

GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines

Global Environment Facility Evaluation Office

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Evaluation Document No. 2 2007

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Global Environment Facility

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Preface

The Monitoring and Evaluation Policy of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) establishes the principles of monitoring and evaluation in all activities funded by the GEF. It describes minimum standards that need to be applied at the project level, and the roles and tasks of all partners in the network of GEF Agencies and organizations. The policy, which was adopted in February 2006 by the GEF Council, noted that further guidelines would be forthcoming on how its norms and standards would be implemented in practice. One of the areas the Council was especially interested in was the establishment of guidelines for ethics in monitoring and evaluation to address conflict of interest issues and proper regard for the rights of stakeholders. These ethical principles and guidelines have been prepared as part of this effort to further specify and operationalize the policy.

The guidelines were developed and discussed with the GEF Agencies and GEF Secretariat in September 2006. The final version was issued in November 2006 and shared with the GEF Council later that month. Subsequently they were shared with the United Nations Evaluation Group for its work on UN-wide ethical principles for evaluation.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the drafting of this document, particularly Dr. David Todd, Senior Evaluation Officer, who was task manager of the process, along with the many members of the GEF Evaluation Office, GEF Secretariat, and partner Agencies who contributed to revising and strengthening earlier drafts.

Rob D. van den Berg

Director, Evaluation Office

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

- 1. In accordance with the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy,¹ the GEF Evaluation Office operates as an organizational unit that is independent of Implementing Agency or GEF Secretariat management in the conduct of the evaluations that it undertakes. In its work, the Evaluation Office applies its mission statement of enhancing global environmental benefits through excellence, independence, and partnership in monitoring and evaluation.
- 2. The Evaluation Office works in close partnership with other entities in the GEF system, and extends this collaboration to the international evaluation community, in order to remain on the cutting edge of emerging and innovative methodologies and derive maximum benefits from collaboration. It dialogues, consults, and collaborates with relevant partners to foster a network of monitoring and evaluation professionals that may add value to GEF operations and results.

1.2 Coverage and Application of Ethical Principles in All GEF Evaluation Office Activities

- 3. These guidelines apply to the conduct of evaluations in the GEF Evaluation Office and for those who work directly for this Office. The GEF Evaluation Office works in close partnership with other Agencies,² many of which have their own ethical guidelines. In addition, the United Nations Evaluation Group is establishing ethical guidelines that will apply to all UN agencies.
- 4. Furthermore, GEF staff members are World Bank employees and are required to subscribe to the World Bank's Code of Professional Ethics,³ as are GEF consultants. This code covers three broad areas that relate to working for an international organization, but that are not specific to evaluators, namely:
 - staff relations (including diversity, fair treatment, exercise of authority, privacy);
 - conflicts of interest (including financial interests, gifts, disclosure of confidential information, outside activities, advancement of relatives);
 - operations (due diligence, avoidance of inappropriate payments, procurement, accuracy of records, use of World Bank assets).

These guidelines
define ethical
principles and
outline the
responsibilities of
the parties involved
in GEF evaluations.

5. The Code of Professional Ethics refers staff to the World Bank Policy on Disclosure of Information, which also covers GEF staff.⁴ According to this policy, there is "a presumption in favor of disclosure," which is balanced by "the need to protect confidential information and the country's internal deliberative process." Documents pertaining to all World Bank GEF projects completed after the policy was approved in 2002 are publicly available, subject to certain procedures concerning the timing of release of information. According to the GEF Instrument, "GEF operational policies... with respect to GEF-financed projects shall provide for full disclosure of all non-confidential information."6

1.3 Purpose of Ethical Principles and Guidelines on Evaluation

- 6. The purpose of these ethical principles and guidelines is to promote
 - responsible behavior toward all stakeholders, particularly those affected by interventions under evaluation:
 - · credibility of evaluation results, through establishing the impartiality, inclusiveness, and comprehensive nature of the work undertaken;
 - responsible use of resources.⁷

Confidence in the ethical nature of an evaluation promotes the credibility and hence usefulness of its results and recommendations.

- 7. In addition to the above-described general ethical guidelines associated with working within the World Bank and the GEF, the evaluation and oversight work that the GEF Evaluation Office undertakes, or in which it participates, is guided by several other ethical principles.
- 8. The ethical principles and guidelines of this document are derived from internationally recognized professional ideals, which are reflected in the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy. The principles can be grouped under four broad headings: freedom from bias, open evaluation, protection of stakeholder rights and interests, and evaluation quality. In order to make the principles more operational, associated guidelines are provided for each on the following pages.

