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COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION TAJIKISTAN (1999 – 2015)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background

1. The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) conducts Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPEs) to provide the GEF Council and the national governments with an assessment of the results and performance of GEF-supported activities at country level. These evaluations also assess how these activities are aligned with national strategies and priorities as well as the global environmental mandate of the GEF. CPEs enable knowledge sharing about country-level results for the benefit of the GEF Council, the participating country, and the agencies and organizations that design, plan and implement GEF-funded activities.

2. The Tajikistan CPE was conducted between October 2014 and January 2016. The GEF portfolio in Tajikistan is diverse and mature, and is composed of 23 national projects covering biodiversity and climate change, with a significant number of multifocal projects. The specific objectives of the evaluation are to assess the effectiveness, results and sustainability of GEF support in Tajikistan, and assess its relevance and efficiency, implementation frameworks, decision-making processes, policies and procedures, with the ultimate aim to provide feedback and knowledge sharing in Tajikistan and in the GEF as a whole.

3. GEF support to Tajikistan started in 1999. At present, the national portfolio is composed of seven Full-size Projects (FSPs), eight Medium-size Projects (MSPs) and eight Enabling Activities (EAs). The portfolio mainly covers the biodiversity and climate change focal areas, with six and five projects respectively. It includes six multifocal area projects, three chemical and waste projects and three land degradation projects. The total GEF grant in the national portfolio amounts at US\$ 33.9 million, with US\$ 119.65 million in cofinancing. Tajikistan is party to sixteen regional and seven global projects, totaling US\$ 64.85 million, with US\$ 150.93 million cofinancing.¹ GEF support through the Small Grants Programme (SGP) has been mostly used for biodiversity and land degradation. Each US\$ of GEF grant to the SGP has leveraged US\$1.23 on average in co-financing, half of which is in cash and half in-kind.

1.2 Highlights of the Main Findings

Results, Effectiveness and Sustainability

4. The overall performance of the portfolio has been satisfactory, with five out of the six completed project rated as satisfactory in the respective Terminal Evaluation (TE). These include one project rated as ‘Highly Satisfactory’ and four as ‘Moderately Satisfactory’.

5. Results in biodiversity demonstrate evidence of replication of management plans for protected areas. The financial plan introduced by the Gissar Mountains Project (GEF ID 1854)

¹ The GEF grants and cofinancing amounts pertaining to regional and global projects are for all the participating countries taken together.

for the Shirkent Historical Park was replicated in other protected areas throughout the country. Management plans have also been replicated in Dashtidzhum Zakaznik (zakaznik - a type of protected area) and Natural Biosphere Reserve Tigrovaya Balka. Importantly, GEF support to biodiversity introduced participatory management in Tajikistan's protected areas system, endorsed by the State Directorate of Protected Areas through Decision No. 57 on December 10, 2010. Other support includes the rationalization of the protected areas boundaries (i.e. the Romit Reserve and the Shirkent Historical Park). GEF support has contributed to an increase in the land area under conservation from 4% to 22%, and there is evidence of stress reduction and improved environmental status as a result of replication in specific and disconnected sites. A noteworthy foundational support from the GEF is the one provided for the Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework (GEF ID 3211), which helped establishing the Centre for Biodiversity and Biosafety and has contributed to the development of important national legislation on biosafety.

6. GEF support to climate change has mostly helped the country to fulfil its obligations to the UNFCCC and the legal framework in the small hydropower sector, with the law on energy efficiency and energy savings, no. 1018 of September 19, 2013. Ongoing support to the transportation and the small-hydropower sectors, both involving the private sector, show good promise in terms of estimated GHG emission reduction potential. The estimated percentage of locally manufactured small hydropower installation costs increased from 5-10% to 50%, and the local manufacturers are now able to fully design, and construct small hydropower units locally.

7. Land degradation was an important share of GEF support to Tajikistan, provided through both national and regional projects. Similarly to biodiversity, results were mostly achieved in the development of important national laws, as in the case of the Law on Mountain Regions and the law on Pastures, approved in 2013. The CACILM project (GEF ID 3237) introduced bio-drainage and shelterbelts which were replicated outside the project area, in the Jirkul district. New protected areas were *de facto* created with direct support from the project. Results from regional projects are less visible.

