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Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies Evaluation Report



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Foreword

In May 2011, the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) requested the GEF Evaluation Office conduct an evaluation of the GEF focal area strategies. The study was designed as a formative evaluation, emphasizing learning as its primary goal. The main objective of the evaluation was to collect and assess information related to the GEF-5 (2010–14) focal area strategies to gain a systematic understanding of the elements and causal links each strategy envisions. The ultimate objective of the evaluation was to inform the development and improvement of strategies for GEF-6 (2014–18).

The evaluation employed a theory-based approach designed around the theory of change of an activity or strategy that maps out the sequence of means-ends linkages identified in each focal area strategy and thereby makes explicit both the expected results and the actions that will lead to achievement of results. In preparation for the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5), the GEF Evaluation Office developed a general framework for the GEF theory of change, drawing on a large amount of evaluative evidence gathered over the years. The present evaluation used the general framework to guide the construction of focal area strategy theories of change in consultation with the GEF Secretariat.

The evaluation encompassed the analysis of the following focal area strategies: biodiversity, climate change mitigation, international waters,

land degradation, chemicals, sustainable forest management/REDD+ (the GEF defines REDD+ as reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries), and—under the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund—adaptation to climate change. The analysis provides the foundation for assessment of implementation of focal area strategies in GEF projects in the context of OPS5.

The evaluation found that the GEF-5 focal area strategies fulfill crucial functions in guiding GEF programming, are largely responsive to convention guidance, and correspond with current scientific consensus. The construction of theories of change for each focal area revealed that, in most cases, the strategies do not draw on a systematic identification of the envisaged causal relationships between different elements of the relevant strategy. The potential for broader adoption of results is recognized in the strategies, but the pathways to do so are not systematically considered. The evaluation also found that the strategies do not have a comprehensive approach for multifocal area activities.

The evaluation of GEF focal area strategies commenced in February 2012, and its conclusions and recommendations were presented to the GEF Council in the following November. Upon review-

ing the document and the management response from the GEF Secretariat and Agencies, the Council requested the Secretariat ensure explicit discussion of casual linkages for GEF-6 strategies, more flexibility for multifocal area projects, clearer pathways from activities to outcome and impact, and a review of the approach to capacity development in GEF-6.

The GEF Evaluation Office would like to thank all who collaborated with the evaluation: its staff, GEF

Secretariat staff, convention staff, and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel. I would also like to thank all those involved for their support and useful criticism. Final responsibility for this report remains firmly with this Office.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob D. van den Berg', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Rob D. van den Berg
Director, GEF Evaluation Office

Acknowledgments

This evaluation was prepared by Anna Viggh, Senior Evaluation Officer and Team Leader for thematic evaluations at the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Evaluation Office. Björn Conrad, Evaluation Analyst, was the Task Manager.

Input and support were provided by members of the GEF Secretariat; representatives of the GEF

Agencies and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel; and staff of the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity	SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
COP	conference of the parties	SFM	sustainable forest management
GEF	Global Environment Facility	STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund	UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
OPS	overall performance study	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
POP	persistent organic pollutant		
RTD	Real-Time Delphi		

All dollar amounts are U.S. dollars unless otherwise indicated.

1. Conclusions and Recommendations

1.1 Background

CONTEXT, SCOPE, AND OBJECTIVES

The Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Focal Area Strategies builds on prior evaluative efforts conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office. In particular, past GEF overall performance studies (OPSs) have presented assessments at the GEF focal area level. In the context of the Third Overall Performance Study (OPS3) in 2004, the GEF focal areas were assessed in a series of program studies. OPS4 presented evidence on focal area achievements, primarily focusing on their progress toward impact, as well as a comprehensive analysis of convention guidance to the GEF. The aggregation of evaluative evidence at the focal area level has proven to be of particular value in informing and providing recommendations for the GEF replenishment process. Accordingly, OPS5 will continue to report evaluative findings on focal area activities. The Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies represents one building block of this effort and a preparatory step for the broader assessment of focal area achievements in the context of OPS5.

This evaluation was designed as a formative evaluation, emphasizing learning as its primary goal.¹ Accordingly, the evaluation's main objec-

¹ The evaluation literature distinguishes between summative and formative evaluations. **Summative**

tive is to collect and assess information related to the GEF-5 (2010–14) focal area strategies to gain a systematic understanding of the elements and causal links each strategy envisions. The evaluation encompasses the analysis of the following focal area strategies: [biodiversity](#), [climate change mitigation](#), [international waters](#), [land degradation](#), [chemicals](#), [sustainable forest management \(SFM\)/REDD+](#),² and—under the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)—[adaptation to climate change](#). The evaluation looks at the most recent GEF-5 focal area strategies and the LDCF/SCCF strategy on adaptation to climate change covering the period from 2010 to 2014.

The evaluation focuses on an analysis of the GEF-5 focal area strategies as they were formulated, emphasizing their intended rationale and internal logic. The analysis provides the foundation for a subsequent assessment of the implementation of

evaluations focus on the assessment of performance and progress measured against expected targets and are used to evaluate the accountability of a given system. In contrast, **formative** evaluations analyze evidence in order to learn from past experiences so as to inform improvements of a given system in moving forward. See [Scriven \(1967\)](#).

² The GEF defines REDD+ as reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

focal area strategies in GEF projects; this is being conducted in the context of OPS5.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

To improve understanding of the elements and causal links reflected in the GEF focal area strategies, the evaluation employed a four-step approach:

- 1. Construct theories of change.** What are the elements, causal links, and overall rationale reflected in each focal area strategy? What are the identified causal pathways envisioned to lead to the achievement of the strategy's objectives?
- 2. Review the relationship with convention guidance.** To what extent and in what way do the objectives formulated in the focal area strategies relate to the respective convention guidance?
- 3. Assess the connection with scientific knowledge.** To what extent do the focal area strategies correspond with current scientific knowledge?
- 4. Make recommendations for future strategies.** Based on the findings of Steps 1–3, what recommendations for the development of future GEF strategies can be provided?

THEORY OF CHANGE APPROACH

A theory-based evaluation is designed around the theory of change of an activity or strategy. The theory of change systematically examines the elements and causal links that constitute the activity/strategy in order to understand and describe the logic of how that activity/strategy is expected to lead to the desired results ([Fitz-Gibbon and Morris 1996](#)). In preparation for OPS5, the GEF Evaluation Office has developed a general framework for the GEF theory of change, drawing on a large amount

of evaluative evidence gathered over the years. This evaluation used the general framework to guide the construction of specific focal area strategy theories of change.

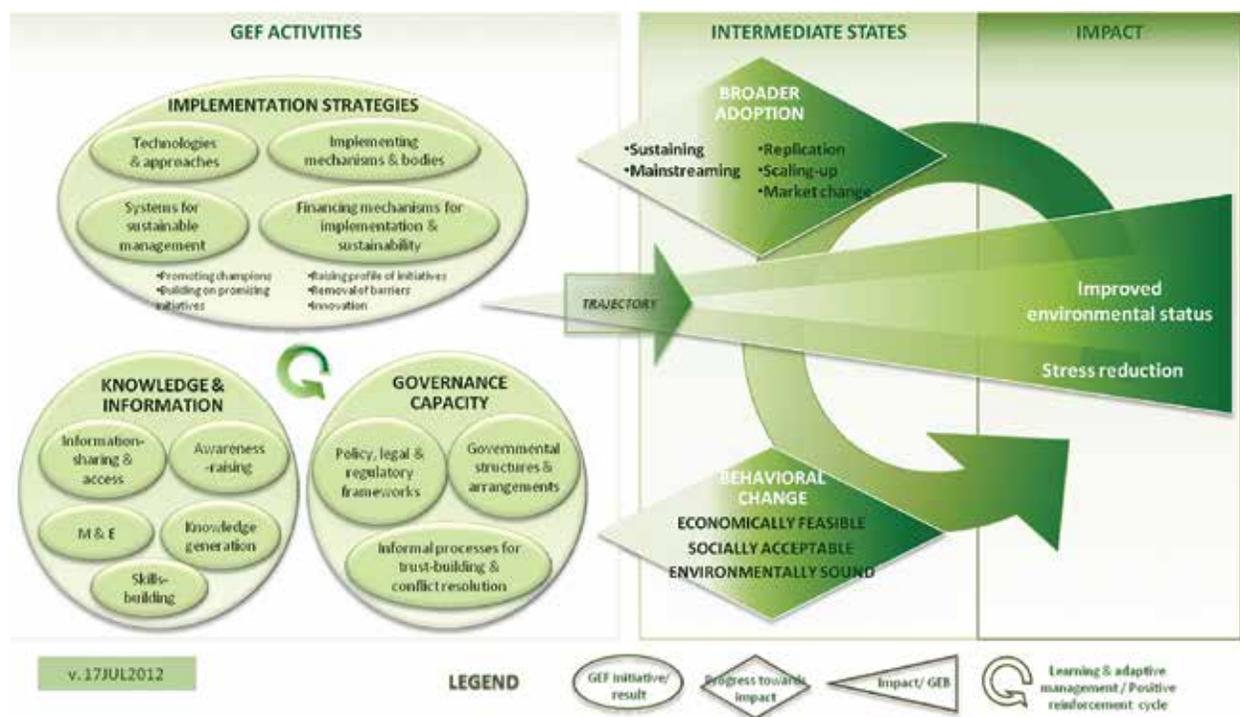
Figure 1.1 shows the general framework describing how the GEF provides support for activities that directly or indirectly address drivers of environmental degradation. The framework proposes three general categories for GEF activities: implementation strategies, institutional capacity, and knowledge and information. Outputs and outcomes of GEF activities—and their interactions with their contextual environment and actions by other actors—are expected to lead to broader adoption of the promoted approaches and technologies, and to institutional action and behavioral change.

The evaluation applied the general framework to each of the GEF-5 focal areas as well as to the LDCE/SCCF strategy on adaptation to climate change. The resulting theories of change map out the strategies' elements and causal links for each strategy, depicting the means-ends linkages envisioned explicitly or implicitly in the respective strategy and thereby identifying the logical chain of actions that are supposed to lead to the achievement of the strategy's objectives. Throughout the theory of change process, the evaluation team consulted extensively with the respective GEF Secretariat team for each focal area to ensure correct interpretation of the strategy documents and establish agreement on the central aspects of the theories of change.

ANALYSIS OF CONVENTION GUIDANCE

To assess how the focal area strategies reflect convention guidance, the evaluation conducted a full review of all convention guidance to the GEF issued by the conferences of the parties (COPs) to the conventions. The review included

FIGURE 1.1 General Framework for the GEF Theory of Change



identification of guidance relevant to the GEF, a quantitative analysis of guidance over time, and a qualitative classification of each individual item of COP guidance. Based on this review, the evaluation conducted a mapping exercise to identify the links between guidance and focal area strategies. The mapping illustrates how topics raised by the conventions are reflected in the strategies and how the strategies are in turn shaped by different kinds of guidance.

REAL-TIME DELPHI APPROACH

The [Delphi method](#) was developed by the RAND Corporation in the late 1950s as a method for collecting and synthesizing expert judgments. The methodology has since become a widely recognized technique of expert consultation. The Delphi method requires anonymity to ensure equal weighting of each participant’s responses and to reduce the bias resulting from the perceived authority of renowned experts.

The original Delphi method involves repeated rounds of responses from experts on a questionnaire, with each expert receiving feedback on peer responses between rounds. This time-intensive method was further developed into a “round-less,” online-based process that allows for asynchronous input and makes expert answers available to the entire group in real time, eliminating the need for round-to-round feedback and considerably shortening the communication time required. This form of Delphi process is called [Real-Time Delphi](#) (RTD).

Seven online questionnaires—one for each focal area strategy—were formulated by the evaluation team with extensive input from the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and embedded into an RTD online platform. Each question required a quantitative as well as a qualitative response covering the central aspects of each focal area strategy. A total of 167 participants signed onto the RTD platform to provide answers to the online questionnaires.

1.2 Conclusions

CONCLUSION 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.

The GEF-5 focal area strategies fulfill crucial functions for guiding GEF programming. Specifically, they define the general areas of activity the GEF should engage in by breaking down the focal areas' overarching goals into objectives; establish the reason for GEF engagement in a specific area by describing the corresponding environmental challenges and explaining the GEF's potential to contribute to a solution; and identify the types of GEF activities to be supported under a certain GEF objective, including illustrative examples of concrete activities to receive GEF financing.

