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Midterm Evaluation of the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise Evaluation Report



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OFFICE

Midterm Evaluation of the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise

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Foreword

At its June 2010 meeting, when the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council approved the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise (NPFE) initiative for GEF-5 (2010–14), it also asked the GEF Evaluation Office to conduct a midterm evaluation of the NPFE initiative. The present evaluation was undertaken to respond to this request and to provide the Council with a detailed assessment of the NPFE initiative, including identification of areas for improvement.

The evaluation process started in October 2012 with preliminary discussions on developing an approach to the evaluation. The data-gathering phase of the evaluation was implemented from February to July 2013. The working paper on the evaluation was presented to the GEF Council in November 2013.

The midterm evaluation led to four Council decisions calling for (1) continuation of NPFE support in GEF-6 (2014–18), (2) use of the balance of the funds allocated to the NPFE program to help

countries undertake NPFEs in GEF-6, (3) inclusion of capacity development initiatives in final replenishment proposals for a comprehensive understanding of the GEF among partners and stakeholders at the country level, and (4) an update of the NPFE guidelines to address countries' information needs. The proposals for the NPFE for GEF-6 reflect several of the recommendations presented in the midterm evaluation. Through this report, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office intends to share the lessons from the piloting of the NPFE initiative with a wider audience.

The evaluation was conducted and completed when Rob D. van den Berg was Director of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office. Final responsibility for this report remains firmly with the Office.



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Director, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

Acknowledgments

Neeraj Kumar Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer in the Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is the leader of the Office's Performance Evaluation team, and the midterm evaluation of the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise was conducted under his overall guidance. Sandra Romboli, Evaluation Officer, was the task manager of the evaluation and led its implementation. The draft report was written by Sandra Romboli and finalized by Neeraj

Kumar Negi. Other members of the evaluation team were consultants Lee Alexander Risby and Nelly Bourlion.

The GEF Independent Evaluation Office appreciates the time and input provided by GEF stakeholders including the GEF Secretariat, the GEF operational focal points and their staff, the GEF Agencies, civil society organizations, and independent experts during the course of this evaluation.

Abbreviations

| | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------|
| AEA | ancillary expense agreement | NPFD | national portfolio formulation document |
| AfDB | African Development Bank | NPFE | National Portfolio Formulation Exercise |
| CBO | community-based organization | NSC | national steering committee |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer | OFP | operational focal point |
| CSO | civil society organization | OPS | overall performance study |
| CSP | Country Support Programme | PIF | project identification form |
| ECW | Expanded Constituency Workshop | PMIS | Project Management Information System |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | RAF | Resource Allocation Framework |
| FSP | full-size project | SIDS | small island developing states |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility | STAR | System for Transparent Allocation of Resources |
| IDB | Inter-American Development Bank | UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| LDC | least developed country | UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| MSP | medium-size project | UNIDO | United Nations Industrial Development Organization |
| NGO | nongovernmental organization | | |

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

1. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Global Environment Facility's (GEF's) implementation of the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise (NPFE) initiative started at the beginning of GEF-5 (2010–14). The goal of the NPFEs was to “strengthen country ownership over decisions on GEF resource programming” (GEF 2010c, 3) and to undertake NPFEs on a voluntary basis in order to produce national portfolio formulation documents (NPFDs).

The NPFE was one of a number of initiatives identified during the fifth replenishment process of the GEF Trust Fund to reform the Country Support Programme (CSP). The CSP was to be implemented by the GEF Secretariat and the voluntary national portfolio identification exercise was to be executed by national institutions in recipient countries.

Another aim of the NPFE process is to strengthen country capacity to coordinate ministries and other involved stakeholders in both the private and public sectors. The NPFEs were also meant to set country priorities for the use of GEF resources in a transparent manner for the benefit of all GEF stakeholders including the anticipated demand for resources, both from countries' national allocations under the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) and from country allocations outside of the STAR.

The overarching goals of the NPFE initiative are to “help recipient countries to build or to strengthen national processes and mechanisms to facilitate GEF programming in a manner that reflects country priorities” and provide

“an opportunity to align the programming of GEF resources with other relevant strategies and national planning processes” (GEF 2012, 2). The NPFEs were expected to cover a country's request for GEF resources from both country allocations under the STAR and other resources aside from these country allocations. One of the objectives in providing support for NPFEs is that it would help GEF Agencies organize their support to countries around the programming priorities listed in a country's NPFE. Other objectives of the NPFEs follow:

- Increased opportunities to align the programming of GEF resources with other relevant strategies and national planning processes and increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits under the multi-lateral environmental conventions.
- Identification of projects and programmatic approaches that will use national allocations under the STAR in the three concerned focal areas, as well as other resources available under the GEF focal areas not subject to STAR allocations.
- Bringing together all relevant ministries and representatives of other key stakeholders (e.g., CSOs and the private sector) to provide input on decisions regarding GEF resource programming.
- Building the capacity of GEF focal points to coordinate GEF policy with other

ministries and to solicit input from other stakeholders.

- Providing for a more predictable and transparent programming process at the national level, which will provide the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Agencies, and the GEF Council with a clearer understanding of each country's prospective project pipeline during a replenishment period.
- Making the pre-PIF portion of the GEF project cycle more efficient.
- Enhancing the mainstreaming of global environmental concerns into other national planning processes and strategies by raising awareness of global environmental issues and priorities among national decision-makers ([GEF 2010c](#), 3–4).

Overall, the NPFE initiative had a low uptake. Of the 42 countries that participated in the NPFE process in GEF-5, 34 shared their NPDFs with the GEF Secretariat. It is unclear whether the remaining eight countries have finalized the process or not. Of the 34 countries with finalized NPDFs, 24 had their process funded by the GEF, and 10 carried out an NPFE using their own resources.

The purpose of the NPFE midterm evaluation is to provide the GEF Council with a comprehensive assessment of the NPFE initiative and provide a formative assessment to improve the initiative for GEF-6 (2014–18). The primary objectives of the midterm evaluation were

- to assess the relevance of the NPFE initiative to the GEF mandate and to the countries;
- to assess the effectiveness and emerging results or effects of the NPFE, including the extent to which the process has enhanced country ownership;
- to assess the efficiency of the NPFE administration and processes, focusing on the guidance provided and timeliness of process

implementation, as well as implementation approaches used by countries; and

- to examine the utility of the NPDFs in terms of the guidance these documents provide to, among others, the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Agencies, and in-country stakeholders.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to collect and analyze information which included **quantitative methods** such as structured survey questionnaires and portfolio reviews, and **qualitative methods** such as semistructured interviews. The quantitative methods were used to examine the effects of the NPFE on portfolio and project development. The qualitative methodologies were used to obtain information on the extent to which the NPFE engendered improvements to country ownership, transparency, and coordination, among other others. The quantitative and qualitative data sets were analyzed separately and then triangulated in order to identify similarities and differences in information from different sources (e.g., actual project preparation times under NPFE relating to perceptions that NPFE increased project preparation times). The lessons learned (see [chapter 8](#)) have been incorporated into the recommendations for this evaluation.

1.1 Findings and Conclusions

RELEVANCE

CONCLUSION 1: The NPFE initiative is relevant to the GEF mandate and policies and to country needs. It promotes ownership and involvement of recipient countries in GEF programming and project development.

The GEF Instrument emphasizes that the GEF “shall fund programs and projects which are country-driven and based on national priorities” ([GEF 2011](#), 12). There is also an increasing amount of evaluative evidence from GEF Independent Evaluation Office evaluations that ownership plays

a crucial role in ensuring efficient and effective delivery of GEF activities and in ensuring support for follow-up. The midterm review of the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) and the Fourth Overall Performance Study (OPS4) of the GEF also emphasized the need for country-level programming. The GEF-5 replenishment policy recommendations called for development of a tool (which became the NPFE) to provide an operational basis for countries to build and sustain ownership in relation to GEF programming and project development.

The NPFE process was seen as relevant and a beneficial first step in building country involvement in portfolio and project development. Most countries perceived the primary relevance of the NPFE as a tool for their empowerment in the GEF so they could generate project ideas without the influence of the GEF Agencies. Prior to the introduction of the NPFE, attention to building country ownership in programs and projects was largely left to individual GEF Agency-country stakeholder interactions. GEF issues, such as climate change, were sometimes integrated into national development plans and also Agency-country strategic planning processes such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework or the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategies. Ten of 19 countries interviewed reported that prior to the NPFE, no systematic effort had been made to plan their respective portfolios or ensure alignment with national priorities. All referred to the "old GEF system," which had the following characteristics: first come, first served (project concepts presented for endorsement by operational focal points [OFPs]), pressure to sign (OFPs under time constraints from GEF Agencies to sign endorsement projects), and limited information and consultation on projects.

A more varied picture emerged from interviews of Agency and GEF Secretariat staff. For the GEF Secretariat, the relevance of the NPFE was perceived to be strong, as it provided countries

with an opportunity to develop their own portfolios and projects through consultations, and therefore increased ownership and capacity. Secretariat technical staff had more varied views of relevance based on expectations and differing opinions of the NPFE process and, importantly, what the process was meant to deliver. The process was perceived as useful in building country involvement and ownership as well as in empowering countries vis-à-vis the Agencies, regardless of the quality and usefulness of the NPFD. However, the NPFE process was perceived as being inadequate in promoting a strategic focus within the country portfolio and in the identification of projects that are eligible for GEF funding.

EFFECTIVENESS

CONCLUSION 2: Uptake of the NPFE initiative was low due to delays in groundwork for implementation and difficulties experienced by the countries in accessing the GEF grant for the initiative.

Implementation of the NPFE started at the beginning of GEF-5. Since this initiative was being implemented for the first time, a considerable amount of groundwork needed to be done before countries could actually undertake NPFEs. Although most (26) of the countries that eventually participated had submitted their applications in 2010, the modality adopted by the GEF Secretariat initially made it difficult for the countries to access GEF grants for NPFEs. The delay in accessing GEF grants led to waning interest. Consequently, overall uptake was low.

Compared to the budgeted participation of 100 countries, only 42 countries participated in the NPFE process in GEF-5. Of these, 10 carried out a NPFE using their own resources. The NPFE initiative attracted countries from different regions of the world. Africa is the most represented region, with 22 countries (3 from Central Africa, 4 from East Africa, 2 from Southern Africa, and 13 from

West Africa). Asia had 11 countries in the NPFE process, Latin America and the Caribbean 7, and Europe and Central Asia 2. Forty-five percent, or 19 of the 42 countries that undertook the NPFE process, are least developed countries (LDCs), while 21 percent (9 countries) are small island developing states (SIDS). Seven percent (3 countries) are both LDCs and SIDS. This indicates that support for the NPFE was especially important for LDCs and SIDS.

CONCLUSION 3: In the majority of countries, the NPFE initiative enhanced country ownership through consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and through the creation of national steering committees to provide a broader decision-making and coordinating structure for GEF programming.

Feedback from stakeholders interviewed in countries that participated in NPFEs indicates that the consultations undertaken as part of the exercise increased the space for participation of various GEF stakeholders in country portfolio formulation. Country stakeholders perceived the NPFE as a turning point in their relationship with the GEF Agencies, as it made them more responsive to country needs.

Of the 34 countries for which NPFDs are available, the documents for 32 countries indicate that consultations were held with stakeholder groups. Twenty-seven indicate civil society organization (CSO) participation in the NPFE, which encompasses academic professionals and research institutes, international nongovernmental institutions (NGOs) such as the World Wildlife Fund in Cambodia and the Wildlife Conservation Society in Rwanda, national NGOs, and community-based organizations (CBOs). The least amount of consultation occurred with CBOs and the private sector. For example, only 7 out of 34 NPFDs reported private sector participation in consultations.

Of the 34 NPFDs, 22 indicated that GEF Agencies participated in NPFE consultations, with the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) being the most frequently involved. The World Bank, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) were each involved in seven to nine countries based on their country presence and requests from countries. The Asian Development Bank was asked to be involved in the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) were only involved in one country each, which can be attributed to their less consistent engagement on GEF projects in country and to their sometimes limited in-country capacity. Notably, the AfDB had begun to be more actively engaged in project development in GEF-5; however, staff reported that, in most countries, the Agency only became aware of an NPFE after the conclusion of the process. The consultative processes in many countries limited Agency involvement until the closing or draft report validation workshop.

The establishment of national steering committees (NSCs) through the NPFE process was seen as playing a major role in improving transparency at the country level in terms of establishing a process and structure for the review of project proposals. NPFE guidelines advised countries to put NSCs in place as part of the consultation process to set priorities and review project proposals, and to hold at least one consultation to discuss the draft report. Seventeen NSCs were established as a result of the NPFE process; in five countries, there were preexisting NSCs or similar committees. In countries that had NSCs, these committees were instrumental in providing a multistakeholder structure to judge project concepts and make decisions. For OFPs that had experienced the “old system,” the NSC structure and the NPFE were empowering, as, according to interviews held with stakeholders, these helped shift the balance of power.

The vast majority of country stakeholders believed that transparency had increased because

of the NPFEs. But most of the gains in transparency were perceived as being associated with the consultations and up to the submission of the NPFDs. Some stakeholders, particularly those that were not represented on the NSCs, had not received any feedback on their proposals since submission and/or were unsure of where their projects stood in the pipeline. This was mentioned with regard to Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Guinea, The Gambia, and Thailand. Most NSCs have continued to function since the completion of the NPFDs. Two Central African countries reported that their NSCs stopped meeting after the completion of the NPFE process because of a lack of funding to hold meetings.

CONCLUSION 4: The NPFE initiative provided a structure for a more systematic alignment of GEF support with country strategies.

The NPFE initiative has been effective in meeting its objective of strengthening the alignment between national strategies and GEF support. Twenty-nine of 34 countries described their national strategies—such as national biodiversity strategies and action plans; national adaptation programs of action; and water, energy, forest, and agricultural strategies—in detail in their NPFDs and linked their programmed GEF projects with them. Most country stakeholders believe that NPFEs provided forums for a more comprehensive discussion of national and GEF strategic alignment in terms of identifying clear synergies. National development planning processes were also linked in many countries to their overarching vision, such as Vision 2020 or 2030, or to five-year development plans. While environmental priorities in these plans were incorporated into NPFE consultations, national budgeting for development planning was not.

The NPFE process was also meant to consider priority areas for regional collaboration. However, most of the countries did not mention regional collaboration and focused more on identifying

national priorities. Interviews tended to confirm the strong perception that the NPFE was not an appropriate tool to promote regional collaboration.

A major intended output of the NPFE was an indicative list of projects for development for GEF-5 support to the country. Interviews revealed that country stakeholders clearly understood they were meant to generate project concepts for development. However, for the GEF Secretariat technical staff and Agency headquarters-based staff, greater emphasis was placed on the production of a portfolio or programmatic approaches. The elements of a portfolio or programmatic approach are evident in 14 NPFDs. Some of the countries, including Sri Lanka, programmed multifocal area projects; others, such as The Gambia and Ghana, tried to see the country's environmental protection as a whole and include projects within the context of their national priorities. In other instances, based on the review of NPFDs, it is difficult to know whether there was an attempt at identifying projects that were connected to ongoing work in the country. Lack of information in the NPFDs on the connection of identified projects to GEF-supported activities does not automatically mean that these projects are unconnected. Furthermore, a lack of connection to GEF-supported activities does not mean that the identified proposals are not connected to the ongoing work of the government or of other partners. The midterm evaluation was not able to explore this question in depth, but this remains an issue that needs to be addressed in the future.

CONCLUSION 5: In countries where stakeholder capacities were low, NPFEs were not effective in identifying project ideas eligible for GEF funding.

The NPFE initiative is implicitly based on the assumption that participants are informed and knowledgeable about the GEF and its eligibility criteria, strategies, and project development process. In many countries, participants were insufficiently

informed to enable meaningful consultation or development of project concepts. Capacity-building exercises were often included through additional preparatory meetings or training on GEF strategies and project proposal writing. However, in several instances, gains made through these exercises have not been sustained due to the transfer, retirement, or removal of key staff.

Analysis of the information contained in the NPFs and data from the GEF Project Management Information System (PMIS) shows that 25 percent of the PIFs approved in GEF-5 for countries that participated in NPFEs had been identified in the NPFs. With regard to the ratio of PIFs submitted versus PIFs approved, there is little difference between the proposals that were identified and those that were not identified in the NPFs.

Some patterns are evident among the countries that undertook NPFEs. A relatively higher percentage of the total PIF submissions from countries with larger STAR allocations (\$30 million or more) versus those with lower STAR allocations (less than \$30 million) had been identified in the NPFs. Similarly, PIFs for projects identified in the NPFs were more likely to have been submitted for countries that had identified projects and allocated resources to them commensurate with their STAR allocations.¹ Of the submitted PIFs, a greater percentage had been identified in the NPFEs for countries that had programmed considerably more projects vis-à-vis their STAR allocations.

Interviews with national stakeholders revealed that many project ideas identified in the NPFs were eventually found to be ineligible for GEF funding. Major weaknesses that led to ineligibility include a lack of congruence with GEF priorities, insufficient cofinancing, or specification of an

inappropriate GEF funding modality. Most of the countries in which these problems were encountered had low capacity.

EFFICIENCY

CONCLUSION 6: From an administrative perspective, the NPFE was inefficiently executed and not fully in accordance with Council decisions and guidelines.

The process and administrative design of the NPFE aspired to strengthen country ownership over decisions on GEF resource programming. In particular, financing modalities were selected for countries to receive resources directly from the GEF Trust Fund using a direct access approach. “Direct access” in this context was interpreted as “recipient executed”—i.e., that the NPFE was to be executed by national institutions in recipient countries through direct access of resources. Therefore, it would not be implemented by one of the Agencies, but through the GEF Secretariat. Under the current NPFE initiative, two successive financing modalities were applied. Initially a World Bank recipient-executed small grants procedure was selected; this was later replaced by a World Bank–executed ancillary expense agreement (AEA).

The initial choice of the recipient-executed grant financing modality caused delays, especially during the early stages of NPFE applications when there was a lack of clarity regarding the process by which recipient countries were to receive resources. Extensive consultations and discussions took place among various World Bank departments (legal, trustee, safeguard, procurement, loan department, and trust fund accounting), the GEF Secretariat, and the GEF Trustee to resolve these initial challenges. Consequently, the time frame for undertaking an NPFE was considerably longer than initially envisioned. The average number of days from receipt of application to NPF submission was 400 days, much longer than the 120–180 days the Secretariat had anticipated.

¹ Although countries are expected to develop projects for areas that are covered through STAR country allocations and for those that are not covered through allocations, the STAR allocation was used as a proxy for country categorization and analytical purposes.

Several challenges arose from the grants procedure process that resulted in delays. First, there was a high degree of variation among recipient countries in navigating the application process. Those unfamiliar with World Bank reporting requirements faced greater difficulties and were likely to drop out. Second, processing time of each grant application was longer than anticipated given the large number of World Bank and GEF staff involved at each stage—e.g., World Bank financial management specialists were required to review and complete a financial management assessment for all grants. Third, the World Bank requirement that the ministry of finance be the main signatory or delegate signatory authority to the GEF OFP’s ministry (usually the environment ministry) created a number of delays depending on the relations between the various in-country ministries. In some cases, this discouraged countries from undertaking the NPFE.

Setting up a new initiative is not easy, especially as here when it was burdened with high-level dialogue between the GEF Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the World Bank as administrative host of the GEF on the possibilities of direct access which would need to be tested through this initiative. This influenced the initial choice for a modality that was not suitable. Additionally, it meant that the NPFE process and implementation arrangements were insufficiently thought through. For example, the initial planning failed to take into account the capacity of recipient countries to see through a complex grant approval process, especially for a relatively small grant. The technical support implications at various levels across the World Bank (country offices, regional specialists) were also insufficiently identified.

A policy shift relating to PIFs contributed to additional uncertainty regarding the NPFE at this point. In October 2010, the GEF CEO decided to freeze PIF submissions for a country participating in the NPFE until the NPFE process was completed. This contrasted with previous

GEF guidance stating that “It will be possible for countries to submit PIF requests to the GEF while the NPFE is being conducted and prior to NPFD finalization” (GEF 2010c, 19). The PIF policy shift caused delays which extended beyond the NPFE initiative. While the shift in policy was intended to ensure consistency with eventual decisions coming out of the NPFE process, it created a freeze on the project pipeline when the Council had decided that the pipeline should remain open.

To address concerns about administrative issues and severe delays under the recipient-executed small grants procedure, an alternative financing modality was identified, the AEA. This occurred almost a year after the introduction of the NPFE and the recipient-executed grants procedure. The switch to an AEA consolidated the overall process from 30 to 8 steps, which helped reduce the complexity of the process and enable a timelier implementation modality. The change meant a shift from a recipient-executed grant to a World Bank–executed transfer—a significant difference, as the recipient-executed grant went through the World Bank’s loan system, while the Bank-executed AEAs are administered directly through accounts payable.

Finding an appropriate financing modality for the small-size NPFE grant proved challenging. The introduction of the AEA to support NPFE activities was not without controversy. Because of the many discrepancies between what is outlined in the AEA policy and the nature of NPFE activities, a waiver was required to use this modality. In May 2011, the Bank granted a waiver to the GEF for NPFEs for GEF-5. This waiver was needed because the AEA financing modality is not fully compatible with the NPFE, since it includes cost categories that are ineligible for an AEA.

CONCLUSION 7: The guidance provided on NPFEs did not adequately address issues related to eligibility for GEF funding, cofinancing requirements, and GEF modalities.

The GEF Secretariat focused its initial guidance on addressing administrative issues related to the procedure for recipient-executed grants. Guidance for the NPFE was very precise in terms of the administrative process laid out, the exact procedure for the 30-step modality, and the 8-step process to receive GEF funds for conducting NPFEs. Feedback from the countries revealed that the GEF Secretariat was very helpful and timely in its support during the process.

Individual countries were encouraged to customize their own NPFE processes. The idea behind this was to be nonprescriptive, to promote country ownership of the planning and decision-making process, as well as to build country capacity. Indeed, the guidance explicitly stated that “the NPFE is executed by national institutions without the support of a GEF Agency” (GEF 2012, 2).

Feedback from country stakeholders, including 32 OFPs, concerning NPFE guidance focuses on the potential to improve the quality and timing of technical support throughout the process. Lack of guidance was identified as one of the greatest weaknesses. There was no real focus on practical technical guidance as the NPFE initiative was rolled out. Technical support, in terms of having a senior technical officer from the GEF Secretariat participate in the actual NPFE at the country level to provide hands-on information on GEF rationale, cofinancing requirements, and project eligibility, was not common. The evaluation found that only seven of the NPFD submissions stayed within the 10-page limit. There was also a lack of clarity in some countries as to whether GEF Agencies should be involved in the NPFE, and if so, the extent of their participation.

The quality assurance process for final NPFDs was left open and resulted in some confusion. While the Secretariat provided comments on

finalized NPFDs, there was no requirement for countries to change them accordingly—leading to some confusion between the GEF Agencies, the Secretariat, and the countries. Final NPFDs, available on the GEF website, referred to projects that the Secretariat may have suggested were not eligible, or that needed to be changed or taken out.

1.2 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: The NPFE initiative should continue since it is highly relevant to supporting countries in addressing the pre-identification phase of the project cycle.

The NPFEs are highly relevant in supporting countries in addressing the pre-identification phase of the project cycle. The period before project concepts enter into the cycle has long been a cause for concern and has been perceived by many as a reputational risk for the GEF. Many countries program the support they expect from the GEF—although many countries have not done so in the past. NPFEs have been set up to support countries (on a voluntary basis) to program future GEF support. In many countries, the NPFE has led to increased coordination and priority setting in future support. New coordination mechanisms have been established in several countries, and more stakeholders have been involved in discussions about future priorities. In principle, these exercises are highly relevant for filling the gap in programming that is contributing to the perception of the GEF’s weak performance.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The revised NPFE needs to continue to be implemented by the Secretariat, to maintain neutrality between countries and Agencies, and to provide funding for a country-led NPFE on a voluntary basis.

The NPFE should be delivered to countries through a mode that is perceived as neutral. While Agency participation needs to be encouraged because the GEF Agencies inform the discussions during the

NPFES on issues related to GEF funding eligibility and the comparative advantage they provide, implementation of an NPFE by a GEF Agency could be perceived as leading to a bias toward that Agency.

The initial problems with the support modality were caused by trying to create a semblance of direct access in the support. The Secretariat has to apply the rules and procedures of its administrative host, the World Bank. In World Bank terminology, direct access pointed to a recipient-executed modality. This modality is complicated and delays support. However, even if the modality was recipient executed, it did not provide direct access to the GEF Trust Fund because the Secretariat would access the fund as an intermediary. Real direct access was initiated in GEF-5 through the initiative to broaden the partnership through Article 28 of the GEF Instrument, for which the GEF Council has established a rigorous process to accredit Agencies. The level of scrutiny entailed for Agencies that have applied for accreditation under Article 28 would not have been feasible for the Agencies identified to execute the NPFE or for preparing reports to the conventions. For NPFES and support to convention reports, the only sensible interpretation of “direct access” would be “not implemented by one of the Agencies but through the Secretariat.”

