

Process Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership Draft Approach Paper

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Task Team Leader

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Approach Paper: Process Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership

Background

During early years of its establishment, GEF implemented its activities through three agencies – the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP. From 1999 onwards seven other multilateral organizations were added to the GEF partnership in a phased manner and these progressively gained direct access to GEF resources. In 2006, a level playing field was established with abolishment of the corporate budget for the three original agencies. During the GEF-5 replenishment negotiations it was agreed that, within the framework of paragraph 28 of the GEF Instrument, the GEF partnership needs to be broadened further. The participants believed that there may be benefits from the expansion as it could provide countries greater choice and could reduce the overhead costs of resource delivery. The participants specified that such entities could be accredited for collaboration with the GEF if: (i) the proposal is endorsed by the country's GEF operational focal point; and (ii) the entity meets the GEF minimum fiduciary standards, and the cost of such an assessment is borne by the entity; and (iii) the entity demonstrates a clear comparative advantage (GEF/R.5/32/CRP.1).

The expansion of the GEF Partnership is aimed at enhancing country ownership in the GEF operations and to give recipient countries greater choice in terms of agencies with which they work. The move towards expansion of GEF partnership was consistent with the changes taking place in the larger context in which GEF operated. In the international negotiations increased attention was being given to reliance on national institutions for undertaking development activities and building necessary capacities for this. For example, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and Accra Agenda for Action (2008) had called for greater role of national institutions. Similarly, the Copenhagen Accord (2009) also emphasized the need for providing developing improved access to funding for activities to address climate change.

Implementation of the GEF-5 period started in July 2010. In the November 2010 Council, the Secretariat presented a paper on 'Broadening of the GEF Partnership under Paragraph 28 of the GEF Instrument' (GEF/C.39/7/Rev.2) that discussed the key policy issues involved in the broadening. Based on the recommendations of the paper, the Council decided that the broadening will be undertaken on a pilot basis; the new agencies accredited to the GEF will be called project agencies; and, the rules and criteria for accreditation of the new agencies would also be applicable to the older agencies to ensure a level playing field. In its May 2011 meeting, the GEF Council approved the policies, procedures, and criteria for accrediting new institutions. The Council also instructed the Evaluation Office to initiate an evaluation of the pilot at the earlier of two milestones: (a) two years after the first five agencies have been accredited or (b) January 2015.

Various policy documents approved by the Council provided a basis for the development of the criteria and procedure for accreditation. The criteria for accreditation¹ drew heavily from the GEF Fiduciary Standards² approved by the Council in 2007. The 'GEF Policies Environmental and Social Safeguards and

¹ PR/IN/04

² GEF/C.31/6

Gender Mainstreaming³ were reviewed by the Council in its May 2011 meeting. It approved the policy on gender mainstreaming, whereas the policy on environmental and social safeguards was approved only on a provisional basis. In its next meeting in November 2011, the Council approved 'The GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards'⁴. The Trustee's paper on 'Clarifying the Responsibilities of the GEF's Key Actors with respect to the Use of GEF Resources'⁵, presented to the Council in its June 2012 meeting, explained the role of the new project agencies along with that of other actors within the GEF partnership. The Council approved the approach presented in the paper to strengthen Financial Procedures Agreements (FPAs) with the GEF Partner Agencies.

The GEF Project Agency accreditation procedure has three distinct stages⁶:

1. Submission of Stage 1 Application, Value-added Review, and Council approval;
2. Submission of Stage 2 Application and Accreditation Panel Review; and
3. Conclusion of Memorandum of Understanding and Financial Procedures Agreement.

As part of the accreditation pilot, the intent was to accredit up to 10 new agencies in the GEF-5 period. The Secretariat informed GEF participant countries and other interested parties in November 2011 as to when and how they may begin submitting applications. During the first round of submission, 16 applications were received in December 2011. Of these six were from national agencies, four from regional organizations, four from civil society organizations, and two from UN organizations (see Annex 2). The Secretariat's panel to conduct reviews to assess value added by the applicants started in January 2012. After conducting the Stage 1 review on 'value added' by the agency, the Secretariat recommended 11 agencies for approval to the Council in the June 2012 Council meeting. The Council accepted the Secretariat's recommendation. Since the intent of the pilot was to accredit up to 10 new agencies, in order to ensure that this cap is not exceeded, a moratorium on new applications was imposed.