The GEF-5 focal area strategies generally provide a clear picture of what the GEF intends to support during the replenishment period. The strategies thus serve as a guide for the GEF Secretariat on programming as well as an overview of fundable activities to inform recipient countries and GEF Agencies during project conception and development. In addition, the strategies include a results framework that defines expected outputs for each focal area objective. The frameworks establish what the GEF intends to achieve and thereby serve as the basis for the GEF's results-based management system, a benchmark for evaluations, and the basis for resource allocation decisions during the GEF replenishment process.

CONCLUSION 2: The GEF-5 focal area strategies are not based on systematic identification of envisaged causal relationships between strategy elements or of connections between GEF activities and expected results.

In most cases, the GEF-5 focal areas do not draw on a systematic identification of the envisaged

causal relationships between different elements of the relevant strategy. This pertains to both links between different types of GEF activities, such as the relationship between mutually reinforcing elements like the enabling policy environment and successful demonstration), and to more complex causal chains that are intended to lead from GEF activities to achievement of results.

This does not mean that the causal links between GEF activities and the chains of causality toward the achievement of expected results are not recognized in de facto GEF programming. On the contrary, [Technical Papers 1–7](#) (box 1.1) highlight a multitude of causal chains toward achievement of results that are implicit in the GEF focal area strategies. Many of these links are identified and discussed in other publications of the GEF Secretariat and included in the GEF programming process. In most focal areas, however, they have not been brought together in a systematic way and are not embedded as an explicit basis of the GEF-5 focal area strategies. By way of example, even though GEF support in establishing and operating energy service companies is an important instrument in achieving the GEF-5 CCM-2 objective (promote market transformation for energy efficiency in industry and the building sector), it is not explicitly mentioned in the strategy's text.

Using the system of causal links that is already reflected to a large degree in GEF programming as the basis for the GEF-6 (2014–18) strategies could strengthen a strategic approach that currently allows GEF projects only to contribute certain elements to the chain of causality toward results. This approach could reduce the burden on individual projects to cover a maximum of different elements. Instead, GEF programming could rely on a more modular approach based on an explicit understanding of how elements from different projects are to be linked in order to achieve a complete causal chain toward results. In addition, an explicit

BOX 1.1 Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies Technical Papers

The technical papers on which this evaluation report is based include the following; these are available on the GEF Evaluation Office website (www.gefeo.org) under thematic evaluations:

- Technical Paper 1: Biodiversity
- Technical Paper 2: Climate Change Mitigation
- Technical Paper 3: International Waters
- Technical Paper 4: Land Degradation
- Technical Paper 5: Chemicals
- Technical Paper 6: Sustainable Forest Management
- Technical Paper 7: Climate Change Adaptation
- Technical Paper 8: Review of Convention Guidance

Technical Papers 1–7 include a more detailed analysis of each focal area strategy. Each includes the full description of the theory of change construction for the respective focal area as well as individual assessments of convention guidance and focal area-specific results of the RTD process.

system of causality that includes causal relationships of elements from different focal areas could support and guide the design of multifocal area activities (see [Recommendations 1](#) and [2](#)).

CONCLUSION 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.

The construction of focal area strategy theories of change highlights the potential that the strategic approaches expressed in the focal area strategies have in catalyzing broader adoption of GEF results through replication, scaling-up, inducing market change, and other mechanisms for uptake. While this potential is reflected to some degree in GEF programming, considerations on the pathways of action toward maximizing broader adoption through GEF activities is in most cases not an explicit and systematic part of the focal area strategies. This situation underpins conclusions presented in OPS4, which highlighted the catalytic role of the GEF, but pointed out that the path toward broader adoption has “never been clearly defined” ([GEF EO 2010](#)).

As in the case of causal links (see [Conclusion 2](#)), the potential for broader adoption is recognized by the GEF and partially reflected in GEF programming. The GEF-5 focal area strategies in some instances refer to the influence of GEF activities on the larger national context and on the engagement of other actors. However, the strategies are in most cases not systematically based on considerations of chains of causality from GEF results to broader adoption, which could serve as a guiding framework for GEF programming to maximize the GEF’s catalytic potential (see [Recommendation 3](#)).

The level of consideration on pathways to broader adoption differs by focal area strategy (see [Technical Papers 1–7](#)). The focal area strategies on climate change mitigation and international waters feature a comparatively stronger link to broader adoption than do the other strategies. The climate change mitigation strategy emphasizes the facilitation of systemic changes, and much of the strategy is dedicated to the direct support of broader adoption as an integral part of GEF activities in collaboration with other actors. The international waters strategy

characteristically focuses on long-term processes that emphasize broader adoption over time.

CONCLUSION 4: The GEF-5 focal area strategies do not include a comprehensive approach to the creation and utilization of synergies between focal areas through multifocal area activities.

Multifocal area activities are rapidly gaining importance in the GEF portfolio. Because the GEF-5 focal area strategies were formulated before this development, they provide limited guidance on how to utilize synergies between focal areas consistently and strategically. The focal area strategy on land degradation is a partial exception, as it elaborates on linkages and potential synergies to other focal areas. However, none of the GEF-5 focal area strategies includes a systematic discussion of how elements of different focal areas can be strategically combined to create effective multifocal area projects. During consultations in the context of the evaluation, stakeholders consistently raised the formulation of a strategic approach to multifocal area activities as a central challenge for the GEF-6 focal area strategies (see [Recommendation 2](#)).

CONCLUSION 5: GEF activities regardless of focal area employ a certain “toolbox” of elements and causal links that fulfill different purposes in each focal area strategy, but are similar in their design.

The focal area strategy theories of change illustrate that the elements and causal links embodied in the strategies fulfill different purposes in each strategy but are similar in their design. This confirms the basic assumption of the general framework for the GEF theory of change that GEF activities, regardless of focal area, employ a certain toolbox of comparable elements and causal mechanisms. The basic categories and subcategories established by the general framework proved to be suitable for adequately capturing the elements in all focal area strategies.

At the same time, each of the strategies retains its own unique character and internal logic. The differentiation between focal area strategies derives from the distinctive selection and combination of common elements and causal links. The selection is mainly determined by the nature of environmental challenges a strategy addresses. For example, some objectives require an emphasis on market-oriented elements and mechanisms, as is the case for the climate change mitigation strategy; others, like the chemicals strategy, rely more heavily on legally rooted activities. However, all strategies combine market- and legally oriented elements. Other dimensions of differentiation include stakeholder composition (the types of stakeholders on which successful achievement of objectives particularly hinges) and convention guidance to the GEF (see [Conclusion 7](#)).

CONCLUSION 6: Many types of GEF activities identified in the GEF focal area strategies build on creating local benefits for achieving global environmental benefits.

Many of the elements of the GEF toolbox identified in the focal area strategies (see [Conclusion 5](#)) build on the creation of local benefits to ultimately achieve global environmental benefits. GEF activities such as changing economic incentive structures in favor of sustainable practices, demonstrating benefits of alternative livelihoods, and reducing initial investments through new financing mechanisms are offering local benefits in exchange for behavioral changes that are ultimately envisioned to create global environmental benefits.

This conclusion drawn from the focal area strategy theories of change closely matches earlier findings presented in the GEF Evaluation Office’s study of the Role of Local Benefits in Global Environmental Programs, which found

that local and global benefits are strongly interlinked in many areas where the GEF is active. Changing human behavior is one of the critical underlying premises of the GEF approach to achieving global environmental gains, and local benefits play a central role in stimulating changes that produce and sustain such gains ([GEF EO 2006](#)).

CONCLUSION 7: GEF focal area strategies are largely responsive to and shaped by convention guidance. CBD guidance has been detailed and restrictive, which has made it difficult for the GEF to formulate a strategic approach in the biodiversity focal area.

The mapping from convention guidance to the corresponding elements of focal area strategies shows that GEF-5 focal area strategies are largely responsive to the guidance of the conventions to which the GEF serves as the financial mechanism. Also, differences in the nature of guidance from the different conventions have shaped the corresponding focal area strategies. To illustrate this aspect, the evaluation specifically compared the influence of guidance from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on the focal area strategies.

The CBD provides frequent, reiterated guidance on a large number of technical matters and prioritization of activities. CBD guidance tends to be concrete, prescriptive, and specific, leaving little room for strategic interpretation. UNFCCC guidance is equally frequent with regard to the absolute amount of items. However, it focuses on issues directly relating to national obligations under the convention (national reporting) and largely refrains from concrete elaborations of technical issues or prioritization of areas to be supported by the GEF. UNFCCC guidance also differs from CBD guidance in its formulation—which enables a greater degree of flexibility for the GEF to integrate it into an overall strategy.

The difference in CBD and UNFCCC guidance is reflected in the respective focal area strategies. The biodiversity focal area strategy reflects the large amount of distinct, prescriptive, and—at times—fragmented CBD guidance through a number of separate objectives or subsections of objectives. A large number of specific issues and priority areas demanded by the CBD are prominently addressed by the biodiversity strategy in accordance with CBD decisions. The CBD does not, however, provide guidance on how it envisions these various aspects to be integrated into an overall strategic approach in a consistent, effective, and efficient way. As a result, parts of the biodiversity focal area strategy appear less connected to the overarching strategic direction that is primarily embodied in the BD-1 and BD-2 objectives.³

The objectives of the climate change mitigation strategy display a high degree of consistency, in accordance with the UNFCCC guidance which allows for flexibility of interpretation and integration of issues. The objectives are equally weighted, addressing the main areas of GEF activity in a balanced and integrated way.

The influence of CBD and UNFCCC guidance on the respective focal area strategies highlights the potential tension between adequately reflecting convention guidance on the one hand and the formulation of a balanced, integrated, and coherent strategic approach on the other (see [Recommendation 4](#)). In this context, already existing CBD mechanisms and ongoing processes aimed at streamlining and improving the strategic coherence of CBD convention guidance to the GEF need to be highlighted. The effort resulting from the recent decision to consolidate and to reduce redundancies through the COP's review of guidance to the financial mechanism represents a step toward

³ See table 4.2 for a list of all GEF-5 focal area strategy objectives.

reducing the overall quantity of guidance, albeit without decreasing the number of priority areas identified by the CBD to be supported by the GEF.⁴ The “Four-Year Framework of Programme Priorities Related to Utilization of GEF Resources for Biodiversity” included as an annex to the decision provides additional CBD guidance on prioritization of GEF support. Most recently, the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 aims at providing a more coherent and consistent overall framework for GEF support (CBD 2010b). The results of these efforts are not yet visible.

CONCLUSION 8: Based on results of the RTD process, the elements of GEF-5 focal area strategies, with few exceptions, correspond with current scientific consensus. From a scientific perspective, room for improvement exists in terms of relative prioritization of specific aspects and the selection of elements.

The quantitative responses provided by scientific experts during the RTD consultations on the scientific soundness of focal area strategy objectives and elements converged around a rating of 6 (fair). Means and medians fell into the range of 5 (somewhat) to 7 (considerably) with few outliers in either direction. While these quantitative results imply room for further improvement, the qualitative responses show that the majority of answers do not suggest a lack of scientific soundness of the strategies’ existing elements. Instead, the suggestions for improvement mostly concern the relative prioritization of specific aspects over others as well

⁴ COP 9 (Decision IX/31 C, paragraph 1) requested a review of the guidance to the financial mechanism (i.e., the GEF). The CBD Secretariat prepared the review with the objective of identifying obsolete, repetitive, and overlapping guidance; and compiled an updated list of the existing guidance to the financial mechanism. The review was submitted as a working document to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation. COP 10 (Decision X/24) approved the proposed list of obsolete, repetitive, and overlapping guidance and the updated compilation of guidance.

as the selection of elements to be included in the strategies.

A partial exception is the discussion on protected areas as a suitable instrument for biodiversity conservation. Some experts voiced fundamental doubts about the contribution of protected areas to biodiversity conservation. Most experts deemed the emphasis given protected areas as the main component of the biodiversity focal area strategy as too high. Many responses pointed to the close connection between the effectiveness of protected areas and the successful mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into production landscapes, suggesting a stronger relative emphasis on the activities envisioned under biodiversity objective BD-2.

1.3 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 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 the GEF-6 strategies.

An explicit, systematic, and comprehensive system of causality that is embedded as an integral part of the GEF-6 strategies could enhance the strategies’ utility as the guiding framework for GEF programming. The already existing knowledge of causal links as reflected in GEF programming should be fully incorporated at the strategy level. An explicit understanding of how elements from different projects—within as well as across focal areas—are to be linked in order to create a complete chain of causality toward results could inform and support a more modular approach to GEF programming. The inclusion of causal relationships of elements from different focal areas into a comprehensive system of causality could facilitate and guide the design of effective multifocal area activities that maximize synergies between focal areas. In addition, the identification of causal relationships could

aid the coordination of activities implemented by different GEF Agencies, allowing the Agencies to intensify their focus on their respective comparative advantages based on systematic collaboration on activities.