Implementation of support through the Secretariat would mean that no Agency would be involved in the execution of the support but also that no Agency fee would need to be paid. This is to some extent an illusory saving, since the Secretariat needs to have sufficient resources to execute the support. It nevertheless means that countries receive support on undertaking NPFES and for reporting to the conventions without incurring Agency fees—which, from the recipients’ perspective, is one of the reasons they ask for direct access in the first place.

The World Bank, as administrative host of the GEF, and the Secretariat should continue to explore possibilities to choose the most efficient

modality of providing support. At the moment, this support is operated through a waiver, which is not an ideal situation. This waiver was needed because the emphasis in the negotiations for a long time was on trying to create a form of direct access that would look as much like Article 28 direct access as possible—ultimately, an unrealistic goal. The NPFE evaluation has enabled further discussions between the administrative host and the Secretariat, which hopefully will result in a streamlined procedure for support in the very near future.

RECOMMENDATION 3: It is strongly recommended to provide support for programming exercises at the end of a GEF phase rather than at the start of a new phase to ensure countries are ready for the new phase when it starts. The current balance in the NPFE program should be used for NPFE support, especially to LDCs and SIDS in 2014.

The experience with NPFES in GEF-5 indicates that they need to be conducted within a narrow time window to be effective. Ideally, they should be undertaken before the next phase of the GEF starts. The replenishment amount may not yet be known at that time, and the size of the STAR allocation is also uncertain, but NPFES are meant to program and prioritize all support, not just STAR support. This could be done within a range of possible STAR allocations. If done before the start of the next phase, it would enable countries and GEF Agencies to begin preparing PIFs for the highest priorities at the start of the next replenishment phase rather than with a delay caused by the programming exercise.

Due to the relatively low uptake of GEF grants for NPFES in GEF-5, a sizable amount remains available. It is highly recommended to approve this balance for use in 2014 for NPFES undertaken in preparation of GEF-6, especially for LDCs and SIDS. The evaluation has demonstrated that these groups of countries need further support due to government capacity issues and stakeholders that need to be involved in NPFES.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The capacity development initiatives of the GEF—including the NPFE, National Capacity Self-Assessments, National Dialogue Initiatives, and the Capacity Development Strategy—should aim to support a more comprehensive understanding of the GEF with country-level partners and stakeholders, especially in LDCs and SIDS.

As noted above, many countries lacked knowledge of GEF-eligibility criteria and skills associated with project development and proposal writing. This should be provided first and foremost in the guidance for NPFEs. Furthermore, given the capacity issues in many countries, especially LDCs and SIDS, more specific capacity support should be considered in GEF-6 on some of the more technical aspects of possible GEF support to countries, especially when NPFEs are being conducted. Currently, a small amount is available annually for direct support to OFPs. Broader support to countries, including National Dialogue Initiatives, National Capacity Self-Assessments, and the current Capacity Development Strategy, could be reassessed and fine-tuned from this perspective.

Many recipient countries, especially middle-income countries and emerging market countries, have increasing capacities both within the government and among stakeholders in dealing with GEF support and tackling local environmental problems that are of global relevance and have a global environmental impact. While this technical and professional capacity is undoubtedly increasing, many LDCs and SIDS continue to face considerable problems that have consistently emerged from the evaluation streams of the Office—most notably from country portfolio evaluations but also from impact and performance evaluations.

This evaluation once again confirms a capacity constraint in LDCs and SIDS. While much can be done to support these countries in further strengthening capacity through medium-size projects (MSPs) and full-size projects (FSPs), small grants through the Small Grants Programme, and enabling activities, a need remains for specific capacity support for LDCs and SIDS—especially for cross-cutting issues like monitoring and evaluation, results-based management, national and technical coordination, and GEF-related issues such as programming and preparation of project concepts. A capacity-building strategy for GEF-6 could focus on these countries and the specific support they need on top of the capacity-building support already provided in the GEF’s operational modalities.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The NPFE guidelines should address the information needs of countries for programming on topics such as eligibility criteria, cofinancing expectations, and funding modalities.

Although the NPFE guidance for GEF-5 provided countries with a solid foundation for the administration and conduct of consultations, it did not provide sufficient detail on technical issues related to eligibility for GEF funding, cofinancing expectations from projects, and appropriate funding modalities for the proposed activities. The guidance should also clarify the meaning of several key concepts that are used in discourse within the GEF partnership without a common understanding of the term. These concepts include the meaning of “portfolio and programmatic approaches” and “country ownership.”

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Introduction

During the fifth replenishment process of the GEF Trust Fund, a number of initiatives were identified to reform the CSP. Within the framework of this overarching program, a new initiative was begun to support NPFES in recipient countries. The key goal of these NPFES is to

strengthen country ownership over decisions on GEF resource programming. The expectation was that GEF Agencies will organize their support to countries for preparing and implementing projects and programmatic approaches around the resulting National Portfolio Formulation Exercises ([GEF 2010c](#), 3).

In July 2010, the GEF Council approved the proposal for countries

to receive resources from the GEF Trust Fund directly to: (a) undertake on a voluntary basis GEF National Portfolio Formulation Exercises to produce portfolio formulation documents; and (b) prepare Convention Reports, which include national communications/reports/national implementation plans undertaken as obligations under the Conventions ([GEF Council 2010](#), 4).

The Council also requested that the Evaluation Office undertake a midterm evaluation of the

NPFES and convention reports with direct access by recipient countries. The NPFES initiative has now been under implementation for about three years. To respond to the Council's request, the Independent Evaluation Office has undertaken this midterm evaluation.

2.2 Background and Context

The GEF's 2009 RAF midterm review and OPS4 identified the issue of applying a portfolio approach at the national level. OPS4 concluded that

a portfolio approach that incorporates national GEF programming and follow-up, including monitoring, supervision, and evaluation, will enable recipient countries to fully support and maximize progress toward global environmental benefits ([GEF EO 2010](#), 15).

The study acknowledged that countries with larger GEF project portfolios were already applying the portfolio approach on their own. Nonetheless, it suggested application of the approach in other recipient countries as well. The recommendations made in the RAF midterm review and OPS4 were mainstreamed in the policy reform package agreed upon during the replenishment negotiation process for GEF-5. The two main objectives of the policy reforms addressing the application of a portfolio approach at the national level were enhancing country ownership and improving the effectiveness

and efficiency of the GEF partnership. The four initiatives to be undertaken to enhance country ownership were reform of corporate programs, direct funding of national communications, development of a flexible resource allocation system, and broadening of the GEF partnership (GEF 2010b).

Suggestions on the reforms proposed were made by participants in the replenishment and outlined in the GEF-5 programming document (GEFSEC 2010). The reforms centered on supporting recipient countries in undertaking portfolio identification exercises for GEF programming and delivering a reformed CSP that includes the NPFE. The CSP was to be executed by the GEF Secretariat, and the voluntary NPFE was to be executed by national institutions in recipient countries. Within the framework of this overarching program, a new initiative was started to support NPFEs in recipient countries.

As proposed in the GEF-5 policy recommendations and programming documents, voluntary NPFEs and any NSCs that might lead them are meant to serve as tools for enhancing country ownership in determining programming priorities in a given GEF replenishment period. Another aim of the NPFE process is to strengthen country capacity to coordinate ministries and other involved stakeholders from both the private and public sectors. The NPFEs are also meant to set country priorities for the use of GEF resources in a transparent manner for the benefit of all GEF stakeholders “including the anticipated demand for resources, both from countries’ national allocations under the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) and outside these allocations” (GEF 2010a, 1). The GEF-5 policy recommendations proposed that the GEF Secretariat would provide support to the NPFE initiative, including through direct access of resources.

2.3 Country Support Program and National Portfolio Formulation Exercises

Until December 2010, the CSP was jointly implemented by UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), with an inter-Agency steering committee chaired by the GEF CEO, and provided strategic guidance. The proposed reform measures for the program were outlined and approved by the GEF Council in July 2010 (GEF 2010c). From December 2010 onwards (the start of GEF-5), a redesigned CSP under direct implementation of the GEF Secretariat was operationalized.

The goals of the GEF CSP are to provide flexible support to countries—particularly their focal points—to build capacity to work with the GEF Agencies and Secretariat in order to set priorities and program GEF resources, to improve coordination between ministries and stakeholders at the national level, and to facilitate input from key non-governmental stakeholders (GEF 2012). The CSP has seven components/initiatives, one of which is the NPFE.

The CSP is completely funded from a special allocation in the GEF Secretariat budget approved by the GEF Council in its 38th meeting.¹ The budget for GEF-5 is \$26 million, of which \$3 million was allocated for the NPFEs, with the aim of conducting 100 NPFEs during early GEF-5.

The overarching goals of the NPFE initiative are to “help recipient countries to build or to strengthen national processes and mechanisms to facilitate GEF programming in a manner that reflects country priorities” and to provide “an opportunity to align the programming of GEF

¹The Council noted that, in approving this document (GEF 2010c), it approved the amount in the contingent budget that was approved by the Council at the 37th Special Council Meeting to support the Secretariat’s facilitation of NPFE grants under direct access and transition to a Secretariat-executed CSP.

resources with other relevant strategies and national planning processes” (GEF 2012, 2).

One of the objectives in providing support for NPFEs is that it would help GEF Agencies organize their support to countries around the programming priorities listed in a country’s NPFE. Other objectives of the NPFEs are as follows:

- Increased opportunities to align the programming of GEF resources with other relevant strategies and national planning processes and increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits under the multi-lateral environmental conventions.
- Identification of projects and programmatic approaches that will use national allocations under the STAR in the three concerned focal areas, as well as other resources available under the GEF focal areas not subject to STAR allocations.
- Bringing together all relevant ministries and representatives of other key stakeholders (e.g., CSOs and the private sector) to provide input on decisions regarding GEF resource programming.
- Building the capacity of GEF focal points to coordinate GEF policy with other ministries and to solicit input from other stakeholders.
- Providing for a more predictable and transparent programming process at the national level, which will provide the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Agencies, and the GEF Council with a clearer understanding of each country’s prospective project pipeline during a replenishment period.
- Making the pre-PIF portion of the GEF project cycle more efficient.
- Enhancing the mainstreaming of global environmental concerns into other national planning processes and strategies by raising awareness of global environmental issues and priorities among national decision-makers (GEF 2010c, 3–4).

3. Methodology

3.1 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the NPFE midterm evaluation is to provide the GEF Council with a comprehensive assessment of the NPFE initiative, generate evaluative evidence for the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5), and provide a formative assessment to draw lessons and improve the initiative for GEF-6.

The scope of the evaluation focuses on reviewing the NPFE against its objectives and the administrative and implementation processes used. Within this context, the evaluation focused on three groups of countries in order to compare and contrast experiences: those that undertook the NPFE with financial assistance from the GEF, those countries that used their own or other sources to fund their NPFEs, and countries that did not conduct NPFEs.

The primary objectives of the evaluation were

- to **assess the relevance of the NPFE** initiative to the GEF mandate and to the countries;
- to **assess the effectiveness and emerging results (or effects) of the NPFEs**, including the extent to which the process has enhanced country ownership;
- to **assess the efficiency of NPFE administration and processes**, focusing on the guidance provided and the timeliness of process implementation, as well as implementation approaches used by countries; and
- to **examine the utility of the NPFDs**, in terms of the guidance the documents provided on portfolio planning to key stakeholders, such as the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Agencies, and in-country stakeholders.

Questions were developed to correspond to each objective and used in the development of an evaluation matrix that guided evaluation implementation.

3.2 Methodology

The evaluation used a series of mixed-method approaches to collect and analyze information; these included quantitative methods, such as structured survey questionnaires and portfolio reviews, and qualitative methods, such as semistructured interviews. The quantitative methods were used to examine what effects the NPFE had on portfolio and project development. The qualitative methods were used to obtain information on the extent to which the NPFEs engendered improvements in country ownership, transparency, and coordination, among other things.

The quantitative and qualitative data sets were analyzed separately and then triangulated in order to highlight similarities and differences across findings, such as actual project preparation times under NPFEs compared to perceptions that NPFEs increased project preparation times.

Four approaches were used to collect data.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

The review of documentation included Council papers, GEF Secretariat NPFE guidance and application templates; country grant applications; and approval correspondence, including letters and emails. Thirty-four out of 42 NPDFs ([annex B](#)) were reviewed with regard to the content and length guidance specified by the GEF Secretariat. Eight NPDFs (from Benin, Fiji, Kiribati, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa) could not be reviewed because they were not submitted.

PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

The portfolio analysis included assessments of the regional distribution of participating NPFE countries ([annex A](#)), the number of projects proposed by participating NPFE countries that were submitted and approved by the GEF Secretariat, projects proposed by NPFE countries that were not included in the NPDFs, the use of STAR allocations by participating NPFE countries compared to countries that did not participate, an elapsed-time analysis for the NPFE process, and a process and administrative assessment.

INTERVIEWS

Two types of interviews were conducted.

- **GEF Secretariat and headquarters-based GEF Agency semistructured interviews.** Semistructured interviews were conducted with 19 GEF Secretariat external relations teams responsible for managing the NPFE initiatives and the technical (focal area) team staff members and 16 GEF Agency headquarters-based staff members ([table 3.1](#)) based on a separate but related interview protocol covering grant administration, process and involvement, results, and lessons. The majority of GEF Agencies were interviewed. A few did not respond to

TABLE 3.1 Stakeholder Interviews

| Stakeholder | Number of interviews |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| OFPs | 37 |
| Convention focal points | 57 |
| Government (line ministries) | 113 |
| CSOs: academia, NGOs, CBOs | 41 |
| Private sector | 0 |
| GEF Agency (headquarters) | 16 |
| GEF Agency (in-country) | 49 |
| GEF Secretariat | 19 |
| Total | 332 |

NOTE: See [annex D](#).

requests for information, were unavailable (FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development), or were not involved in the NPFE process (IDB).

- **Country-focused semistructured interviews.** Almost 300 (297) representatives from 20 countries were interviewed, representing approximately 47 percent of the countries that participated in the NPFE initiative: 13 from Africa, 3 from Asia, 2 from Europe and Central Asia, and 2 from Latin America and the Caribbean ([table 3.2](#)). The countries were sampled based on the geographic distribution of the participating NPFE countries, with the main uptake being in Africa and Asia. Twelve countries that did not participate in the NPFE initiative were also interviewed at two Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs) in Rwanda and the Republic of Congo and during field trips.

The interviews with in-country representatives focused on those involved in the NPFE process and included OFPs;¹ convention focal points; officials from line ministries including agriculture, economic planning, finance, forestry, and

¹ In some cases, such as Cambodia and Thailand, this was the OFP office staff or representative.

TABLE 3.2 Evaluation’s Country Coverage

| Region | NPFE GEF funded | | NPFE non-GEF funded | | Non-NPFE countries | All country interviews |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| | Field visit | Phone interview | Field visit | Phone interview | | |
| Africa | 10 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 22 |
| Asia | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Europe and Central Asia | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 15 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 12 | 32 |

health; CSOs—i.e., academia, international and/or national NGOs, and CBOs; and the private sector (table 3.3). Where possible, the evaluation used lists of stakeholders annexed to NPFDs to select interviewees. When no list was attached, the OFP was asked to arrange meetings with appropriate interviewees. A semistructured interview protocol was developed for OFPs, convention focal points, line ministry officials, GEF Agencies, and CSOs (annex C). The questions focused on the following: the underlying reasoning for conducting an NPFE, the situation prior to the NPFE in previous replenishment periods, the in-country NPFE consultative and/or participatory processes, perceptions of the GEF Secretariat grant administration and guidelines, perceptions of emerging results, and key lessons learned.

One important section of the interviews common to all stakeholders interviewed (annex D) was a set of closed “rapid-fire” questions where only yes,

no, or don’t know responses were permitted. The questions focused on the perceptions of results and were derived from the expected results of the NPFE process as stated in the Council paper. Seventy-four respondents completed these questions, 53 respondents based in country.

Analysis of semistructured data was based on the principles of sorting and comparing responses across the same question to reveal common patterns and differences within and between stakeholder groups.

ONLINE SURVEY

A combined online survey questionnaire was developed for the NPFE and the STAR midterm evaluations (annex E). As an initial step in the development of the questionnaire survey, NPFE documentation was reviewed—paying particular attention to the intended results—as well as the

TABLE 3.3 In-Country Stakeholder Interviews

| Stakeholder | NPFE countries | | | | Non-NPFE countries | | All countries interviewed | |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------|---------|--------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| | GEF funded | Non-GEF funded | Total | | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| | | | Number | Percent | | | | |
| OFP | 19 | 4 | 23 | 9.8 | 14 | 22.2 | 37 | 12.5 |
| Convention focal point | 30 | 9 | 39 | 16.7 | 18 | 28.6 | 57 | 19.2 |
| Other ministries | 79 | 21 | 100 | 42.7 | 13 | 20.6 | 113 | 38.1 |
| CSO | 23 | 10 | 33 | 14.1 | 8 | 12.7 | 41 | 13.8 |
| Agency in country | 29 | 10 | 39 | 16.7 | 10 | 15.9 | 49 | 16.5 |
| Total | 180 | 54 | 234 | 100.0 | 63 | 100.0 | 297 | 100.0 |

initial interviews conducted with the GEF Secretariat and headquarters-based GEF Agency staff. The survey focused on issues of funding sources, stakeholder involvement, emerging results, key lessons, and future issues for participating countries. In addition, it allowed for open-ended responses so nonparticipating countries could give reasons why they chose not to conduct NPFEs. The instrument was administered online through [SurveyMonkey](#).

The survey target group was comprised of those countries that conducted NPFEs and those that did not. It was aimed at OFPs, in-country executing agencies (usually line ministries), CSOs, and GEF Agencies. The survey opened June 1 and closed August 13, 2013. During this period, 103 respondents participated in the survey. Of these, 63 respondents completed the part of the survey concerning the NPFE, while 40 did not. Out of those 40 that did not complete the survey, 9 did not do so because they had never heard about the NPFE or because they did not know if their country had undertaken an NPFE. Of the 63 respondents who completed the survey, 22 came from a country that did not undertake an NPFE. Of the other 41 respondents, 10 (25 percent) were OFPs, 19 (48 percent) were from GEF Agencies, and 12 (27 percent) were from CSOs. Respondents who dropped out of the survey were excluded from the analysis.

3.3 Limitations

The NPFE was a new initiative that began implementation at the start of GEF-5. Therefore, the evaluation was expected only to be able to provide an assessment of the first round of NPFEs.

However, all the NPFDs prepared—with the exception of the eight that were not submitted—were assessed in this midterm evaluation. Early perceptions of the results have been documented. However, it will take further rounds of NPFEs to ascertain more concrete judgments on ownership, transparency, and predictability as well as other issues.

A full comparative assessment of NPFE countries and non-NPFE countries with regard to ownership and transparency and other issues was not possible due to resource and time constraints. Discussions were conducted with a small number of non-NPFE country stakeholders at ECW meetings; these did provide some understanding of why countries chose not to conduct an NPFE.

Several limitations were encountered during data collection and analysis. First, despite the evaluation providing many countries with lists of participants from their NPFDs, it was found that many government civil servants had changed posts, been replaced, and/or retired and were thus unavailable for interviews. Furthermore, many government employees had been recently appointed to their positions and knew little or nothing about the NPFE process. Second, accurate data on the administrative and technical process was difficult to obtain because of a lack of central record or filing systems for the NPFE process within the GEF Secretariat. Third, there is a self-selection bias in countries that chose to undertake NPFEs with GEF funding or with their own resources versus those that chose not to undertake an NPFE. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the extent to which NPFEs are driving differences in programming-related performance.

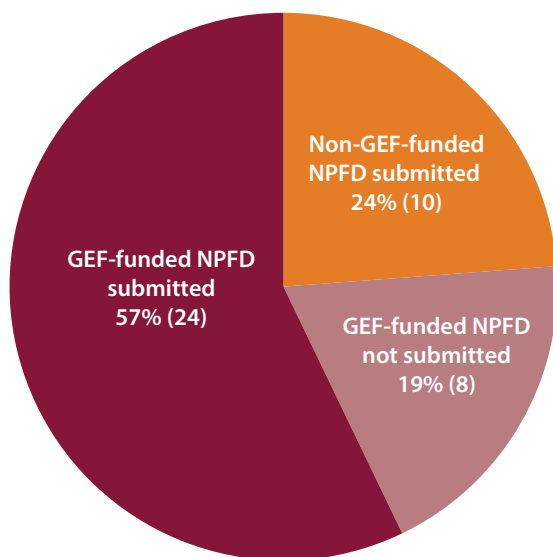
4. Portfolio Overview and Analysis

Overall, 42 countries participated in the NPFE process. Of those 42, only 34 shared their NPDFs with the GEF Secretariat. Eight countries have not yet shared their documents with the Secretariat, and it is unclear if they have finalized the process. Of the 34 countries with finalized NPDFs, 24 had their NPFE process funded by the GEF, and 10 carried out an NPFE using their own resources (figure 4.1). NPDFs do not generally specify the source of alternative NPFE funding, if any. In some cases, it is explicitly noted that the process was

funded by a GEF Agency or other international institution, such as UNDP in Burkina Faso. Key informant interviews in the different countries validated this information.

A number of countries applied to undertake an NPFE, but withdrew from the process; these countries were Belize, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Morocco, Pakistan, Suriname, Swaziland, Tunisia, and Tuvalu. The reasons for withdrawal are not clear, and it may be because of changing circumstances in each individual country. Challenges arising from the application process are another possible explanation; this is further explored in section 5.4.

FIGURE 4.1 Distribution of Countries Participating in the NPFE Process



SOURCES: GEFSEC 2012a and GEF website.

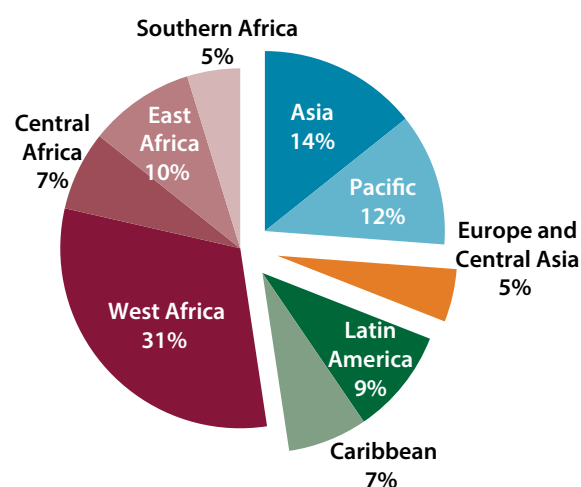
4.1 Regional Breakdown

The NPFE initiative attracted countries from different regions of the world, with the majority from Africa. In fact, the African region is the most represented in the NPFE process, with 22 countries (3 from Central Africa, 4 from East Africa, 2 from Southern Africa, and 13 from West Africa). Asia had 11 countries participating in the NPFE process, Latin America and the Caribbean had 7, and Europe and Central Asia had 2 (figure 4.2).

4.2 Portfolio Overview

During GEF-5, the 42 countries that participated in the NPFE process submitted a total of 663 projects to the GEF Secretariat (table 4.1). Of this total, only 18 percent of the projects (121) emerged directly

FIGURE 4.2 Number of NPDFs by Region



SOURCES: GEFSEC 2012a and GEF website.

from completed NPDFs. Another 278 projects were proposed but not submitted to the GEF Secretariat.

For the 42 countries that participated in the NPFE process, there are currently 418 projects approved. Of the 121 projects submitted to the GEF and programmed in the NPDFs, 63 percent (76) have been approved; 19 percent (23) have been rejected, canceled, or dropped; and 18 percent (22) are still pending. These proportions are similar to those for the entire cohort of GEF-5 projects: of all projects submitted for approval in GEF-5, about 60 percent have been approved; 20 percent have been rejected, canceled, or dropped; and 20 percent are still pending. The status trend for NPDF versus non-NPDF projects is quite similar (table 4.2).

The proportion of projects programmed in the NPDFs and submitted to the GEF is low. A number

TABLE 4.1 Projects Submitted or Programmed in NPDFs by Participating Countries

| Status of NPDF | Projects submitted | | | Projects not submitted | | | Total | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| | NPDF completed (34 countries) | | NPDF not completed (8 countries) | NPDF completed (34 countries) | | | | |
| Project NPDF link | Submitted PIF—not in NPDF | Submitted PIF—in NPDF | Total | Submitted PIF—no NPDF submitted | Programmed in NPDF—no PIF submitted to date (national) | Programmed in NPDF—no PIF submitted to date (regional) | Total | |
| Total | 426 | 121 | 547 | 116 | 253 | 25 | 278 | 941 |

SOURCES: PMIS and NPDFs.

TABLE 4.2 Status of Submitted Projects from NPDF Participating Countries

| | Projects not in NPDF | | | | Projects in NPDF | | | | Projects where NPDF not completed | | | |
|-----|----------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|
| | Pending | Approved | Rejected/dropped/canceled | Total | Pending | Approved | Rejected/dropped/canceled | Total | Pending | Approved | Rejected/dropped/canceled | Total |
| No. | 84 | 256 | 86 | 426 | 22 | 76 | 23 | 121 | 23 | 86 | 13 | 122 |
| % | 19.7 | 60.1 | 20.2 | 100 | 18.2 | 62.8 | 19.0 | 100 | 18.8 | 70.5 | 10.7 | 100 |

SOURCE: PMIS.