The 11 Council approved agencies, submitted their Stage 2 applications in May 2012 and subsequently made initial fee payments to the Secretariat. A three member independent panel was established for the Stage 2 of accreditation. The panel started reviewing the Stage 2 applications in June 2012. On June 14th 2013 WWF-US became the first agency to clear the Stage 2 of the accreditation process. So far five agencies have cleared the Stage 2 of the accreditation and four of these – WWF-US, Conservation International, IUCN and DBSA – have been accredited (the Stage 3). Although FUNBIO progressed from stage 2 to stage 3 in October 2014, the Stage 3 process for accreditation has not yet been completed.

In its October 2014 progress report on the pilot on accreditation the Secretariat has acknowledged that the progress so far has been slow⁷. It made a case that, given the slow progress, it might be difficult to

³ GEF/C.40/10/Rev.1

⁴ The Council reviewed GEF/C.41/CRP.02 and GEF/C.41/CRP.05. The Council requested changes in the documents for finalization of the policy. The finalized policy is provided in the GEF.C.41.10.Rev.01 document.

⁵ GEF/C.42/04

⁶ PR/IN/04

⁷ GEF/C.47/10

learn about the effects of the expansion. It requested the Council to postpone the start of the proposed evaluation from January 2015 to October 2016. It proposed that although data collection for establishing a baseline may start in January 2015, the evaluation should start from October 2016 onwards. The Council discussed the Secretariat's proposal in its October 2014 meeting. The Council agreed with the Secretariat's suggestion that it is early to assess the effectiveness of the expansion of the GEF partnership. Nonetheless, the Council felt that an evaluation focused on the accreditation process would still be useful. The Council, therefore, requested "the Independent Evaluation Office to initiate an evaluation of the GEF accreditation process, and to present the findings of this evaluation to the Council at its 48th meeting in June 2015."⁸ During the discussions, the Council members also expressed support for the GEF IEO undertaking a more detailed and comprehensive evaluation on the effectiveness of the GEF partnership at a later date.

The evaluation of the GEF accreditation process is being undertaken by the GEF IEO to respond to the Council's request. The GEF IEO started startup work on the evaluation in November 2014. It started meeting some of the key stakeholders in December 2014. This approach paper is based on the information gathered from the preliminary desk review and the interviews conducted so far (see Annex 1 for the stakeholders consulted).

Key Questions

The evaluation seeks to answer the following questions related to the accreditation process:

- To what extent is the accreditation process designed to achieve its intended purpose?
- To what extent is the accreditation process fair and transparent?
- To what extent has the accreditation process been efficient from the perspective of different stakeholders?
- What are the early results of the accreditation process?
- What are lessons have emerged from the GEF's experience so far on accreditation?

To what extent is the accreditation process designed to achieve its intended purpose?

The evaluation will assess the process through which criteria and procedures for accreditation were established. The evaluation will ascertain the extent to which there was clarity on the purpose for which accreditation was being undertaken and also the expected results of the process. It will determine the extent to which the criteria and procedures adopted for accreditation were likely to lead to the agencies that met GEF's ex-ante expectations from the new partners. It will assess the extent the accreditation criteria are sound in assessing the suitability of institutions to be GEF agencies. It will also identify the barriers to the potential Project Agencies applying for accreditation and/or attaining accreditation.

⁸ *Decision on Agenda Item 11 Progress Report on the Pilot Accreditation of GEF Project Agencies & Timeline for Further Discussion of Accreditation. JOINT SUMMARY OF THE CHAIRS, OCTOBER 28 – 30, 2014. October 2014*

To what extent is the accreditation process fair and transparent?

The evaluation will assess the extent to which the accreditation process, including the criteria and other rules and procedures, are perceived to be fair and transparent. It will assess the perceived fairness of the process by gauging the perspectives of different agencies. The evaluation will take stock of the accreditation related communications and decisions, and will assess the extent these were timely, consistent and clear.