The results of the RTD illustrate that close consultations with the scientific community can provide important information on the relative prioritization of existing elements as well as the identification of additional and/or alternative elements to be included in the GEF-6 strategies. To ensure that up-to-date scientific knowledge is fully taken into account, the GEF STAP should assume a strong role in the process of preparing the GEF-6 strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 2: GEF-6 strategies should enable a more flexible and strategic approach to developing multifocal area projects that would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.

Given the increasing importance of GEF activities that cut across focal areas, approaches to maximize synergies and ensure the added value of multifocal area activities should be an integral part of GEF-6 strategies. An approach to GEF programming that facilitates the combination of elements from different focal areas should be considered during their formulation. The systematic identification of causal links between elements can support and inform corresponding efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 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.

The focal area strategy theories of change highlight the potential of GEF activities to trigger broader adoption and induce systemic change. This cata-

lytic role of the GEF should be further defined and strengthened by basing GEF-6 strategies on systematic consideration of potential chains of causality between GEF activities and broader adoption through replication, scaling-up, change of market structures, or mainstreaming (with or without direct GEF support). The already existing knowledge on pathways to broader adoption as reflected in GEF programming should be fully incorporated at the strategy level.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Given the impact of convention guidance on the focal area strategies, the GEF should continue the dialogue with the CBD to further define the relationship between guidance and strategies to facilitate responsiveness as well as strategic coherence in GEF-6.

The evaluation findings illustrate the strong influence of convention guidance on GEF focal area strategy formulation, highlighting the importance of close coordination between convention secretariats and the GEF in the strategy-building process. The potential tension between adequately reflecting convention guidance in the strategies on the one hand and formulation of a balanced, integrated, and coherent strategic approach on the other should be addressed during the formulation of GEF-6 strategies. Where conventions, such as the CBD, choose to issue specific technical guidance to the GEF, this guidance should follow a coherent overall vision so as to ensure that it can be integrated into a consistent strategic approach. The CBD is already working to enhance the strategic coherence of its guidance to the GEF. Its ongoing efforts are positive steps toward balancing convention demands and the coherence of GEF support. The formulation of the GEF-6 strategies should be closely connected to these efforts. The GEF should continue and intensify the dialogue at the appropriate level with the CBD to facilitate this process.

RECOMMENDATION 5: GEF-6 strategies should revisit the GEF's overall approach to capacity development in response to concerns voiced by the conventions.

Based on interviews with convention secretariats, GEF support of capacity development is perceived as being at odds with convention expectations. The analysis of focal area strategies suggests that this is primarily an issue of implementation rather than a lack of inclusion at the level of the strategies. In terms of implementation, the issue will be further examined during OPS5.

GEF-6 strategies should revisit the approach taken by GEF-5 strategies that largely address capacity development elements through distinct objectives within the focal area strategies as well as in a separate strategy (i.e., the cross-cutting strategy on capacity development). The inclusion of capacity development as an integral part of activities under different objectives is, in many cases, not emphasized in the GEF-5 focal area strategies.

2. Context, Scope, and Objectives

2.1 Context

The Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies builds on prior evaluative efforts conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office. In particular, past GEF OPSs have presented assessments at the GEF focal area level. In the context of OPS3 in 2004, the GEF focal areas were assessed in a series of program studies. OPS4 presented evidence on focal area achievements, primarily focusing on their progress toward impact, as well as a comprehensive analysis of convention guidance to the GEF. The aggregation of evaluative evidence at the focal area level has proven to be of particular value in informing and providing recommendations for the GEF replenishment process. Accordingly, OPS5 will continue to report evaluative findings on focal area activities. The Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies represents one building block of this effort and a preparatory step for the broader assessment of focal area achievements in the context of OPS5 (see [section 2.3](#)).

Past OPSs have mainly taken a bottom-up perspective with regard to the GEF focal areas, assessing focal area achievements primarily at the level of individual projects. Complementing this work, the present evaluation attempted to add a top-down view, providing a closer look at the GEF-5 focal area strategies as they were originally intended and formulated. The evaluation focused on the strate-

gic paths envisioned to lead to the achievement of GEF goals and, ultimately, to create global environmental benefits or—in the case of the LDCF and the SCCF—adaptation benefits.

2.2 Scope and Objectives

This evaluation was designed as a formative evaluation, emphasizing learning as its primary goal. Accordingly, the evaluation's main objective was 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 evaluation encompasses the analysis of the following focal area strategies: [biodiversity](#), [climate change mitigation](#), [international waters](#), [land degradation](#), [chemicals](#), [sustainable forest management \(SFM\)/REDD+](#), and—under the LDCF and the SCCF—[adaptation to climate change](#). The evaluation looks at the most recent GEF-5 focal area strategies and the LDCF/SCCF strategy on adaptation to climate change covering the period from 2010 to 2014.

The evaluation excludes the strategy on cross-cutting capacity development. The Capacity Development Strategy has recently been partially evaluated in the context of the [Evaluation of GEF National Capacity Self-Assessments](#) (NCSAs); an additional assessment will be conducted by the ongoing [Evaluation of GEF Enabling Activities](#).

Using a theory-based approach (see [chapter 3](#)), the evaluation takes a detailed look at the logic chains of causality that each strategy identifies to achieve its objectives. Based on the theory of change analysis of elements and causal links, the evaluation provides an assessment of the extent to which the causal pathways identified by the strategies reflect guidance provided to the GEF by the international conventions—especially those the GEF serves as a financial mechanism (the UNFCCC, the CBD, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification [UNCCD], and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants [POPs])—as well as the current state of scientific knowledge on aspects relating to the strategies. The evaluation provides recommendations for the GEF replenishment process and, especially, the formulation of the GEF-6 focal area strategies.

The evaluation focuses on an analysis of the GEF-5 focal area strategies as they were formulated, emphasizing their intended rationale and internal logic. The analysis provides the foundation for a subsequent assessment of the implementation of focal area strategies in GEF projects; this is being conducted in the context of OPS5 (see section 2.3).

2.3 Contribution to OPS5

The Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies is closely tied to OPS5 and needs to be understood as a modular contribution within the broader OPS5 context. The evaluation aimed to provide the following input to the OPS5 analysis of focal area achievements:

- **Framework for analysis.** The focal area theories of change—i.e., the systematic mapping of the strategies' elements and causal links—was designed to serve as a framework to guide subsequent OPS5 analysis of strategy implementation in GEF projects. The improved understanding of the mechanisms that are envisioned

to make GEF support successful will provide a starting point for an assessment of the portfolio's strengths and weaknesses.¹

- **Identification of issues.** The evaluation provides a catalogue of crucial aspects to include in the OPS5 analysis. The theory-based approach to the focal area strategies highlights aspects that are of particular importance in the success of GEF activities. In addition, the evaluation identified the strategies' underlying assumptions that could be directly tested against evidence from GEF activities.
- **Assessment of convention guidance.** The evaluation included a full assessment of convention guidance as it relates to the focal area strategies. This will serve as the basis for the OPS5 assessment of GEF relevance to the conventions.
- **Collection of perceptions.** The interactive process used to conduct the evaluation has served as a vehicle for exchanging views on focal area strategies across stakeholder groups. This collection of perceptions was designed to inform the OPS5 analysis.
- **Testing of approaches.** The evaluation employed two methodological approaches that are also to be used in the context of OPS5. The evaluation tested and refined the use of the general framework for GEF theories of change as well as the RTD approach (see chapter 3).

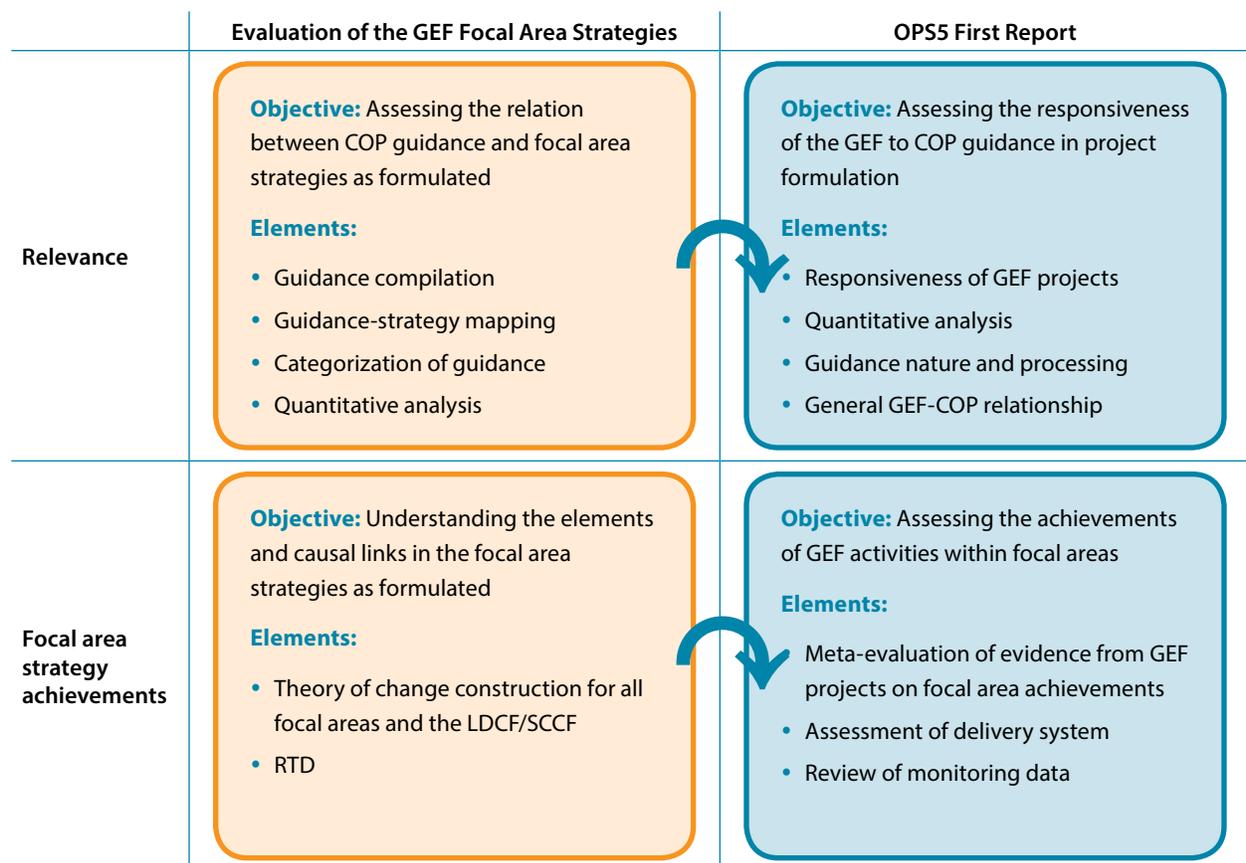
Based on the findings of the Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies, the next step will be to assess the implementation of focal area strategies,

¹The OPS5 analysis of strategy implementation and focal area achievements will primarily focus on GEF-5 projects that have been designed under the GEF-5 strategies. Evaluative evidence from earlier projects will be used as necessary and possible, taking into account that the evidence is not fully reflective of the current focal area strategies, as many projects were formulated under previous strategies.

collecting evidence on how the strategic guidelines are realized in GEF projects and how successful the causal chains envisioned by the strategies are in achieving stated objectives. A meta-evaluation

of related evidence and corresponding findings will be included in the First Report of OPS5 (figure 2.1). Based on the findings of the First Report, the analysis will be developed further for the Final Report of OPS5.