NOTE: Proposals for pending projects have been submitted but have not yet been approved. Approved projects include CEO approved, CEO endorsed, Council approved, Agency approved, program manager recommended, PIF approved, and PPG [project preparation grant] approved. Rejected/dropped/canceled projects include the following status: canceled, CEO PIF rejection, dropped, not recommended, rejected, and withdrawn.

of contributory factors accounts for this (GEFSEC 2012a):

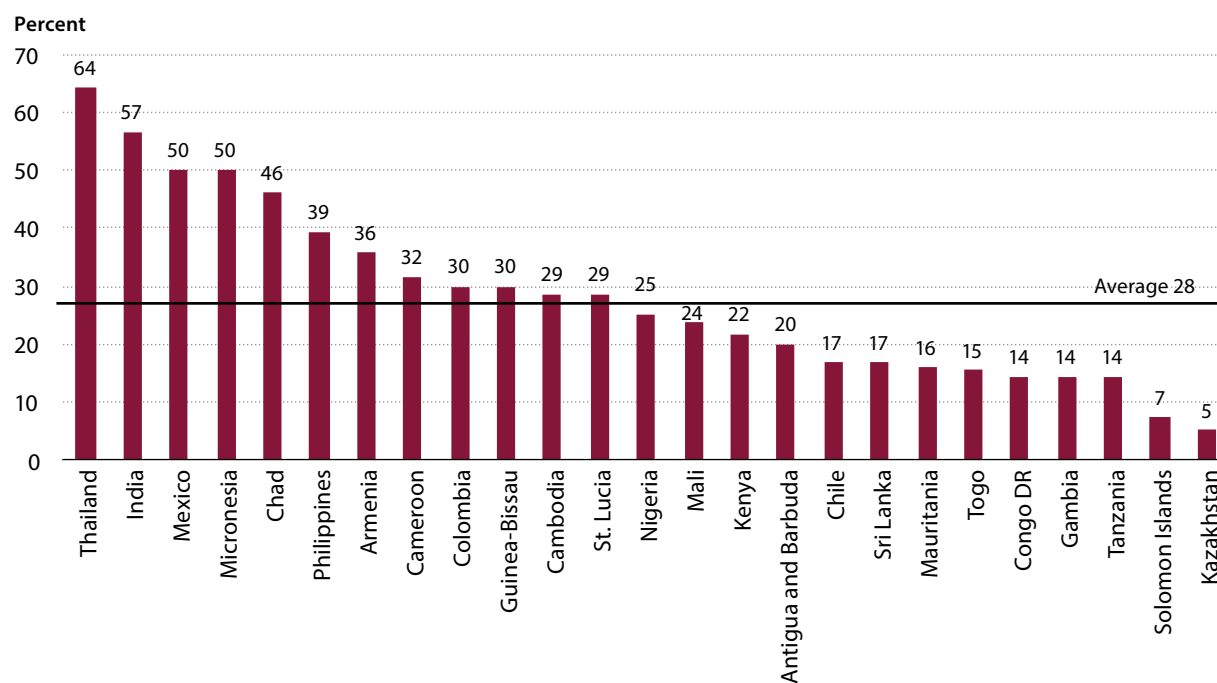
- Project ideas may not have been eligible for GEF funding.
- Projects may not have been pursued due to changing circumstances in the country.
- Projects may have seen some changes in the title and general objectives compared to the suggested projects in the NPFDs, but the main idea might have remained the same. This cannot be captured fully when NPFDs give only project titles without additional information.

Among the 34 countries with completed NPFDs, 25 had at least one project activity submitted to the GEF. For these countries, the average proportion of submitted projects that were programmed from the NPFDs compared to all submitted projects was approximately 28 percent

(figure 4.3). For 10 countries, more than 30 percent of the projects submitted came from their NPFDs. Of this total, many were from higher capacity settings including Armenia, India, Mexico, the Philippines, and Thailand. It is worth noting that nine countries with completed NPFDs (The Bahamas, Burkina Faso, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Niue, Uruguay, and Vietnam) had none of their projects submitted in GEF-5. In some cases, this is understandable since the NPFDs provided only broad program directions. The NPFDs of Ghana, Niue, Uruguay, and Vietnam listed no projects or programs. Elsewhere, as in Republic of Congo and Ethiopia, while the NPDF may have mentioned a significant number of projects, none were submitted in GEF-5.

Three countries submitted all the projects they programmed in their NPFDs. Antigua and Barbuda programmed two projects in the NPDF that it successfully submitted for Council approval.

FIGURE 4.3 Proportion of All Submitted Projects That Were Programmed in NPFDs



SOURCES: PMIS and NPFDs.

NOTE: Data are for each country that has submitted at least one project to the GEF Secretariat during GEF-5.

It also submitted seven additional projects not programmed in its NPDF. Chad is the second country that submitted all the projects that were programmed in its NPDF. Six projects were programmed and then submitted to the GEF. One is pending, and two were dropped. Chad also submitted seven additional projects not programmed in the NPDF. The third country that submitted all its NPDF-programmed projects to the GEF was the Federated States of Micronesia. It programmed and submitted two projects, both of which were approved by the GEF Council. Additionally, it submitted two projects not programmed in the NPDF.

COUNTRY TYPE

Forty-five percent (19) of the 42 countries that undertook the NPFE process are LDCs, while 21 percent (9) are SIDS. Seven percent (3) are both LDCs and SIDS.

LDCs and SIDS had a lower than average proportion of NPDF-proposed activities submitted to the GEF (table 4.3). During GEF-5, the 19 LDCs that participated in the NPFE process submitted a total of 309 projects; only 11 percent of these (34) were proposed in the NPDFs. The vast bulk of

NPDF-proposed activities (118) was not submitted to the GEF. The nine SIDS that participated in the NPFE process submitted a total of 72 projects, of which just 14 percent (10) were programmed in the NPDFs. The NPDFs also included 36 SIDS projects that were not submitted to the GEF. The 17 other countries that participated in an NPFE submitted 316 projects, of which 26 percent (81) were programmed in their respective NPDF. For these countries, the NPDFs also included 133 projects that were not submitted to the GEF.

A similar picture emerges when looking only at the cohort of 34 countries that sent an NPDF. This cohort included 13 LDCs, which sent a total of 223 projects, of which only 11 percent had been proposed in their NPDFs. The seven SIDS that sent their NPDFs submitted a total of 49 projects, with 20 percent of them programmed in the NPDFs. In comparison, the 16 other countries that sent their NPDFs submitted a total of 299 projects, 27 percent of which were programmed in the NPDFs.

PROJECTS BY REGION

Table 4.4 shows the distribution of projects submitted and proposed by region under GEF-5. The table

TABLE 4.3 Projects Submitted or Programmed in NPDFs by Country Classification

| Status of NPDF | Projects submitted | | | | | | | | | Projects not submitted | | | | | Total | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|------|---------------------------|----|----------------------------------|----|-------|---------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|-----|
| | NPDF completed (34 countries) | | | | NPDF not completed (8 countries) | | | | | NPDF Completed (34 countries) | | | | | | |
| Project NPDF link | Countries that undertook NPFE | | Submitted PIF—not in NPDF | | Submitted PIF—in NPDF | | Total | Submitted PIF—no NPDF submitted | | | Programmed in NPDF—no PIF submitted to date (national) | | Programmed in NPDF—no PIF submitted to date (regional) | | Total | No. |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | | |
| LDCs | 19 | 45.2 | 189 | 44 | 34 | 8 | 223 | 86 | 20 | 309 | 99 | 23 | 19 | 4 | 118 | 427 |
| SIDS | 9 | 21.4 | 39 | 36 | 10 | 9 | 49 | 23 | 21 | 72 | 33 | 31 | 3 | 3 | 36 | 108 |
| LDCs and SIDS | 3 | 7.1 | 20 | 47 | 4 | 9 | 24 | 10 | 23 | 34 | 9 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 43 |
| Others | 17 | 40.5 | 218 | 49 | 81 | 18 | 299 | 17 | 4 | 316 | 130 | 29 | 3 | 1 | 133 | 449 |

SOURCES: PMIS and NPDFs.

TABLE 4.4 Projects Submitted or Programmed in NPFs by Region

| Status of NPF | Projects submitted | | | | | | | | | Projects not submitted | | | Total |
|------------------|------------------------------|----|----------------------|----|-------|-----|---------------------------------|----|-------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| | NPF completed (34 countries) | | | | | | NPF not completed (8 countries) | | | NPF Completed (34 countries) | | | |
| Project NPF link | Submitted PIF—not in NPF | | Submitted PIF—in NPF | | Total | | Submitted PIF—no NPF submitted | | Total | Programmed in NPF—no PIF submitted to date (national) | Programmed in NPF—no PIF submitted to date (regional) | Total | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | | No. | No. | | No. |
| Africa | 231 | 63 | 44 | 12 | 275 | 75 | 93 | 25 | 368 | 122 | 15 | 137 | 505 |
| Asia | 108 | 60 | 48 | 27 | 156 | 87 | 23 | 13 | 179 | 71 | 7 | 78 | 257 |
| ECA | 28 | 82 | 6 | 18 | 34 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 34 | 14 | 0 | 14 | 48 |
| LAC | 59 | 72 | 23 | 28 | 82 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 82 | 46 | 3 | 49 | 131 |

SOURCES: PMIS and NPFs.

NOTE: ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean.

highlights that Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia were among the most successful regions in terms of the proportion of NPF projects submitted to the GEF (28 percent and 27 percent, respectively). For African countries that participated in the NPFs, only 12 percent of all projects submitted were from the NPFs. A partial explanation for this might be the number of regional or global projects implemented in Africa that the countries might not have programmed in their NPFs, such as the GGW Sahel and West Africa Program in Support of the Great Green Wall Initiative (GEF ID 4511) and the LCB-NREE Lake Chad Basin Regional Program for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Energy Efficiency (GEF ID 4680), among others.

REGIONAL APPROACH

NPFs concentrated on national priorities and less on regional approaches. The proportion of regional projects submitted from NPFs was 36 percent in Africa, 23 percent in Asia, and 9 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean; there were none in Europe and Central Asia (table 4.5). The comparative estimates for the proportion of regional

projects submitted to the GEF Secretariat—outside of the NPF framework—is 65 percent in Africa, 58 percent in Asia, 50 percent in Europe and Central Asia, and 47 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. The low proportion of submitted regional projects programmed in the NPFs can be understood in the context of countries focused more on suggesting national priorities.

PROJECTS BY FOCAL AREA

For all 34 countries that participated in the NPFs, the highest proportion of submitted projects programmed in the NPFs are multifocal area projects, which represent 36 percent of all submitted projects coming from NPFs. For the submitted projects that were not programmed in the NPFs, multifocal area projects also have the highest share: 30 percent (table 4.6).

The next most represented focal area is climate change. Twenty-six percent of the projects submitted to the GEF and programmed in the NPFs are climate change projects, as are 23 percent of the submitted projects that were not programmed in the NPFs. Biodiversity follows, with 20 percent of the submitted projects programmed in NPFs

TABLE 4.5 Regional/Global and National Projects Submitted or Programmed in NPFDs by Region

| Region and project scope | Project submitted— not in NPFd | | Project submitted— programmed in NPFd | | NPFd not completed | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Africa | 231 | 100 | 44 | 100 | 93 | 100 |
| Regional/global | 150 | 65 | 16 | 36 | 62 | 67 |
| National | 81 | 35 | 28 | 64 | 31 | 33 |
| Asia | 108 | 100 | 48 | 100 | 23 | 100 |
| Regional/global | 63 | 58 | 11 | 23 | 16 | 70 |
| National | 45 | 42 | 37 | 77 | 7 | 30 |
| Europe and Central Asia | 28 | 100 | 6 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Regional/global | 14 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| National | 14 | 50 | 6 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 59 | 100 | 23 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Regional/global | 28 | 47 | 2 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| National | 31 | 53 | 21 | 91 | 0 | 0 |

SOURCES: PMIS and NPFds.

and 14 percent of submitted projects not coming from NPFds. Both climate change and biodiversity are included in the STAR allocation, so it is not surprising that they are represented in the NPFds to this degree.

The third focal area covered by the STAR allocation is land degradation; it accounts for only 4 percent of the submitted projects from NPFds addressing that focal area. This compares to 8 percent of the submitted projects not from NPFds with a land degradation focal area. Because this focal area is also the one with the smallest allocation, countries might have preferred to program multifocal area projects with a land degradation component to make better use of their allocation rather than a single focal area project.

The projects proposed in the NPFds but not submitted to the GEF cannot be analyzed in this section since most of them do not describe the focal areas in which they are included.

The NPFE process shows some evidence of promoting a portfolio approach at the national level. Although this is difficult to assess, evidence is found in 14 of the documents where a portfolio

approach was promoted, such as multifocal area projects or promotion of a general approach to a country's environmental conditions. Some documents explicitly emphasized a portfolio approach and the fact that projects should have impacts in several environmental areas, but they did not actually propose projects. For example, Ghana identified large programs and emphasized a portfolio approach in its analysis, but no specific projects were identified.

4.3 Allocation Analysis

The NPFE process was implemented with the aim of helping countries program their priorities for the use of GEF resources in a transparent manner both from countries' national allocations under the STAR and outside these allocations. Therefore, it was expected that the countries that undertook the NPFE process would make more effective use of their allocations than the countries that did not.

On average, the 32 countries that undertook NPFEs with GEF funding have spent an average of 51 percent of their STAR allocations to date

TABLE 4.6 Projects Submitted or Programmed in NPFs by Focal Area and Project Type

| Focal area and project type | Project submitted— not in NPF | | Project submitted— programmed in NPF | | NPF not completed | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Biodiversity | 59 | 14 | 24 | 20 | 21 | 18 |
| Enabling activity | 16 | | 3 | | 2 | |
| MSP | 17 | | 2 | | 7 | |
| FSP | 26 | | 19 | | 12 | |
| Climate change | 96 | 23 | 31 | 26 | 21 | 18 |
| Enabling activity | 3 | | 0 | | 0 | |
| MSP | 6 | | 2 | | 2 | |
| FSP | 87 | | 29 | | 19 | |
| International waters | 32 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 9 |
| MSP | 2 | | 1 | | 0 | |
| FSP | 30 | | 7 | | 11 | |
| Land degradation | 32 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 6 |
| Enabling activity | 8 | | 2 | | 0 | |
| MSP | 5 | | 1 | | 2 | |
| FSP | 19 | | 2 | | 5 | |
| Ozone depletion MSP | 1 | <1 | 0 | | 0 | |
| Persistent organic pollutants | 78 | 18 | 10 | 8 | 19 | 16 |
| Enabling activity | 16 | | 2 | | 3 | |
| MSP | 8 | | 3 | | 1 | |
| FSP | 54 | | 5 | | 15 | |
| Multifocal | 128 | 30 | 43 | 36 | 37 | 32 |
| Enabling activity | 26 | | 0 | | 6 | |
| MSP | 20 | | 0 | | 4 | |
| FSP | 82 | | 43 | | 27 | |
| Total | 426 | 100 | 121 | 100 | 116 | 100 |

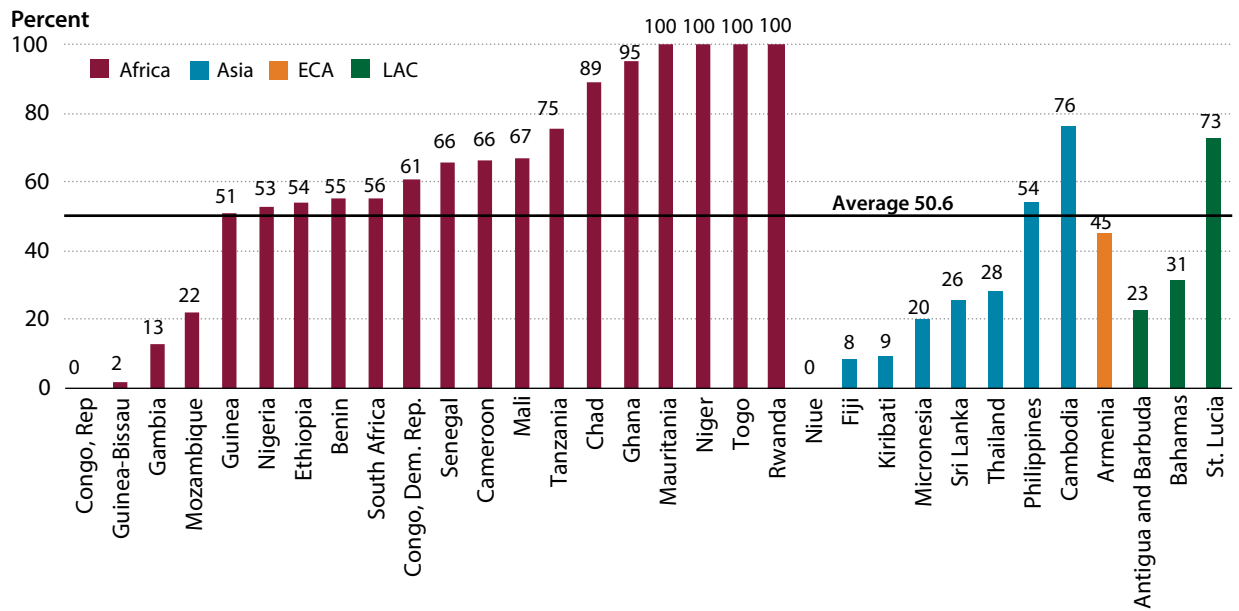
SOURCES: PMIS and NPFs.

(figure 4.4). Four countries—Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, and Togo—have used all of their allocations, while Republic of Congo and Nieu have not used any.

The STAR was introduced during GEF-5. During GEF-4 (2006–10), the RAF system was in place. Therefore, it might be useful to compare the allocation utilization (RAF versus STAR) of the countries that undertook NPFs to see if the NPF process allowed those countries to use more of their allocations.

The countries that conducted NPFs with GEF funding had spent slightly less of their allocations during GEF-4 (figure 4.5): an average of about 47 percent. Benin, Guinea, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Senegal did not use any of their allocations; The Bahamas and Republic of Congo exceeded their allocations. No trend by individual country can be discerned because the level of allocation spent during GEF-4 and GEF-5 varied greatly depending on the country. Overall, the African and Latin American countries seem to have spent a higher percentage of their

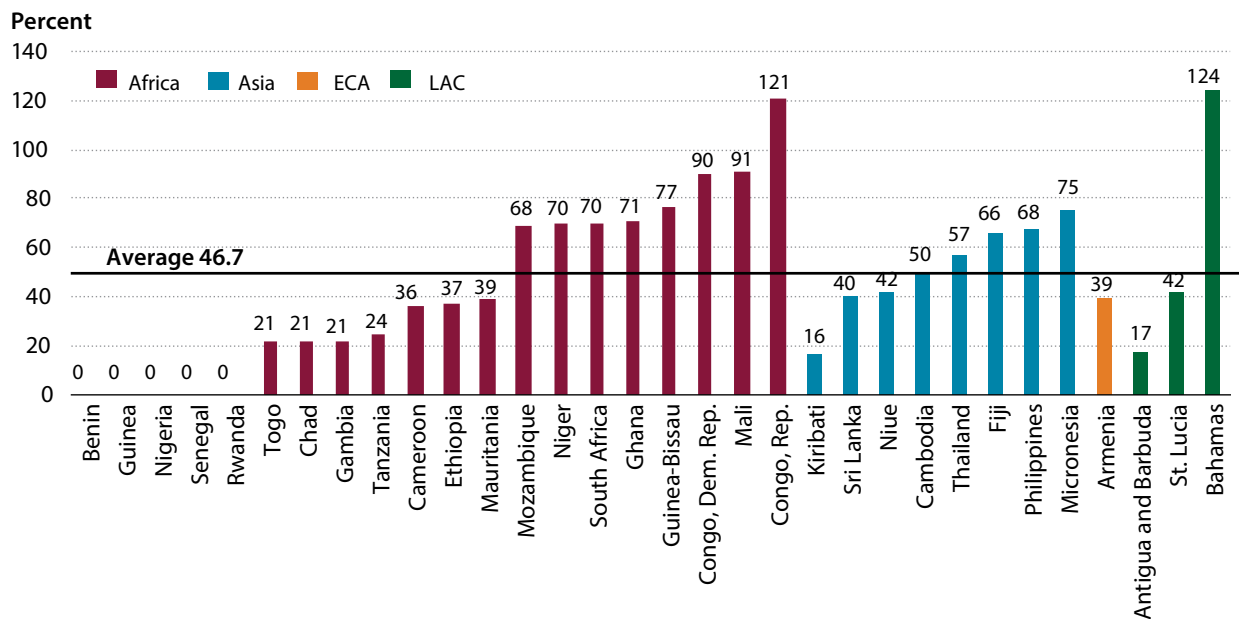
FIGURE 4.4 Proportion of STAR Allocation Spent by Region and Country for GEF-Funded NPFs



SOURCE: PMIS.

NOTE: ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean. Data are as of June 30, 2013.

FIGURE 4.5 Proportion of RAF Allocation Spent during GEF-4 by Region and Country for GEF-Funded NPFs



SOURCE: PMIS.

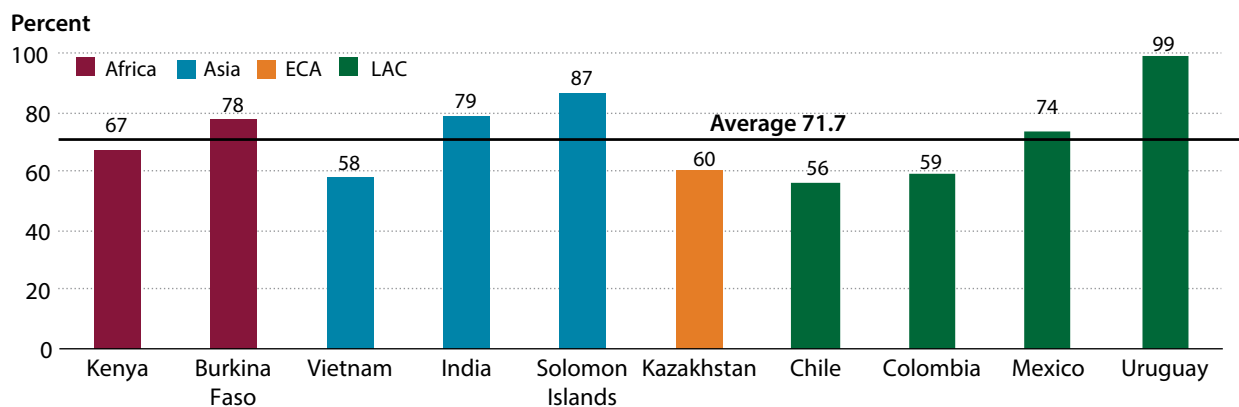
NOTE: ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean. Data are as of February 2009, two years after the start of GEF-4.

allocations during GEF-5 than during GEF-4; the reverse is true for Asian countries.

The 10 countries that undertook NPFs without GEF funding spent, on average, 72 percent of their allocations (figure 4.6). Only Uruguay used almost all of its allocation (99 percent). All the other countries have remaining allocations between 13 and 43 percent.

Those 10 countries that undertook the NPFs without GEF funding spent, on average, less of their allocations during GEF-4 than during GEF-5: about 55 percent in GEF-4 compared to about 72 percent in GEF-5. During GEF-4, Burkina Faso was the only country of the 10 that did not spend any of its allocation. None of the 10 countries spent all or almost all of their allocations (figure 4.7).

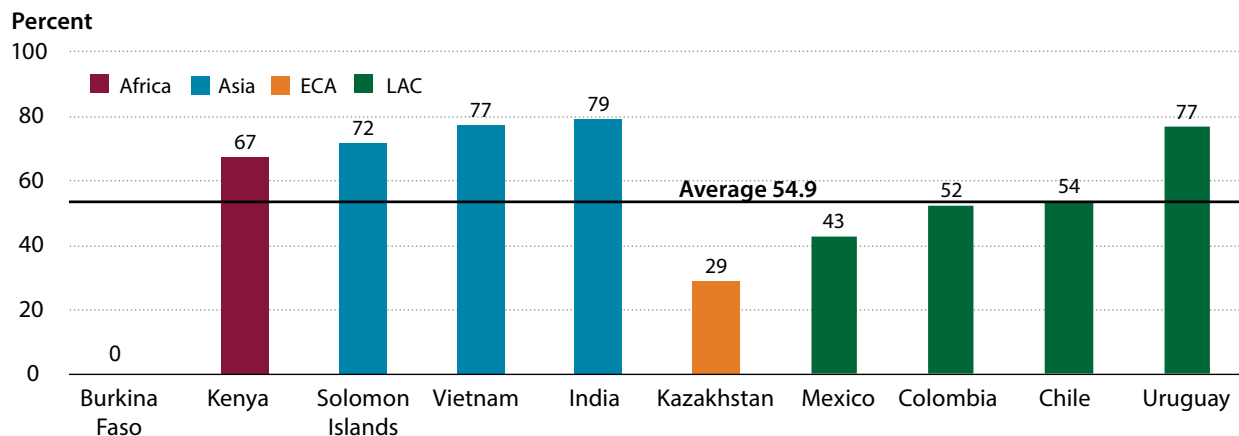
FIGURE 4.6 Proportion of STAR Allocation Spent by Region and Country for Non-GEF-Funded NPFs



SOURCE: PMIS.