8. Support to chemicals and waste was effective in the Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) sector. From 2001 to 2008, the ODS Phasing-out project (GEF ID 15) contributed to recovering and recycling 115,008 kilograms of refrigerants. About 85% of domestic CFC-based refrigerators were replaced between 2000 and 2010. Parallel to that, through the project HCFC Phase Out in the CEIT Region (GEF ID 4102), a retrofit financial incentive programme was designed and implemented for the country's refrigeration industry. The consequent ODS phase-out is equal to 50.7 tons ODP (ozone depletion potential), with which the country returned to compliance with the Montreal Protocol in 2006. Results in POPs did not go beyond foundational support.

9. The five completed and ongoing multifocal projects in the national portfolio largely include biodiversity, climate change and land degradation elements and addressed most of the main environmental priorities set by national development and environmental policy documents. Results are mainly visible at the local and project sites level. Examples from the community watershed management project (GEF ID 1872) include: (i) gardens on terraces,

conserving the soil, preventing wind erosion and increasing GHG absorption; (ii) corrals for livestock, facilitating the preservation of livestock productivity, the improvement of pastures, leading in turn to increasing overall productivity and natural restoration of land; and (iii) the yaks' breeding initiative, which also improved pasture lands productivity by contributing to reduce the pressure on pastures. Irrigation water saving technologies and use of biological methods for plants and crops protection as alternatives to chemical control (GEF ID 1872 and 3237) are estimated to have saved at least 250 cubic meters of water a year. An irrigation network that was rehabilitated in 30 villages allows a more rational and efficient use of irrigation water, prevents erosion and soil salinization, and reduces the use of pesticides and fertilizers. Water supply pipelines built for 550 households are still functioning today.

10. Institution and capacity building was effective. All the Jamoat Resource Centers (JRC) supported by the Gissar Mountains project (GEF ID 1854) are still operational today, as they are the two tree nurseries set up with the support of the project. Ten farmers having benefited of training opportunities provided by the project have concluded land lease agreements with the local forestry department. The community watershed management project (GEF ID 1872) set up three information centers, all of them still operating today. Farmers Field Schools (FFSs) consultants trained by the CACILM project are still working for the Land Degradation Units (LDUs) in the project region. Not all efforts have been successful though. The 5-Years Tugai Community forest management agreement supported by the Gissar Mountains project, signed in 2008 by community representatives and the Hukumat (the local authority) expired in 2013. To date, no further efforts have been made for its renewal.

11. In Tajikistan, GEF support focused considerably on knowledge generation and sharing. The most effective form of support in this area was in awareness raising and skills building. In terms of knowledge generation, a number of FSPs and MSPs had varying degrees of effectiveness. The project Dashtidzhum Biodiversity Conservation project (GEF ID 2037) developed a set of maps generated through Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which were uploaded on a dedicated internet website. These include a number of maps of ecosystems, biotopes, natural habitats for plants and animals, biodiversity threats, boundaries of zakaznik² and a zoning map. Unfortunately the website was removed after project completion.

12. The ongoing Small-Hydropower project (GEF ID 4160) helped developing a guidebook, providing in-depth information to private and public investors interested in the construction of small-hydropower plants, and education modules for students of technical universities and short term vocational trainings. The guidebook and modules have been included in the education curricula of the Tajik Technical University and the Kurgant'yube Energy Institute, the main institutions training hydropower engineers in Tajikistan. The Gissar Mountains project (GEF ID 1854) issued a regular newsletter, Navruzgoh, to disseminate best practices and lessons learned. The Center for Environmental Protection (CEP) has then taken ownership of this initiative, and a national staff conference has been held annually since 2009 to facilitate networking. Trainings, peer-to-peer exchanges and other forms of skills buildings were a

² A type of protected area.

particular focus in several projects. As a result of the trainings delivered by one of the earliest projects, the ODS Phasing-out project (GEF ID 15), many of the 334 certified refrigeration technicians continue working as independent entrepreneurs or as employees of various service centers throughout the country.

