# Progress towards Impact
# Guidance Note for CPEs

The use of the progress towards impact methodology in country portfolio evaluations structured around two stages. First, an initial analysis is conducted using only information available from GEF project Terminal Evaluations to identify themes across the portfolio, such as common factors contributing to broader adoption and environmental impact. The results of this analysis should provide further criteria on which to base the selection of projects to visit during the evaluation stage.  The second stage uses the project review sheets – pre-filled with information from the TEs – to update information on progress towards impact based on the fieldwork, interviews and other data gathering activities conducted during the evaluation phase. This updated information in turn provides a basis from which to write a short case study for each project reviewed, which focusses on the progress to impact pathways, broader adoption mechanisms, and the factors that affect both.

This guidance note provides a starting point for consultants working on CPEs to understand the procedures for conducting a country-level progress towards impact study and analysis. The guide first defines what impact is, what broader adoption is, the three GEF areas of contribution, and how each of these elements fits into the overall GEF Theory of Change. It then explains how progress towards impact is used in CPEs, centering around the project review sheets, which are pre-filled by the GEFIEO. It goes on to explain the various contributing and hindering factors and how they are categorized. Finally, a template structure for the individual project case studies is outlined.

## What is Impact?

Impact in general can be defined as "the long-term effects produced by an intervention, intended or unintended, direct or indirect" (GEF M&E Policy 2010). They can also be positive and/or negative and primary and/or secondary. The goal of the GEF is to achieve environmental impact, which is defined as positive changes in biological, chemical and physical parameters that could take the form of stress reduction or improved environmental status:

- **Stress reduction:** decrease, prevention or slowdown of the degradation, destruction or contamination of the components of an ecosystem e.g. better protection/enforcement, improved management effectiveness, banning of destructive technology, waste treated, habitat restored
- **Improved environmental status:** positive changes in the state of the ecosystem or any of its components. e.g. improved water quality/ nutrient concentration, higher habitat cover, higher species population

Over time, stress reduction leads to improvements in environmental status. Impact measurement thus has a time dimension, significantly longer than project duration, as many biophysical processes that the GEF aims to influence take a long time to mature. Thus project can have direct, short-term or quick

impacts or long-term impacts that emerge over time through long-duration biophysical processes. See the GEF generic Theory of Change below.

Furthermore, impact has a space dimension; it can be measured at different geographical, socio-ecological, or administrative scales. For example, single sites, multiple disconnected sites, across land or seascapes, national or global markets, across regions or even worldwide.

**Figure 1. GEF Theory of Change**
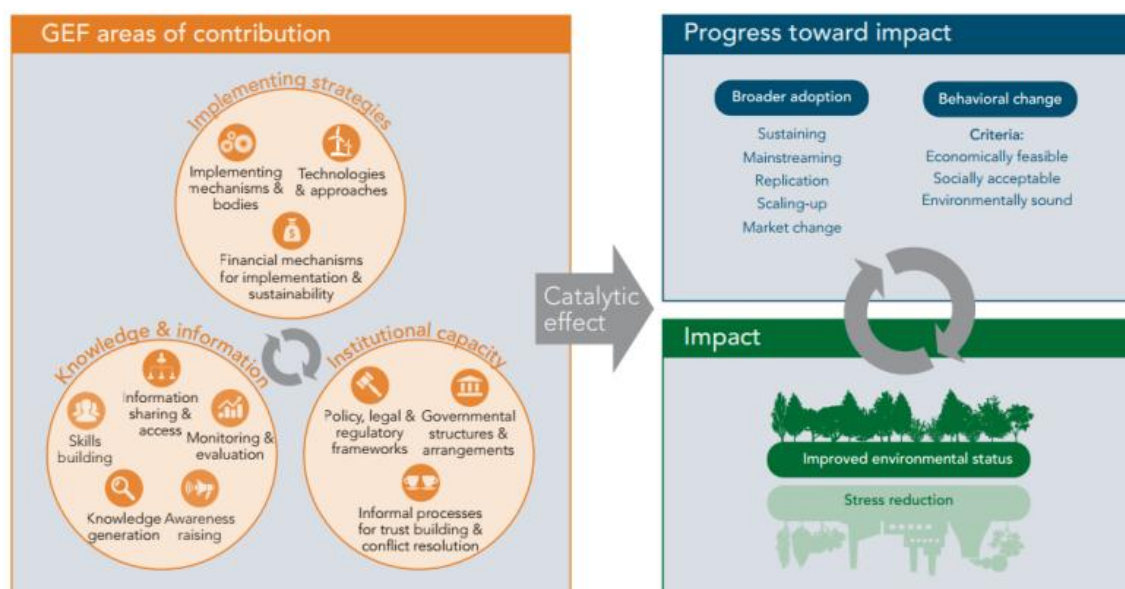


## What is Broader Adoption?

Although GEF support can aim at processes taking place at different levels (local, national, regional or global), the aim is to transform the ways and systems by which humans interact with the environment. GEF contributions to such transformations typically take place through the broader adoption of the outcomes of GEF support by stakeholders through processes laid out below. This broader adoption should then ultimately contribute to environmental impact.