NOTE: ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean. Data are as of June 30, 2013.

FIGURE 4.7 Proportion of RAF Allocation Spent during GEF-4 by Region and Country for Non-GEF-Funded NPFs



SOURCE: PMIS.

NOTE: ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean. Data are as of February 2009, two years after the start of GEF-4.

Countries that did not conduct an NPFE have spent, on average, 61 percent of their STAR allocations as of this writing. Seventeen used all or almost all of their allocations (more than 99 percent utilization), and six did not use any. It is important to recall that a year remains in the GEF-5 period, and countries can still submit projects and use their remaining allocations until June 30, 2014.

Countries that did not conduct an NPFE spent, on average, 39 percent of their RAF allocations during GEF-4—which is less than their average

STAR utilizations during GEF-5. Seven used all or almost all of their allocations (more than 99 percent utilization), and 32 did not use any.

The countries that conducted NPFEs without GEF funding had a higher use of their STAR allocations. It is also clear that the countries that actually did the NPFEs with GEF funding had a similar use of STAR allocations compared to countries that did not engage in the NPFE process. Therefore, there is no evidence that the NPFE leads to a higher or more efficient use of STAR allocations.

5. Relevance

5.1 Relevance to the GEF Mandate and Policies

The relevance of the NPFE is derived from the GEF Instrument, which emphasizes that country ownership (or country drivenness) needs to be in place for the successful delivery of GEF projects and programs. [Table 5.1](#) shows that the concepts of ownership, GEF alignment with national priorities, and coordination have been further emphasized in the operational principles and subsequent replenishment policy recommendations from GEF-2 (1999–2002) to GEF-5. This is followed by NPFE goals and objectives.

The GEF Instrument emphasizes that the GEF “shall fund programs and projects which are country-driven and based on national priorities” ([GEF 2011](#), 12). There is also an increasing amount of evaluative evidence from GEF Independent Evaluation Office evaluations that ownership plays a crucial role in ensuring efficient and effective delivery of GEF activities and in ensuring support for follow-up.¹ The RAF midterm review and OPS4 also highlighted the need for country-level programming. The GEF-5 replenishment policy recommendations called for development of a tool (which became the NPFE) to provide an operational basis for countries to build and sustain ownership in relation to GEF programming and

¹ See for example, OPS1, OPS2, and OPS4, and the various country portfolio evaluations.

project development ([GEF 2010d](#)). Therefore, the NPFE was based on a clear operational need on the part of the countries.

5.2 Policy and Operational Challenges to Relevance

Several weaknesses in the definition of concepts, objectives, and guidance at the policy and operational levels negatively affect relevance.

First, no definitions of “country ownership” or “country drivenness” were given. The concepts have appeared in numerous GEF Council documents before 2010 and since the beginning of the NPFE initiative. But the GEF has not defined what these terms mean, leaving the concepts open to multiple interpretations and rhetorical use by all stakeholders, including within the NPFE initiative.

Second, the NPFE has 13 goals and objectives with little clarity as to their relative level of importance or relation to one another. For example, in a 2010 Council document, goals and main objectives focus broadly around the concept of strengthening country ownership and imply that this is to be achieved through improvements to alignment, coordination, and stakeholder involvement; however, the instructions for NPFEs in the same document place the objective at a much lower output/activity level: “to produce a NPFD” ([GEF 2010a](#)).

Third, the NPFE was developed without a clear logic model and monitoring and evaluation framework to measure country ownership and

TABLE 5.1 NPFE Relevance to GEF Mandate and Policies

| | NPFE | GEF policies |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To serve as tools for putting countries in the driver’s seat for determining programming priorities in a given GEF replenishment period • To strengthen recipient country capacity to coordinate among relevant ministries and to receive input from external stakeholders in the private and public sectors • To be a means to set forth country priorities for the use of GEF resources, and be the basis around which GEF Agencies will support the preparation and implementation of projects and programmatic approaches • To provide all GEF stakeholders, including the Secretariat and Council, a more transparent basis for managing the incipient GEF project pipeline | <p>GEF Instrument: The GEF shall...fund programs and projects which are country-driven and based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development and shall maintain sufficient flexibility to respond to changing circumstances in order to achieve its purposes.”</p> <p>“Actions needed to attain global environmental benefits are strongly influenced by existing national policies and sub regional and regional cooperative mechanisms. GEF financing will need to be coordinated with appropriate national policies and strategies.”</p> |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To strengthen country ownership over decisions on GEF programming • To align the programming of GEF resources with relevant strategies and national planning processes • To increase responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environment benefits • To identify projects and programmatic approaches • To bring together all relevant Ministries and representatives of other key stakeholders (e.g., CSOs and the private sector) • To build capacity of the focal points to coordinate GEF policy with other ministries and solicit input from stakeholders • To provide more predictable and transparent programming process at the national level for the prospective project pipeline • To enhance the mainstreaming of global environmental concerns into other national planning processes and strategies • To develop an NPFD to serve as a basis for GEF resource programming through a consultation process with relevant government agencies and stakeholders | <p>GEF Operational Strategy (1995): “The GEF will fund projects that are country-driven and based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development.”</p> <p>“Public consultation and participation of local communities and other stakeholders will enhance the quality, impact, relevant and national ownership of GEF activities.”</p> <p>Replenishment policy recommendations</p> <p>GEF-2: “Participants stress that GEF activities should be country-driven and that country ownership is key to the success of GEF projects. To achieve this, GEF activities should be based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development and the global environment.”</p> <p>GEF-3: “Country ownership of GEF operations is essential to achieving sustainable results. GEF objectives and programs should therefore be integrated into national priorities, strategies and programs for sustainable development, based on policies and plans for each focal area in order to highlight their global relevance and to link contributions to all aspects of national sustainable development.”</p> <p>GEF-4: “Country ownership of GEF activities will be further enhanced by organizing multi-stakeholder consultations and workshops to increase ownership by diverse stakeholders at the national level.”</p> <p>GEF-5: “It was agreed that GEF program support should be based upon—and integrated with—existing national programming and planning processes in countries.”</p> <p>Participants support the proposal of providing GEF resources to recipient countries to undertake a national GEF portfolio identification process, on a voluntary basis, to provide a framework for programming GEF resources.</p> |

SOURCES: NPFE goals: [GEF 2010a](#), 6; NPFE objectives: [GEFSEC 2012b](#), 1; GEF 1995; and summaries of negotiations for GEF replenishments.

other goals and objectives. In 1998, a document presented to the Council aimed at “strengthening country-level coordination and ownership” (GEF 1998) requested the development of indicators for measuring country ownership. This work could have provided a relevant input for the NPFE; however, the evaluation was unable to find indicators or evidence that the work had been started.

Fourth, the NPFE guidance was overly focused on the complexities of the grant application process (see [chapter 7](#)). There was no explicit direction on project size—e.g., that proposed projects must abide by MSP/FSP sizes or the GEF’s preference for funding larger projects—incremental reasoning, and cofinancing.² The lack of technical guidance had several negative effects on the relevance of the NPFDs and the projects proposed (see [chapter 6](#)):

- The proposed projects had unclear or sometimes absent GEF eligibility and incremental reasoning. For example, project proposals contained requests for infrastructure the GEF could not provide.
- The project proposals lacked clear indications of cofinancing. In many countries, this may have been related to uneven participation of in-country ministries of finance, but also the lack of clarity on cofinancing requirements and ratios demanded by the GEF Secretariat. Cambodia, the Philippines, and Thailand all mentioned a lack of clarity on cofinancing from the GEF Secretariat.
- Countries proposed too many projects, which were often below the usual resource envelopes for MSPs or FSPs. For example, out of the 34 NPFDs, only 5 programmed fewer than 5 projects in their NPFDs, 10 programmed between 5 and 10 projects, 8 programmed between 11 and 20 projects, and 7 programmed

² Despite encouraging the participation of line ministries, including the finance ministry.

more than 20 projects. Overall, approximately 60 percent of the countries programmed a rather large number of project proposals in their NPFDs (10 or more projects). There was significant variation within this range. Some countries, like Antigua and Barbuda, had as few as 3 projects programmed, while Thailand had 37, Cambodia and The Gambia each had 40, and Ethiopia had 52.

Country interviews indicate other factors, such as depth of consultations, also played a role in producing too many and too small project proposals. In countries such as Ethiopia and The Gambia, there was a strong ethos of participation underpinning the government-led process to reach the grassroots for project proposals. While this was a laudable participatory process, it naturally produced many small project proposals, which could not be approved by the GEF. The experience indicates that instead of the NPFE process being driven by relevant criteria and questions, such as what projects are eligible for GEF funding, it was driven by the need to be consultative. In essence, some countries focused on consultation and ownership. Under such circumstances, it was easy to take in too many proposals and lose relevance.

5.3 Relevance of the NPFEs to the Countries

The relevance of the NPFE initiative to participating countries was strong and responded to their need for improved ownership and involvement in GEF programming and project development.

Prior to the introduction of the NPFEs, attention to building country ownership in programs and projects was largely left to individual GEF Agency-country stakeholder interactions. GEF issues, such as climate change, were sometimes integrated into national development plans as well as Agency-country strategic planning processes such as the United Nations Development

Assistance Framework or the World Bank Country Assistance Strategies.

Ten out of 19 countries interviewed reported that no systematic portfolio planning or alignment with national priorities was conducted prior to the NPFEs.³ All referred to the “old GEF system,” which had the following characteristics:

- **First come, first served.** Project concepts would be presented by endorsement by the OFP without due attention to building a portfolio, including an overview of possible options for project concepts, or formal reviews by country stakeholders. An Eastern African country reported that this sometimes resulted in later project submissions with stronger alignment and relevance to country priorities being rejected due to lack of funds.
- **Pressure to sign.** Agencies placed OFPs under time constraints to sign endorsement letters for projects.⁴ Some Asian countries reported that it was difficult to resist pressure when OFPs had sole responsibility for agreeing to projects with a lack of formal structures to promote discussion and foster distributed responsibility and ownership.⁵
- **Lack of information about projects.** Often, stakeholders were unaware of the status of projects after endorsement and submission to the GEF. OFPs reported they knew little about projects that they were asked to endorse.
- **Lack of consultation and involvement.** In many countries, NSCs or similar committees

³ Five countries did not provide a response. Four countries had already created NSCs to review projects.

⁴ A typical comment was, “If I do not sign now, we may not get the money.”

⁵ Several countries reported that pressure tactics used by the GEF Agencies included suggestions that allocations could be lost if endorsement was not given.

did not exist, so there was no forum to discuss and debate project concepts and the portfolio.

Some countries (e.g., Brazil, Cameroon, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Mexico, and the Philippines) had already put in place an NPFE-like process. For example, Mexico started a project/ portfolio planning process in 2008 to assist in a more rapid and structured development of its GEF portfolio. This was a reaction to the slow programming of resources experienced under the RAF, and gave Mexico a foundation on which to build when it decided to conduct its own, self-funded NPFE. Similarly, Cameroon put in place an NSC in 2008–09 in part to develop a more systematic review and approval process for GEF projects and to address some of the pressures felt from the Agencies.

Country stakeholder needs for the NPFE related to improving country ownership and control over their GEF STAR allocations and broadly comprised three issues:

- **Stakeholder involvement**—to broaden the decision-making process beyond the OFPs to include other stakeholders such as line ministries
- **Transparency**—to provide clear communication and coordination opportunities for stakeholders to make decisions on priorities and project concepts together
- **Independent structure**—to have a country-led planning process, with committees and criteria, for the use of the GEF allocation

Most countries perceived the primary relevance of the NPFE as a tool for empowerment in the GEF so that they could generate project ideas without the influence of the GEF Agencies.⁶ Others, such as the Philippines, wanted to use

⁶ In these countries, the GEF Agencies were usually not permitted to participate until the validation workshop for the NPFDs.

the process to have more time to discuss project concepts that were already developed with Agency involvement. In those countries, there was more open and structured dialogue with the Agencies. Relevance was context driven and depended on countries' relations with Agencies and their interpretations of the NPFEs. The flexibility conformed to broad guidelines provided by the GEF and the voluntary nature of the tool.

For the GEF Secretariat External Affairs, the relevance of the NPFE was perceived to be strong, as it provided countries with an opportunity to develop their own portfolios and projects through consultations. This increased ownership and capacity.

GEF Secretariat technical staff had more varied views of relevance based on expectations and differing opinions of the NPFE process and what the process was meant to deliver. Furthermore, they were directly involved in reviewing and providing comments on the NPFs. On the one hand, some saw the process as useful for building country involvement and ownership as well as for empowering countries, regardless of the quality and utility of the NPFs. During interviews, participants noted the following:

- “Nobody had ownership before...and this is better than nothing because it gets the government stakeholders moving in the right direction. And this is particularly important in African countries, and not so much in the Brazils or Mexicos where the Agencies are paper pushers.”
- “The main value was country ownership. Countries had a chance to discuss without the Agencies... Focusing on country ownership is perhaps the best way to get to global environmental benefits.”

On the other hand, some interviewees were critical of the lack of strategy or portfolio approaches (see [chapter 6](#)) contained within the NPFs and the predominant focus on producing

lists of projects—many of which did not meet GEF eligibility criteria and were unrelated and of limited relevance: “It was not a strategic process and it was money driven rather than strategy driven... countries [were] wondering or focused on ‘how do we slice this [the STAR allocation]?’”

GEF Agency staff highlighted similar criticisms with regard to the poor strategic focus and development of projects with little attention to eligibility and cofinancing. However, the NPFE process was seen as a relevant and beneficial first step in building country involvement in portfolio and project development (see [chapter 6](#)).

5.4 Non-NPFE Countries

Countries cited the following external reasons for not conducting an NPFE:

- **Instability in civil service cadres resulting in frequent staff turnover making the NPFE planning process impossible.** For example, some African countries cited political and social instabilities resulting in disruptions to the civil service, making it impossible to conduct planning processes.
- **Existing government planning mechanisms for considering GEF projects and allocating resources to national priorities.** For example, Mauritius had government planning processes linked to its 2020 Vision and also a national sustainable development strategic plan with various standing committees. Therefore, the NPFE was considered duplicative.
- **Lack of awareness of the NPFE initiative.** This lack was related to staff turnover and poor institutional memory among country stakeholders.⁷

⁷The GEF Secretariat promoted direct access and the NPFE through the ECWs and constituency meetings in 2011, thus accomplishing some awareness raising; but it is difficult to counteract the effects of changing civil service cadres.

GEF Agencies discouraged countries from participating,⁸ citing various reasons, including: “the NPFE is just another planning exercise on top of already too many,” “the countries already plan their GEF resources,” and “the countries would not be able to submit project proposals while the NPFE process is ongoing.” For example, Swaziland undertook its own portfolio/project planning exercise which was funded by UNDP.

Countries were also discouraged from conducting NPFEs because internal GEF-related issues reduced the attractiveness and relevance of participation:

- Transaction costs associated with the long and complex application process for the NPFE grant

⁸ UNEP, for example, attempted to discourage an Asian country from conducting an NPFE.

discouraged countries from conducting an NPFE (see [chapter 7](#)). For example, Belize, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Morocco, Pakistan, Suriname, Swaziland, Tunisia, and Tuvalu dropped out in part because of shortcomings in the application process.⁹

- In October 2010, the GEF CEO decided not to allow the submission of PIFs until the NPFE process was completed, thus removing the flexibility countries had previously been assured of (e.g., by [GEF 2010c](#)). For one example, Pakistan dropped out because of this decision (see [chapter 7](#)).

⁹ A further 10 countries chose to do the NPFE with their own resources: Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, Solomon Islands, Uruguay, and Vietnam.

6. Effectiveness and Emerging Results

Enhancing country ownership of GEF programs and projects was a key objective of the NPFs. Ownership was assessed from three perspectives: stakeholder consultation, alignment with strategies and national planning processes, and capacity building to improve coordination and solicit inputs to GEF programs and projects.

6.1 Country Stakeholder Consultation

Thirty-two out of 34 NPFs indicated consultations were held with stakeholder groups (table 6.1). However, the level of detail of their descriptions varied. Only 10 NPFs provided a comprehensive list of stakeholders involved. Others provided indicative descriptions, and some provided no information at all. GEF-financed NPFs tend to have more information on stakeholders involved and processes used, such as workshops and interviews, compared to non-GEF-financed NPFs. Some Latin American and Asian countries had very little to no information on stakeholder involvement or their consultation processes.

From the reports with a full list of participants, it is clear that NPFE government participation was broadly satisfactory, whereas participation from other stakeholder groups was lower. Participation from ministries of environment, including convention focal points and representatives of environmental parastatals, was the norm. In addition, one or two representatives from

ministries of agriculture, energy, and/or forestry participated because they had previously been or are currently involved as executing agencies for GEF projects and had clear incentives for attending the meetings. Indeed, many interviewees from non-environment line ministries expressed a high level of satisfaction with consultation and coordination:

- “To some extent we got to know what other ministries were concerned with, what proposals they had, and this had not happened before in a formal way.”
- “It was about improving coordination on GEF issues, and it was about involving different people in a joint process to come up with project ideas.”

In Ethiopia, the Gambella local and regional authority officials and CBOs were also involved in NPFE consultations, which reflected their in-depth and participatory approaches to generating project concepts. Ethiopia’s NPFE process was based on reaching out to the regions and grassroots so that their project ideas and concepts could be considered.

The result of conducting large consultation exercises tended to be large numbers of project proposals. In some countries, this resulted in difficulties in managing stakeholder expectations and communication when new programs were introduced outside of the NPFE process (box 6.1).

TABLE 6.1 Stakeholder Consultation and Involvement in Country NPFE Initiatives

| Country | Consultative process | Stakeholder involvement | | | | | NSC created |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | | Ministries | CSOs | Private sector | GEF Agency | GEF Secretariat | |
| Antigua and Barbuda | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Armenia | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Bahamas | Yes | — | — | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| Burkina Faso | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Cambodia | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | No |
| Cameroon | Yes ^a | Yes | Yes | — | Yes | Yes | Yes ^b |
| Chad | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| Chile | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Colombia | — | — | — | — | — | — | No |
| Congo, Rep. | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Congo, Dem. Rep. | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | Yes |
| Ethiopia | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Gambia, The | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Ghana | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| Guinea—Conakry | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| Guinea—Bissau | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | No |
| India | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | Yes |
| Kazakhstan | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Kenya | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Mali | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Mauritania | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Mexico | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Micronesia, Fed. Sts. | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| Nigeria | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| Niue | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| Philippines | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Rwanda ^c | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No |
| St. Lucia | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| Solomon Islands | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | No |
| Sri Lanka | Yes ^d | — | — | — | — | — | No |
| Tanzania | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | | Yes |
| Thailand | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Togo | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| Uruguay | Yes | Yes | — | — | — | — | No |
| Vietnam | Yes | Yes | — | — | Yes | — | — |
| Total | 32 | 31 | 27 | 7 | 22 | 4 | 22 (17) |

SOURCE: NPFDS.

a. Based on interviews; NPFD does not detailed the consultation process.

b. Several countries had already created NSCs—Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, and Mexico.

c. Based on interviews; no NPFD submitted by Rwanda.

d. Consultation described but insufficient evidence of stakeholder groups.

BOX 6.1 Reaching out to the Grassroots: Unfulfilled Expectations

Burkina Faso conducted consultations with national NGOs and CBOs to generate project concepts and/or components of projects for the NPFDF. The consultations were productive and well received by the NGOs/CBOs. It was their first time to be consulted and asked to submit project concepts addressing environmental challenges in their regions: “It was a unique opportunity for us to speak out and we are grateful for the opportunity. The expectations were very strong that the process would result in an opening of the GEF to all...”

The NGOs/CBOs submitted projects on biodiversity and climate change (renewable energy), and everything initially went well. In the meantime, the country committed most of its STAR allocation to the Great Green Wall regional program (to be implemented by the World Bank). This was not part of the NPFE consultations and was not supported by the OFP or the GEF NSC. Subsequently, there was no feedback provided to the NGOs/CBOs about the fate of their project proposals. The NGOs stated: “A break came in the communication [with the NSC], so we were wondering as to the transparency of the process. Then we heard about the Great Green Wall—the GEF informed the government about it—it was the GEF telling us yes, you can participate, but we are taking your money for the Great Green Wall... We were very disappointed and hope there will be another opportunity in GEF-6.”

Twenty-seven of 34 NPFDFs indicated CSO participation in the NPFEs. CSOs included academic institutions, research institutes, international NGOs (such as the World Wildlife Fund in Cambodia and the Wildlife Conservation Society in Rwanda), NGOs, and CBOs. Academics, research institutes, and NGOs were consistently involved across the 25 countries; CBOs were not involved in most countries except for Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, The Gambia, St. Lucia, and Togo. Country interviews revealed some underlying reasons for

the exclusion of CBOs. First, the NPFE process was perceived as a planning tool for larger GEF projects. Second, CBO-related opportunities for projects existed in the Small Grants Programme and not the NPFE process.

Private sector involvement was weak. Only 7 of 34 NPFDFs reported private sector participation in consultations. Four of the seven presented no substantive evidence on the identity of the private sector participants; in others, including Antigua and Barbuda and Mauritania, associations were involved, such as hotel associations or chambers of commerce.

Country interviewees stated that it was difficult to attract the private sector to participate in the NPFE process, which had no quick outcome or clear business rationale. There was no deliberate attempt to exclude the private sector. Based on current experience, it is clear the NPFE initiative in its current form is not an ideal tool for engaging with the private sector.

6.2 GEF Agency and GEF Secretariat Involvement in NPFEs

Twenty-two of 34 NPFDFs indicated that GEF Agencies participated in NPFE consultations ([table 6.2](#)). UNDP was the Agency most commonly involved, because it has a field presence in all the countries and is easy to engage in consultation. The World Bank, UNIDO, and FAO were involved in seven to nine countries each based on their respective country presence and requests from the countries. The Asian Development Bank was asked to be involved in the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. IDB and AfDB were only involved in one country each, which can be attributed to their less consistent engagement on GEF projects in country and to their sometimes limited in-country presence. AfDB has begun to be more actively engaged in project development in GEF-5. However, staff reported that, for most countries, they only came to know of NPFEs after the process concluded.

TABLE 6.2 GEF Agency Participation in NPFE Consultations

| Country | UNDP | UNEP | World Bank | ADB | AfDB | FAO | IDB | UNIDO |
|---------------------|----------------|------|------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-------|
| Antigua and Barbuda | — | Yes | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Armenia | Yes | — | Yes | — | — | Yes | — | Yes |
| Bahamas | — | Yes | — | — | — | Yes | Yes | — |
| Burkina Faso | Yes | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Cambodia | Yes | — | — | — | — | — | — | Yes |
| Cameroon | — | Yes | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Chad | — ^a | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Chile | Yes | Yes | Yes | — | — | Yes | — | Yes |
| Congo, Rep. | Yes | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Ethiopia | Yes | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Gambia, The | Yes | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Guinea—Bissau | Yes | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Kenya | Yes | Yes | Yes | — | — | — | — | Yes |
| Mali | Yes | — | Yes | — | — | Yes | — | — |
| Mauritania | Yes | — | — | — | — | Yes | — | — |
| Mexico | Yes | — | Yes | — | — | — | — | Yes |
| Philippines | Yes | — | Yes | Yes | — | Yes | — | Yes |
| Rwanda | — | — | Yes | — | — | — | — | — |
| Solomon Islands | — ^b | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Tanzania | Yes | Yes | Yes | — | Yes | Yes | — | — |
| Thailand | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | — | Yes | — | Yes |
| Vietnam | — | — | — | Yes | — | — | — | — |
| Total | 15 | 6 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 7 |

SOURCE: NPFDS.

NOTE: ADB = Asian Development Bank.

a. Chad stated that “development partners” attended its NPFE consultations without stating specifically which GEF Agency attended.

b. Solomon Islands stated that consultations were held with a GEF Agency without stating specifically which Agency was involved.

In a few countries in the Africa region, UNDP funded the NPFEs and could potentially guarantee its involvement, although this presented a potential conflict of interest. A similar issue occurred in Africa when a GEF Secretariat staff member seconded to the World Bank country office worked with the government and used the NPFE process to conduct consultations on a GEF project on which the Bank was an Implementing Agency.

Country stakeholders saw the NPFE as a turning point in their relationships with the Agencies. Countries proposed project concepts and selected

Agencies to work with, rather than the Agencies suggesting or advising on projects for their consideration. The consultative processes in many countries limited Agency involvement until the closing or draft report validation workshop. In others—e.g., in Asia—the countries perceived the NPFEs as a way to improve partnerships with the Agencies through their involvement in all meetings based on proactive collaboration. Noted an interviewee, “...before, the Agencies would just propose projects to us, but now they work much more together with us.”

There were considerable differences in the perception and benefit of GEF Agency involvement in the NPFE consultations: headquarters staff generally perceived the NPFE to have hampered coordination and slowed project development with country clients. In contrast, field-based staff viewed coordination and consultation with the countries to have been enhanced through the NPFEs. Furthermore, it also reduced some of the “horse trading” and “competition” between Agencies, as the project proposals were discussed in a more transparent manner. The reasons for the difference in perceptions are not clear, but may relate to the closer relations field-based staff have with countries, whereas headquarters staff may have more “corporate” views.

