and to measure GEF results (i.e., progress towards achieving global environmental benefits) as well as performance (aggregating implementation and completion ratings available from terminal evaluations and

¹ A regional/global project are considered relevant if the project coordination unit is in the demonstration sites are in-country or there is a strong and clear connection to a national project.

terminal evaluation reviews). Available statistics and scientific sources, especially for national environmental indicators, have also been used where appropriate.

5. The Evaluation Team used the standard tools and protocols for CPEs and adapted these to the Moroccan context. These tools include: a Project Review Protocol (PRP) to conduct the desk and field reviews of national projects; outlines for the Country Environmental Legal Framework (CELf) analysis and the Global Environmental Benefits Assessment (GEBA); and a diversified set of interview guides designed to be suitable for interviewing different stakeholders groups. Country ownership and driven-ness was analyzed using an analysis framework being developed based on the one used for a similar analysis in OPS5². Progress to impact was analyzed by designing and conducting five case studies on completed projects. The tool used was the Theory of Change (TOC) for broader adoption mechanisms for progress to impact developed by the Office for OPS5³ adapted to suit country portfolio analysis.

6. The Morocco CPE included visits to project sites for field observation of results achieved. The criteria for selecting the sites were finalized at the start of the evaluation phase, with emphasis placed on both on-going and completed projects. The Evaluation Team decided on specific sites to visit based on the initial review of documentation and balancing needs of representation as well as cost-effectiveness of conducting the field work.

7. A number of limitations were encountered and addressed wherever possible while conducting the evaluation, including: (i) Availability of key informants: interviews and field visits planning needed time and patience, because of the busy schedules of both Government and GEF Agencies staff; (ii) Difficulty of tracking results for the earlier projects; and (iii) Limited availability and weaknesses in the accuracy of the data and information produced by the M&E systems at project and portfolio level. The Team endeavored to gather additional data wherever possible to complement for these limitations. This resulted in the establishment of a clear and reliable set of data on projects and project documentation.

8. The full evaluation report (Volume I) and technical documents (Volume II) in French language have been uploaded separately as part of this Council information document. The report includes in its Annex 1 the official endorsement of the evaluation received from the Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and the Environment of Morocco. The report has been professionally copy-edited and the publication has been uploaded on the GEF IEO website.⁴

² GEF IEO (2013) OPS5 Technical Document #6: Meta-Evaluation on Country Ownership and Driven-ness

³ <https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/EO/CPE-Progress-Towards-Impact-Guidance-Note.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.thegef.org/gef/CPE%3A%20Morocco>

1.3. Conclusions

EFFECTIVENESS, RESULTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

- (a) **Conclusion 1: GEF support has contributed to the achievement of important results, including the creation of an enabling environment for renewable energy, the conservation of protected areas, and the prevention of deforestation and the elimination of dangerous chemicals.**

9. Since 1990, GEF has supported a number of strategic initiatives to preserve biodiversity and to strengthen the institutional capacities of Morocco. Important institutional, organizational and technical changes were put in place for co-management of forest resources. Protected areas were demonstrably better protected relative to unprotected areas. However, these results need to be consolidated, applied more generally and with greater ownership by the appropriate national institutions.

10. Morocco has a great potential to produce energy from green sources. GEF support has contributed to the development of solar energy on a large scale. In the area of POPs, significant results are to be credited to GEF support. Particularly, the creation of the national commission of Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), the partial strengthening the legal framework and management plans at the level of PCB holders. However, low participation has been observed in the informal sector as well as small and medium enterprises. This is due to their difficulty in replacing their contaminated equipment.

- (b) **Conclusion 2: Some forms of broader adoption of project outcomes occurred and are leading to progress towards impact.**

11. Some projects supported by the GEF did not have an exit strategy. This reduces possibilities of appropriation and replication of their results. Other projects have developed elements promoting the sustainability of results in the fields of Energy Efficiency (EE) in the industrial sector, the elimination of PCB equipment and the protection of protected areas.