FIGURE 2.1 Relationship between Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies and OPS5 First Report



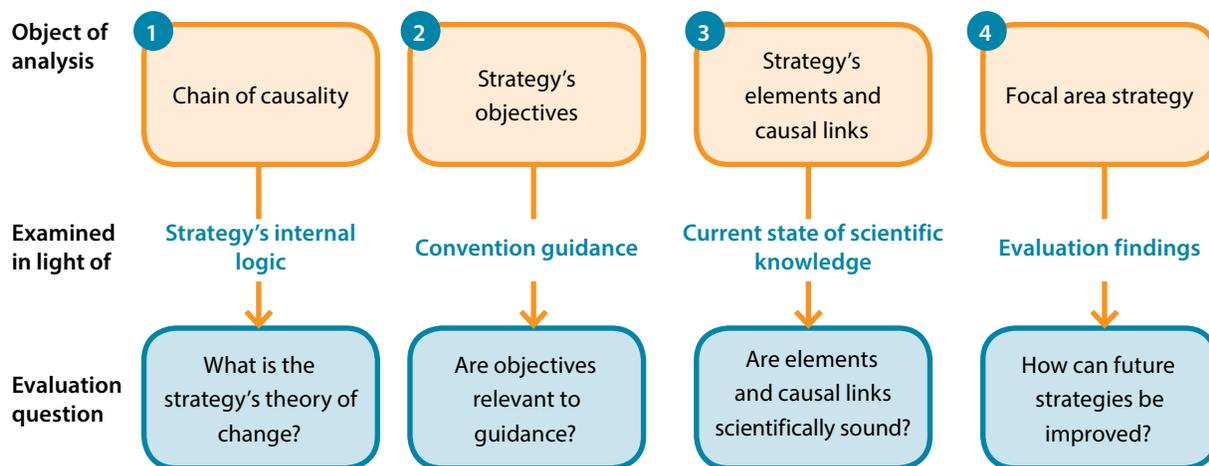
3. Approach and Methodology

To improve the understanding of elements and causal links reflected in the GEF focal area strategies, the Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies employs a four-step approach (figure 3.1):

1. **Construct theories of change.** What are the elements, causal links, and overall rationale reflected in each focal area strategy? What are the identified causal pathways envisioned to lead to the achievement of the strategy’s objectives?
2. **Review the relationship with convention guidance.** To what extent and in what way do the objectives formulated in the focal area strategies relate to the respective convention guidance?
3. **Assess the connection with scientific knowledge.** To what extent do the focal area strategies correspond with current scientific knowledge?
4. **Make recommendations for future strategies.** Based on the findings of Steps 1–3, what recommendations for the development of future GEF strategies can be provided?

The following sections summarize the methodological approach employed in the three analytical steps. A more comprehensive description can be found in the seven technical papers supporting this evaluation that cover the individual focal area strategies (see [box 1.1](#)).

FIGURE 3.1 Four Evaluation Steps



3.1 Theory of Change Approach

A theory-based evaluation is designed around the theory of change of an activity or strategy. The theory of change systematically examines the elements and causal links that constitute the activity/strategy in order to understand and describe the logic of how that activity/strategy is expected to lead to the desired results ([Fitz-Gibbon and Morris 1996](#)). A theory of change may have been made explicit when the activity/strategy was designed; sometimes it is implicit, which requires evaluators to reconstruct it. In the case of the GEF-5 focal area strategies, the theories of change are mostly implicit; their reconstruction constitutes a major part of the Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE GEF THEORY OF CHANGE

In preparation for OPS5, the GEF Evaluation Office has developed a general framework for the GEF theory of change, drawing on a large amount of evaluative evidence gathered over the years. This evaluation used the general framework to guide the construction of focal area strategy theories of change. The purposes of the general framework are to classify GEF activities and locate them within the intended causality chain toward the generation of global environmental benefits; establish links between different elements of GEF support as well as between GEF activities and contributions of other actors; assess the GEF contribution to progress toward global environmental benefits, including the GEF's interaction with other actors; and identify constraints on further GEF contributions to progress toward global environmental benefits.

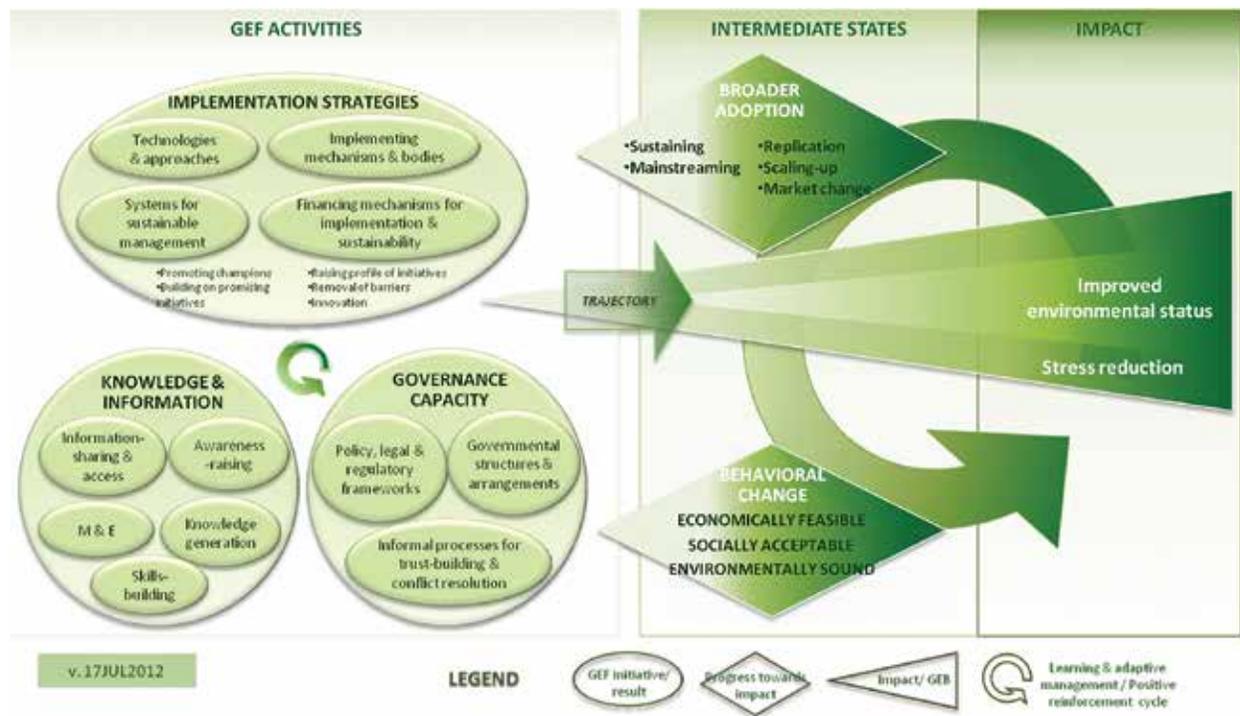
The framework classifies GEF support into three categories that are interdependent and, in most cases, realize their full potential through their interaction with each other (figure 3.2). A specific

GEF project often features a combination of elements from different categories:

- **Knowledge and information**, including activities to support the generation and sharing of pertinent knowledge and information, awareness-raising activities, and improvement of technical skills, as well as monitoring and evaluation
- **Institutional capacity**, encompassing support for the development and formulation of policy, legal, and regulatory frameworks at the appropriate scales of intervention; assistance for the improvement of institutional structures and processes; and support for informal mechanisms for trust building and conflict resolution
- **Implementation strategies**, covering a broad range of activities, including investments in physical assets, establishment of financing mechanisms and organizational arrangements, and improvement of sustainable management approaches, among many others; this category also includes the testing and demonstration of new technologies, instruments, and approaches as well as efforts to support broader deployment of proven strategies

Changes directly linked to GEF activities are referred to as GEF **outputs** and **outcomes**. In working toward envisioned outputs and outcomes, the different elements within a GEF project are often designed to complement each other and interact with contributions of other actors. GEF projects are usually conducted within the context of previous and ongoing initiatives carried out in part by non-GEF actors (e.g., national governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector). GEF projects often build on and/or supplement the contributions of other actors. In addition, GEF activities are implemented under national circumstances that influence the initiative and are largely outside GEF control. The general framework helps

FIGURE 3.2 General Framework for the GEF Theory of Change



to assess the interactions of GEF activities with contextual factors.

GEF support is typically seen as catalyzing progress toward impact at a broader level including the broader adoption of technologies, approaches, and instruments. The nature of GEF involvement in catalyzing broader adoption differs by activity. In a number of cases, GEF activities include direct support for the facilitation of broader adoption in collaboration with other actors. In other cases, broader adoption follows the example of GEF activities, but emerges without direct GEF support.

The general framework identifies five means toward broader adoption (within or beyond the limits of direct GEF influence):

- **Sustaining.** Technologies/approaches originally supported through the GEF activity continue to be implemented beyond actual project duration

through integration into the regular activities and budget of the government and/or other stakeholders.

- **Mainstreaming.** Information, lessons, or aspects of a GEF initiative are incorporated into broader initiatives such as policies, institutional reforms, and behavioral transformations.
- **Replication.** Results of the GEF activity are reproduced at a comparable scale, often in different geographical areas or regions.
- **Scaling-up.** Results of the GEF activity are expanded to address concerns at larger geographical, ecological, or administrative scales.
- **Market change.** The GEF activity catalyzes market transformation, which might encompass technological changes, policy and regulatory reforms, and financial instruments that increase demand for goods and services likely to contribute to global environmental benefits.

Broader adoption goes hand in hand with behavioral change, meaning sustained and significant changes in stakeholder choices toward more environmentally friendly actions. The theory of change framework highlights the reinforcing interactions between broader adoption, behavioral change, and environmental improvements.

THEORY OF CHANGE CONSTRUCTION FOR GEF-5 FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES

The evaluation applied the general framework to each of the GEF-5 focal areas as well as the LDCF/SCCF strategy on adaptation to climate change. The resulting theories of change map out the strategies' elements and causal links for each strategy, depicting the means-ends linkages envisioned explicitly or implicitly in the respective strategy and thereby identifying the logical chain of actions that are supposed to lead to the achievement of the strategy's objectives.

The construction of the theories of change proceeded in two steps. First, each strategy was disaggregated into its objectives in order to systematically identify different GEF activities articulated by the strategy, assess the causal links between elements, and recognize the underlying assumptions on which these causal chains are based. Second, the elements and causal links identified were consolidated in a single overarching theory of change for each focal area strategy, identifying the causal pathways the strategy envisions and the underlying assumptions on which these pathways are based.

Throughout the theory of change process, the evaluation team consulted extensively with the respective GEF Secretariat team for each focal area to ensure correct interpretation of the strategy documents and establish agreement on the central aspects of the theories of change. The full process of theory of change construction for each

of the GEF-5 focal area strategies and the LDCF/SCCF strategy on adaptation to climate change is described in detail in [Technical Papers 1–7](#), which cover each focal area strategy individually.

3.2 Analysis of Convention Guidance

One factor that influences the characteristics of the GEF focal area strategies is the guidance the GEF receives from the respective convention COP. Convention guidance plays a particularly important role for focal area strategies that directly reflect the GEF's role as financial mechanism to a convention:

- Biodiversity—CBD
- Climate change mitigation—UNFCCC
- Land degradation—UNCCD
- Chemicals—Stockholm Convention on POPs (partially)
- Adaptation to climate change—the LDCF and the SCCF established by the UNFCCC COP

To assess how the focal area strategies reflect convention guidance, the evaluation conducted a full review of all guidance to the GEF issued by the COPs to the conventions. The review included identification of guidance relevant to the GEF, a quantitative analysis of guidance over time, and a qualitative classification of each individual item of COP guidance. The review of COP guidance can be found in [Technical Paper 8](#).

Based on this review, the evaluation conducted a mapping exercise to identify the links between guidance and focal area strategies. The mapping illustrates how topics raised by the conventions are reflected in the strategies and how the strategies are in turn shaped by different kinds of guidance. Stakeholder interviews, especially with the GEF Secretariat and the convention secretariats, provided additional information for the analysis of

the relationship between focal area strategies and convention guidance.

3.3 Real-Time Delphi Approach

The [Delphi method](#) was developed by the RAND Corporation in the late 1950s as a method for collecting and synthesizing expert judgments. The methodology has since become a widely recognized technique of expert consultation. The Delphi method requires anonymity to ensure equal weighting of each participant’s responses and to reduce the bias resulting from the perceived authority of renowned experts.

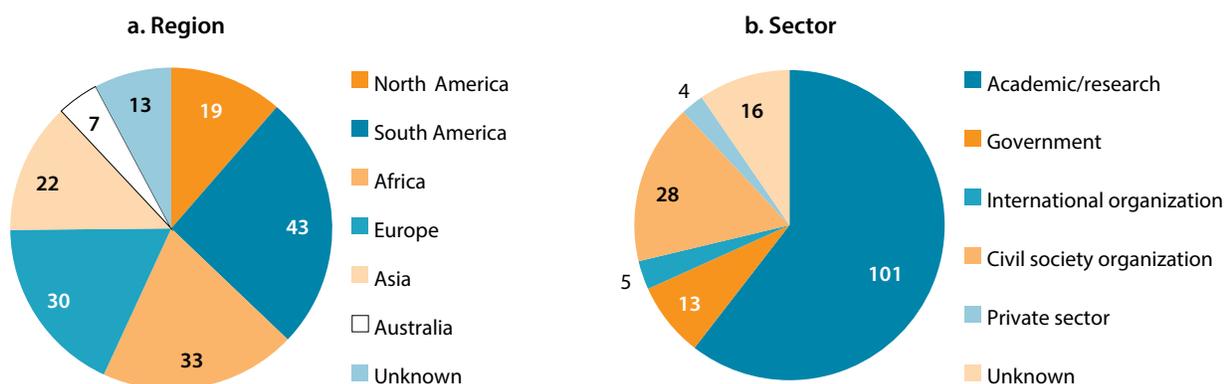
The original Delphi method involves repeated rounds of responses from experts on a questionnaire, with each expert receiving feedback on peer responses between rounds. This time-intensive method was further developed into a “round-less,” online-based process that allows for asynchronous input and makes expert answers available to the entire group in real time, eliminating the need for round-to-round feedback and considerably shortening the communication time required. This form of a Delphi process is called [RTD](#).