GEF Secretariat technical involvement in NPFEs was ad hoc and based on requests from countries. Only four countries received visits from GEF Secretariat technical staff; support came primarily from the natural resource teams. Staff assistance varied by country—from general advice on project eligibility and cofinancing to active involvement in individual project development. While this was useful in the Philippines and helped focus project proposals for submission to the GEF Secretariat, it had no such effect in Central Africa. Clearly, these examples show that technical assistance is related to country context and the capacity to use the advice.

6.3 Creation of National Steering Committees and Increased Transparency

The guidelines advised countries to put NSCs in place as part of the consultation process to set priorities and review project proposals and to hold at least one consultation to discuss the draft report. Thirty-two of 34 NPFDs reported, in varying levels of detail, on consultations conducted during the NPFE process. Eighteen of the 34 NPFDs were based on combined multiple consultations

with stakeholders and capacity-building exercises (table 6.2).

While no consultation processes were identical, common elements were observed:

- Hosting initial workshops by the OFP with stakeholders to introduce the NPFE process and call for project proposals¹
- Capacity building and awareness raising on the GEF and strategies/criteria; project concept and proposal development or proposal writing (using the PIF format)
- Contracting a national consultant(s) to facilitate and document meetings, review country strategies, and conduct interviews/meetings with stakeholder groups
- Establishing an NSC or using an existing NSC or NSC-like committee structure
- Developing criteria for NSC judgment of project proposals based on country priorities and GEF criteria
- Establishing focal area subgroups within some NSCs to preselect projects to be presented to the full NSC
- Conducting stakeholder meetings and interviews with national, regional, and community stakeholder groups (CBOs)
- Drafting report write-ups and stakeholder validation workshops

Seventeen NSCs were established as a result of the NPFE process, with a further five pre-existing NSCs or similar committees involved. NSCs were important to those countries that established them in providing a multistakeholder structure to judge project concepts and make decisions. For OFPs

¹In some countries, the call for project proposals was conducted through national newspapers (Nigeria) or through radio programs (Ethiopia).

who had experienced the “old system” that they perceived as disempowering, the NSC structure (and the NPFEs) was an opportunity to shift the balance of power:

- “We wanted...control over the allocation... It is the country that makes the decision.”
- “It [the NPFE] is about our priorities and our projects.”

The NPFEs and the NSCs in particular were viewed as playing a major role in improving transparency at the country level in terms of establishing processes and structures for the review of project proposals. The vast majority of country stakeholders believed transparency to have increased because of the NPFEs. But most of the gains in transparency were seen as being associated with the consultations and as occurring up to the submission of the NPFs. Some stakeholders, particularly those not sitting on the NSCs, had received no feedback on their proposals since submission or were unsure of where their projects stood in the pipeline. Countries where this was the case include Burkina Faso, Cambodia, The Gambia, Guinea, and Thailand.

Most NSCs have continued to function since the completion of the NPFs. Only some Central African countries reported that their NSCs stopped meeting after the completion of the NPFE process because of a lack of funding to hold meetings. NSC membership in most countries was reported to be restricted to ministries of environment and line ministries. However, Guinea, the Philippines, and Togo reported that CSOs were also members of the NSC.

Following were the common barriers to effective consultation:

- Ministries sending junior staff to the NPFE meetings who were not of decision-making rank; Cambodia and Thailand reported that this negatively affected the quality of their NPFE

consultations because junior staff tend not to speak out in workshops but simply take notes for their absent superiors

- Ministries sending a different staff member to each meeting so that it became difficult to maintain consistency in participation
- Lack of knowledge about the GEF, causing many consultations to be prefaced by basic training sessions on the GEF; this was particularly a problem in LDCs (African country participants) which suffer from low capacity
- Limited or no experience in writing project concepts or basic proposal writing; in most countries, the GEF Agencies had previously formulated project concepts and written PIFs, leading to most stakeholders having no experience in writing GEF proposals; in contrast, in other countries, stakeholders were not interested in writing proposals, which they saw as “the job of the Agencies,” but wanted the writing to adequately reflect their ideas

6.4 Alignment with National Strategies and Planning Processes

Twenty-nine out of 34 countries described their national strategies (national biodiversity strategies and action plans; national adaptation programs of action; and water, energy, forest, and agricultural strategies) in detail in the NPFs and tried to link their programmed GEF projects with them.² This is in line with the overall vision for the NPFEs and objectives of strengthening alignment between national and GEF priorities.

There was a strong perception among country stakeholders that NPFEs provided a forum for a more comprehensive discussion of national and

² NPFs included reviews of existing legislation and national environmental and development strategies. Countries were able to identify clear overlaps.

GEF strategic alignment in terms of identifying clear synergies. Consequently, this element was very strong in the NPDFs, with only six countries not mentioning their national strategies.

National development planning processes were linked in many countries to overarching visions (Vision 2020 or 2030) or five-year development plans. While environmental priorities in these plans were incorporated into NPFE consultations, national budgeting for development planning was not. For example, in one Asian country, the national budget responds to priorities in the development plan. The budget considers financing for activities (including projects) every year. However, the NPFE consultations could not be aligned with the government planning and budgeting process because of delays and because GEF projects take too long to approve.

6.5 Regional Projects

The NPFE process was also meant to consider “priority areas for regional collaboration.”³ However, most of the countries did not mention regional collaboration and focused more on identifying national priorities. Interviews tended to confirm the strong perception that the NPFEs were not an appropriate tool to promote regional collaboration. One of the barriers to successful regional project concept development cited by several countries was the lack of exchange and coordination between countries during the NPFE process. For example, the evaluation could find no countries that had communicated on regional project ideas or held meetings to discuss such issues.

The perception of the NPFEs as being more nationally focused than regional is not entirely

³The Secretariat in its guidelines suggested that each country’s NPDF should contain the priority areas for regional collaboration. The document was supposed to “highlight pressing global and regional environmental problems on which regional and sub-regional level cooperation will be necessary to properly address.”

supported by the assessment of NPDFs, which indicates that 14 out of 34 reports did include some consideration of regional environmental issues. Further, of the 14 NPDFs that addressed regional environmental concerns, 8 proposed regional projects.

6.6 Capacity Building

In countries where stakeholder capacities were low, NPFEs were not effective in the identification of project ideas eligible for GEF funding. The NPFE initiative is implicitly based on the assumption that participants are informed and knowledgeable about the GEF, its eligibility criteria, strategies, and project development process. In many countries, the capacities of participants were not sufficient to enable meaningful consultation or development of project concepts. Thus, capacity-building exercises were often included through additional preparatory meetings or training on GEF strategies and project proposal writing. The NPFE initiative was viewed by most OFPs as an opportunity to raise awareness of the GEF—such as what it funds and its strategies—in a structured and transparent approach with all stakeholders.

Interviews revealed that such capacity-building exercises only resulted in a temporary boost in understanding of the GEF in country, mainly because civil servants have been transferred, retired, or removed from their positions since the end of the NPFE process. This means, as one OFP observed: “More training will have to be given for another NPFE process in GEF-6.”

In countries where the OFPs have remained in position, the NPFE initiative achieved the objective of building capacity to manage a multistakeholder consultative and coordination process. The NSC structure has also further developed communication, mediation, and negotiation skills. However, the GEF Secretariat’s focus on building capacity for consultation and coordination was a narrow one, as it is clear that capacity needs went beyond

process to substantive technical issues. And without that knowledge, participation was unlikely to produce a relevant or effective GEF portfolio of projects.

6.7 Promoting a Portfolio Approach

The primary intended output from the NPFs, as per the NPFE guidelines, was an indicative list of projects for development and approval by the GEF Secretariat. Country interviews revealed that stakeholders clearly understood they were meant to generate project concepts for development. However, for GEF Secretariat technical staff and Agency headquarters–based staff, greater emphasis was placed on the production of a portfolio or programmatic approaches. Among country stakeholders, some questioned if the GEF had a clear definition of a “portfolio approach,” as opposed to what was understood as the development of individual projects.

The majority of NPFs do not show evidence of promoting a portfolio approach. Most of the projects or programs described are disconnected from one another, and the reasoning behind those choices seems to be driven by dividing up the STAR allocation. Twenty NPFs do not mention or promote any kind of portfolio approach; in 14 NPFs, some portfolio elements can be found. Some of the countries programmed multifocal area projects, while others tried to see the country’s environmental protection as a whole and include projects within the context of national priorities.

The effect of producing lists of project concepts with little direct connection was the result of the broad consultation processes the countries followed. In short, the more stakeholders involved, the more project ideas likely to be developed into concepts in the NPFs. As discussed in [chapter 5](#), the majority of countries developed more than 10 projects for approval with their STAR allocations. Some projects were under \$1 million and were never going to be approved by the GEF

Secretariat—especially as the project policy seems to be trending toward larger projects with the MSP ceiling now raised to \$2 million.

The countries were subsequently advised by the GEF Secretariat to combine or focus their concepts into small numbers of larger projects in line with MSPs and FSPs. In some countries, this led to the combining of small projects from different focal areas, leading to multifocal projects. However, in some cases, this had the effect of selecting larger projects and ruling out CBO participation in projects that had been encouraged through in-country consultations.

In some Asian countries, project concepts had already been developed or sketched out with the assistance of or by the GEF Agencies and were effectively fitted to the NPFE process. This avoided some of the problems found in other countries, but contradicted the underlying premise of the NPFE process.

GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency headquarters staff tended to be critical of the commonly termed “shopping list approach” of the NPFs, as they lacked focus and strategy—resulting in additional effort to get countries to focus and slowing down project PIF development. Moreover, the lack of cofinancing discussions within the NPFs meant projects were presented to the GEF without indications of in-country financing, further reducing the effectiveness of the NPFs. More than 75 percent of NPF project concepts have not been developed. Therefore, in terms of providing an indicative pipeline of projects or a portfolio, the NPF performance has been less than expected.

The underlying reasons for the problems encountered are related to imprecision in the NPFE guidance, lack of in-country capacity to produce “GEF-able” project concepts, lack of GEF Secretariat technical staff involvement to provide guidance to countries during their NPFs (only ad hoc assistance was given and this was not adequate), and a lack of guidance that may have resulted in more projects being approved.

6.8 Synergies between Focal Areas

There are indications that the NPFE initiative led to increased synergies between focal areas as a result of bringing different groups of stakeholders together, but also because of the GEF Secretariat's advice to merge small projects.

The NPFEs were perceived by country stakeholders, the GEF Secretariat, and field-based GEF Agency staff to have led to enhanced synergies between focal areas and to more multifocal area projects.

Country stakeholder interviews showed the NPFE consultations led to greater consideration of synergies by bringing together convention focal points and different ministries, such as agriculture and forestry, that would not meet regularly to discuss areas of mutual interest.

This was coupled with the more recent considerations of linkages between biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation in country strategies and at the conference of the parties level, of which the convention focal points were aware. Country stakeholders indicated that the GEF Secretariat encouraged countries to focus and to combine small project concepts into larger multifocal project concepts when appropriate (with the support of the GEF Agencies).

6.9 Utility

The usefulness of the NPFDs as a predictable project development process is currently low. The documents could be used as a baseline and as learning experiences for GEF-6.

For most OFPs and other country stakeholders, the NPFDs have not been used extensively after completion. Most stated that they will only return to the documents to provide a baseline for GEF-6 NPFE processes. Some project concepts that were not approved or could not be funded would perhaps be redeveloped and made "GEF-able."

The GEF Agencies have initially referred to the NPFDs and—where possible—used project concept ideas but were critical of the utility of documents that presented "shopping lists" or "wish lists" of projects. Many of these projects were ineligible for GEF funding.

The GEF Secretariat is required to consult NPFDs as part of the PIF review checklist. However, it is not a determining factor in acceptance or rejection of a project proposal. Staff mentioned "glancing" at the NPFDs during project reviews quickly to see if the project or a similar concept was there. Therefore, its value remains unclear.

The dissemination of the NPFDs has been limited to select in-country stakeholders, GEF Agencies (several field-based staff reported that they had not received copies), and the GEF Secretariat. Eight countries that received funding have not submitted their reports. Feedback to in-country stakeholders on the status of their project concepts was found to be problematic in several countries.

The GEF Secretariat has published all NPFDs on the GEF website. However, the link to the NPFE page is not immediately obvious to country stakeholders; it takes three "clicks" to get to the correct page. Most country stakeholders were unaware that the NPFDs were published on the website.

6.10 Other Results

The NPFE was expected to provide opportunities to integrate global environmental benefits and issues into country priorities and to enhance responsiveness to convention guidance. However, for most country stakeholders, the process outcomes were uncertain or not observable in one round of NPFEs.

6.11 Summary

Overall, the NPFE initiative has had a low uptake. Only 42 countries participated in the process in GEF-5, while the expectation was 100 countries in the first year. The NPFE initiative has enhanced

ownership and transparency in participating countries. The range of stakeholders consulted has been generally inclusive and in line with GEF guidance, except with regard to the private sector. The consultation processes, including the creation of many NSCs, has provided a sustainable structure to review and approve GEF projects at the country level. The main shortcoming relates to challenges of developing focused and “GEF-able” projects. This is partly related to the issue of poor guidance, and to low in-country capacity.

As an indication of the success of the NPFE initiative, 18 out of 20 countries that were interviewed stated that they wanted the NPFEs to continue in GEF-6—albeit with changes in the timing and administration of the process (issues discussed in [chapter 7](#)).

GEF Agency headquarters staff and—to some extent—GEF Secretariat technical staff were less positive about the NPFEs, mainly because of the perceived low value in producing lists of projects and a desire for a more strategic approach.

7. Efficiency of the Administrative Process

7.1 Overview

The process and administrative design of the NPFEs aspired to strengthen country ownership of decisions on GEF resource programming. The NPFEs were designed to be executed directly by national entities in recipient countries. The funds were devised to be provided through direct access to the recipient country within the framework of the CSP. The maximum GEF funding envisioned for the activity was \$30,000, accessible through a recipient-executed small grants procedure from the World Bank.

Overall implementation and coordination responsibilities were assigned to the GEF Secretariat, with OFPs playing a key role in ensuring execution by national entities in recipient countries. To gain access to GEF funding for NPFEs, the focal points were required to submit an application template on behalf of the recipient country. This was considered an endorsement of the activity. The application provided detailed descriptions of the activity and its associated costs.

The NPFE process was expected to last between four and six months (120–180 days), resulting in a completed NPFD. The NPFD was to be a document of approximately 5–10 pages long and covering the following:

- A description of the NSC
- A description of broader consultations

- A brief description of the country's global environmental challenges in the different sectors within the focal areas funded by the GEF
- A note on the level of the indicative STAR allocation for the country for each focal area under the STAR and a clear list of priority projects and/or programmatic approaches, eligible under the GEF-5 focal area strategies, for which the country intended to seek support in GEF-5
- A list of priority projects, eligible under the GEF-5 focal area strategies, for which the country would seek support in focal areas/themes outside the STAR
- A brief description of pressing global and regional environmental problems for which regional and subregional cooperation would be necessary to properly address
- An outline of how implementation of these projects would contribute to the fulfillment of obligations to the biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation conventions

The GEF Secretariat provided different forms of guidance throughout the NPFE initiative. A toolkit issued by the Secretariat in April 2011 and updated in September 2012 provided templates and guidance on accessing resources under the reformed CSP. The application and template provided by the GEF Secretariat outline the financial arrangements of the national entity executing the NPFE.

7.2 Time Frame for the NPFE Process

The time frame for undertaking the NPFEs was considerably longer than initially envisaged. The average number of days from receipt of application to submission of the NPFDs was 400 days, which is longer than the 120–180 days the Secretariat had anticipated. None of the countries submitted their NPFDs before 220 days of application receipt. Only 10 countries submitted their NPFDs before 400 days of application receipt (table 7.1). The five remaining countries for which data are available submitted their NPFDs more than 400 days after their applications were received. This figure is likely to be underestimated. To date, eight countries have still not submitted their NPFDs. Note that information on when NPFDs were submitted is not available for all countries.

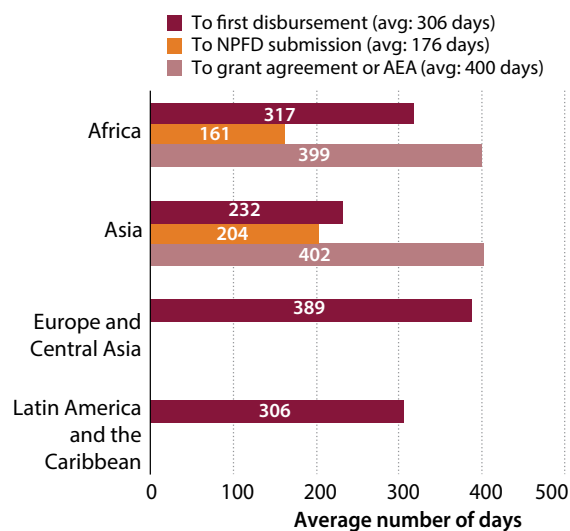
Key bottlenecks in undertaking the NPFEs occurred at the project design and preparation stage. For the NPFEs conducted with GEF funding, the average number of days from receipt of application to first disbursement of funds was 306 days, a time frame considerably exceeding original estimates. This pattern holds firm across all regions, with average processing times ranging from 232 days in Asia to 389 days in Latin America and the Caribbean (figure 7.1). Overall, no country

TABLE 7.1 Time Frame for NPFE Process (Number of Countries)

| Number of days | Time from application submission to | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| | NPFD submission | First disbursement | Grant agreement or AEA |
| ≤199 | — | 7 | 17 |
| 200–399 | 10 | 14 | 9 |
| 400–599 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| 600–799 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 15 | 26 | 28 |

SOURCE: PMIS.

FIGURE 7.1 Time Frame for NPFE Process by Region



SOURCE: PMIS.

NOTE: Data on time to first disbursement were available for 26 countries; data on time to NPFD submission were available for 11 countries; data on time to grant agreement or AEA were available for 15 countries. Disbursements were made to Ghana and Mali after they completed their NPFDs.

received its first disbursement before 120 days from receipt of application, and only seven received it before 200 days from receipt of application. The majority of the countries (14) received their first disbursement between 200 and 400 days of application receipt.

On average, NPFEs took almost twice as long to prepare than to undertake. Average time elapsed from first disbursement to NPFD submission was 176 days, although these data are based on a considerably smaller set of countries. The Africa region appears to have had the quickest pace of implementation. In Africa, the time elapsed from first disbursement to actual NPFD submission was 161 days on average, compared to 211 days from application submission to grant agreement. It should also be noted that some countries decided to “advance” the funds and conduct their NPFEs before they received the GEF grant due to the many delays. This would have the effect of biasing

the estimates downwards (making it seem faster). It is important to note that there were severe data availability restrictions with regard to the above dates.

The number of days taken between several steps in the process varies greatly by country. On average, the Africa region seems to have taken the least time on all the steps in the process. However, the individual data are widely dispersed. For example, the average length of time between receipt of application and first disbursement was 317 days, but the data range from 140 days to 603 days. Half of the African countries received their first disbursements in less than 300 days. In Asia, it took between 172 and 354 days from receipt of application until first disbursement, with more than half of the countries receiving their first disbursement in less than 300 days. Five African countries out of seven—for those where data are available—submitted their NPDFs less than 150 days after the first disbursement. For Asian countries, it took between 266 and 504 days from receipt of application until the NPDFs were submitted. Only one Asian country submitted its NPDF less than 150 days after first disbursement.

For all the Asian countries for which data are available, it took less than 200 days from receipt of application to grant/AEA. For half of the African countries, less than 200 days elapsed between receipt of applications and grant agreement. This time frame is more difficult to analyze for the remaining two regions since little data are available.

The initial choice of financing modality (recipient-executed small grants procedure) proved to be a key determining factor in preparation delays. The NPFE was the first time a direct access initiative was devised in the GEF. The GEF Secretariat felt it was important that the grant itself be an agreement directly between the recipient country and the GEF. This led to a “Designation of Signature Authority for Certain Instruments Pertaining to Grants from the Global

Environment Facility” from the World Bank to the GEF Chairperson and CEO. The GEF Secretariat also wished for the initiative to be direct access. For the GEF, “direct access” was interpreted as not being implemented by one of the GEF Agencies but through the GEF Secretariat. The NPFEs were to be executed by national institutions in recipient countries using a “direct access of resources approach” (GEFSEC 2011, 24). After initial discussions with the World Bank, it was decided that the most suitable financing modality for the NPFEs was the Bank small grants procedure, which is recipient executed.

Findings from interviews with country stakeholders, including OFPs, cited administrative issues and delays as the most common weakness of the NPFE process. Many stakeholders suggested reducing the number of procedures in the process, which involved 30 steps (annex F).

To address concerns about delays under the recipient-executed small grants procedure, an alternative financing modality was selected, the AEA. The first AEA came into effect in mid-June 2011, almost a year after the introduction of the NPFEs and implementation of the recipient-executed small grants procedure. The switch to AEAs consolidated the overall process from 30 to 8 steps, thereby helping reduce complexity and offer a timelier implementation modality (annex G).

The change meant a shift from a recipient-executed grant to a Bank-executed transfer. This difference was significant, as the recipient-executed grant is processed through the Bank’s loan system, while Bank-executed AEAs are administered directly through accounts payable. In World Bank terminology, this change also meant a shift from a recipient-executed to a Bank-executed modality.

While the shift in administrative arrangements was designed to simplify the application procedure, in practice it did not generate a large uptake of participating countries. By the time the new procedures were introduced, many countries had already been exposed to the recipient-executed

small grants procedure and its challenges.¹ Most countries (26) submitted their applications in 2010, 5 submitted in 2011, and 1 in 2012 (table 7.2). Three countries signed a grant agreement in 2010; 22 were signed in 2011. Finally, four countries signed an AEA in 2011, and one country did so in 2012. While there was still time to apply for the NPFES upon the introduction of the AEA procedure, the window was closing for GEF-5. The first disbursement of funds for most countries took place between May and September 2011—almost a year after the initiative had been rolled out. Five countries received their first disbursement in 2012.

Of the 32 countries conducting an NPFE with GEF support, 27 (84 percent) used the World Bank small grants procedure, with 10 (31 percent) of these later shifting to the AEA modality;² 5 (15 percent) used the AEA directly.³ The first AEA was signed in mid-June 2011. Two countries, Liberia and Senegal, started with a small grant agreement procedure but then withdrew from the NPFE process. Burkina Faso and Kenya also started with a small grant agreement procedure but later decided to do the NPFE with their own funds. All of the other NPFE countries continued with the small grant agreement procedure.

It took between 32 and 416 days for countries to shift from the small grant agreement procedure to the AEA process. Half of the countries for which data are available were able to shift in less than 100 days (most of the data are from African countries). None of the countries could shift in less than a month.

¹ Twenty-seven of the 32 countries used the recipient-executed small grants procedure; some later changed to the AEA.

² Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mozambique, Niger, and Sri Lanka.

³ Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, St. Lucia, and South Africa.

TABLE 7.2 Type of Grant Agreement Used by Countries

| Year | Number of countries submitting application | Small grant agreement | AEA | Switch from grant agreement to AEA |
|-------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|------------------------------------|
| 2010 | 26 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 2011 | 5 | 14 | 4 | 8 |
| 2012 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 32 | 17 | 5 | 10 |

SOURCE: World Bank Integrated Records Information System (IRIS).

Even under the AEA process, the timeline for project preparation and implementation was still slower than had initially been anticipated. For the five countries that used the AEA process directly, the average number of days from grant application submission to first disbursement was 214 days, with the minimum being under 120 days. These countries reported longer average time periods from application submission to date of AEA signing, ranging from 32 to 307 days. For the 10 countries that switched from a recipient-executed small grant to an AEA, the average time needed to make the shift was 164 days. The time lapse ranged from 32 to 416 days, with half of those 10 countries shifting in less than 65 days.

The countries that only used the small grant agreement seem to have had a faster pace for all steps of the process except for the overall time frame from application receipt to NPFD submission. From receipt of application to first disbursement, the time elapsed ranged from 128 to 471 days for the countries that only used the recipient-executed small grant agreement procedure. For the countries that shifted to an AEA or only used an AEA, the elapsed time was between 184 and 603 days.

All the countries for which data are available that only used the AEA process submitted their NPFDs less than 350 days after receipt of their applications; the countries that used only

the grant agreement procedure submitted their NPFDS between 220 and 722 days after receipt of application.

Another difference between the countries that using the two financing modalities is the time between receipt of application and date of grant agreement. Thirteen of the 16 countries for which data are available that used the recipient-executed small grant agreement procedure signed their grant agreements less than 200 days after receipt of their application. Only two countries out of the nine for which data are available signed their AEA agreement less than 200 days after receipt of their application. Therefore, shifting to an AEA procedure did not necessarily accelerate the process. Data are available for three of the five countries that used the AEA procedure only: two of these signed their AEA agreement in less than 200 days, one took more than 300 days.

7.3 NPFE Guidance

The GEF Secretariat focused its initial guidance on supporting the many administrative issues related to the small grants procedure for recipient-executed grants. Guidance for the NPFEs was very precise in terms of the administrative process laid out, and the exact procedures for the 30-step modality—and later the 8-step process—were described in detail ([annexes F and G](#)). With regard to content and process, individual countries were encouraged to customize their own NPFE. The idea behind this was to be nonprescriptive, to promote country ownership of the planning and decision-making process, as well as build country capacity. Indeed, the guidance explicitly states that “the NPFE is executed by national institutions without the support of a GEF Agency” ([GEF 2012, 2](#)). Feedback from the countries revealed that the NPFE team in the GEF Secretariat was very helpful and provided timely support to the countries during the application process.