13. Thirteen national projects considered gender issues in project formulation and implementation, while the other ten didn't. More specifically, gender issues were mentioned in the project formulation documents of all thirteen projects, although some of them only did it partially (GEF ID 3310 and 3237). M&E documentation shows that five projects were actively mainstreaming gender in their activities (GEF ID 1854, 4160, 1872, 3129 and 3310). Only six projects include gender disaggregated indicators (GEF ID 4422, 4352, 1872, 3234, 3129, and 5236). The Gissar Mountains project (GEF ID 1854) integrated a gender dimension into the conceptualization, planning, and implementation of all project activities. The project considered women involvement to be crucial in ensuring demonstration activities are successful and have strong potential to be replicated. Conversely, the CACILM project (GEF ID 3237) didn't, despite the fact that most of the labor in the farming systems of Tajikistan is done by women. Women were mainly involved in the micro-loan activities and trainings (GEF ID 1854, 3237, 4160, 3129, and 3310). Promoting the participation of women in decision making processes has been inconsistent in the period under analysis. Some efforts were made in two earlier projects (GEF ID 1872, 1854) and in a more recent one (GEF ID 5223). The introduction of the GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming in 2011 contributed to a higher consideration of gender in the portfolio.

Relevance

14. In line with its mandate, the GEF has supported Tajikistan in the preparation of important documents, including the First National Communication to UNFCCC, the National Implementation Plan for Stockholm Convention on POPs, the NCSA, the NBSAP and the First National Report to the CBD. These foundational documents helped the country comply with its obligations as a signatory member of the international environmental conventions. To note, Tajikistan is party to most if not all the international environmental conventions, with the notable exception of the Minamata convention on mercury, which has not yet been signed. Mercury is among the major mineral resources extracted in Tajikistan, where chemicals leaking in waters as a result of mining activities is a cause of concern.

15. All GEF national projects align with most of the main national official sustainable development and environment policies. Furthermore, a quick estimation based on available literature compared with portfolio figures in the period 2010-2012 allows to infer that GEF is an important contributor to the country's efforts in the environmental sector. To note, the co-finance ratio of US\$3.5 for each US\$1 of GEF grant in the national portfolio compares reasonably well with the two other country portfolios analyzed by the IEO in the ECA region (US\$2.9 in Turkey; slightly over US\$1 in Moldova). Not only is GEF support aligned with country's national priorities, it is also included in national budgets, demonstrating ownership, especially since GEF-4. After Tajikistan's accession to the Paris Declaration in 2005, project

management units started being set up under the ministries and government agencies, with four out of the eight GEF - 4 and GEF - 5 MSPs and FSPs.

Efficiency

16. With its average of 25.45 months, the Tajikistan portfolio scores better than Sri Lanka, where FSPs take an average of four years to move from entry into pipeline to start of implementation, as well as South Africa and Brazil, where the average is 3.7 and 3.6 years, respectively. Overall, in comparison with most portfolios analyzed by the GEF IEO in the last 10 years, Tajikistan scores rather well, although for FSPs it took more than four months longer than the official threshold of 18 months established in GEF-5. Stakeholders consider these time lags too long.

17. GEF ongoing and future projects are discussed in the Donor Coordination Committee (DCC) and coordinated with other donors support at the national level. Coordination is affected at the local level by insufficient engagement of the respective government agencies, some of which have undergone several internal restructurings. At times, this even included lack of institutional clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the respective institutions. GEF projects, as mentioned by several interviewed stakeholders, have introduced a culture of collaboration among all the partner institutions involved. For example, the Gissar Mountain project (GEF ID 1854) established participatory land-use and forest management mechanisms including different government departments as well as local communities.

18. Unlike other countries, in Tajikistan the GEF focal point positions - both the political and operational - are assigned to one institutional figure: the Chairman of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP). Several key informants voiced their concerns on the effectiveness and efficiency of this arrangement, given the many other responsibilities the CEP Chairman has. Many believe that insufficient consultation with project proponents to fine-tune proposals and manage the approval process are among the reasons for delays at the project design stage. However, in most cases, delays have been associated with low in-country project design capacities and lack of specialized technical expertise.