- **Sustaining:** Interventions originally supported by GEF continue to be implemented by stakeholders without GEF support to demonstrate the benefits and provide benefits for adoption by other stakeholders beyond the original project scope.
- **Mainstreaming:** Information, lessons, or specific results of GEF are incorporated into broader stakeholder mandates and initiatives such as laws, policies, regulations, and programs. This may occur through governments and/or through development organizations and other sectors.
- **Replication:** GEF-supported initiatives are reproduced or adopted at a comparable administrative or ecological scale, often in another geographical area or region.

- **Scaling-up:** GEF-supported initiatives are implemented in larger geographical areas, often expanded to include new aspects or concerns that may be political, administrative, economic or ecological in nature.
- **Market change:** GEF-supported initiatives help catalyze market transformation by influencing the supply of and/or demand for goods and services that contribute to global environmental benefits. This may encompass technological changes, policy and regulatory reforms, and financial instruments.

## GEF Areas of Contribution

As laid out in the GEF general Theory of Change above, the GEF has three broad areas of contribution: Knowledge and Information, Implementing Strategies and Institutional Capacity. Through broader adoption of these results elements, GEF's support is aimed to lead towards impact.

1. **Knowledge and Information:**
   - Research/assessment methods e.g. data collection/analysis protocols, approaches, technologies
   - Monitoring systems e.g. protocols, technologies, bodies for REGULAR data collection/ analysis
   - Awareness raising initiatives e.g. school campaigns, TV shows, study tours, forums
   - Information sharing arrangements e.g. databases, websites, expert networks, conferences
   - Training/ skills building initiatives e.g. training, workshops, internships, study tours
2. **Implementing Strategies**
   - Management frameworks/ approaches e.g. integrated coastal management, community-based protected area management, management plans
   - Technologies/ Infrastructure e.g. treatment plant, wetland engineering, energy efficient lighting
   - Financial mechanisms e.g. user fees, revolving finds, alternative livelihoods, public-private partnerships (PPPs)
   - Management systems (including structures & processes) e.g. protected area management council, law enforcement teams, community forums
3. **Institutional Capacity**
   - Laws/policies/regulations e.g. municipal ordinances, republic acts, national development strategies, rules
   - Government structures e.g. department, bureau, agency, commission
   - Mechanisms/processes for participation & trust-building/ conflict resolution e.g. regular intergovernmental meetings, community dialogues, national networks and conferences

## Using Progress towards Impact in CPEs

The Progress to Impact methodology uses the Project Review Sheets to collect information from GEF project Terminal Evaluation reports concerning the above-mentioned aspects of the GEF Theory of Change. However, the review sheets have a slightly different structure, for the sake of easing collection of information during the evaluative phase. The sheets are structured around six areas, each relating to the various elements of progress towards impact and the GEF Theory of Change.

**Box 1. The 6 project areas reviewed in the CPE Progress towards Impact methodology**

**Environmental change** *(refers to improved environmental status and stress reduction)*
Describe the changes in environmental stress and environmental status that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

**Socio-economic change**
Describe any changes in human well-being (income, education, health, community relationships, etc.) that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

**Capacity and governance changes** *(refers to the three GEF contribution areas: Implementing Strategies, Institutional Capacity, Knowledge and Information)*

Describe notable changes in capacities and governance that can lead to large-scale action (both mass and legislative) bringing about positive environmental change. "Capacities" include awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, and environmental monitoring systems, among others. "Governance" refers to decision-making processes, structures and systems, including access to and use of information, and thus would include laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc. Indicate how project activities contributed to/ hindered these changes, as well as how contextual factors have influenced these changes.

**Unintended impacts**
Describe any impacts not targeted by the project, whether positive or negative, affecting either ecological or social aspects. Indicate the factors that contributed to these unintended impacts occurring.

**Adoption of GEF initiatives at scale** *(refers to 'broader adoption' mechanisms)*
Identify any initiatives (e.g. technologies, approaches, financing instruments, implementing bodies, legal frameworks, information systems) that have been mainstreamed, replicated and/or scaled up by government and other stakeholders by project end. Include the extent to which this broader adoption has taken place, e.g. if plans and resources have been established but no actual adoption has taken place, or if market change and large-scale environmental benefits have begun to occur. Indicate how project activities and other contextual factors contributed to these taking place. If broader adoption has not taken place as expected, indicate which factors (both project-related and contextual) have hindered this from happening.

***Note:*** *Further details for each of these areas can be found under the relevant tables in the Review Sheets*

For CPEs, the evaluation team takes the progress to impact assessment from the desk review level to the level of fieldwork, stakeholder consultation, and verification. This allows the evaluation team to see if further progress towards impact has taken place since project-end and to verify or challenge those findings found in the TEs.