There was no real focus on practical technical guidance as the NPFE initiative rolled out. Technical support—in terms of having a senior technical officer from the GEF Secretariat participate in the actual NPFE process at the country level to provide hands-on information on GEF rationale, cofinancing requirements, and project eligibility—was not common. This support only took place on an ad hoc basis in four countries—Cameroon, Republic of Congo, the Philippines, and Rwanda.

There was a disconnect in terms of the timing and nature of NPFD guidance. For example, the suggested content of the NPFDS was described in detail in a 2011 document presented to the GEF Council ([GEFSEC 2011](#)). The description spans more than two full pages; while this guidance is useful to the countries, it stands in contrast to the suggestion that NPFDS are to be between 5 and 10 pages only. Also, while the toolkit issued by the GEF Secretariat in April 2011 and updated in September 2012 provided templates and guidance on accessing resources under the reformed CSP ([GEFSEC 2011](#)), the timing of the guidance was not ideal, as most NPFE countries (26) had submitted their applications in 2010 or early 2011.

The evaluation found that only seven of the NPFD submissions stayed within the 10-page limit. Nineteen were between 11 and 40 pages, and eight exceeded 50 pages. Some countries submitted only two to four pages (Chile, Kazakhstan, Solomon Islands, and Uruguay); Kenya and the Philippines sent more than 100 pages. The difference in document length can be seen in terms of the breadth of information provided. Some documents were comprehensive. Others were very brief, consisting of only a letter to the Secretariat or a short list of projects with no context, no priorities, and no explanation as to how the projects had been chosen (Cameroon, Chile, Kazakhstan, Solomon Islands, and Uruguay). Overall, the information required by the GEF Secretariat was too detailed for the suggested length of 5–10 pages.

There was also some confusion with regard to the possible involvement of Agencies in the process. One of the initial Council documents states that “those countries that do not meet the minimum requirements would still have the option to undertake the NPFE by assessing the GEF resources through one of the ten GEF Agencies” (GEF 2010a, 5). A later Council document states that “the NPFE is executed by national institutions without the support of a GEF Agency” (GEF 2012, 2). This disparity has had some implications. For example, Burkina Faso and Georgia both approached the GEF about conducting the NPFE with UNDP but were told that that was not possible. As a result, Georgia decided not to conduct an NPFE, and Burkina Faso conducted one without GEF funding but with funding from UNDP.

Feedback from country stakeholders concerning NPFE guidance, including 32 OFPs, focuses on the potential to improve the quality and timing of technical support throughout the NPFE process. Insufficient guidance was identified as one of the weaknesses. Key lessons identified by stakeholders included the following:

- Ensure that support is provided earlier in the project cycle, as a means of improving quality and shortening the application process
- Provide clearer guidance and structure for the NPFEs/NPFDs
- Provide a deeper level of technical assistance, including further information about the GEF, particularly on cofinancing issues

The quality assurance process for final NPFDs was left very open and resulted in confusion. While the Secretariat provided comments on finalized NPFDs, there was no requirement for countries to change their documents, which led to some confusion between the GEF Agencies, the GEF Secretariat’s technical departments, and the countries. Final NPFDs, available on the GEF website, refer to

projects the Secretariat may have suggested were not eligible, or needed to be changed or removed.

The NPFE initiative did not establish a centralized knowledge repository, which might have been useful in providing overall technical support and guidance. It was reported that project documentation was inadequately recorded in the World Bank’s Integrated Records Information System (IRIS), and that more often than not, information was maintained on individual staff computers. This resulted in a limited institutional memory and no real systematic record retention.

7.4 Financial Management

The application package included a financial management assessment questionnaire for the institutions responsible for carrying out the NPFEs. A simplified financial management template and questionnaire were developed to assess the national entity. The financial management assessment was filled in by a financial management specialist at the GEF Secretariat (hired specifically for the direct access initiatives). The assessment was carried out in consultation with the World Bank’s Financial Management Board and the relevant country office. The assessment included risk ratings,⁴ mitigation measures, and overall strengths and weaknesses; it ultimately determined if the financial management arrangements of the entity met the minimum requirements of World Bank Operations Policy 10.02. Data were available from the World Bank for 28 countries, the majority of which received either a medium (15) or low (11) risk rating. One country received a high rating and another a substantial rating.

A desk review of all financial management assessments submitted highlights divergent

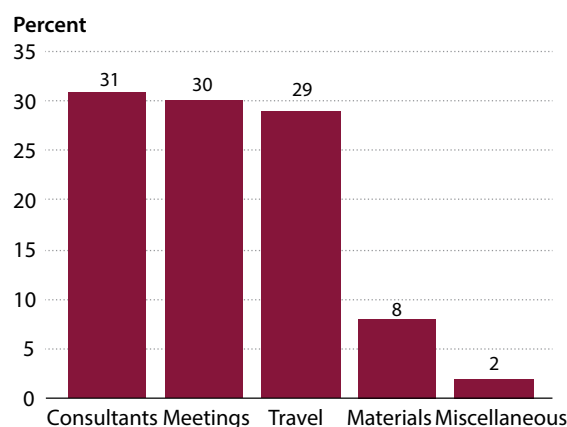
⁴Inherent risk: country level, entity level, and grant level; control risk: budget, accounting, internal control, funds flow, financial, and audit.

strengths and weaknesses across national implementing entities, especially in the African context. The NPFEs were intended to be carried out by the national entity with “the experience and competence to develop such an exercise” (GEFSEC 2011, 24). In almost all countries, the ministry of environment was the recipient of the NPFE grant. Table 7.3 summarizes the key strengths and weaknesses identified in the desk review of the financial management assessments. The key strengths that provided a “basis for reliance on the recipients’ financial management system” (GEFSEC 2011, 33) were adequacy of staff, controls, and systems, and previous experience in implementation projects. The strengths shows that countries using an entity that had previous experience in implementing projects—and in particular with the World Bank small grants procedure—were at an advantage. The key weaknesses identified illustrate some of the problems, especially for African countries, in receiving the grant. These included weaknesses in accounting systems, reporting delays, poor audit capacity, and no previous Bank experience.

The NPFE financial management process allowed for accurate budget planning. As part of the NPFE application, OFPs were asked to provide a list of activities as well as a detailed budget

for the NPFEs. These materials were reviewed by a financial management specialist at the GEF Secretariat. The average NPFE grant was \$28,900. Figure 7.2 reports the average expenditure list of activities, based on the preset expenditure categories provided by the GEF Secretariat. The categories of expenditure all relate directly to actual implementation of the NPFE workshops, except for the “consultants” category. Consultancies were allowed as a cost category “to develop program or project options, including writing of the country

FIGURE 7.2 Categories of Expenditure



SOURCE: GEFSEC 2011, 27.

TABLE 7.3 Strengths and Weaknesses Cited in the Financial Management Assessment

| Strength/weakness | Number of cases | Region |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Strength | | |
| Adequate staff/control/audit system in place | 15 | 100% Africa |
| Previous experience in implementing projects/satisfactory audit | 11 | 75% Africa |
| Ability to manage small grant | 6 | 66% Africa; 33% Asia |
| Familiarity with World Bank procedures and requirements | 2 | 100% Africa |
| Weakness | | |
| Weak accounting system/delays in reporting | 11 | 100% Africa |
| Entity audit not available or weak | 8 | 75% Africa |
| No prior bank experience | 8 | 90% Africa |
| Interference in management of project assets and deviations in use of funds | 2 | 100% Africa |
| Grant too small to have a cost effective audit | 2 | 100% Africa |

SOURCES: GEFSEC 2011 and World Bank Integrated Records Information System (IRIS).

report” ([GEFSEC 2011](#), 27). It is a positive finding that, on average, 69 percent of each grant was used to conduct the actual workshops for the NPFEs, given the value the NPFE initiative placed on the process itself.

7.5 NPFE Administration

A central implementation challenge of the NPFEs has been the administrative process supporting the initiative. The utilization of the World Bank’s recipient-executed small grants procedure proved to be an exceptionally labor-intensive process that required much staff time across the GEF, the Bank, and country offices. This was especially true during the early stages of NPFE applications, when there was much confusion regarding the process to be followed to enable recipient countries to receive resources. Extensive consultations and discussions took place with various Bank departments (legal, trustee, safeguard, procurement, loan, and trust fund accounting), the GEF Secretariat, and the GEF Trustee to resolve these initial challenges.

As the NPFEs continued, several challenges arose from the recipient-executed small grants procedure that resulted in undesired delays:⁵

- There was a high degree of variation among recipient countries in navigating the application process, with those unfamiliar with Bank processes reporting greater difficulties and likelihood to drop out.
- The processing time for each grant application was greater than anticipated given the large number of Bank and GEF staff involved at each stage. For example, World Bank financial management specialists were required to review the financial management questionnaire and complete a financial management assessment for all grants.

⁵ This information is partially drawn from [GEFSEC \(2012b, 2\)](#).

- The World Bank requirement that the ministry of finance be the main signatory, or delegate signatory authority to the GEF OFP ministry (in many instances, the ministry of environment), created a number of delays depending on the relations between the various ministries within a country. In some cases, this discouraged countries from undertaking an NPFE.
- Countries had difficulties when completing the hard copy of the withdrawal application forms.
- There were delays in the disbursement of funds, mainly due to the provision of incomplete banking information, a lack of an intermediary bank in the United States, and discrepancies in the signatures included in the legal documents.
- In some cases, grant agreement and disbursement letters were not cleared by the World Bank loan department. For example, some countries in Africa had outstanding balances on previous Bank loans ([GEFSEC 2011](#), 7–8).

The initial problems with the support modality stemmed from the desire to create a semblance of direct access in the support. In so doing, the Secretariat had to apply the rules and procedures of its administrative host, the World Bank. In World Bank terminology, “direct access” pointed to a recipient-executed modality, which is complicated and delays support. However, even if the modality were recipient executed, it did not provide direct access to the GEF Trust Fund, as in this case the Secretariat would access the Trust Fund as an intermediary. Real direct access was initiated in GEF-5 through the initiative to broaden the partnership through Article 28 of the Instrument, for which the Council has set up a rigorous process to accredit Agencies. This direct access was never possible; for NPFEs and support to convention reports, the only sensible interpretation of “direct access” would be that it is not implemented by one of the Agencies but through the Secretariat.

The above challenges show inadequate due diligence at the outset in thinking through the NPFE process and implementation arrangements. Initial planning failed to take into account the capacity of recipient countries to see through a complex recipient-executed grant approval process, especially for a grant of this size. The technical support implications at various levels within the Bank (country offices, regional specialists) were also insufficiently identified.

As the overall implementation and coordination responsibilities were assigned to the GEF Secretariat, with the OFPs playing a key role in ensuring execution by national entities in recipient countries, there may have been alternative financing modalities that could have been established for the NPFEs.

The AEA modality does not fit very well with NPFE activities. The AEA policy notes that “Expenses which are considered grants in nature, are not eligible under the Ancillary Expense policy” and that “ancillary expenses support the execution of the VPU’s [Vice Presidential Unit’s] work programs. The policy also outlines eligible funding activities; expenses for consultants are not allowed. However, under the NPFE, about 31 percent of costs are directly related to consultants, and “consultant” is an eligible cost category under NPFE guidance. Furthermore, the AEA is processed directly through accounts payable and, as such, is not protected by the GEF Trust Fund or grant policy and has limited fiduciary controls.

Transaction costs associated with the application process discouraged a number of countries from engaging in the NPFEs. Many countries felt discouraged to navigate so many steps, especially for a grant of this small size. Mexico decided to conduct an NPFE without GEF support for this reason. In total, 10 countries (Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, Solomon Islands, Uruguay, and Vietnam) conducted an NPFE without receiving a GEF grant. A number of other countries showed an initial interest

in participating in the NPFEs, but withdrew their applications or dropped out during the process; these included Belize, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Morocco, Pakistan, Suriname, Swaziland, Tunisia, and Tuvalu. The exact reasons for each country’s withdrawal are difficult to ascertain.

In parallel to internal processing challenges, some of the GEF Agencies at the field level discouraged countries from applying (e.g., UNEP in Cambodia). Stakeholder interviews brought out different reasons for this, including: “the NPFE is just another planning exercise on top of already too many,” “the countries already plan their GEF resources,” and “the countries would not be able to submit project proposals while the NPFE process is ongoing.”

A policy shift related to PIFs also contributed to uncertainty surrounding the NPFE. In October 2010, the GEF CEO decided to freeze PIF submissions for a country participating in the NPFE until the NPFE process was completed. In a letter to the OFPs, the CEO affirmed this policy:

It has come to my attention that in the first months of GEF-5 (2010–14), several project proposals have been submitted by the Agencies on behalf of the countries that have requested NPFE funding. I am concerned that the project identification forms (PIFs) presented by Agencies at this stage may not have been reviewed through a consultative process with all the relevant stakeholders, may not be aligned to the Government’s priorities and that the amounts budgeted could render the NPFE process ineffective. Therefore, projects will only be approved once the NPFE process is completed.

This stood in direct contrast to Council-approved GEF guidance on NPFE policies and procedures, which stated that “It will be possible for countries to submit PIF requests to the GEF while the NPFE is being conducted and prior to NPFD finalization” (GEF 2010c, 19).

The PIF policy shift caused delays for GEF projects that extended beyond the NPFE initiative. While intended to ensure consistency with decisions coming out of the NPFE process, the shift had the effect of freezing the project pipeline due to the many delays and creating confusion between recipient countries and GEF Agencies. Both countries and Agencies contacted the GEF Secretariat to seek

clarification on how this could shift midprocess. The issue was never raised in the GEF Council.

To date, eight countries have still not submitted their NPFDs. They have, however, submitted projects to the Secretariat in GEF-5. It remains unclear how and until what date the rule “projects will only be approved once the NPFE process is completed” was in place and applied.

8. Lessons Learned

This section presents the key lessons for the GEF. These lessons have been incorporated into the recommendations for this evaluation.

LESSON 1: Placing greater emphasis on the strategic development of a GEF portfolio as opposed to the development of individual projects is key to improving the utility of the NPFE.

Experience from the first round of NPFEs indicates that countries placed too much emphasis on developing individual project proposals, which total to less than the sum of their parts, and planning exercises lacked a strategic and cohesive approach to GEF portfolio programming. A more strategic approach can be developed by revising the guidelines to make them more precise regarding what is required ([Lesson 4](#)). Furthermore, the goal of the NPFEs should be revised to place the emphasis on portfolio development through a consultative process with requisite country ownership—and not merely to increase country ownership for its own sake.

LESSON 2: The attraction of the NPFEs for countries as a portfolio planning tool will only increase if challenges associated with the grant application and administration are resolved.

Experience shows that the cumbersome grant application and administrative process prevented many countries from conducting an NPFE. It is clear the GEF needs to develop a quicker and easier process for grant administration in order for

the NPFEs to be a viable GEF-6 portfolio planning tool.

LESSON 3: Broadening capacity-building aspects of the NPFEs is important in assisting LDCs and SIDS to develop eligible projects within the context of a portfolio approach.

Capacity building was originally targeted at improving the skills of the focal points to hold consultative and coordination processes, which are important to the NPFE. However, experience shows that capacity building needs to be approached from a broader perspective for LDCs and SIDS (which have been the main clients of the initiative) to provide stakeholders with the skills and knowledge to understand GEF eligibility criteria, the GEF project cycle, and—particularly—to develop project proposals within the context of a strategic portfolio approach. This could be done through the following:

- NPFE training for stakeholders on GEF eligibility, strategies, and project proposal writing; also a review of the countries' GEF portfolios to place the consultations in context
- Use of ECWs to disseminate key lessons from the NPFE initiative and provide a forum for exchange of views among countries
- More systematic involvement of GEF Secretariat technical staff early on in NPFE consultations to provide on-the-ground guidance to countries

LESSON 4: Insufficient technical guidance led to ineffective NPFs.

While the guidance provided countries with a solid foundation for the administration and conduct of the consultations, it did not provide sufficient detail on technical issues related to the following:

- **Terminology**—clarity is needed regarding the meaning of “portfolio and programmatic approaches” and “country ownership”
- **Project size**—specifically the need for project proposals to adhere to MSP and FSP resource envelopes
- **Cofinancing requirements**—greater clarity is needed from the GEF on its cofinancing ratios so countries know what to aim for
- **Portfolio planning**—planning a portfolio based on the principle of “less is more” to avoid the programming of too many project proposals

Annex A: Countries Covered by the Evaluation

| NPFE | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| With GEF support | | Without GEF support | | |
| NPFD | No NPFD | NPFD | No NPFD | No NPFE |
| Antigua and Barbuda | Benin | Burkina Faso | | Belarus |
| Armenia | Fiji | Chile | | Burundi |
| Bahamas, The | Kiribati | Colombia | | Central Africa Republic |
| Cambodia | Mozambique | India | | Comoros |
| Cameroon | Niger | Kazakhstan | | Djibouti |
| Chad | Rwanda | Kenya | | Georgia |
| Congo, Dem. Rep. | Senegal | Mexico | | Madagascar |
| Congo, Rep. | South Africa | Solomon Islands | | Mauritius |
| Ethiopia | | Uruguay | | Nicaragua |
| Gambia, The | | Vietnam | | São Tomé and Príncipe |
| Ghana | | | | Swaziland |
| Guinea | | | | Uganda |
| Guinea-Bissau | | | | |
| Mali | | | | |
| Mauritania | | | | |
| Micronesia, Fed. Sts. | | | | |
| Nigeria | | | | |
| Niue | | | | |
| Philippines | | | | |
| Sri Lanka | | | | |
| St. Lucia | | | | |
| Tanzania | | | | |
| Thailand | | | | |
| Togo | | | | |

Annex B: Countries with NPFDS

| GEF funded | | Non-GEF funded |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Antigua and Barbuda | Mali | Burkina Faso |
| Armenia | Mauritania | Chile |
| Bahamas, The | Micronesia, Fed. Sts. | Colombia |
| Benin | Mozambique | India |
| Cambodia | Niger | Kazakhstan |
| Cameroon | Nigeria | Kenya |
| Chad | Niue | Mexico |
| Congo, Dem. Rep. | Philippines | Solomon Islands |
| Congo, Rep. | Rwanda | Uruguay |
| Ethiopia | Senegal | Vietnam |
| Fiji | South Africa | |
| Gambia, The | Sri Lanka | |
| Ghana | St. Lucia | |
| Guinea | Tanzania | |
| Guinea-Bissau | Thailand | |
| Kiribati | Togo | |

Annex C: Semistructured Interview Protocol

This annex presents the interview protocol used in this evaluation. Minor editorial corrections have been made.

C.1 Interview Guide: GEF Secretariat NPFE Team

Background/Context

1. What were the reasons behind (initial demand for) introducing NPFEs? Why do them?
2. What did you perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of NPFEs for countries?
 - a. Are those advantages and disadvantages still valid now?
3. Which countries tend to be interested in NPFEs and why?
 - a. LDCs
 - b. African countries
 - c. SIDS
 - d. Large/small portfolio countries
4. What was the response from countries?
5. What was the response from Agencies to the NPFE concept?

Process and Administration/Efficiency (Application to Approval)

6. How was the NPFE initiative initially rolled out?
 - a. How was the NPFE promoted (given the target of 100 countries)?
7. Describe the process of the NPFE application to the time the final document is submitted.
 - a. Take us through the steps.
8. What is the average time for processing an NPFE grant?
9. How do you keep track of NPFEs? Not using PMIS? Institutional memory?
10. Describe the procedure for quality assurance when making an NPFE application?
11. Who is the typical recipient organization/Implementing Agency?
12. Why did some countries show interest and then withdraw?
 - a. What are the reasons for dropped/canceled allocations?
13. How much staff time is spent on NPFE support—what type of support—describe?
14. What are the most common bottlenecks identified in the application process?
15. What are the typical risks identified (special section on this)?
16. Is there any dissemination of the NPFD by you or by countries (except for the GEF website)?
 - a. ECW meetings/GEF Secretariat staff country visits, etc.?
17. Are the NPFDs typically shared among countries?
 - a. Are there good practice examples for the application process?
 - b. Fastest/slowest applicant countries?
 - c. NPFD?

Quality, Utility, and Value Added/Relevance

18. How are the NPFEs different from the National Dialogue Initiatives (NDIs)?
 - a. Is there an overlap/confusion of these two initiatives?
 - b. Both NPFEs and NDIs—covering country coordination, ownership, priorities, etc.?
19. Are the ECWs/NDIs used to discuss NPFE processes/experiences?
 - a. Why/why not? What communications channels are used?
20. To what extent are NPFDs revised—e.g., when priorities change, how are these reflected?
21. To what extent are GEF Secretariat officers receiving project proposals looking at the NPFDs when proposals come in?
22. To what extent are the Agencies looking at NPFDs when developing projects with countries?
 - a. What is the evidence that NPFDs are being used?
23. How many proposals are materializing from the NPFDs in GEF-5?
 - a. What are the underlying reasons for differences? Who is keeping track of this?
24. What are the main strengths/weaknesses of the NPFEs?
25. How can the NPFEs be improved?
26. Do you think countries will update or produce new NPFEs for GEF-6? What is the expectation?
27. What are the alternatives to NPFEs?

Effectiveness/Emerging Results

28. What in your opinion are the main results of the NPFE process/NPFD?
29. To what extent has the NPFD improved (yes/no and why):
 - a. Improved priority setting?
 - b. Transparency and predictability in programming of resources? (e.g., NPFE project proposals are the ones that are funded)

- c. Strengthened country ownership?—How would you define country ownership?
- d. Stronger portfolio approach? How?
- e. Strengthened GEF partnership? How? Examples?
- f. Enhanced capacities of the GEF focal points? How/examples?
- g. Enhanced coordination within countries (i.e., between ministries, private sector, NGOs/CSOs)? How?
- h. Enhanced coordination with GEF Agencies? How?
- i. Impact on the pre-PIF stage? (reduced processing times)
- j. Better alignment of GEF support to national strategies and planning processes? How?
- k. Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits?
- l. More efficient fulfillment of obligations to the conventions?
- m. Enhanced synergies between focal areas? How? Examples?
- n. Better regional collaboration?
- o. More efficient use of STAR resources?

Lessons Learned

30. What can be done better to improve the NPFE process/NPFD?
31. What are some examples of different/alternative programming?

C.2 Topics for Discussion with GEF Secretariat Focal Area Managers

Process and Relevance

1. To what extent have you been involved in the NPFE process? Describe.
 - a. What was your role?
 - b. Purpose in participating in NPFE consultations?

2. What was the main value of the NPFE process?
 3. How are NPFEs different from NDIs?
 - a. Is there an overlap/confusion of these two initiatives? Both NPFEs and NDIs—covering country coordination, ownership, priorities, etc.?
 4. How do you use the NPFDs?
 - a. Are GEF Secretariat officers receiving project proposals looking at the NPFDs when proposals come in?
 5. To what extent have the Agencies been involved in the NPFEs?
 6. To what extent do the Agencies look at NPFDs when developing projects with countries?
 7. How many proposals are materializing from the NPFDs in GEF-5?
 - a. What are the underlying reasons for differences?
 - b. Are you keeping track of this in your focal area?
 8. To what extent do you think countries will submit new/revised NPFEs for GEF-6?
- h. Enhanced coordination with GEF Agencies? How?
 - i. Impact on the pre-PIF stage? (reduced processing times)
 - j. Better alignment of GEF support to national strategies and planning processes? How?
 - k. Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits?
 - l. More efficient fulfillment of obligations to the conventions?
 - m. Enhanced synergies between focal areas? How? Examples?
 - n. Better regional collaboration?
 - o. More efficient use of STAR resources?

Lessons

10. Good examples of NPFEs?
 - a. What makes for a less good one?
11. What are the main lessons of the NPFEs?
12. What can be done better/differently?
13. What can we learn from the NPFE process?

Effectiveness/Results

9. What have been the key results of the NPFE process?
 - a. Improved priority setting?
 - b. Transparency and predictability in programming of resources? (e.g., NPFE project proposals are the ones that are funded)
 - c. Strengthened country ownership?—How would you define country ownership?
 - d. Stronger portfolio approach? How?
 - e. Strengthened GEF partnership? How? Examples?
 - f. Enhanced capacities of the GEF focal points? How/examples?
 - g. Enhanced coordination within countries (i.e., between ministries, private sector, NGOs/CSOs)? How?

C.3 Topics for Discussion with Country Representatives

General/Process/Relevance

1. Why did your country decide to do the NPFE?
 - a. What was the country doing before the NPFE in terms of portfolio planning?
2. How was your NPFE funded (GEF, government, Agency, other)?
3. Do you have a GEF national steering committee?
4. How was the administrative process of the NPFE?
 - a. Hold-ups/problems with the process in obtaining grant
 - b. If you did not take the grant—why did you decide to do an NPFE independently?
 - c. Advantages?