Seven online questionnaires—one for each focal area strategy—were formulated by the evalu-

ation team with extensive input from the GEF STAP and embedded into an RTD online platform. Each question required a quantitative as well as a qualitative response covering the central aspects of each focal area strategy. The invitation to participate in the RTD process was disseminated widely among environmental scientists via the International Council for Science and other scientific networks. Because the Delphi process is only successful if participants review their peers’ answers carefully and consider adjustments of their own responses on that basis, efforts to mobilize participants were implemented throughout the process. A total of 167 participants signed onto the RTD platform to provide answers to the online questionnaires. Figure 3.3 presents demographic information about the participants; comparable information by focal area can be found in [Technical Papers 1–7](#).

The analysis of RTD data included the collection and interpretation of quantitative responses as well as a summary of the text responses and discussions among participating experts, identification of crucial issues raised, and interpretation of responses within the broader context of the evaluation. Overarching results are presented in [chapter 4](#); detailed analyses of RTD results for each focal area is in [Technical Papers 1–7](#).

FIGURE 3.3 Number of Real-Time Delphi Participants by Region and Sector



4. Comparative Analysis of Focal Area Strategies

4.1 GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies: Background and Overview

EVOLUTION OF FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES

Prior to 2007, GEF financing was guided by 15 operational programs: 5 in biodiversity, 4 in climate change, 3 in international waters, 1 addressing POPs, 1 in land degradation, and 1 multifocal program on integrated ecosystem management. The operational programs identified relevant convention guidance; formulated corresponding program objectives; and provided

a list of expected outcomes, project outputs, and examples for typical activities to be funded through the GEF.

In 2007, a year into the GEF-4 replenishment period (2006–10), the operational programs were replaced by the GEF-4 focal area strategies (table 4.1). They included one strategy for each of the six focal areas (biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, POPs, and ozone layer depletion) as well as two cross-cutting strategies (SFM and sound chemicals management).

TABLE 4.1 Overview of GEF Programming Frameworks

Before GEF-4	GEF-4	GEF-5
Operational programs (15 in 6 clusters)	GEF-4 focal area strategies	GEF-5 focal area strategies and LDCF/SCCF strategy
Biodiversity (5)	Biodiversity	Biodiversity
Climate change (4)	Climate change (including adaptation to climate change through the Strategic Priority for Adaptation)	Climate change mitigation LDCF/SCCF 2010–14 strategy on adaptation to climate change
International waters (3)	International waters	International waters
Land degradation (1)	Land degradation	Land degradation
POPs (1)	POPs Ozone layer depletion Sound chemicals management	Chemicals
	SFM	SFM/REDD+
Integrated ecosystem management (1)		
		Cross-cutting capacity development

The GEF-5 focal area strategies were approved by the GEF Council and the LDCF/SCCF Council (for adaptation to climate change) in May 2010 and went into effect with the beginning of the replenishment period on July 1, 2010. There are seven GEF-5 focal area strategies: biodiversity, climate change mitigation, international waters, land degradation, chemicals, SFM/REDD+, and cross-cutting capacity development (not covered by this evaluation). The LDCF/SCCF strategy on adaptation to climate change covers the same 2010–14 time period.¹

As opposed to operational programs, focal area strategies are aimed at formulating long-term strategic objectives to guide activities under each focal area. The focal area strategies established strategic programs with explicitly stated expected outcomes. Indicators allow for monitoring through the GEF results-based management framework. The GEF-4

¹ The strategy on adaptation to climate change was assessed alongside the GEF-5 focal area strategies in this evaluation. However, its financing is managed separately from the standard GEF focal areas and features several particularities:

- Funds for financing adaptation to climate change in the GEF context are provided through the LDCF and the SCCF, as set up under the UNFCCC, and managed by the GEF.
- The funds are governed by the LDCF/SCCF Council. The strategy on adaptation to climate change was approved by the LDCF/SCCF Council in May 2010, and went into effect July 1, 2010.
- The LDCF and the SCCF are not part of the GEF replenishment process; thus, the strategy on adaptation to climate change is only arbitrarily linked to the GEF-5 time period.
- Since the LDCF and the SCCF are not part of the GEF replenishment and funding levels are volatile and uncertain, the strategy on adaptation to climate change does not feature indicative resource allocations per objective, but instead provides different funding scenarios linking expected outputs to potential levels of available funds.
- Activities under the LDCF and the SCCF are not aimed at creating global environmental benefits, but rather adaptation benefits.

and GEF-5 strategies across all focal areas comprised the following basic elements:

- Long-term strategic objectives partly readjusted from GEF-4 to GEF-5 in view of past experiences and recent COP guidance
- Strategic programs selected according to their importance, urgency, and cost-effectiveness from a global environmental perspective, as well as in terms of country priorities
- A results framework in line with the development of results-based management in the GEF, including expected impacts (from strategic objectives) and expected outcomes (from strategic programs)
- Measurable indicators for the expected impacts and outcomes, allowing monitoring and evaluation of progress toward achievement
- An indicative provisional allocation of GEF-5 funds and expected cofinancing toward the strategic programs

FORMULATION PROCESS

The process of formulating the GEF focal area strategies is closely tied to the GEF replenishment process. The focal area strategies reflect donor country preferences as to how funding granted to beneficiary countries through the GEF should be used during the respective replenishment period. Consequently, the focal area strategies establish the relationship between the objectives and the resources necessary to achieve these objectives, necessitating a close interrelation between focal area strategies and the replenishment process.

The drafting of the GEF-4 strategies was conducted through a consultative process involving external advisory groups and contributions from Council members, the convention secretariats, the GEF Agencies, the GEF STAP, and other GEF partners. To draft the GEF-5 strategies, the GEF

Chief Executive Officer established six technical advisory groups and a strategy advisory group. The technical advisory groups were composed of external experts, a representative from the relevant convention secretariat, a member of the STAP, and a member of the GEF Secretariat serving as the technical advisory group's secretary. Working drafts were posted on the GEF website, and comments were received from GEF partners throughout the process.

OVERVIEW OF INDICATIVE AND PROGRAMMED FOCAL AREA ALLOCATIONS

Table 4.2 presents an overview of the indicative GEF-5 allocations to each focal area objective as approved by the GEF Council as part of the GEF-5 focal area strategies. The indicative allocations are compared to the resources programmed for GEF activities under the respective objectives as of June 30, 2012. The table does not include the strategy on adaptation to climate change, because LDCF/SCCF funds are not part of the GEF replenishment process and the strategy does not include indicative resource allocations per objective.

The overview of approved resources illustrates that interest is particularly high for projects in areas that explore new niches of GEF activities—namely land use, land use change, and forestry (CCM-5), management of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (IW-4), and to some degree piloting of sound chemicals management and mercury reduction (CHEM-3).

4.2 General Strategy Design

The construction of the theories of change for the GEF focal area strategies (see [Technical Papers 1–7](#)) identified a number of general characteristics that were reflected across strategies. While these characteristics are not equally pronounced in all

strategies and exceptions do exist, several general design traits can be established.

FUNCTIONS FULFILLED BY THE GEF FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES

The GEF-5 focal area strategies fulfill crucial functions for guiding GEF programming; specifically, they

- define the general areas of activity the GEF should engage in by breaking down the focal areas' overarching goals into objectives;
- establish the reason for GEF engagement in a specific area by describing the corresponding environmental challenges and explaining the GEF's potential to contribute to a solution; and
- identify the types of GEF activities to be supported under a certain GEF objective, including illustrative examples of concrete activities to receive GEF financing.

The focal area strategies generally provide a clear picture of what the GEF intends to support during the GEF-5 replenishment period. The strategies thus serve as a guide for the GEF Secretariat on programming as well as an overview of fundable activities to inform recipient countries and GEF Agencies during project conception and development. In addition, the strategies each include a results framework that defines expected outputs for each focal area objective. These frameworks establish what the GEF intends to achieve and thereby serve as the basis for the GEF's results-based management system, a benchmark for evaluations, and the basis for resource allocation decisions during the GEF replenishment process.

ASPECTS LESS EMPHASIZED BY GEF FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES

Causal Links

In most cases, the GEF-5 focal areas do not explicitly and systematically discuss the causal relation-

TABLE 4.2 Overview of GEF-5 Indicative and Programmed Resource Allocations by Focal Area

Objectives	Indicative allocation		Approved resources ^a	
	Million \$	%	Million \$	%
Biodiversity				
Goal: Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem goods and services				
BD-1: Improve sustainability of protected area systems	700	65.4	250	51.3
BD-2: Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors	250	23.4	206	42.3
BD-3: Build capacity to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety	40	3.7	3	0.6
BD-4: Build capacity on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing	40	3.7	3	0.6
BD-5: Integrate CBD obligations into national planning processes through enabling activities	40	3.7	25	5.1
Total	1,070	100.0	487	100.0
Climate change mitigation				
Goal: To support developing countries and economies in transition toward a low-carbon development path				
CCM-1: Promote the demonstration, deployment, and transfer of innovative low-carbon technologies	300	24.0	62	31.1
CCM-2: Promote market transformation for energy efficiency in industry and the building sector	250	20.0	140	29.5
CCM-3: Promote investment in renewable energy technologies	320	25.6	104	21.9
CCM-4: Promote energy efficient, low-carbon transport and urban systems	250	20.0	58	12.2
CCM-5: Promote conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through sustainable management of land use, land use change, and forestry ^b	50	4.0	75	15.8
CCM-6: Support enabling activities and capacity building	80	6.4	35	7.4
Total	1,250	100.0	474	100.0
International waters				
Goal: Promotion of collective management of transboundary water systems and implementation of the full range of policy, legal, and institutional reforms and investments contributing to sustainable use and maintenance of ecosystem services				
IW-1: Catalyze multistate cooperation to balance conflicting water uses in transboundary surface/groundwater basins while considering climatic variability and change	130	31.0	15	12.7
IW-2: Catalyze multistate cooperation to rebuild marine fisheries and reduce pollution of coasts and large marine ecosystems while considering climatic variability and change	180	42.9	61	51.7
IW-3: Support foundational capacity building, portfolio learning, and targeted research needs for ecosystem-based, joint management of transboundary water systems	90	21.4	15	12.7
IW-4: Promote effective management of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction	20	4.8	27	22.9
Total	420	100.0	118	100.0

(continued)

TABLE 4.2 Overview of GEF-5 Indicative and Programmed Resource Allocations by Focal Area (continued)

Objectives	Indicative allocation		Approved resources ^a	
	Million \$	%	Million \$	%
Land degradation				
Goal: To contribute to arresting and reversing current global trends in land degradation, specifically desertification and deforestation				
LD-1: Maintain or improve flows of agro-ecosystem services to sustain livelihoods of local communities	200	50	41	30.6
LD-2: Generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services in arid, semi-arid, and subhumid zones, including sustaining livelihoods of forest-dependent people	30	7.9	6	4.5
LD-3: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape	135	35.5	84	62.7
LD-4: Increase capacity to apply adaptive management tools in sustainable land management	15	3.9	3	2.2
Total	480	100.0	134	100.0
Chemicals				
Goal: To promote the sound management of chemicals throughout their life-cycle in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the global environment				
CHEM-1: Phase out POPs and reduce POPs releases	340	81.0	118	83.1
CHEM-2: Phase out ozone-depleting substances and reduce ozone-depleting substance releases	25	6.0	5	3.5
CHEM-3: Pilot sound chemicals management and mercury reduction	20	4.8	12	8.5
CHEM-4: POPs enabling activities	35	8.3	7	4.9
Total	395	100.0	142	100.0
SFM/REDD+				
Goal: To achieve multiple environmental benefits from improved management of all types of forests				
SFM-1: Reduce pressures on forest resources and generate sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services			65	97
SFM-2: Strengthen the enabling environment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and enhance carbon sinks from land use, land use change, and forestry activities			9	12.2
Total ^c	250	100.0	67	100.0

SOURCE: Indicative allocations from [GEF Secretariat and World Bank 2010](#); approved resources are estimates from the GEF Secretariat.