Consultants should use the Review Sheets that have been pre-filled with information from the available TEs as their starting point. These sheets contain only information found in the available TEs. More information can then be added to these sheets based on findings from the interviews, project visits and other data collection activities during the evaluation phase. These sheets provide a structure through which broader adoption mechanisms, progress to impact pathways, and environmental impacts taking place within each project can be framed in a consistent manner.

In general, the review sheets are structured into 6 tables, such as the one below. The pre-filled information from the TEs will provide some guidance to the consultants as to how these tables should be updated. However, it is similar to the 'causal pathways' used in LogFrames, and attempts to link GEF-supported (project-related) and non-GEF-supported (contextual) activities to reported changes in the six areas outlined above. There is also a column for 'details' where more quantitative or granular information can be added. The sources of information column should be used for referencing the source of the data collected, e.g. interview with project manager, document review, field observation etc.

**Table 1. Example table from the Project Review Sheets**

| ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE REPORTED | DETAILS [b] | SOURCES OF INFORMATION | GEF-SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES/ FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE | NON-GEF ACTIVITIES/ FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

**Note:** See below each table for further guidance on how to fill

## Factors affecting Broader Adoption

The Factors that affect each reported change under each of the six areas, should be identified in the review sheets. These can either 'contributing factors' towards or hinder broader adoption processes and eventual impact. They can also be either 'project-related factors' (i.e. GEF-supported activities or factors) or 'context-related factors' (i.e. Non-GEF activities or factors). The various factors are outlined, with some examples, in the table below.

**Table 2. Summary of factors affecting broader adoption and impact**

| | Project-related Factors | Context-related Factors |
|---|---|---|
| **Contributing Factors** | Highly relevant technology/approach (e.g. micro-credit facilities that benefit local beneficiaries)<br><br>Broader adoption processes initiated using project resources (e.g. conferences held on project lessons, establishing sustainable revolving funds)<br><br>Good engagement of key stakeholders (e.g. involving indigenous people or local governments in decision making)<br><br>Good coordination with/ continuity of previous/ current initiatives (e.g. lessons learned used)<br><br>Good project design<br><br>Adaptation of project to changing contexts<br><br>Extended implementation period (e.g. mid-term evaluation led to project extension)<br><br>Previous GEF support [add GEF ID]<br><br>Follow-up initiatives using GEF resources (e.g. enabling activity led to full size project)<br><br>Other | Previous/current related initiatives (by government, global events, etc.) (i.e. alignment of interests and synergies between the efforts of different actors)<br><br>"Champions" (e.g. officials of local government providing extra support to help the project)<br><br>Country support (e.g. alignment with country's objectives leads to extra cofinancing)<br><br>Other stakeholder support (e.g. donors, private sector)<br><br>Other favorable political conditions/events<br><br>Favorable economic conditions/drivers/ events<br><br>Favorable social conditions/drivers/events<br><br>Favorable environmental conditions/drivers/ events<br><br>Other |
| **Hindering Factors** | Inappropriate/insufficient technology/approach (e.g. local users did not have the expertise to use the new equipment provided)<br><br>No activities to sustain momentum (e.g. No follow-on funding from government)<br><br>Poor project design (other than factors above)<br><br>Poor project management (e.g. a project manager did not have expertise, poor engagement of steering committee)<br><br>Inability to adapt project to changing context<br><br>Insufficient time for implementation (e.g. project had unrealistic objectives for timeframe)<br><br>Other | Lack of country support (e.g. project was driven by implementing agency with no buy-in from relevant agency)<br><br>Lack of other stakeholder support (e.g. donors, private sector) (e.g. project objectives were not aligned with other stakeholders' objectives)<br><br>Other unfavorable political conditions/events<br><br>Unfavorable economic conditions/drivers/ events<br><br>Unfavorable social conditions/drivers/events<br><br>Unfavorable environmental conditions/drivers/ events<br><br>Other |

## Case Study Guidelines

See below for an outline structure for the project case studies, which should be completed for each of the project reviewed using the CPE progress towards impact methodology.

### 1.      Intro

A short project description outlining project objectives, key components, theory of change, project design and execution.

### 2.      Outputs and Outcomes

Outline the general results of the project, including outputs, outcomes and reported changes under the capacity and governance areas of the project review sheets.

### 3.      Environmental Impact

Indicate environmental impacts achieved by the project, both at project-end and at the time of the CPE evaluation phase. Discuss the extent and scale of the impact, as well as highlighting absent or negative impacts.

### 4.      Broader Adoption Processes

Highlight and describe all broader adoption processes that have taken place as a result of the project. Include information on the intervention adopted, the broader adoption mechanism, the scale of the adoption, and the current status of the adoption (i.e. planned, initiated, adopted, showing behavioral change).

### 5.      Contributing and Hindering Factors

Use the framework outline in Table 2 (above) to identify the factors that affected broader adoption and progress towards impact.

### 6.      Conclusion

Provide a summarizing statement, highlighting areas of similarities between the project in question and other projects reviewed, particularly with regards to the factors.