5. How useful was the support given from the GEF Secretariat (guidelines, conceptual clarity, etc.)?
 6. What was the nature, quality, and timeliness of support provided by the GEF Secretariat?
 7. What implementation approach did you use?
 - a. Participatory/inclusive
 8. What stakeholders participated?
 - a. Ministries (name them)
 - b. Civil society (NGOs/CBOs)
 - c. Agencies
 - d. GEF Secretariat
 - e. Private sector
 9. How were the project proposals chosen?
 - a. Developed during the process or predeveloped and fitted
 10. To what extent do you think the NPDF reflects the decisions taken and process followed during this process?
 11. Did the NPFE process change the GEF-5 pipeline in your country? How?
 12. Are the GEF-5 projects stemming from the NPDF or not? Explain.
 13. To what extent did the NPFE link to national priorities? How?
 - a. Was it linked to any other strategies/planning processes? (e.g., UN Development Assistance Framework or World Bank Country Assistance Strategies, poverty reduction strategies/environment strategies)
 14. Has your country done an NDI? If yes:
 - a. How are the NPFEs different from the NDI? Is there an overlap/confusion on the part of countries of these two initiatives (both covering country coordination, ownership, priorities, etc.)? Explain.
 15. How has the NPDF been used during and after its finalization?
 16. To what extent is the NPDF a living document?
 - a. How are changes in priorities reflected (if at all)?
 17. How are the NPDFs used by different stakeholders?
 - a. Examples
 18. What was the main value of the NPFE process? Explain.
- Effectiveness/Results**
19. What have been the key results of the NPFE process?
 - a. Improved priority setting?
 - b. Transparency and predictability in programming of resources? (e.g., NPFE project proposals are the ones that are funded)
 - c. Strengthened country ownership?—How would you define country ownership?
 - d. Stronger portfolio approach? How?
 - e. Strengthened GEF partnership? How? Examples?
 - f. Enhanced capacities of the GEF focal points? How/examples?
 - g. Enhanced coordination within countries (i.e., between ministries, private sector, NGOs/CSOs)? How?
 - h. Enhanced coordination with GEF Agencies? How?
 - i. Impact on the pre-PIF stage? (reduced processing times)
 - j. Better alignment of GEF support to national strategies and planning processes? How?
 - k. Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits?
 - l. More efficient fulfillment of obligations to the conventions?
 - m. Enhanced synergies between focal areas? How? Examples?
 - n. Better regional collaboration?
 - o. More efficient use of STAR resources?

Lessons

20. What has your country learned from the NPFE process?
21. How can the NPFE be strengthened? Made more useful?
22. How can the grant be used in a better way?
 - a. What would you do differently?
23. What is the weakest part of the NPFE?
24. Would you do an NPFE for GEF-6? Why/why not?
25. What is the most important outcome of the NPFE in your view?

C.4 Topics for Discussion with Convention Focal Points

General/Process/Relevance

1. Have you participated in NPFE consultations?
2. Did you find it useful in terms of enhanced collaboration across focal areas?
3. How were project proposals chosen?

Effectiveness/Results

4. What have been the key results of the NPFE process in your view?
 - a. Improved priority setting?
 - b. Transparency and predictability in programming of resources? (e.g., NPFE project proposals are the ones that are funded)
 - c. Strengthened country ownership?—How would you define country ownership?
 - d. Stronger portfolio approach? How?
 - e. Strengthened GEF partnership? How? Examples?
 - f. Enhanced capacities of the GEF focal points? How/examples?
 - g. Enhanced coordination within countries (i.e., between ministries, private sector, NGOs/CSOs)? How?
 - h. Enhanced coordination with GEF Agencies? How?

- i. Impact on the pre-PIF stage? (reduced processing times)
- j. Better alignment of GEF support to national strategies and planning processes? How?
- k. Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits?
- l. More efficient fulfillment of obligations to the conventions?
- m. Enhanced synergies between focal areas? How? Examples?
- n. Better regional collaboration?
- o. More efficient use of STAR resources?

Lessons

5. How can the NPFE be strengthened? Made more useful?
6. How can the grant be used in a better way (what would you do differently)?
7. What is the weakest part of the NPFE process?
8. What is the most important outcome of the NPFE in your view?

C.5 Topics for Discussion with GEF Agencies

Process/Relevance

1. Have you participated in any of the NPFE preparations? Describe.
2. Are you generally invited to participate? Purpose of participation?
3. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the NPFE process and the NPFDs?
4. To what extent is the NPFE in your view a helpful tool/guide for Agencies in their assistance to recipient countries?
 - a. Identification and development of projects
 - b. Building relations/country ownership
 - c. Reduced/increased processing times for projects

5. To what extent is your Agency using these documents (for priorities, etc.) when organizing your support to the respective countries?
 - a. How does the NPDF link to other planning/strategy documents from your Agency? (UN Development Assistance Framework, World Bank Country Assistance Strategies, etc.)
6. How was the NPFE described to the Agencies by the GEF Secretariat?
 - a. How is it different from the NDI?

Effectiveness/Results

7. What have been the key results of the NPFE process so far?
 - a. Improved priority setting?
 - b. Transparency and predictability in programming of resources? (e.g., NPFE project proposals are the ones that are funded)
 - c. Strengthened country ownership?—How would you define country ownership?
 - d. Stronger portfolio approach? How?
 - e. Strengthened GEF partnership? How? Examples?
 - f. Enhanced capacities of the GEF focal points? How/examples?
 - g. Enhanced coordination within countries (i.e., between ministries, private sector, NGOs/CSOs)? How?
 - h. Enhanced coordination with GEF Agencies? How?
 - i. Impact on the pre-PIF stage? (reduced processing times)
 - j. Better alignment of GEF support to national strategies and planning processes? How?
 - k. Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits?
 - l. More efficient fulfillment of obligations to the conventions?
 - m. Enhanced synergies between focal areas? How? Examples?

- n. Better regional collaboration?
- o. More efficient use of STAR resources?

8. Has the NPFE process helped the Agencies—if so, in what way?

Lessons

9. What are the main lessons of the NPFEs?
10. What can be done differently in the future to improve NPFEs/NPDFs?

C.6 Topics for Discussion with NGOs/CSOs

General/Process/Relevance

1. Has your NGO/CSO participated in the NPFE?
 - a. Were you invited to participate or did you request?
2. How were project proposals chosen?
 - a. Developed during the process or predeveloped and fitted
3. To what extent do you think the NPDF reflects the decisions made and process followed during this NPFE process?
4. Has your NGO/CSO participated in any previous GEF meetings—such as national steering committee/NDI?
5. Do you know if the NPDF has been used during and after its finalization?
6. What was the main value of the NPFE process? Explain.

Effectiveness/Results

7. What have been the key results of the NPFE process?
 - a. Improved priority setting?
 - b. Transparency and predictability in programming of resources? (e.g., NPFE project proposals are the ones that are funded)
 - c. Strengthened country ownership?—How would you define country ownership?
 - d. Stronger portfolio approach? How?

- e. Strengthened GEF partnership? How? Examples?
- f. Enhanced capacities of the GEF focal points? How/examples?
- g. Enhanced coordination within countries (i.e., between ministries, private sector, NGOs/CSOs)? How?
- h. Enhanced coordination with GEF Agencies? How?
- i. Impact on the pre-PIF stage? (reduced processing times)
- j. Better alignment of GEF support to national strategies and planning processes? How?
- k. Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits?
- l. More efficient fulfillment of obligations to the conventions?
- m. Enhanced synergies between focal areas? How? Examples?
- n. Better regional collaboration?
- o. More efficient use of STAR resources?

Lessons

- 8. How can the NPFE be strengthened? Made more useful?
- 9. What is the weakest part of the NPFE?
- 10. Would you do an NPFE for GEF-6? Why/why not?

C.7 Non-NPFE Interview/Focus Group Guide

- 1. Why did your country decide not to do the NPFE? Explain.
 - a. What do you perceive as the disadvantages/advantages?
 - b. Existing planning/strategy processes in country
 - c. Slow up GEF project development/processing
 - d. Advice provided by Agencies/others (against NPFEs)
- 2. If funding is available, would you apply for it for GEF-6?
 - a. If yes, why the change?
- 3. What are the main differences between NPFEs and NDIs?
 - a. Do you view the two as complementary or as competing/substituting?
- 4. How does your country link GEF resources to national planning?
 - a. GEF committee
 - b. Link to national strategies
 - c. Link to country/Agency strategies (UN Development Assistance Framework, World Bank Country Assistance Strategies, etc.)
- 5. How can the NPFE become more valuable/improve?
 - a. What would need to change to encourage your country's participation?

Annex D: Stakeholders Interviewed

A. Kabore, Burkina Faso
A.T. Traore, Burkina Faso
Adama Gassama, The Gambia
Adamou Bouhari, UNEP Nairobi
Aime Mbuy Kalombo, Democratic Republic of Congo
Alice Ruhweza, UNDP
Aliou Samba Nyang, The Gambia
Almamy Camara, UNDP, The Gambia
Ana Rukhadze, Georgia
Analisa The, Philippines
Anatula Rodrigues, Mozambique
Andrew Velthaus, GEF
Andriantsalama Ramakararo Côme, Madagascar
Angela Andrade, Colombia
Angela Armstrong, World Bank HQ
Anicet Ellion Donat, Republic of Congo
Annouchka Ramcharrun, Mauritius
Anrea Cruz Angon, Mexico
Antonio Moreno, Mexico
Any Onysko, UNIDO
Aristeo Portugal, Philippines
Arlie Endonica, Philippines
Armen Martirosyan, Armenia
Arsène Rigobert Guelele Kouene Kitono, Republic of Congo
Art Torralba, Philippines
Arturo Arreola Muñoz, Mexico
Assani Ongala, Democratic Republic of Congo
Astrid Helgeland, World Bank HQ
Augustin Ngoliele, Republic of Congo
Augusto Correia, Mozambique
Banemou Tlayor, Mauritania
Banjertluck Jintarit, Thailand
Barbara Cooney, FAO
Barthelemy Mbou-Okouri, Republic of Congo
Beatrice Jokoh, GEF Secretariat
Ben Vickers, Thailand

Berhanu Bezabeh, Ethiopia
Bernade Kabore, Burkina Faso
Bernard Gomez, The Gambia
Berthanu Solomon Genet, Ethiopia
Blaise Freedy Nguimbi, Republic of Congo
Bolangembe Iyongo Ilierre, Democratic Republic of Congo
Bongani Simon Masuku, Swaziland
Bruce Dunn, Asian Development Bank Philippines
BSeb, Burkina Faso
Bunjirtluk Jintaridth, Thailand
Bussabong Kanjanasaka, Thailand
Canuia F. Tavares, Mozambique
Carla, Mozambique
Carlos Mejía, Nicaragua
Carlos Roberto Ortiz Gomez, Mexico
Chan Darong, Cambodia
Chatthida Boonto, Thailand
Chea Sina, Cambodia
Chinpen Chua, Thailand
Chumm Sovanny, Cambodia
Claudia Vásquez Marazzani, Colombia
Conrado Heruela, Thailand
Constance Dlamini, Swaziland
Constantin Ngoyi Moyonbu, Democratic Republic of Congo
Cristina Regunay, Philippines
Dana Orazkeldykyzy, Kazakhstan
Daress Khaewket, Thailand
Dereje Agonafir, Ethiopia
Désiré Iwangou, Republic of Congo
Diana Carolina Barba P., Colombia
Diana Harutyunyan, Armenia
Dijwonou Folly, Togo
Dinesh Aryal, Mozambique
Dismas Bakundukize, Rwanda
Dolores Barrientos, Mexico
Donatien N'Zala, Republic of Congo

Dorelly Estepa, Colombia
 Augustin Kabore, Burkina Faso
 Mamadou Diallo, Guinea
 Meas Pyseth, Cambodia
 Qwanruedee Chotchanathawewong, Thailand
 Selly Camara, Guinea
 Edmé Koffi, Republic of Congo
 Edmond Makimouha, Republic of Congo
 Edwin Domingo, Philippines
 Eidumo B. Michashawn, Swaziland
 Elizabeth Padre, Philippines
 Elmi Obsieh Mohamed, Djibouti
 Elsa Matilde Escobar, Colombia
 Elvira Capazas, Philippines
 Emma Castillo, Philippines
 Eric Lukulunga M., Democratic Republic of Congo
 Ernest Manganda Iloweka, Democratic Republic of
 Congo
 Faissoili Ben Mohadji Attoumane, Comoros
 Felizardo Virtucio, Philippines
 Fenosoa Solofomandimby Andriamahenina,
 Madagascar
 Florence Baula, Philippines
 Francine Bienvenue Mberi Tsimba, Republic of
 Congo
 Francois Kappa, Democratic Republic of Congo
 Futhi Magagula, Swaziland
 Gadiry Soumah, Guinea
 George Ledec, Mozambique
 Gilbert Biongo Ntikala, Democratic Republic of
 Congo
 Gina Nico, Philippines
 Glynda Bathan-Baterina, Philippines
 Godef Villapardo, Philippines
 Grace Parcon, Philippines
 Grigol Lazrievi, Georgia
 GSoule, Burkina Faso
 Guillermo Hernandez, Mexico
 Gustave Doungoube, Central Africa Republic
 Gustavo Fonseca, GEF
 Halima Kolo Mohamed, Nigeria
 Henry Salazar, GEF
 Hesiquio Benitez Dias, Mexico
 Ida Alejandra Guzman Olguin, Mexico
 Iga Bashkihos, Philippines
 Ines Angulo, IDB Washington
 Irakli Shavgulidze, Georgia
 Issa Omar Djama, Djibouti
 Iuseb Kartsivadze, Georgia
 Iván Darío Valencia Rodríguez, Colombia
 Ivan Felipe Leon, Colombia

J.D.M Mukanya Bukasa, Democratic Republic of
 Congo
 Jaime Cavelier, GEF
 Jean Marc Sinnassamy, GEF
 Jean Muneng Mutakej Ilunga, Democratic Republic
 of Congo
 Jerry Lebo, CFPTO
 Jessica Ayala Brito, Mexico
 Jimena Puyana E, Colombia
 Joël Loumeto, Republic of Congo
 Joelle Nkosi Boeli, Democratic Republic of Congo
 Johnathan Ryan, Mexico
 Jonathan Ryan, Mexico
 Jose Armando Alanis De la Rosa, Mexico
 Jose Maria Valenzuela Robles Linares, Mexico
 José Nlandu, Democratic Republic of Congo
 Joseph Ganongo Joseph, Republic of Congo
 Josue Avila, Colombia
 Juanita Nunes, Philippines
 Juergen Hierold, UNIDO
 Jules Felix Emmanuel Randriamiharisoa,
 Madagascar
 Juliana Castaño Isaza, Colombia
 Justin Nantchou Ngoko, Cameroun
 Kan Vibol, Cambodia
 Kanchit Sukjaimitr, Thailand
 Karin Shepardson, World Bank HQ
 Karl Vergel, Philippines
 Kebba Bojang, The Gambia
 Kobkul Rungsijaroj, Thailand
 Kritanand Beeharry, Mauritius
 Lasha Moistrapishvili, Georgia
 Laura Bermudez, Colombia
 Laure Kananura, Rwanda
 Leonie Arguello, Nicaragua
 Liliam Jarquin, Nicaragua
 Lily Uy Hale, GEF
 Louis Bahakoula Mabidi, Republic of Congo
 Lourenço Monteiro de Jesus, São Tomé and
 Príncipe
 LR Ouedraogo, Burkina Faso
 Lucky Dlamini, Swaziland
 Luis Fiallos, Nicaragua
 Madeleine Nyiratuza, Rwanda
 Makia de Mesa, Philippines
 Malak Shukurova, Georgia
 Mallee Aubharadorn, Thailand
 Mamadou Honadia, Burkina Faso
 Mandimby Andrianarisoa Jaona, Madagascar
 Margarita Lavides, Philippines
 Margarita Pérez Villaseñor, Mexico

Maria del Carmen Sacasa, Mexico
 Maria Jakolias, GEF
 Maria Njie, The Gambia
 Mariana Bellot Johas, Mexico
 Marie-Laetitia Busokeye, Rwanda
 Marieta Sakalian, UNEP Rome
 Marina Philipynk, Belarus
 Mary Caleda, Philippines
 Mateus Mutemba, Mozambique
 Mdehin Fissaha, Ethiopia
 Michael Collins, IDB Washington
 Micheal Tankoana, Burkina Faso
 Michel Ikama, Republic of Congo
 Miguel Angel Abaid Sanabria, Mexico
 Miguel Angel Abaid Sanabria, Mexico
 Mike Ipanga, Democratic Republic of Congo
 Minna Maria Kononen, GEF
 Mirey Atallah, Republic of Congo
 Mme Camara Idiatou, Guinea
 Mohamed Ali, Ethiopia
 Mohamed Ali Mlazaaha, Comoros
 Mohamed Sessay, UNEP Nairobi
 Mohamed Yahya Ould Lafdal, Mauritania
 Moinahalima Assani, Comoros
 Montserrat Xilotl Soberón, Mexico
 Alieu Sowe, The Gambia
 Issac Dladla, Swaziland
 Vasi Simelane, Swaziland
 Dodou Darb, The Gambia
 Emmanuel Dlamini, Swaziland
 Emmanuel Ndlangamandla, Swaziland
 Faburama Darboe, The Gambia
 J. D Vilakati, Swaziland
 Joseph Sylla, Guinea
 Maadjou Bah, Guinea
 Momodou Canteh, The Gambia
 Momodou Suwareh, The Gambia
 Prasert Sirinapaporn, Thailand
 Rithirak Long, Cambodia
 Seeku Janko, The Gambia
 Som Thy, Cambodia
 Somanegre Nana, Burkina Faso
 Titus S. Dlamini, Swaziland
 Toure, Guinea
 Ms Ndey S Bakurin, The Gambia
 Bawelile Dladla, Swaziland
 Manjate, Mozambique
 Nadia Vaz, Mozambique
 Natthanich Asvapoositkul, Thailand
 Pulo Taal, The Gambia
 Narawan Chalermoat, Thailand
 Natarika Vayuphak, Thailand
 Natarika Vayuphak, Thailand
 Natthanich Aussawaphusitkul, Thailand
 Navirak Ngin, Cambodia
 Nestor Nikobagomba, Burundi
 Nichamon Akarasutt, Thailand
 Nicole Glineur, GEF
 Nina Narciso, Philippines
 Nino Antadze, Georgia
 Nino Chikovani, Georgia
 Nino Kvarnadze, Georgia
 Nino Tkhlava, Georgia
 Nopporn Jarungkiat, Thailand
 Nualphan Bhawaves, Thailand
 Nuchanart Supanasri, Thailand
 Nucharee Phuedphol, Thailand
 Nurmeded Jemal Abdelselam, Ethiopia
 Olivier Balima, Burkina Faso
 Oranuch Lorphensri, Thailand
 Oscar Manuel Ramirez Flores, Mexico
 Ousainou Touray, The Gambia
 P. Sawadogo, Burkina Faso
 Pamela Crivelli, GEF Trustee
 Panuwat Kamuttachart, Thailand
 Paola Agostini, World Bank HQ
 Parijuat Chuntaketta, Thailand
 Parmananda Ragen, Mauritius
 Patanan Tarin, Thailand
 Pathorian Tarin, Thailand
 Paula Caballero, Colombia
 Philomène Mwanba Kyungu, Democratic Republic
 of Congo
 Pierre Batoungasio, Republic of Congo
 Pinyo Ketsa, Thailand
 Pires Cristiano, Mozambique
 PM, Burkina Faso
 Poonsin Srisangkom, Thailand
 Prasert Sirinapaporn, Thailand
 Prof Vute Wangwacharakul, Thailand
 Prosper Kalombo Kayembe, Democratic Republic
 of Congo
 Quynh Xuan Thi Phan, GEF
 Ramesh Ramankutty, GEF
 Ramiro Magaña, Mexico
 Raphael Lavides, Philippines
 Ratana Maanprasit, Thailand
 Raúl Ernesto Murguía Rosete, Mexico
 Rawlestone Moore, GEF
 Raymond Babanawo, Ghana
 Renato Cruz, Philippines
 Richard H. Hosier, World Bank HQ

Richard Saing, Philippines
 Rigobert Ramamonjisoa, Madagascar
 Rirache Robleh Houssein, Djibouti
 Rito Mabunda, Mozambique
 Robel Meseret, Ethiopia
 Robert Erath, UNEP Panama
 Roberto Araquistain, Nicaragua
 Roberto Leon, Colombia
 Rodolfo Godinez Rosales, Mexico
 Rose Mukankomeje, Rwanda
 Saandia Said Ibrahim, Comoros
 Sagno Roger, Guinea
 Said M'madi Abdallah, Comoros
 Sambou Nget, The Gambia
 Sandra Valenzuela de Narváez, Colombia
 Sankung B.Sagnia, Republic of Congo
 Saowalak Winyoonuntakul, Thailand
 Saowaluck Winyoonuntakul, Thailand
 Sara El Choufi, GEF
 Sasidara Phoopakdee, Thailand
 Sasipha Jeerasukthaweeikul, Thailand
 Sathit janyaswat, Thailand
 Saule Zhurynova, Kazakhstan
 Sébastien Delahaye, AfDB Tunis
 Sekou Toure, AfDB (ex GEF)
 Shandy Hubilla, Philippines
 Siriporn Tanthiwanich, Thailand
 Siv Tokle, World Bank HQ
 Sok Narin, Cambodia
 Somachai Subparinyaporn, Thailand
 Somjittiya Srisuwan, Thailand
 Sooksiri Chamsuk, Thailand
 Sophiko Akhobadze, Georgia
 Sovithea Khun, Cambodia
 Sthembiso Hlatshwako, Swaziland
 Sukrita Pongsapan, Thailand
 Sumedha Ramprosand, Mauritius
 Suppowan Wongprayoon, Thailand
 Susan Waithaka, GEF
 Sutharin Koonphol, Thailand
 Suwimol Saenanok, Thailand
 T. Manbanko, Swaziland
 Tamar Kvantaliani, Georgia
 Tatiana Nuñez Suárez, Colombia
 Teddy Monroy, Philippines
 Teeraporn Wiriwutikorn, Thailand
 Thunnarin Na-Nakorn, Thailand
 Tiplada Thongtapao, Thailand
 Va Chanmakaravuth, Cambodia
 Verania Chao, Mexico
 Vincent Kasulu Seya Makonga, Democratic
 Republic of Congo
 Voktor Martirosyan, Armenia
 Wanlop Preechamart, Thailand
 Wanlop Preechamatt, Thailand
 Warapong Waramit, Thailand
 Warraporn Hirunwatsin, Thailand
 Wilfred M. Nxumalo, Swaziland
 William Ernest Ehlers, GEF
 Wubua Mekonnen, Ethiopia
 Yoko Watanabe, GEF
 Youbou Biagha Daldy Rustichel, Republic of Congo
 Zarasoa Zarasoa, Madagascar
 Zaxharia Dlamini, Swaziland

Annex E: Online Survey Instruments

The online survey was administered through [SurveyMonkey](#) website from June 1 and closed August 13, 2013; the first response was received June 3 and the last July 30. The survey had four separate modules—OFP and staff, executing agency, Implementing Agency, and CSOs—which were administered in English, French, and Spanish. The questions relevant to the NPFE were part of a comprehensive questionnaire that also included questions on other performance-related concerns such as the GEF STAR, the project cycle, cofinancing, results-based management, and knowledge management. This approach was adopted for transactional convenience; the GEF Independent Evaluation Office was trying to reach out to the same set of stakeholders for other concurrent evaluations and studies. Only questions relevant to the NPFE have been presented in this annex; minor editorial corrections have been made.