19. M&E ratings in earlier projects have been unsatisfactory, but the situation improved over time. Four out of the six TEs, including the three most recent ones, report an overall M&E satisfactory rating. The Terminal Evaluation Review (TER) of the ODS project (GEF ID 15) rated M&E design as marginally unsatisfactory, and was unable to assess M&E implementation. The TER of the Dashtidzhum project (GEF ID 2037) rated M&E design as marginally satisfactory, but M&E implementation was rated as marginally unsatisfactory. More recent project show M&E contribution to project adaptive management. The design of the M&E system of the CACILM project (GEF ID 3237) was rated as satisfactory, and monitoring data allowed for adaptations made to the intervention while it was still ongoing. The TE of the CAWM project (GEF ID 1872) reports that the preliminary risk analysis was not conducted well and that project M&E design did not consider the low technical capacities of communities as well as their willingness to include gender considerations in the project activities. This situation was addressed as a result of the project Mid-term Review (MTR), which found that a lot of women were actually

beneficiaries, and recommended the inclusion in the M&E system of gender indicators. To note, only four out of fifteen national FSPs and MSPs and one EA have their respective tracking tools correctly filled.

1.3 Main Conclusions and Recommendations

20. The evaluative evidence demonstrates that GEF support to biodiversity in Tajikistan has contributed to the achievement of significant results, more than in the other focal areas. Results are particularly positive in protected areas management, legislation development, raising awareness, and building capacity. Cases of broader adoption in biodiversity and land degradation occurred mostly in terms of replication and mainstreaming, at the local level. To date, GEF support to climate change in Tajikistan has had limited – although promising – results. Effectiveness has instead been achieved through the support provided to deal with chemicals and waste issues in the ODS sector, while results are mixed on the reduction of POPs. GEF has been significantly effective at the local level in knowledge generation and dissemination, mainly during project implementation, and less so after completion. In general, gender has not been consistently considered within the Tajikistan portfolio.

21. GEF support has been aligned with the international GEF mandate, and this has helped the country meet its international commitments. It has also been relevant to Tajikistan national environmental and sustainable development policies and priorities. Ownership of GEF support has increased over time, especially since GEF-4. Besides, although the project cycle in Tajikistan is comparable to GEF averages, Tajikistan stakeholders perceive it as being too long, especially at the formulation stage. There has been coordination and synergies between GEF Agencies, national executing agencies, and other donor supported projects in the environment sector at the national level, less so at the local level. According to stakeholders, the GEF focal point mechanism in Tajikistan has not provided sufficient strategic guidance and coordination. Furthermore, the GEF focal point has not been involved in M&E of the GEF portfolio at the national level, and information on GEF mechanisms and procedures has not been regularly conveyed to national partners. Overall, M&E has contributed to project adaptive management, especially in recent projects, but use of tracking tools has been spotty.

22. In summary, the GEF Tajikistan CPE has reached the following conclusions and recommendations presented here below. A more extensive presentation of these conclusions and recommendations is provided in Chapter 8 of this report.

Conclusions

- (a) GEF support to Tajikistan has been significantly more effective in biodiversity conservation, particularly in protected areas management and biosafety legislation, as compared with other focal areas.
- (b) A few cases of broader adoption of outcomes, leading to progress toward impact, are observed at local scale in the form of replication, specifically in the biodiversity and land degradation focal areas.

- (c) The GEF support in knowledge generation and dissemination was effective mostly at the local level.
- (d) GEF support to dealing with chemicals issues in Tajikistan was effective in the ODS sector. Results on the reduction of POPs are mixed.
- (e) Few examples of GEF contribution to reducing gender inequality are observed at the local level. Overall, gender has not been consistently considered in the Tajikistan portfolio.
- (f) GEF support has been broadly aligned with the international GEF mandate of achieving global environmental benefits and helped the country to meet its international commitments.
- (g) GEF support was relevant to Tajikistan's national environmental as well as sustainable development policies and priorities.
- (h) Ownership of GEF support has increased over time, especially since GEF-4.
- (i) In Tajikistan, the GEF activity cycle is perceived as too long, especially at the project formulation stage.
- (j) There has been coordination and synergies between GEF Agencies, national executing agencies and other donor support at the national level, less so at the local level.
- (k) M&E contributed to project adaptive management, with some exceptions.

Recommendations

To the Government of Tajikistan and GEF Agencies

- (a) Gender concerns should be adequately and systematically addressed and mainstreamed in all GEF Focal Areas, as provisioned in the GEF Gender Mainstreaming Policy.

To the Government of Tajikistan

- (b) The GEF focal point mechanism should be strengthened and a strategic approach to GEF support should be developed to ensure dissemination of lessons after project completion and promote coordination among the main stakeholders, including at the local level.
- (c) Mercury, POPs and other hazardous chemicals related issues should be given priority in Tajikistan.