NOTE: Calculations within the focal area objectives are based on project approval total amounts for full-size projects, medium-size projects, and enabling activities, excluding project management cost and project fees. Some capacity-building objectives are not included here because they were not built into the replenishment scenarios; these objectives collectively account for \$7 million.

a. As of June 30, 2012.

b. \$100 million contribution to the separate SFM/REDD+ incentive mechanism.

c. Total allocation for GEF-5 SFM/REDD+ incentive mechanism includes set-asides for BD-5 (\$130 million), CCM-5 (\$100 million), and LD-2 (\$20 million).

ships between different elements of the respective strategy. This pertains to the causal links between different types of GEF activities, such as the relationship between mutually reinforcing elements (e.g., an enabling policy environment and successful demonstration). It also concerns the more complex chains of several causal links that are envisioned to lead from GEF activities to the achievement of results.

This does not mean that the causal links between GEF activities and the chains of causality toward the achievement of expected results are not recognized in de facto GEF programming. On the contrary, [Technical Papers 1–7](#) highlight a multitude of causal chains toward achievement of results that are implicit in the GEF focal area strategies. Many of these links are identified and discussed in other publications of the GEF Secretariat and included in the GEF programming process. In most focal areas, however, they have not been brought together in a systematic way and are not embedded as an explicit basis of the GEF-5 focal area strategies. By way of example, even though GEF support in establishing and operating energy service companies is an important instrument in achieving the GEF-5 CCM-2 objective (promote market transformation for energy efficiency in industry and the building sector), it is not explicitly mentioned in the strategy's text.

An explicit, systematic, and comprehensive system of causality could enhance the strategies' utility as the guiding framework for GEF programming. Incorporating the already existing knowledge on causal links as reflected in GEF programming at the strategy level could facilitate a more modular approach to GEF programming, allowing GEF projects to contribute only certain elements to the causal chain toward impact. This approach could reduce the burden on individual projects to cover a maximum of different elements. GEF programming could instead rely on a clear understanding

of how elements from different projects are to be linked in order to achieve a complete causal chain toward impact. The system of causal links would thus also constitute a guiding framework for targeted and effective knowledge management between projects.

An approach to GEF programming informed by an explicit system of causality becomes especially relevant in the context of multifocal area activities and synergies between focal areas. A strategic approach for linking elements in a modular way could provide the basis for chains of causality that reach across different focal areas and serve as the backbone for multifocal area activities, following a clear strategic path toward results. In the same way, an explicit system of causal links could strengthen the connection between different objectives within a particular focal area strategy. As with the opportunities of modular GEF programming, explicit systems of causality could also provide a blueprint for coordination between activities implemented by different GEF Agencies, allowing the Agencies to intensify their focus on respective comparative advantages, relying on systematic collaboration to create chains of causality toward results.

Broader Adoption

The construction of theories of change highlights the potential that the strategic approaches expressed in the focal area strategies have in catalyzing broader adoption of GEF results through replication, scaling-up, inducing market change, and other mechanisms for uptake. While this potential is reflected to some degree in GEF programming, considerations on the pathways of action toward maximizing broader adoption through GEF activities is in most cases not an explicit and systematic part of the focal area strategies. This situation underpins conclusions presented in OPS4, which highlighted the catalytic role of the GEF, but pointed out that the path

toward broader adoption has “never been clearly defined” ([GEF EO 2010](#)).

As in the case of causal links, the potential for broader adoption is recognized by the GEF and partially reflected in GEF programming. The GEF-5 focal area strategies in some instances refer to the influence of GEF activities on the larger national context and on the engagement of other actors. In most cases, however, the strategies are not systematically based on considerations of chains of causality from GEF results to broader adoption that could serve as a guiding framework for GEF programming to maximize the GEF’s catalytic potential.

The level of consideration on pathways to broader adoption differs by focal area strategy (see [Technical Papers 1–7](#)). The focal area strategies on climate change mitigation and international waters feature a comparatively stronger link to broader adoption than do the other strategies. The climate change mitigation strategy emphasizes the facilitation of systemic changes, and much of the strategy is dedicated to the direct support of broader adoption as an integral part of GEF activities in collaboration with other actors. The international waters strategy characteristically focuses on long-term processes that emphasize broader adoption over time.

Multifocal Area Activities

Multifocal area activities are rapidly gaining importance in the GEF portfolio. Because the GEF-5 focal area strategies were formulated before this development, they provide limited guidance on how to utilize synergies between focal areas consistently and strategically. The focal area strategy on land degradation is a partial exception, as it elaborates on linkages and potential synergies to other focal areas. However, none of the GEF-5 focal area strategies includes a systematic discussion of how elements of different focal areas can be strategically combined to create effective multifocal area

projects. During consultations in the context of the evaluation, stakeholders consistently raised the formulation of a strategic approach to multifocal area activities as a central challenge for the GEF-6 focal area strategies. As described above, the systematic identification of causal links between elements could support and inform corresponding efforts in the process of formulating the GEF-6 strategies.

Flexibility in Programming

Integrating flexibility in programming into the GEF focal area strategies has been a continuous challenge given the relatively rigid nature of the strategies for the four-year replenishment period. The flexibility needed to address emerging issues, changes in circumstances, new knowledge, etc., is limited by the resource allocations linked to the focal area strategies.

The focal area strategy theories of change identify a number of cases where forward-looking formulation of strategies has provided resources for exploring new niches for GEF activities. The most comprehensive effort in this regard is the incentive mechanism for SFM/REDD+ activities guided by its own strategy. Other examples include activities relating to mercury and the emerging convention on this issue in the chemicals focal area strategy, as well as activities on areas beyond national jurisdiction collaboratively addressed by the international waters and biodiversity focal area strategies. In sum, GEF-5 focal area strategies demonstrate several ways of making room for flexible programming that can serve as a source of information for future efforts in this direction.

4.3 Elements and Causal Chains

THE GEF “TOOLBOX”

The general framework for the GEF theory of change establishes basic categories and subcategories for GEF activities, suggesting that GEF activities—regardless of focal area—employ a certain

“toolbox” of elements (e.g., market-based incentive mechanisms, awareness raising, etc.) that fulfill different purposes in each focal area but are similar in their design. The theories of change confirm that the elements identified in the strategies are used in multiple focal areas, and that the categories established in the general framework are suitable to capture the elements identified in all focal area strategies. Figure 4.1 provides examples of focal area strategy elements as they are categorized in the general framework. Most of the implicit chains of causality can be detected in multiple focal area

strategies. Figure 4.2 illustrates one of the most common chains of causality present in several of the strategies.

At the same time, each of the focal area strategies retains its own unique character and internal logic. The differentiation between focal area strategies derives from the distinctive selection and combination of common elements and causal links. The specific selection is mainly determined by the nature of environmental challenges a strategy addresses. For example, some objectives

FIGURE 4.1 Categories of Elements of GEF Activities with Examples from GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies

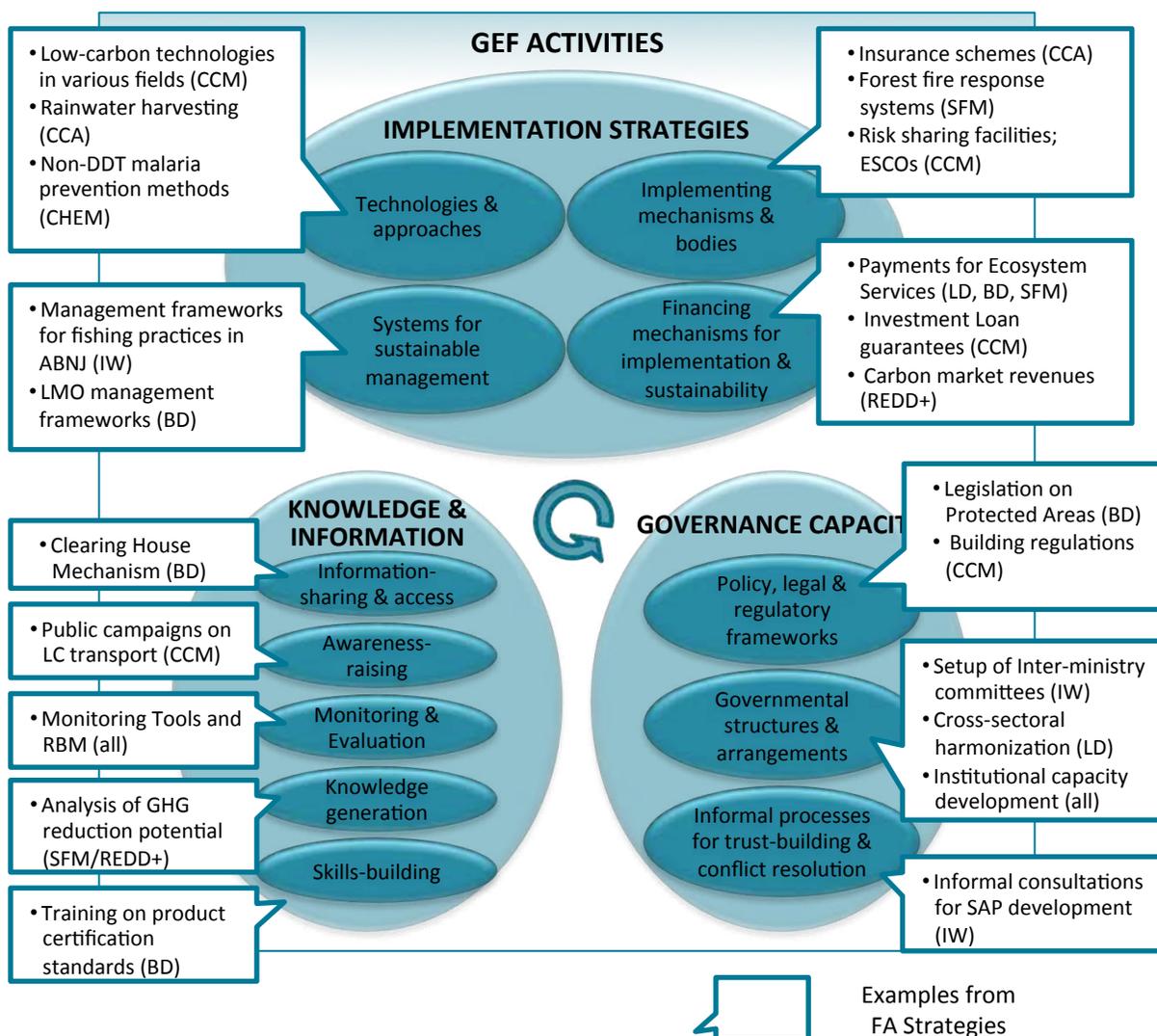
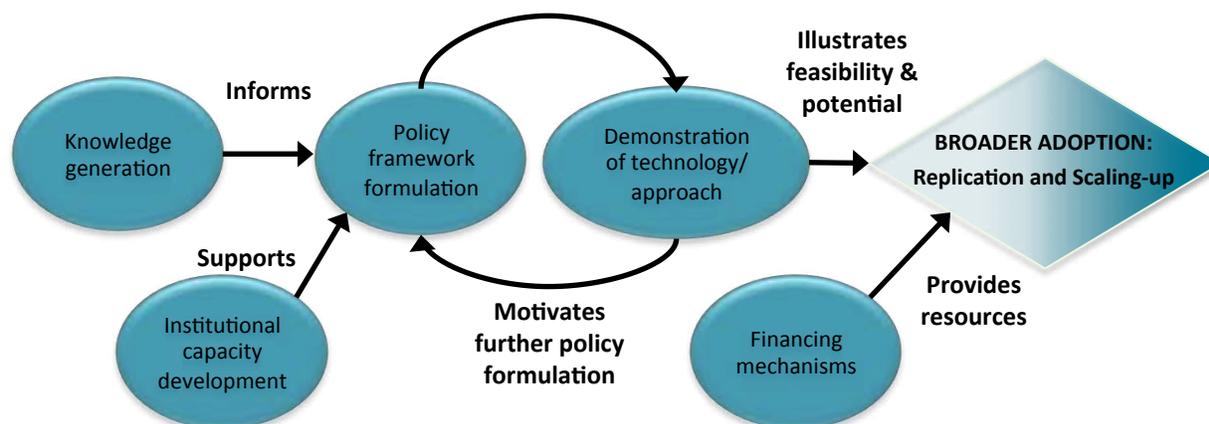


FIGURE 4.2 Example of Frequent Chain of Causality Implicit in Several Focal Area Strategies



require an emphasis on market-oriented elements and mechanisms, as is the case for the climate change mitigation strategy; others rely more heavily on legally rooted activities, such as the chemicals strategy. However, all strategies combine market- and legal-oriented elements. The technical papers provide a focal area-specific analysis of the balance between market orientation and legal orientation.