These guidelines are divided into four core principles.

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Notes

- 1. GEF Evaluation Office, The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, Evaluation Document 2006, No. 1, www.gefeo.org/uploadedFiles/Policies_and_Guidelines-me_policy-english.pdf.
- The GEF partner Agencies are its three Implementing Agencies—the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Environment Programme—and seven Executing Agencies—the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

- The World Bank Group, Code of Professional Ethics-Ethics: Living Our Values, 1999, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTETHICS/Resources/CodeinEnglish.pdf.
- The World Bank Group, The World Bank Policy on Disclosure of Information, 2002, www1.worldbank.org/operations/disclosure/documents/disclosurepolicy.pdf.
- 5. The World Bank Policy on Disclosure of Information, paragraphs 4 and 6.
- GEF, Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility, 2004, paragraph 5, http://thegef.org/GEF_Instrument3.pdf.
- United Nations Evaluation Group, "Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation," 2007, draft, p. 3.

2. Freedom from Bias

9. The activities of the GEF Evaluation Office shall be demonstrably free of bias. This can be achieved through the three principles of independence, impartiality, and transparency.

2.1 Independence

10. The principle of independence has two dimensions: (a) the avoidance of conflicts of interest and (b) the ability to retain independence of judgment and not be susceptible to pressure from any party to modify evaluation findings. Conflicts of interest may arise at the level of the Evaluation Office or at that of individual staff members or consultants.

Avoidance of Institutional Conflicts of Interest by the Evaluation Office

- 11. The Evaluation Office shall avoid any conflict of interest that might arise, or appear to arise, as a result of the acceptance of any form of external support or assistance. For example, the acceptance of supplementary funding for any of its activities from bilateral or multilateral agencies or other parties shall be carefully considered and managed. Such funding must not lead to the pursuit of a particular evaluation approach under the influence of a funding partner or partners, nor can the Office incorporate any perceptions that a partner may have or express concerning an institution, policy, or project under evaluation. The Director of the Evaluation Office shall carefully assess the relative advantages and potential conflicts of any external support offered to the Office. Where such funding is substantial and represents a considerable share (25 percent or more) of the overall cost of an evaluation, the Director shall establish an appropriate independent advisory group for the evaluation concerned to ensure that it is pursued at all times in an appropriate manner, including retaining its necessary independence of judgment from any contributing parties.
- 12. The offer of support from any external party for additional staff in the Evaluation Office will be carefully considered by the Director to ensure that no influence on the work of the unit is intended or exerted. Any such staff member shall have the appropriate qualifications and experience to fill the post offered, shall be trans-

Freedom from bias is the first core principle.

External funding should not influence the Office.

- parently recruited, and shall be subject to the same guidelines for avoidance of conflict of interest as other staff members.
- 13. Other potential assistance to the Evaluation Office, such as participation in joint evaluations, conferences, and workshops in which costs are shared, shall be carefully assessed by the Director to ensure that they do not imply any loss of independence of the Office. The most favored partner for such activities will be other independent evaluation offices or units.

14. The GEF operates in a specialized field in which relatively few institutions are

evaluation for which the potential of a conflict of interest is present, the Director

shall ensure that the affected staff member is not the task manager.

Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest by Evaluation Office Staff

prominent. Staff members are likely to have had some level of previous exposure to some of the Agencies that they are required to evaluate. As a guideline, staff members of Evaluation Office teams shall not have been responsible for the design, implementation, or supervision of any of the projects, programs, or policies that they are evaluating. The allocation of work among staff members will take due account of the need to ensure this aspect of independence, and staff members are required to notify the Evaluation Office Director of any potential conflict of interest, or appearance of such, that could result from their participation in a particular evaluation. Where it is unavoidable for a staff member to participate in an

All parties involved in evaluations must seek to avoid any conflict of interest that might arise.

Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest by Consultants

- 15. The range of high-quality consultants with expertise in the fields covered by the GEF is relatively limited; and, over time, most of them will have had some contact with GEF activities. The Evaluation Office will protect the independence of its studies without excluding the potentially most qualified consultants on the grounds of previous experience. The Office shall not engage consultants who have worked previously on the design or implementation of a project, program, or policy to conduct evaluation analysis or prepare evaluation reports on those activities. Where it is unavoidable to hire such a consultant on a higher order evaluation, such as a program or thematic study, the consultant shall not engage in any part of the evaluation that deals directly with activities with which he or she was associated. The task manager shall also pay particular attention to ensure that any appearance or incidence of conflict of interest is avoided through the appropriate distribution of work and through quality control of findings.
- 16. Potential consultants are required to divulge any past experience, of themselves or their immediate family, that may give rise to a potential conflict of interest. To satisfy due diligence requirements, GEF evaluation consultants will be required to confirm in writing any experience or benefits that might be considered to present a potential conflict of interest through the use of a declaration of interests form

(see annex). The task manager, if necessary in association with the Evaluation Office Director, will decide whether any potential conflict is sufficient to exclude the consultant from working on the evaluation or whether such participation can be allowed with the adoption of specified measures to safeguard the integrity of the evaluation.

Retaining Independence of Judgment

17. Independence of judgment is one of the key characteristics specified in the recruitment of staff and consultants for the Evaluation Office. During the course of implementation of evaluation studies, pressure may be applied by interested parties to moderate or change findings. Examples of pressures experienced in studies already undertaken by the Office have included, on the one hand, some team members wishing to make stronger recommendations than can be fully supported from the findings; and, on the other, project implementers insisting that their own evidence is more positive than that gathered by the evaluation study and requesting revision of findings and recommendations on this basis. Although such pressures are common, they may reach a stage at which they endanger the completion and integrity of the evaluation. In such cases, the task manager shall raise the issue with the Evaluation Office Director, who will arrange to meet with relevant officers of the agency concerned, or with evaluation team members or consultants, to clarify the issues and decide on an approach that will ensure that evaluation findings and recommendations are consistent, verified, and independently presented.

Independence of judgment will be maintained against external pressure.

2.2 Impartiality

- 18. Closely related to the issue of independence is that of impartiality. Evaluations must give a comprehensive and balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the policy, program, project, or organizational unit being evaluated. The evaluation process shall reflect impartiality at all stages and take due account of the views of stakeholders. Task managers are responsible for ensuring that all evaluators operate in an impartial and unbiased manner throughout the evaluation. This impartiality shall be ensured both in the conduct of key evaluation activities, such as fieldwork and stakeholder meetings, and in the analysis and presentation of findings. The link between findings and recommendations shall be transparent, persuasive, and proportionate. The task manager shall ensure that recommendations do not go further than the associated body of evidence allows.
- 19. One of the key mechanisms for ensuring the impartiality of Evaluation Office studies is internal and external review. Within the Office, all major studies (determined as such in terms of cost and/or sensitivity) shall be peer reviewed by at least one senior staff member. The peer review process will ensure the impartiality of evaluation outputs through careful assessment of the quality of work

Internal and external review is a key mechanism for ensuring impartiality.

undertaken, its presentation, and the linkages between findings and recommendations. After receiving and discussing peer review comments, the task manager shall prepare a revised version of the document; this will then be discussed at an appropriate Evaluation Office staff meeting, at which further comments and suggestions may be received. Finally, the Evaluation Office Director may decide to make additional suggestions concerning the evaluation, including ensuring the impartiality of its conduct and reporting. Once these stages of internal review have been completed, evaluation documents will be discussed with any advisory group (for major evaluations) prior to presentation to key stakeholders in the GEF Secretariat, the Implementing and Executing Agencies, and ultimately the GEF Council.

2.3 Transparency

- 20. Transparency and consultation with major stakeholders shall be essential features in all stages of monitoring and evaluation processes. The Evaluation Office shall clearly communicate the purpose of the evaluation or monitoring activity, the criteria applied, and the intended use of findings. Evaluation documents shall be in an easily readable form, facilitating their transparency and legitimacy. Evaluation and monitoring reports shall provide information on their sources, costs, methodologies, and approaches. At the same time, however, they must honor all commitments made concerning the confidentiality of information given to individuals or institutions.
- 21. Drafts of assessments of GEF activities shall be circulated to the relevant Agencies and the GEF Secretariat to allow them to respond on matters of fact or validity of analysis. The Evaluation Office shall also make its working documents available on the GEF Web site at the earliest opportunity, to enable public access and discussion. Evaluation findings shall be presented and discussed at the appropriate national or local level within the relevant country to enable stakeholders to respond to them.