E.1 OFP Module

1. Name of GEF member country the respondent represents (name of country)
2. The response is being filled in by (options: OFP, OFP staff, other—specify)
3. Did your country undertake an NPFE during the GEF-5 period?
4. If no, then why did your country decide against undertaking an NPFE? Would you apply for an NPFE in GEF-6?
5. If yes, then (a) from GEF resources or (b) entirely through other resources?
6. Who funded the NPFE in your country: the GEF, GEF Agency, government, other—specify
7. Please check the applicable boxes to indicate stakeholders who participated in the NPFE consultations (options: environment ministry [ministry of natural resources, etc.], finance ministry [ministry of economy, etc.], other ministries, CSOs, private sector, GEF Agencies [specify], GEF Secretariat, others [specify])
8. The NPFE has led to (assess in terms of level of agreement with the statements: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, unable to assess):
 - Improved priority setting
 - Improved transparency and predictability in programming of resources
 - Strengthened country ownership
 - Stronger portfolio approach
 - Strengthened GEF partnership
 - Enhanced capacities of the GEF OFP
 - Enhanced coordination among ministries within countries
 - Enhanced coordination within countries between government and civil society
 - Enhanced coordination within countries between government and private sector
 - Enhanced coordination with GEF Agencies

- Reduced project processing times
 - Improved alignment of GEF support with national planning processes
 - Improved alignment of GEF support with national strategies
 - Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits
 - More efficient fulfillment of obligations to the conventions
 - Enhanced synergies between focal areas
 - Enhanced regional collaboration
 - More efficient use of STAR resources
9. Lessons and future issues for the NPFE: check the boxes that represent your view on how the NPFE can be improved for GEF-6 (options):
- Better linked to Agency strategies (UN Development Assistance Framework, World Bank Country Assistance Strategies, etc.)
 - Better integrated into government planning processes
 - A more strategic document covering four-year cycle (in line with GEF replenishment)
 - A more strategic document covering longer time frame (e.g., 6- or 10-year strategy)
 - Consist of an aim to provide a list of projects
 - Improved guidance from the GEF Secretariat on the NPFE
 - Greater participation of the GEF Secretariat in NPFE consultations
 - Mandatory process for all countries
 - Nonbinding for all countries
 - Other (specify)
- (options: Asian Development Bank, AfDB, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, FAO, IDB, International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, and World Bank Group)
3. How many GEF projects has your agency executed so far (including those presently under execution)? (options: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or more)
 4. Which country or countries are you presently covering through your GEF-related work? (list countries)
 5. Was your agency invited to participate in the workshop for NPFE? (options: yes, our agency was invited and we participated in the workshop; yes, our agency was invited but we were not able to participate in the workshop; no, our agency was not invited; do not have information on whether we were invited and whether we participated in the workshop)
 6. The NPFE has led to (assess in terms of level of agreement with the statements: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, unable to assess):
 - Improved priority setting
 - Improved transparency and predictability in programming of resources
 - Strengthened GEF partnership
 - Enhanced coordination with GEF Agencies
 - Improved alignment of GEF support with national planning processes
 - Improved alignment of GEF support with national strategies
 - Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits
 7. In your opinion, what are the most important outcomes of the NPFE? (list and explain)

E.2 Executing Agency Module

1. Name of the executing agency
2. Name of the GEF Implementing Agency that supervises the executing agency's work

E.3 GEF Agency Country Staff Module

1. The GEF Agency where the respondent presently works

2. How long have you been associated with GEF activities (also include the period that you may have been associated while working at other organizations)? (options: less than a year, 1–2 years, 3–5 years, 5–10 years, more than 10 years)
3. Which country or countries is the respondent presently covering through Agency's GEF-related work? (list the countries)
4. Did the country you are based in (or cover) undertake an NPFE exercise? (options: yes, we undertook this exercise with GEF funding support; yes, we undertook this exercise entirely through non-GEF resources; no)
5. Was your Agency invited to participate in the workshop for the NPFE? (options: yes, our Agency was invited and we participated in the workshop; yes, our Agency was invited but we were not able to participate in the workshop; no, our Agency was not invited; do not have information on whether we were invited and whether we participated in the workshop)
6. The NPFE has led to (assess in terms of level of agreement with the statements: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, unable to assess):
 - Improved priority setting
 - Improved transparency and predictability in programming of resources
 - Strengthened GEF partnership
 - Enhanced coordination with GEF Agencies
 - Reduced project processing times
 - Improved alignment of GEF support with national planning processes
 - Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits
 - More efficient fulfillment of obligations to the conventions
 - Enhanced synergies between focal areas
 - Enhanced regional collaboration
 - More efficient use of STAR resources
7. Lessons and future issues for the NPFE: check the boxes that represent your view on how the NPFE can be improved for GEF-6 (options):
 - Better linked to Agency strategies (UN Development Assistance Framework, World Bank Country Assistance Strategies, etc.)
 - Better integrated into government planning processes
 - A more strategic document covering four-year cycle (in line with GEF replenishment)
 - A more strategic document covering longer time frame (e.g., 6- or 10-year strategy)
 - Consist of an aim to provide a list of projects
 - Improved guidance from the GEF Secretariat on the NPFE
 - Greater participation of the GEF Secretariat in NPFE consultations
 - Mandatory process for all countries
 - Nonbinding for all countries
 - NPFE should be abolished
 - Other (specify)
8. In your opinion, what are the important outcomes of the NPFE? (explain)

E.4 CSO Module

1. Name of the country where you are based
2. Which of the following best describes the CSO you work with? (options: local/grassroots NGO, national-level NGO, community-based organization, network of NGOs, autonomous educational institution, other—specify)
3. Are you aware of the NPFEs that are being supported by the GEF to help the countries? (options: yes, no)
4. If yes, did the country you are based in (or cover) undertake an NPFE exercise? (options: yes, no, don't know)
5. Was your agency invited to participate in the workshop for NPFE? (options: yes, our agency

was invited and we participated in the workshop; yes, our agency was invited but we were not able to participate in the workshop; no, our agency was not invited; do not have information on whether we were invited and whether we participated in the workshop)

6. To what extent were inputs from your CSO reflected in the NPFE decision and documents? (options: all or almost all of our suggestions were considered and taken onboard, some of our suggestions were considered and taken onboard, our suggestions were considered but none were taken onboard, our suggestions were not considered)
7. The NPFE has led to (assess in terms of level of agreement with the statements: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, unable to assess):
 - Improved priority setting
 - Improved transparency and predictability in programming of resources

- Strengthened GEF partnership
 - Improved alignment of GEF support with national planning processes
 - Improved alignment of GEF support with national strategies
 - Increased responsiveness to country priorities for generating global environmental benefits
 - More efficient fulfillment of obligations to the conventions
 - Enhanced synergies between focal areas
 - Enhanced regional collaboration
 - More efficient use of STAR resources
 - Greater involvement of CSOs in planning of the national portfolio
8. In your opinion, what are the most important outcomes of the NPFE? (explain)

Annex F:

NPFE Processing Steps under World Bank Small Grants Procedures

This annex is based on information from the GEF Secretariat ([GEFSEC 2012b](#)).

At the concept stage, the GEF team discussed the concept with all relevant units in the Bank, including legal, safeguard, Loan Department (LOA), procurement, and Trust Fund. The outcome of the discussion included agreement on exemption from safeguard review, preparation of a standard model letter of agreement, and a disbursement letter that are applicable to the direct access modalities (including NPFE). It was also agreed that the GEF send the World Bank country directors a letter informing them of the GEF direct access proposals in the country for information purposes and to request support from the country offices. All country officers processing NPFEs should get Trust Fund accreditation and a SAP profile.

F.1 Project Preparation

1. Upon receipt of application, the application package is received by the program manager, the GEF Secretariat financial management specialist (FMS); the country officer (or task team leader in Bank terms) reviews the proposal, ensures that the budget and proposed activities are in line with the objectives of the NPFEs, and, as necessary, discusses with the OFP possible revisions to the budget or seeks any needed clarification.
2. Upon receipt of a proposal from a country, send a letter to the World Bank country director describing the NPFE and the process involved and the support requested from the country office. The letter should be signed by the task team leader, and sent through the Delegate Assembly email account.
3. The country officer sends a letter/email to the OFP through the NPFE email account, explaining the project processing procedures; in particular, urging the OFP to contact the ministry of finance regarding countersignature of the grant agreement. Also ask the OFP to contact the respective World Bank country office to seek administrative support. When the GEF Secretariat receives a response from the country director to the letter in Step #1 above, provide the contact person's information to the OFP to facilitate communication and support. If this has not already been done, send the application package to the OFP providing a summary of the NPFE process, the NPFE proposal template, instructions for completing the forms, and the simplified combined financial management and procurement assessment template. In the meantime, the country officer engages in consultation with the country to provide further clarification on the application.
4. After technical clearance by the country officer, a cover memo should be sent to the CEO for clearance.

5. Simultaneously, the GEF Secretariat FMS contacts the local FMS to prepare the financial management and procurement assessment. Once assessment is cleared, the FMS notifies the country officer to move to the next step.
6. At any point in time upon receipt of the proposal, the country officer/task team leader should do the following:
 - (a) Within the GEF Secretariat, load the relevant information into the PMIS to obtain a PMIS ID number for each proposal. The country officer/task team leader should send the PMIS ID number to the GEF Trustee so the Trustee can transfer funds from the GEF Trust Fund to the NPFE main Trust Fund (TF071555). The External Affairs team should continue updating the information in the PMIS for various milestone dates throughout the proposal approval process.
 - (b) Via SAP, prepare the Activity Initiation Summary to obtain a project ID number, and the Grant Funding Request to obtain the Trust Fund number. Both the Activity Initiation Summary and Grant Funding Request have to be sent, approved, and released by the appropriate staff within the GEF Secretariat.

In completing the Activity Initiation Summary and Grant Funding Request, the country officer/task team leader has to ensure all information in the template is complete; this includes identifying key project team members: (a) procurement specialist, (b) financial management specialist, (c) lawyer for the project. Any missing information in the Activity Initiation Summary or Grant Funding Request, while not preventing approval or release of the form, will hinder disbursement at a later stage. The Bank's disbursing unit, CTRDM (Loan Department, Disbursement Management Division), will not effect disbursement if information is missing.

F.2 Clearances and Approvals

7. Upon receiving Financial Management Risk Assessments clearance, the country officer/task team leader prepares the grant letter agreement and the disbursement letter, following the agreed-upon model templates; nothing should be changed in this template. The information to provide in the template includes the country name; the recipient official's address; the amount of the grant; and any missing information in the disbursement letter including the name of the financial institution to receive the grant amount, the preferred currency of the country, and the type of designated account—either pooled or segregated.
8. First Bank Clearance Request (from Trust Funds Accounting Clearance Team [TACT] and LOA): Once the draft grant letter agreement and disbursement letter are completed, the task team leader sends them to TACT1 (Trust Fund Accounting) and LOA-TF (Loan Department) for clearance (service standard: five business days). The email should include a copy to the GEF Trustee, the Financial Management Unit, and be filed in the World Bank's Integrated Records Information System (IRIS). The email to TACT1 and LOA-TF must include the following information: (a) project number; (b) child trust fund number; (c) grant funding request number; (d) text of the draft letter (grant) agreement; (e) text of the draft disbursement letter; (f) simplified financial management assessment; (g) approved project proposal; (h) audit waiver, if applicable; (i) confirmation of bank account details; and (j) names of the country officer/task team leader, lawyer, and FMS.
9. Second Bank Clearance Request (from Legal): Upon clearance by TACT1 and LOA-TF, the country officer/task team leader revises/updates as necessary and sends the final Word

version of the grant letter agreement, disbursement letter, and transmittal letter to the contact point in Legal, requesting clearance.

- 10.** Simultaneously, the country officer/task team leader sends TACT1 and LOA-TF clearance emails to the GEF Trustee, together with the PMIS ID number. This last step will trigger the Trustee to transfer funds from the GEF Trust Fund account to the NPFE main Trust Fund account (TF071555).
- 11.** Upon clearance of the grant letter agreement and the transmittal letter by Legal, the country officer/task team leader makes two copies each of the grant letter agreement and the disbursement letter and one copy of the transmittal letter. The GEF CEO signs the grant letter agreement, the disbursement letter, and the transmittal letter (this is the CEO approval date in the PMIS). The country officer/task team leader updates the PMIS accordingly. Relevant documents should always be filed in IRIS.
- 12.** The country officer/task team leader sends the following to the client via the relevant World Bank country office: (a) two signed copies of the grant letter agreement, (b) one signed copy of the disbursement letter (keep the second copy for the GEF Secretariat file), (c) the transmittal letter, and (d) an original withdrawal application.

Simultaneously, the country officer/task team leader sends an electronic copy of these signed documents as well as the withdrawal application to the OFP/client and the contact person in the World Bank country office, informing them that the signed originals are being sent via Bank pouch to the country office and requesting them to send the package to the client/government.

- 13.** Upon receipt of the pouch, the country office sends the two signed originals of the grant

letter agreement, the signed original of the disbursement letter, and the withdrawal application to the OFP or the ministry of finance for countersignature. The recipient has 30 days to countersign the grant letter agreement. They should return the following to the GEF Secretariat within 30 days via the World Bank country office: (a) the countersigned grant letter agreement (this is the date of grant signing in the PMIS); (b) an authorized signature specimen; and (c) the completed withdrawal application, if ready. The country office contact follows up on the countersigned original documents and ensures all three items listed here are returned to the country office to send by pouch to the GEF Secretariat.

F.3 On Receipt of Countersigned Original of the Grant Letter Agreement

- 14.** Upon receipt of the countersigned grant letter agreement, the authorized signature specimen, and the withdrawal application, the External Affairs team scans these and keeps a copy of each for the GEF Secretariat's own internal recordkeeping and sends a letter to the OFP acknowledging receipt of the countersigned letter agreement.
- 15.** The task team leader sends the original hard copy of the following to Official Documents in Legal: (a) countersigned grant letter agreement, (b) CEO signed disbursement letter, (c) authorized signature specimen, and (d) official transmittal memo based on a template provided by Legal. The task team leader sends a PDF version of the grant letter agreement, disbursement letter, and authorized signature specimen to Legal, LOA-TF, TACT, and CTRLD. The original withdrawal application should be sent to CTRLDM (Step #18 below).

F.4 On Activation of Child Trust Fund Account and Disbursement

16. Third Bank Request to activate child trust fund (from TACT) and Fourth Bank Request to transfer funds (from Program Accountant): These two requests can be sent in one email addressed to TACT and the Program Accountant in sequence.
 - (a) Request TACT activate the child trust fund account.
 - (b) Request the Program Accountant transfer funds from the NPFE parent account (TF071555) to the child trust fund account (grant funding request).
17. The Program Accountant will confirm allocation of funds to the child trust fund to the country officer/task team leader, who will forward the confirmation to LOA-TF/CTRDM's trust fund service account.
18. Fifth Bank Request to withdraw funds to recipient bank account (from CTRDM): The country officer/task team leader scans the withdrawal application, keeps the scanned copy at the GEF Secretariat, and sends the original withdrawal application to CTRDM. Simultaneously, the country officer/task team leader sends an email to the CTRDM trust fund service account to alert it that the original withdrawal application is on its way via interoffice mail and to request CTRDM to effect disbursement of funds to the recipient's bank account.
19. Within CTRDM, the entire grant is reviewed for completeness of information, including the grant agreement, the disbursement letter, the signature specimen, the recipient country's bank name and account information, SWIFT information, etc., via the LOA folder; and information from the Activity Initiation

Summary and the Grant Funding Request.¹ When CTRDM is satisfied with the information, it will give the green light by sending an email to Treasury (Treasury Operations Banking) to effect actual payment of the grant fund to the account of the recipient country.²

F.5 Implementation

20. The country officer/task team leader is responsible for monitoring implementation progress of the project and for assisting the country as necessary in implementation, including answering questions on procurement, reporting requirements, etc.

F.6 Reporting

21. The country officer/task team leader is responsible for updating the GEF Secretariat PMIS to record key dates, such as the CEO approval date, the grant signing date, etc.
22. The country officer/task team leader is responsible for providing semiannual reports to the GEF Trustee on how much grant funds have been disbursed to a particular country for preparing the report, following the specific template provided by the GEF Trustee.
23. The country officer/task team leader should ensure that the country submits to LOA-TF the semiannual financial report (the template of which is Attachment IV of the disbursement letter: interim financial report). The report is

¹ This is why complete information should be included in the Activity Initiation Summary and the Grant Funding Request, since any missing information will delay CTRDM at this stage in transferring funds to the client.

² At this point, the country officer/task team leader can log into the Client Connection website to see the status of funds for a particular NPFE and to monitor whether the funds have been disbursed to the client. If they have not, contact CTRDM to determine the reason.

used to show and account for all funds used and provides evidence of payments made out of the grant fund, and the grant amount disbursed to date. The country officer/task team leader provides assistance to the country as necessary to complete the interim financial report.³

F.7 Project Completion and Closing

24. Upon completion of the project, the client country/OFP should send the final output (reports to conventions) to the relevant convention with a copy to the GEF Secretariat. The country officer/task team leader reviews the report and provides comments as necessary.
25. Separately, the GEF FMS will request the local FMS to undertake an ex post review (in case the project is audit exempt) and to complete an ex post review report and send these to the GEF FMS.⁴ Simultaneously, the country officer/task team leader sends a letter to the OFP asking it to fill out a final withdrawal application to be attached to the financial report for submission to the GEF. The financial report format is the same format as for the interim financial report attached to the disbursement letter.

³Note that the interim financial report should be submitted together with the request for withdrawal application, even though no withdrawal is requested. The withdrawal application also serves as the reporting document that accompanies the interim financial report.

⁴For those countries with an audit exemption, the FMS should arrange with the local FMS to undertake a review of all financial transactions, including funds paid to consultants, expenses incurred in the preparation of the report, etc., and to examine all evidence (such as official receipts) to ensure that the funds are used in accordance with the intended use of the grant and the disbursement policy of the World Bank.

26. In case the OFP has agreed that an audit report is to be submitted at the end of the project, the OFP should send the report prepared by an auditor when ready, plus a financial report and final withdrawal application to the country officer/task team leader. If an audit exemption has been granted, the OFP sends only the financial report and withdrawal application to the country officer/task team leader, who in turn forwards these to the GEF FMS for review.
27. The FMS will liaise with the local FMS to review the financial report and coordinate input of financial information into the Bank's Audit Report Compliance System (ARCS) to complete the closing process.
28. The FMS will send the financial report and withdrawal application to LOA (CTRDM), which will review this. Upon satisfaction of all information, LOA will notify the country officer/task team leader on the final status of disbursements, including amounts disbursed for each category and the remaining balance, if any.⁵
29. Upon receipt of the notification of disbursement status and closing of the account from the Bank's finance officer, the country officer/task team leader prepares a closing notification and sends it to the OFP with a copy to the Bank's Country Management Unit.
30. Lastly, the country officer/task team leader completes the letter of representation, which is done on an annual basis for each child trust fund.

⁵If there is a balance, i.e., not all funds were used, it will need to be refunded to the Bank before closing can take place.

Annex G:

NPFE Processing Steps under the Ancillary Expense Agreement Policy

This annex is based on information from the GEF Secretariat (GEFSEC 2012b).

1. At the request of the OFP indicating interest in undertaking an NPFE, the NPFE team sends the application package to the OFP. The package includes a letter providing a summary of the NPFE,¹ the NPFE proposal template, and instructions for completing the forms. In the meantime, the NPFE team engages in consultation with the country to provide further clarification on the application.
2. Upon receipt of the application, the NPFE program manager reviews the proposal, ensures the budget and proposed activities are in line with the NPFE's objectives, and as necessary discusses with the OFP possible revisions to the budget or seeks any needed clarification.
3. Simultaneously, the project manager/task team leader should do the following: (a) within the GEF Secretariat, load the relevant information into the PMIS to obtain a PMIS ID number for each NPFE; (b) send the final NPFE proposal to the designated staff member to create an IO number; (c) via SAP, and using the IO number, prepare the Grant Funding Request. This request has to be sent to and approved/released by the appropriate staff within the Secretariat.
4. When the proposal and budget are considered acceptable, the task team leader prepares the AEA and has the CEO sign the agreement.
5. The NPFE team sends the signed AEA, together with Attachment 2, Request for Grantee ID,² to the client either directly or via the World Bank country office, depending on client preference.
6. Upon receipt of the countersigned agreement, the NPFE team should do the following: (a) scan the original signed agreement and save it in the World Bank's Integrated Records Information System (IRIS); (b) send the original signed agreement to Legal; and (c) send a scanned copy of the countersigned agreement to the Trust Funds Accounting Clearance Team (TACT) to request activation of the child trust fund account. Upon receipt of a message from TACT on activation of the child trust fund, the task team leader should send the designated staff member (a) the TACT activation confirmation email, (b) a scanned copy of the countersigned AEA so an ID can be requested to process the accounts payable for disbursement; (c) the approved Grant Funding Request

¹ The letter should emphasize the importance of keeping all relevant expense records as indicated in paragraph 9 of the AEA.

² This form is used to obtain banking information from the client.

trust fund number; and (d) a completed Attachment 3.

7. Upon receipt of the above, the designated staff member should request the funds transfer from the pass-through account to the child

trust fund and request payment to the client's bank account.

8. The NPFE team updates the PMIS, including the event checklist, and files all relevant documents in IRIS.

Annex H: Management Response

This annex presents the management response to this report, which was presented to the GEF Council in November 2013 as [GEF/ME/C.45/06](#). Minor editorial corrections have been made.

H.1 Introduction

This is the management response to document GEF/ME/C.45/06, “Midterm Evaluation of the National Portfolio Formulation Exercise,” undertaken by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office. The evaluation was mandated by the GEF Council at its 38th meeting in July 2010 and provides an independent assessment of the NPFE. The management response focuses on the main conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation has highlighted many of the challenges experienced in implementation of the NPFE. In general, the Secretariat appreciates the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the NPFE midterm evaluation. The GEF Secretariat welcomes the emphasis in the evaluation on providing a formative assessment to improve the initiative for GEF-6.

H.2 Conclusions

The Secretariat welcomes [Conclusion 1](#), which indicates that the NPFE is relevant to the GEF mandate and policies and is relevant to the country needs. This also contributes considerably to the

achievement of the primary goals of the CSP led by the GEF Secretariat in GEF-5: strengthening the capacity of national governments to operate effectively within the GEF system. We agree with the finding that the NPFE was seen as relevant and a beneficial first step in building country involvement in portfolio and project development through improved coordination between different national stakeholders.

The Secretariat takes note of [Conclusion 2](#) that “Uptake of the NPFE initiative was low due to delays in groundwork for implementation and difficulties experienced by the countries in accessing the GEF grant for the initiative.” The Secretariat would like to stress that it worked intensely with the World Bank to identify what was felt to be the best of the existing procedures to apply for direct access.

The Secretariat agrees with [Conclusion 3](#) which highlights how the NPFE initiative enhanced country ownership through consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and through the creation of national steering committees. Indeed, the Secretariat has been informed that countries perceived the NPFEs as a turning point in their relationships with the GEF Agencies as it made them more responsive to country needs. As the evaluation correctly pointed out, country stakeholders perceived transparency to have increased because of the NPFEs.

The Secretariat agrees with [Conclusion 4](#), which points out the relevance of a structured and

systematic approach for country-level programming through national steering committees and alignment of GEF support with national strategies.

The Secretariat agrees with [Conclusion 5](#) that countries with lower capacities need more support in identifying projects that are eligible for GEF funding. As such, different capacity-building measures are crucial in supporting country ownership and national-level programming. Actually, several countries included workshops in their NPFs aiming to enhance technical capacity at the country level in order to propose eligible project ideas.

The Secretariat agrees with [Conclusion 6](#) that the administrative burden for executing relatively small grants under the NPFs was substantive. A large amount of time was spent with World Bank colleagues discussing the details of the procedures and how to simplify them. Hand-holding was the approach taken in helping the OFPs navigate the system. GEF staff also had a learning curve under severe pressure to get the NPFs done. While all the technical support implications were identified, there was a lack of understanding of the GEF and the NPFs on different levels, especially at the country offices, though the staff there were always very helpful.

While the circumstances described in the document are correct, the impact was relatively low. Projects continued to be reviewed and later included in work programs. There are cases where most of the STAR allocations were used before the NPFs were delivered, and at least 14 countries submitted PIFs that were cleared while they were still undertaking their NPFs.

The Secretariat takes note of [Conclusion 7](#) that “The guidance provided on NPFs did not adequately address issues related to eligibility for GEF funding, cofinancing requirements, and GEF modalities.” The Secretariat recalls that initial guidelines available in August 2010 focused on how to prepare the NPF application, as well as the suggested content of the NPFs. For other issues referred to by the evaluation such as eligibility,

cofinancing requirements, and GEF modalities, countries were referred to the programming document for GEF-5, as well as other policy documents that contained a good description of the above-mentioned subjects. In addition, the Secretariat would like to mention that senior technical officers participated in the NPF discussions at the country level when requested.

H.3 Recommendations

The Secretariat welcomes [Recommendation 1](#) that “The NPF initiative should continue since it is highly relevant to support countries in addressing the pre-identification phase of the project cycle.” The initial experience from the NPF has been very positive in terms of setting up and/or strengthening coordination mechanisms and involving new stakeholders in discussions about future priorities at the country level and should be promoted.

The Secretariat agrees with [Recommendation 2](#) to continue to implement the revised NPF by the Secretariat, to maintain neutrality between countries and GEF Agencies, and to provide funding for a country-led NPF on a voluntary basis.

The Secretariat agrees with [Recommendation 3](#) to support programming exercises at the end of a GEF phase rather than at the start of a new phase, to ensure that countries are ready for the new phase when it starts. In this regard, the Secretariat intends to begin a new round of NPFs in January 2014 with a view to preparing for GEF-6. The Secretariat agrees that this effort could focus especially on supporting LDCs and SIDS that ask to conduct NPFs before the start of GEF-6, but the exercise will be available to all interested recipient countries.

The Secretariat agrees with [Recommendation 4](#): “The capacity development initiatives of the GEF—including the NPF, National Capacity Self-Assessments, National Dialogue Initiatives, and the Capacity Development Strategy—should aim

to support a more comprehensive understanding of the GEF with country-level partners and stakeholders, especially in LDCs and SIDS.” The Secretariat will seek to fine-tune the approach as suggested.

The Secretariat agrees with [Recommendation 5](#), in that current NPFE guidelines should be

revised to provide countries with more detailed information on key concepts and issues related to project preparation, as well as to refine the content of the NPFDs. To that effect, the guidance for the next round of NPFEs will provide more details as suggested.

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| 59 | GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Moldova (1994–2009) | 2011 |

Evaluation Documents

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| ED-4 | The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2010 | 2010 |
| ED-3 | Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluations | 2008 |
| ED-2 | GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines | 2008 |

Learning Products

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|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| LP-3 | The Journey to Rio+20: Gathering Evidence on Expectations for the GEF | 2012 |
| LP-2 | Climate Change and the GEF | 2010 |
| LP-1 | Biodiversity and the GEF | 2010 |

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