Another dimension of differentiation between focal area strategies is stakeholder composition. In order to achieve their objectives, focal area strategies in most cases have to effect behavioral change within different stakeholder groups. The type of stakeholders on which successful achievement of objectives particularly depends (farmers, industry, governments, etc.) significantly shapes each strategy's selection and composition of elements. Finally, the difference in guidance that focal areas receive from corresponding international conventions differentiates focal area strategies and shapes the selection and composition of elements. As detailed in [section 4.4](#), the conventions differ considerably in the way they influence the formulation of focal area strategies.

RELATION BETWEEN LOCAL AND GLOBAL BENEFITS

Many of the elements of the GEF toolbox identified in the focal area strategies build on the creation of local benefits to ultimately achieve global environmental benefits. GEF activities such as changing economic incentive structures in favor of sustainable practices, demonstrating benefits of alternative livelihoods, and reducing initial investments through new financing mechanisms are offering local benefits in exchange for behavioral changes that are ultimately envisioned to create global environmental benefits.

This conclusion drawn from the focal area strategy theories of change closely matches earlier findings presented in the GEF Evaluation Office's study of the Role of Local Benefits in Global Environmental Programs, which found

that local and global benefits are strongly interlinked in many areas where the GEF is active. Changing human behavior is one of the critical underlying premises of the GEF approach to achieving global environmental gains, and local benefits play a central role in stimulating changes that produce and sustain such gains (GEF EO 2006).

4.4 Observations on Convention Guidance

OPS4 included an inventory and analysis of convention guidance to the GEF and the GEF's overall responsiveness (see [GEF EO 2010](#), section 2.3). It pointed to challenges the GEF was facing in responding to convention guidance, in particular the quantity and repetitiveness of the guidance (figure 4.3 and table 4.3). The OPS4 analysis already noted that the conventions are in the process of addressing these issues by moving toward programmatic approaches, streamlining the way guidance to the GEF is presented in COP decisions, and strengthening coordination between convention secretariats and the GEF Secretariat.

The analysis of the GEF's overall responsiveness to convention guidance is not part of the present evaluation, but will be presented in the context of OPS5. However, the review of convention guid-

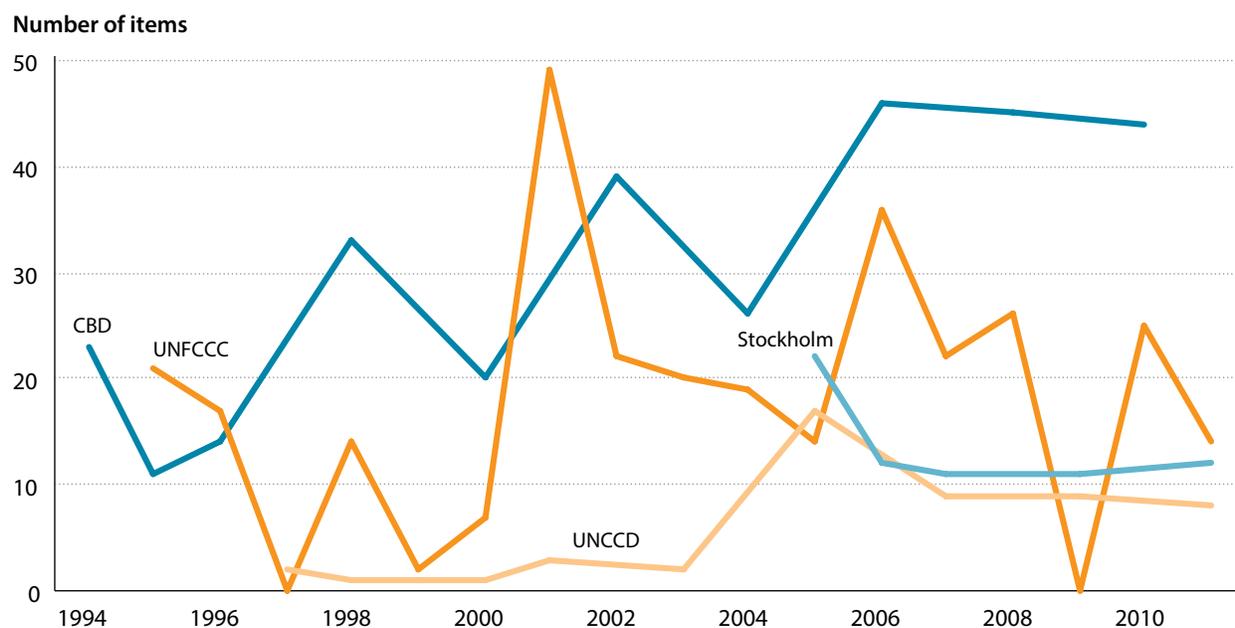
TABLE 4.3 Cumulative Guidance Provided to the GEF by the Conventions

Convention	Time period	Cumulative items
CBD	1994–2010	301
UNFCCC	1995–2011	308
UNCCD	1997–2011	53
Stockholm	2005–11	68

NOTE: The numbers presented here, which will also be used for OPS5, count all items of guidance defined as a “distinguishable piece of information within a COP decision” (usually a paragraph or subparagraph). Accordingly, the reported number is significantly higher than in OPS4, which counted the number of articles in COP decisions directed to the GEF.

ance conducted in preparation for the guidance-strategy mapping (see [Technical Paper 8](#)) also yielded findings on the general nature of guidance to the GEF. In particular, streamlined presentation of GEF guidance in COP decisions and efforts to strengthen coordination between convention secretariats and the GEF Secretariat facilitate GEF responsiveness to convention guidance. However,

FIGURE 4.3 Items of Convention Guidance Provided to the GEF over Time



NOTE: The numbers presented here, which will also be used for OPS5, count all items of guidance defined as a “distinguishable piece of information within a COP decision” (usually a paragraph or subparagraph). Accordingly, the reported number is significantly higher than in OPS4, which counted the number of articles in COP decisions directed to the GEF.

the concrete effects of these relatively recent measures on the overall quantity and clarity of convention guidance to the GEF remain to be seen.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONVENTION GUIDANCE AND FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES

The mapping of convention guidance to focal area strategies, which is presented in detail for each focal area in [Technical Papers 1–7](#), finds that the GEF-5 focal area strategies are overall responsive to convention guidance. The strategies' approach to capacity development represents a partial exception to this general finding and is discussed below.

The GEF's general responsiveness to convention guidance implies that the guidance constitutes one of the dimensions that shape each focal area strategy. Differences in the nature of the guidance from the conventions have shaped the corresponding focal area strategy, which can be illustrated by a comparison of the biodiversity strategy as shaped by CBD guidance and the climate change mitigation strategy as shaped by UNFCCC guidance. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 summarize the quantitative and qualitative approaches of both conventions to guidance on technical matters that directly influence the formulation of GEF focal area strategies. As evident from the amount as well as the formulation of relevant guidance, the CBD provides frequent, reiterated guidance on a large number of technical matters and on the prioritization of activities. CBD guidance tends to be concrete, prescriptive, and specific, leaving little room for strategic interpretation. In absolute terms, as shown in table 4.3, UNFCCC guidance is just as frequent as CBD guidance. However, UNFCCC guidance with direct implications for focal area strategies focuses almost exclusively on issues relating to national obligations under the convention (national reporting), national planning, and capacity development (table 4.5). It largely refrains from concrete elabora-

tions of technical issues or prioritization of areas to be supported by the GEF.² Themes covered by focal area strategy objectives such as energy efficiency or land use, land use change, and forestry are usually mentioned by a single item of guidance. UNFCCC guidance also differs from CBD guidance in its formulation, which implies a greater degree of flexibility for the GEF in integrating the guidance into an overall strategy.

The differences between CBD and UNFCCC guidance are reflected in the respective focal area strategies (see [Technical Papers 1](#) and [2](#)): The biodiversity focal area strategy reflects the large amount of distinct, prescriptive, and at times fragmented CBD guidance through numerous separate objectives or subobjectives. Specific issues ranging from access and benefit sharing to biosafety and invasive alien species are prominently addressed by the biodiversity strategy, in accordance with CBD decisions. In the past, CBD guidance did not elucidate how it envisioned these various aspects to be integrated into an overall strategic approach in a consistent, effective, and efficient way. As a result, parts of the biodiversity focal area strategy appear less connected to the overarching strategic direction that is primarily embodied in BD-1 and BD-2. Current efforts of the CBD to increase the strategic coherence of its guidance to the GEF are attempting to address this challenge.

The objectives of the climate change mitigation strategy, following UNFCCC guidance that allows for flexibility of interpretation and integration of issues, display a high degree of consistency. The objectives are equally weighted, addressing the

²This analysis applies to UNFCCC guidance on climate change mitigation relevant to the climate change mitigation focal area strategy. With regard to guidance on adaptation, which is directed at the LDCF and the SCCF—funds directly established under the convention—the UNFCCC follows a narrower, more assertive approach.

TABLE 4.4 Quantitative and Qualitative Assessment of CBD Guidance to the GEF

Theme	COP 1	COP 2	COP 3	COP 4	COP 5	COP 6	COP 7	COP 8	COP 9	COP 10	Total
Biodiversity planning	2			1		1	1	3	1	6	15
Identification, monitoring, indicators, and assessments	2		2		1		1	1		2	9
Taxonomy				2	1	1	1	5		2	12
Protected areas							1	5	4	2	12
Species conservation	1					2				2	5
Invasive alien species				2	2	1	1	2	3		11
Local/indigenous people (Article 8(j))	1		1		1	1		1	1	2	8
Sustainable use							1				1
Engagement of business									2		2
Incentive measures	1		1	2	1	1					6
Research and training			1						2		3
Education and awareness			1		1	1	1	2			6
Access and benefit sharing			2	2	1	2	1			1	9
Technology cooperation	1						1		2	2	7
Scientific cooperation and CHM	1	2	2	3	1	1			3	2	15
Biosafety			1		1	1	3	3	1	1	11
National reports		2		2	1	2	1	3	1	2	14
Ecosystem approach					1		1		3		5
Agricultural biodiversity			1		2	4					7
Forest biodiversity				4	1	1					6
Biodiversity of inland water systems				3	1	2					6
Marine and coastal biodiversity	1	1			1	2	1			3	9
Island biological diversity								2			2
Biodiversity of dry/subhumid lands	1				1						2
Mountain ecosystems	1										1
Climate change and biodiversity							1		2	4	7
Development activities	1						1			2	4
Sustainability	1								1		2
South-South cooperation										2	2
Total											199

Qualitative: Examples of CBD guidance formulation:

- Decision IV/7, paragraph 5: “Urges Parties and countries and international financial institutions, including the Global Environment Facility, to give high priority to the allocation of resources to activities that advance the objectives of the Convention in respect of forest biological diversity”
- Decision VII/20, paragraph 7: “Urges the Parties, other Governments and the Global Environment Facility, in accordance with its mandate, and other relevant funding organizations to provide adequate and timely support to developing countries to assist in the implementation of the Global Taxonomy Initiative”
- Decision VIII/18, paragraph 27: “Notes the need for the provision of additional funding by the financial mechanism of the Convention to support capacity-building for developing countries, in particular the least developed and small island developing States, and countries with economies in transition, to prevent or minimize the risks of the dispersal and establishment of invasive alien species at the national, subregional, or regional levels”
- Decision X/31, B, paragraph 13: “Urges the Global Environment Facility and its Implementing Agencies to streamline their delivery for expeditious and proportionate disbursement and to align the projects to national action plans for the programme of work on protected areas for appropriate, focused, sufficient and harmonious interventions and continuity of projects”

NOTE: CHM = Clearing-House Mechanism. The numbers presented here, which will also be used for OPS5, count all items of guidance defined as a “distinguishable piece of information within a COP decision” (usually a paragraph or subparagraph). Accordingly, the reported number is significantly higher than in OPS4, which counted the number of articles in COP decisions directed to the GEF.