Transparency
and consultation
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and evaluation
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3. Open Evaluation

3.1 Disclosure

- 22. The lessons from monitoring and evaluation shall be disseminated by establishing effective feedback loops to policy-makers, operational staff, beneficiaries, and the general public. The GEF Evaluation Office shall seek to ensure that its partners share with it their GEF-related evaluation and monitoring reports as well as other internal periodic reviews of progress and implementation. The GEF Evaluation Office shall be provided access to all project documentation of the Agencies relating to GEF-financed activities. The Office will disclose its own aggregate data through such means as desk reviews, presentations, and working papers. Original data, including interview records and meeting notes, will be retained in confidential files until completion of the evaluation; at which point the task manager, in consultation with the Evaluation Office Director, shall determine an appropriate time limit for further retention, after which such data shall be securely disposed of.
- 23. Databases of information on individual project activities shall be securely stored in the Evaluation Office and available for use only by the Office's staff and consultants. Requests by external stakeholders for access to such databases shall be carefully considered by the Office in light of requirements for confidentiality and evaluation integrity. Access to data pertaining to the work of any GEF Implementing or Executing Agency shall only be granted where this does not contradict the disclosure principles of the Agency concerned. The granting of access to such data on individual project activities shall be carefully and fully justified. The Evaluation Office Director is required to make the final decision concerning any such access.

3.2 Knowledge Sharing

24. The Evaluation Office shall ensure the highest standards in accessibility and presentation of its published reports, provide additional learning products based on evaluations, use a range of channels to reach target audiences, participate in knowledge management activities, and facilitate interagency sharing of experiences relevant to the GEF. The Office shall take full advantage of all possible means of sharing lessons learned with a broader audience, including through electronic

Open evaluation is the second core principle.

The Evaluation
Office will use a range of channels to reach target audiences and share knowledge.

and interactive channels, knowledge networks, communities of practice, presentations at relevant conferences, and preparation and dissemination of appropriate publications.

4. Protection of Stakeholder Rights and Interests

- 25. The Evaluation Office shall operate with due regard for the welfare, beliefs, and customs of those involved in or affected by its activities, avoiding conflict of interest. Evaluators must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence.
- 26. In particular, the following ethical guidelines shall be followed for GEF-sponsored fieldwork activities, whether by staff members or consultants:
 - a. **Minimize cultural intrusion.** Local customs regarding dress, personal interaction, gender roles, and religious beliefs and practices shall be respected.
 - b. Anonymity/confidentiality. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source.
 - c. **Omissions and wrongdoing.** Evaluators have a responsibility to report on issues and findings that, even though they may not relate directly to the terms of reference, present credible evidence of omissions of required procedures or of active wrongdoing by project personnel. The evaluation team shall consult with the GEF Evaluation Office task manager when there is any doubt about if and how issues such as evidence of wrongdoing should be reported. The task manager shall discuss these issues with the Evaluation Office Director, in order to agree on the most appropriate course of action.
 - d. Individual responsibilities. All team members shall have an opportunity to disassociate themselves from particular judgments and recommendations. Any unresolved differences of opinion within the team shall be acknowledged in the report.
 - e. **Participation/privacy.** Evaluators should realize that people may not have time or want to be involved. Evaluators shall provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right to privacy.
 - f. Fundamental values. While evaluators should respect other cultures, they must also be aware of international values regarding minorities and particular groups, such as women. In such matters, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the operative guide.¹

Protection of stakeholder rights and interests is the third core principle.

Evaluators must respect and protect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence.

- g. Evaluation of individuals. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate the performance of individuals and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle. Reviews of project achievements and challenges shall refer to the processes involved rather than to individual stakeholders.
- h. Disclosure. Evaluators have a commitment to the public and participants, as well as a contractual arrangement with the GEF Evaluation Office. Briefings and unofficial summaries may therefore be shared outside of the GEF Evaluation Office. However, responsibility for distribution of published material rests with the GEF Evaluation Office or its delegated agent.
- i. Integrity. Evaluators have an overriding responsibility to ensure that the evaluation is independent, impartial, and accurate. This principle shall not be compromised.
- j. Responsibility. Evaluators are not solely responsible to the GEF Evaluation Office as the commissioning organization. Evaluators also have a wider responsibility to the institutions, groups, and individuals involved in, affected by, or interested in the evaluation. They shall therefore ensure that their findings and recommendations are clearly reported and that they are based on sound methodology and evaluation implementation.

Note

United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, www.un.org/Overview/rights.html.

5. Evaluation Quality

5.1 Evidence of Wrongdoing

27. The Evaluation Office has an obligation to report evidence of wrongdoing or unethical behavior. If such evidence is uncovered, the evaluator shall report it to the task manager, who will in turn report the issue to the GEF Evaluation Office Director. The Director shall take appropriate action, such as informing the investigative body of the Agency concerned or the appropriate authorities of the country concerned.