12. GEF support mainstreaming has occurred in the establishment of specific institutional structures for protected areas and forest management. Moreover, a legal framework was implemented for the environmental protection against chemicals. The necessary legal and financial conditions for mainstreaming the development of solar energy and energy efficiency have been put in place. Replication of GEF initiatives in Morocco occurred in some cases in the field of POPs and forest management. Still, these initiatives lack the programmatic framework for replication. Replication of residential energy efficiency initiatives is

planned in the new urban centers and in social housing investments in Morocco. Lastly, several GEF supported actions have helped to influence the market of solar energy and the development of income generating activities for the protection of the environment.

(c) Conclusion 3: Knowledge generation and exchange has been most effective at local and regional levels. National knowledge sharing is more limited. Some GEF projects showed evidence of lessons learned from previous projects, but this has not happened systematically.

13. Throughout the GEF portfolio in Morocco, specific knowledge management components were developed through enabling activities, especially in the framework of GEF support to Morocco to fulfil its obligations as a signatory to international conventions on the environment.

14. Information exchange, peer support and sharing of lessons have helped opening up to the knowledge and expertise related to Mediterranean wetlands. A substantial number of communication materials (brochures, monthly newsletters, demonstration sites, web-sites, among others) was used as channels of promotion, communication and sharing of information on EE, solar energy and POPs. Following these efforts, the demand for Solar Water Heating (SWH) systems has increased. Interest in EE in the building sector and the dangers of POPs are now better understood. Capacity building was the most used knowledge sharing approach in GEF projects. It focused on the knowledge and the use of natural resources, forest ecosystem management, safe management of PCBs, and technical proficiency of solar thermal installations.

(d) Conclusion 4: Gender mainstreaming was not taken into account systematically in the GEF portfolio.

15. The integration of gender in GEF projects is recent. As a matter of fact, the GEF has approved its gender mainstreaming policy in 2011. Before that date, the GEF relied upon GEF Agencies' gender policies. In many cases, gender is not taken into account in project design. Indeed, no specific approach to gender mainstreaming has been developed in the EE and PCBs sectors. Women's participation was mainly achieved through income-generating activities promoted by the Small Grants Programme (SGP).

(e) Conclusion 5: GEF has supported South-South cooperation on issues of environmental management.

16. Morocco has developed South-South cooperation initiatives in the PCBs' safe management sector with countries in sub-Saharan Africa. GEF support has also helped to advance the development of sustainable management strategies for

wetlands, as well as the development and sharing of expertise on the date palm in the Maghreb.

RELEVANCE

- (f) Conclusion 6: GEF support was aligned with the GEF mandate in all focal areas and permitted the Government of Morocco to address some of its international commitments.**

17. GEF support helped Morocco to conform to a range of regional and international environmental agreements, notably the CBD, CDD, UNFCCC, CITES, RAMSAR, UNCCD and Stockholm Convention. To this end, Morocco modified national laws and designed new plans. However, Morocco did not succeed in respecting the deadlines or in submitting certain reports regularly, as in the case of the biennial CITES report (2007-8), the annual CITES report (2011), and the initial report for the Stockholm Convention.

- (g) Conclusion 7: GEF support has been highly relevant to the Moroccan environmental priorities and sustainable development needs and challenges, and is in alignment with public policies of Morocco.**

18. Morocco started to plan its national environmental priorities in 2006 with the introduction of systems to allocate GEF resources, notably the GEF-4 Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) and the GEF-5 System for the Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR). GEF support has been aligned to the country's environmental legislation, policies and plans, as well as to the priorities indicated in the action plans related to the GEF focal areas. Adaptation to climate change was the most recent addition to the GEF portfolio.

- (h) Conclusion 8: GEF support in Morocco is clearly nationally owned and country-driven. Ownership has evolved over time, particularly in later GEF phases.**

19. The degree of ownership in the design and implementation of GEF projects varies by focal area and according to the national priorities defined over the last 20 years (1995-2015). Ownership was consolidated through a process of institutional changes at the Environment Department. The status of the authority in charge of the environment passed from the Ministry of the Secretariat of State to a ministerial department at the Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and the Environment. Ownership of GEF support by national institutions occurred in several projects (HCEFLD, ADREEE, ONE, MAPM). However, it is at the level of communes and regions where there was the greatest ownership.