TABLE 4.5 Quantitative and Qualitative Assessment of UNFCCC Guidance to the GEF

Theme	COP																	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
Research and observation				1			7		1	1								10
Education, training, and public awareness	2			1			5	2	1	3		1	2			2		19
National communications		3		2	2		2	1	1	2	2	2	6	6		5		34
National programs and planning	3			1			2									1	1	8
Capacity development	1	1		1			3	1	1	6		3		1			1	19
Technology transfer and technology needs assessment				1			1	1				3	5	3			2	16
Total																		106
Carbon capture and storage											1							1
Land use, land use change, and forestry												1						1
Energy efficiency												1						1
Total																		3

Qualitative: Examples of UNFCCC guidance formulation:

- Decision 5/CP.11, paragraph 3: “Requests the Global Environment Facility to consider whether supporting carbon capture and storage technologies, in particular related capacity-building activities, would be consistent with its strategies and objectives, and if so, how they could be incorporated within its operational programmes”
- Decision 2/CP.12, paragraph 1 a-d: “Requests the Global Environment Facility [...] (c) to explore options for undertaking land use and land-use change projects within the climate change focal area of the Global Environment Facility, in light of past experience; (d) to continue its promotion of energy efficiency projects”

NOTE: The numbers presented here, which will also be used for OPS5, count all items of guidance defined as a “distinguishable piece of information within a COP decision” (usually a paragraph or subparagraph). Accordingly, the reported number is significantly higher than in OPS4, which counted the number of articles in COP decisions directed to the GEF.

main areas of GEF activity in a balanced and integrated way.

The example of the influence of CBD and UNFCCC guidance on the respective focal area strategies highlights the potential tension between adequately reflecting convention guidance in the strategies on the one hand and the formulation of a balanced, integrated, and coherent strategic approach on the other. As UNFCCC guidance demonstrates, the best way to reconcile the two requirements is through the formulation of convention guidance that provides general direction while largely leaving strategic integration of technical issues to the GEF. This approach might not be suitable for all conventions.

An alternative approach would be to issue concrete and narrow guidance, but base it on a comprehensive process of strategy definition to ensure that the guidance can still be integrated into a consistent strategic approach. This requires a strategy formulation effort on the part of the convention, which could also be implemented with the direct participation of the GEF Secretariat. In this context, already existing CBD mechanisms and ongoing processes aimed at streamlining and improving the strategic coherence of CBD convention guidance to the GEF need to be highlighted. The effort to reduce redundancies and consolidate guidance through the “Review of the Guidance to the Financial Mechanism” (CBD 2010a) represents a step toward reducing the overall quantity of guid-

ance—albeit not decreasing the number of priority areas to be supported by the GEF. Additionally, the framework of programme priorities related to utilization of GEF resources provides additional CBD guidance on the prioritization of GEF support (CBD 2008, annex). Most recently, the “Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020” aims to provide a more coherent and consistent overall framework for GEF support (CBD 2010b). The results of these efforts are not yet apparent.

Similarly, the UNCCD and the GEF Secretariat are seeking to achieve consistency between the UNCCD strategy and the future GEF focal area strategy on land degradation. This ongoing process could potentially yield important lessons for cooperation between the convention and the GEF at the strategy level.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

In interviews, convention secretariats consistently raised concerns about the GEF’s overall approach to capacity development, noting two related aspects:

- The implementation of GEF-supported enabling activities connected to recipient countries’ obligations under the conventions (reporting, national policy planning, etc.)
- GEF support to capacity development including knowledge, information, and awareness-raising activities that go beyond enabling activities

Focal Area Strategies and Enabling Activities

In terms of their inclusion of enabling activities, the focal area strategies display a high level of responsiveness to convention guidance. GEF support for enabling activities constitutes a separate objective under each of the four relevant focal area strategies. However, the integration of enabling activities (e.g., national communications) as a strategic component within the strategies’ other objec-

tives could, in most cases, be enhanced by making the role of enabling activities in the achievement of other focal area objectives more explicit. This point reiterates a finding presented in OPS4, highlighting the potential benefits of better integrating “foundational and enabling activities in [focal area] strategies in line with relevant convention guidance” (GEF EO 2010). Beyond the relationship between focal area strategies and enabling activities, convention secretariats raised a number of concerns regarding the implementation of enabling activities during GEF-5. These related issues will be addressed by the ongoing Evaluation of Enabling Activities as well as by OPS5.

Focal Area Strategies and Capacity Development beyond Enabling Activities

The convention secretariats, while acknowledging that the GEF provides support for institutional and human capacity development through its enabling activities, believe that more could be done in this regard via stand-alone capacity development activities. Interviewees from different convention secretariats singled out intensified institutional capacity development as a prerequisite for the continuity and sustainability of environmental policies and related activities. The ozone units under the Montreal Protocol were frequently invoked as a best practice in this context. Corresponding GEF support for capacity development is perceived as insufficient.

Capacity development activities beyond enabling activities, including institutional capacity, are generally included in the focal area strategies. In addition, the separate cross-cutting capacity development strategy defines related objectives, outcomes, and outputs for GEF support. Concerns raised regarding capacity development therefore appear to be largely tied to the actual implementation of corresponding activities as well as to the overall priority that should be given to capacity development within the GEF portfolio. For example, activities under the climate change mitigation

strategy respond to UNFCCC Article 6 on education, training, and public awareness. While corresponding activities are explicitly included under CCM-6, the UNFCCC COP consistently urges the GEF to follow guidance on Article 6. The OPS5 assessment of the implementation of the focal area strategies will examine the issue of how capacity development activities receive GEF support.

4.5 Results of the Real-Time Delphi Process

The objective of the RTD process, which gathered input on the focal area strategies from a group of 167 scientific experts, was to assess the extent to which the causal pathways identified by the strategies reflect the current state of scientific knowledge. Quantitative responses provided by scientific experts during the RTD consultations on the scientific soundness of focal area strategy objectives and elements converged around a rating of 6 (fair). Means and medians fell into the range of 5 (somewhat) to 7 (considerably), with a few outliers in either direction (table 4.6). While these quantitative results imply that there is room for further improvement, the majority of qualitative responses received do not suggest a lack of scientific soundness in the strategies' existing elements. Instead, qualitative suggestions for improvement mostly concern the relative prioritization of specific aspects and the selection of elements to be included in the strategies (box 4.1). A partial exception was the discussion of the scientific soundness of protected areas as a suitable instrument for biodiversity conservation; this is addressed in more detail below.

QUANTITATIVE RESPONSES

One major caveat to the quantitative responses presented in table 4.6 is the low number of experts who provided input on some of the focal area questionnaires. While participation in biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation is sufficient to enable conclusions to be drawn from the quantitative responses provided, the quantitative data in the other focal areas is based on relatively low numbers of responses and therefore need to be interpreted with caution. Detailed assessments of the quantitative information aggregated in table 4.6 are presented in [Technical Papers 1–7](#) for each focal area.

The technical papers also provide comprehensive overviews of the RTD discussions for each focal area strategy. Box 4.1 gives examples of some of the issues raised by these discussions. The most intensely discussed issue was the effectiveness of protected areas as a suitable instrument for biodiversity conservation. Some experts voiced fundamental doubts about the contribution of protected areas to biodiversity conservation. Most deemed the emphasis on protected areas as the main component of the biodiversity focal area strategy as being too great. Many responses pointed to the close connection between the effectiveness of protected areas and the successful mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into production landscapes, suggesting a stronger relative emphasis on the activities envisioned under BD-2. As the summary of allocated resources in table 4.2 shows, a relative shift from BD-1 to BD-2 is already occurring.

TABLE 4.6 Overview of Quantitative Findings from the Real-Time Delphi Process

Question #	Mean	Min	Max	Median	Std. Dev.
Biodiversity (51 participants)					
#1 Overall goal and objectives	6.14	1	10	6.5	0.453
#2 BD-1: Protected areas	5.70	1	10	6.0	0.424
#3 BD-2: Production land/seascapes	5.56	1	10	6.0	0.493
#4 BD-3: Biosafety	5.39	1	10	5.0	0.531
#5 BD-4: Access and benefit sharing	5.04	2	9	5.0	0.405
#6 Focal area set-aside and ABNJ partnership	4.63	1	10	5.0	0.537
Climate change mitigation (36 participants)					
#1 Overall goal and objectives	6.92	4	9	7.0	0.413
#2 CCM-1: Low-carbon technologies	6.63	4	9	7.0	0.431
#3 CCM-2: Energy efficiency	5.72	3	10	5.0	0.643
#4 CCM-3: Renewable energy	6.75	5	9	7.0	0.426
#5 CCM-4: Low-carbon transport	6.18	3	10	5.0	0.600
#6 CCM-5: LULUCF and SFM	6.00	1	10	6.0	0.761
International waters (15 participants)					
#1 Overall goal and objectives	6.28	5	7	7.0	0.332
#2 IW-1: Conflicting water uses	6.00	5	7	6.0	0.349
#3 IW-2: Marine fisheries, coasts, large marine ecosystems	5.62	3	8	5.5	0.498
#4 IW-3: Foundational capacity	5.85	5	8	5.0	0.425
#5 IW-4: Marine areas beyond national jurisdiction	5.42	3	8	5.0	0.566
Land degradation (17 participants)					
#1 Overall goal and objectives	6.14	4	8	6.0	0.550
#2 LD-1: Agro-ecosystems	5.71	5	9	5.0	0.523
#3 LD-2: Forest ecosystems	7.14	5	9	7.0	0.550
#4 LD-3: Competing land uses	5.85	3	9	5.0	0.867
#5 LD-4: Sustainable land mgmt adaptive management	6.16	2	10	5.5	1.090
#6 Focal area partnership on SFM	7.14	5	10	7.0	0.652
Chemicals (8 participants)					
#1 Overall goal and objectives	5.75	5	8	5.0	0.649
#2 CHEM-1: POPs	6.50	5	8	6.5	1.060
#3 CHEM-2: Ozone-depleting substances	6.00	5	7	6.0	0.707
#4 CHEM-3: SAICM and mercury	5.50	5	6	5.5	0.353
#5 CHEM-4: CHEM beyond Stockholm/Montreal	6.00	5	7	6.0	0.707
#6 Links with other focal areas	6.00	5	7	6.0	0.707
SFM/REDD+ (12 participants)					
#1 Overall goal and objectives	6.16	5	8	6.0	0.435
#2 SFM-1: Reducing pressure on forests	7.66	6	9	8.0	0.720
#3 SFM-2: Forest ecosystem services	7.33	6	8	8.0	0.544
#4 SFM-3: Greenhouse gas emissions and carbon markets	4.66	1	8	5.0	1.655
#5 Focal area partnership with BD, CCM, LD	6.66	5	8	7.0	0.720
Adaptation to climate change under LDCF/SCCF (28 participants)					
#1 Overall goal and objectives	6.40	5	9	6.0	0.350
#2 CCA-1: Reduction of vulnerability	6.45	4	8	7.0	0.413
#3 CCA-2: Increase of adaptive capacity	5.30	2	9	5.5	0.800
#4 CCA-3: Adaptation technology transfer	5.80	2	8	6.0	0.525
#5 Sectorial distribution of activities	5.75	3	8	5.5	0.605
#6 Research on adaptation economics	6.22	5	9	6.0	0.465

NOTE: Rating scale: 1 to 10, where 1 = not at all; 2 = hardly; 3 = slightly; 4 = partly; 5 = somewhat; 6 = fairly; 7 = considerably; 8 = very; 9 = highly; 10 = fully (0 = no answer).

BOX 4.1 Examples of Issues Raised by the Real-Time Delphi Consultations on Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation

Biodiversity

- Experts frequently raised the problem of protected areas as “isolated patches” that become ineffective for biodiversity conservation; need for an emphasis on connectivity, buffer zones
- In this context, the connection between BD-1 and BD-2 was emphasized as a crucial factor in the success of the biodiversity strategy
- Discussion of what should be protected in productive landscapes (“ecological triage”)
- Several responses referred to approaches that try to fit biodiversity conservation “into the mainframe of agricultural production” versus new methods to “optimize agricultural production and biodiversity value simultaneously”
- Some experts called for the development of improved indicators that capture the “quality” of biodiversity conservation
- Discussions frequently addressed the trade-offs between biodiversity conservation and socioeconomic needs, with several experts proposing a more differentiated view on biodiversity protection (“partial protection”)

Climate Change Mitigation

- Discussions highlighted the need for emphasis on “green economic growth” in the climate change mitigation strategy
- Some experts noted local leaders/champions as a key factor for success given the highly contextual circumstances in which climate change mitigation projects operate
- Management of waste generated by replacement technologies (e.g., compact fluorescent lamps) was identified as an open question
- Discussions underlined the mitigation potential of system-level urban planning which should be emphasized more under CCM-4
- Responses stressed the importance of technology transfer as a core component of the climate change mitigation strategy
- Responses pointed to the need for further improvements in greenhouse gas reduction monitoring systems

NOTE: See [Technical Papers 1–7](#) for RTD results for all focal areas.

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ED-2	GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines	2008

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