Evaluation quality is the fourth core principle.

5.2 Due Process

- 28. Evaluations shall be implemented with regard to the principles of due process. Stakeholders shall be provided with sufficient information to understand how to seek redress for any perceived disadvantage suffered from the evaluation or any projects it covers. At the country level, it shall be made known to stakeholders that any objections to fieldwork procedures or conduct may be reported to the Director of the Evaluation Office through a locally accessible means. Similarly, if parties contacted by an evaluation team voice objections concerning conduct of an Agency, procedures for registering a complaint shall be made known to them.
- 29. Copies of evaluation findings shall be provided to stakeholders in countries covered by the evaluation, including the GEF focal point, relevant ministries and nongovernmental organizations, and national consultants. Where evaluation teams are formed to undertake an evaluation, the right is reserved for dissenting viewpoints to be formally voiced in an annex to the final report.
- 30. The GEF Secretariat and its Agencies shall be provided with copies of each final evaluation report. In accordance with the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, a "management response will be required for all evaluation and performance reports presented to the GEF Council by the GEF Evaluation Office" and the "agencies ensure that recommendations from GEF-related evaluations conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office...are submitted for decision-making and action within the agencies." The Evaluation Office shall track the implementation of evaluation recommendations that have been accepted by management and/or the GEF Council and report on their follow-up status on an annual basis.²

The Evaluation
Office tracks the implementation of evaluation recommendations.

5.3 Competencies and Capacities

The Evaluation Office seeks to bring together an optimal mix of skills and backgrounds in evaluation teams. 31. Depending on the subject, monitoring and evaluation activities require a range of expertise derived from technical, environmental, social science, or evaluation disciplines. The Evaluation Office shall select independent-minded, experienced, and appropriately senior evaluators. The Office will seek to bring together for each evaluation the optimal mix of specializations to enable the development of an authoritative, evidence-based report and associated recommendations. Evaluations of GEF activities shall also make the best possible use of local expertise, both technical and evaluative, in participating countries. Wherever possible, team composition shall appropriately reflect culturally important dimensions such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and language. The GEF Evaluation Office shall, as feasible, cooperate to stimulate evaluation capacity development in partner countries, with a specific focus on environmental evaluation concerns.

5.4 Credibility

32. Monitoring and evaluation shall be credible and based on reliable data and observations. Evaluation methodology shall be developed on the basis of an initial approach paper, which will be discussed by the full Evaluation Office and approved by its Director. The methodology will be further developed and incorporated into the evaluation terms of reference, which will be circulated to GEF stakeholders and revised in light of comments received. Monitoring and evaluation reports shall show evidence of consistency and dependability in data, findings, judgments, and lessons learned; appropriately reflecting the quality of the methodology, procedures, and analysis used to collect and interpret data. Where necessary, reports will present socially disaggregated data to reflect different experiences or impacts of GEF activities, according to gender, ethnicity, and other locally relevant characteristics. Although Evaluation Office reports are corporate products, care shall be taken to acknowledge all contributions to their development appropriately.

Evaluations must be credible and useful.

5.5 Utility

33. Monitoring and evaluation shall serve the information needs of intended users. The Evaluation Office and its partners and evaluators shall endeavor to ensure that each evaluation is well informed, relevant, and timely; and that it is clearly and concisely presented, so as to be of maximum benefit to stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluation reports shall present evidence, findings, issues, conclusions, and recommendations in a comprehensive and balanced way. Further, recommendations shall fall within the mandate of the GEF and its Agencies and be implementable.

Notes

- *The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*, paragraph 73.
- The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, paragraph 75.

Annex.

Consultant Declaration of Interests Form

Declaration of Interests Relevant to Undertaking Work for the GEF Evaluation Office

- 2. Proposed contribution to work of GEF Evaluation Office:
- 3. Declaration of direct interests derived from the GEF or its Implementing or Executing Agencies in the past three years (for example, financial benefits arising from employment, contracted work, investments, fees):
- 4. Declaration of indirect interests derived from the GEF or its Implementing or Executing Agencies in the past three years (for example, grants, sponsorships, publications, or other kinds of benefits):
- 5. Declaration of any membership role in or affiliation with organizations/bodies with an interest in the work of the GEF (for example, environmental or developmental NGOs):
- 6. Other interests or facts that the undersigned considers pertinent:

Declaration

I declare that the information provided above is true and complete.

Signed at [place] on [date]

Signature:



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