EFFICIENCY

- (i) **Conclusion 9: The GEF project cycle in Morocco frequently overruns deadlines and is perceived as too long by stakeholders.**

20. GEF projects take an average of two years from initial design to start up. The average time to prepare projects is respectively 32 months for full-sized projects, 16 months for medium-sized projects and 17 months for enabling activities. Project completions are extended by an average of three years. In general, completion delays are linked to a number of factors, notably projects design, ineffective approaches, overly large geographical territories, over ambitious objectives, a lack of qualified personnel and the absence of continuous monitoring mechanisms.

- (j) **Conclusion 10: With a few noteworthy exceptions, GEF Agencies have generally worked independently from one another. Besides, some form of national level coordination and synergies is emerging, with mixed results.**

21. Several cases of synergy and coordination between GEF Agencies exist. A few of these continue after project completion. The coordination committee for sustainable development and environment set up in the framework of the “One UN” initiative has improved inter-agency coordination, although not in a meaningful manner. Competition for GEF financing between GEF Agencies has negatively affected coordination.

- (k) **Conclusion 11: Monitoring and evaluation systems are not fully implemented.**

22. The M&E mechanisms for projects supported by the GEF focused above all on administrative and financial monitoring. Historically, there has been little or no monitoring of outcomes and impacts, and no baselines were established at the start of older projects. M&E arrangements were not functional or useful for the implementation of seven out of ten GEF completed projects.

1.4. Recommendations

To the Government

- (a) **Recommendation 1: The Environment Department should play a greater role in the systematic coordination of the GEF portfolio, generating and sharing knowledge.**

23. The evaluation of the GEF portfolio in Morocco revealed weaknesses in the coordination of projects supported by the GEF. The Environment Department should pursue efforts to coordinate the portfolio, increase its role as a driver and contribute to

the national ownership of project results. Portfolio coordination should emphasize better collaboration with stakeholders and regulate the dissemination of information, strengthen harmonization practices, avoid duplications and optimize national resources. Concerning knowledge generation, the Environment Department should put in place a database for the key documents of GEF projects and update it regularly. As suggested repeatedly by stakeholders, the Environment Department should create a national platform dedicated to the production and management of knowledge in the GEF focal areas.

(b) Recommendation 2: The Environment Department should integrate the function of evaluation to support efficiency and sustainability of environmental policies and programs in Morocco.

24. In accordance with the constitutional principles of the evaluation of public policies, the Environment Department should consider institutionalizing and organizing the evaluation function. The context for this is favorable. The prospect of institutionalizing the function of evaluation in the department must take into account the ongoing process of institutionalizing the evaluation of public policies in Morocco, which was initiated by the Ministry of General Affairs and Governance (MGAG). It would be, therefore, appropriate that the Environment Department institutionalize and organize the evaluation function for all its environmental projects, including those funded by international organizations, such as the GEF. The Environment Department should therefore plan to put in place a monitoring, evaluation and learning system aimed at monitoring and evaluating results (effects and impacts), beyond the mere financial monitoring and the measurement of outputs achievement. The creation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit for Cooperation Programs foreseen in the new institutional organigram of the Environment Department certainly constitutes a commendable initiative, which is worth exploiting for responding to these needs.

To the Government and the GEF Agencies

(c) Recommendation 3: The projects supported by the FEM must be sensitive to gender. Likewise, the gender elements should be included in the identification, planning, implementation and M&E of projects.

25. The recommendations for gender mainstreaming included in the Gender Mainstreaming Policy must be considered. Particularly, Principle 18 specifies that action plans should be sensitive to gender while recognizing and respecting the differing roles of women and men and the management of resources in society⁵. To this effect, the Environment Department and the GEF Agencies must take into account the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in both project formulation and implementation, and regularly

⁵ https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/Gender_Mainstreaming_Policy.pdf

monitor while adjusting as necessary. That would involve the commitment of GEF Agencies to consolidate the capacities of national partners (the government, private sector and civil society) to mainstream gender into the design, implementation and evaluation of GEF projects. In that, the establishment of collaboration links with UN Women could be helpful.