To what extent has the accreditation process been efficient from the perspective of different stakeholders?

The evaluation will take stock of the costs involved in terms of financial costs, time, risks, and institutional resources deployed for accreditation from the perspective of the GEF Secretariat, the applicants, and the Trustee. It will assess the extent actual costs borne by different actors are in line with the anticipated costs. It will assess whether there were some procedures that increased the costs involved in the accreditation process and the extent to which these costs could have been mitigated. It will also identify the good practices and the missed opportunities in terms of adoption of enabling measures reduce cost. The evaluation will assess the extent to which time taken for establishment of accreditation process, and also for accreditation once the process was in place, was reasonable.

What are the early results the accreditation process?

The evaluation will assess the motivations of the applicants for GEF accreditation and the extent actual results so far have met their expectations. It will assess whether the new partners are bringing in new networks and knowledge to the partnership. It will assess the extent GEF portfolio is changing as a result of the expansion of the partnership and which are the changes that may be anticipated. It will determine whether the project proposals submitted so far by the GEF Project Agencies any different from those submitted by the GEF Agencies, and whether there is actually a level playing field in the manner in which the proposals by them are reviewed. It will present early experiences of the organizations that were accredited at least a year back (WWF-US and Conservation International) in developing proposals. Similarly, emerging lessons from the experiences of the Operational Focal Points in countries where a national organization has been accredited would shed more light on whether the expansion has increased choices at the national level. Similarly, from the Project Agency perspective it will take stock of the changes that have taken place within these organizations in terms of their systems, procedures and their portfolios and what are the changes that these are anticipating in near future.

What are the emerging lessons from the accreditation process?

The accreditation process has been under implementation for the past three years. There may be lessons that may be learned from the experiences thus far. The evaluation will, therefore, identify and describe these lessons. It will also compare these lessons with lessons from the experiences emerging from the accreditation process of other funds (Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund). The focus of the enquiry will be on identifying areas that could be improved along with potential corrective actions that could be undertaken.

Evaluation Approach

Information sources

The evaluation will draw from interviews of key stakeholders and experts, review of the documents on procedures and rules for accreditation, and review of the correspondence among the Secretariat, applicants, and accreditation panel. It will also review the application materials submitted by the agencies and the assessment prepared by the accreditation panels.

Perspectives of the key stakeholders will be captured through interviews and in some instances through written responses. The key stakeholders include the relevant staff of the Secretariat, the Project Agencies, Trustee, Operational Focal Points in countries with a national agency that applied for accreditation, Trustee, Accreditation Panel members, other funds that have used the accreditation approach. The list of key stakeholders that the evaluation team needs to reach out to is quite contained. Therefore, to the extent possible a census approach will be adopted in interviewing the key stakeholders.

The evaluation will undertake a comparative analysis of the accreditation approaches of GEF, Adaptation Fund, and Green Climate Fund. Publicly available documents on rules and procedures for accreditation to the three organizations will be reviewed to identify the common elements along with the areas where their accreditation approaches differ. The aim will also be understand how these factors affect the accreditation process in these funds. A review done by the Green Climate Fund compares Green Climate Fund's accreditation criteria with that used by the GEF, Adaptation Fund and Directorate-General Development and Cooperation— EuropeAid of the European Commission (EU DEVCO)⁹. The GEF IEO evaluation will adapt this framework for comparison of the accreditation approaches of different funds.

The evaluation will also assess how the rules and procedures for GEF accreditation process evolved and what led to the choices that were eventually made. To the extent possible it will also seek to determine how these choices affected implementation and results of the accreditation process. The evaluation will also take stock of the guidance that was provided to the applicants at the start of submissions for Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the accreditation process.

The evaluation will undertake a review of the correspondence between the Secretariat and the applicants, Secretariat and the Accreditation Panel, and Accreditation Panel and the applicants. The review will try to assess whether there was clarity in communications, and whether there were instances where lack of clarity led to inefficiencies. The review of the application materials and assessment provided by the accreditation panel would help in determination of the extent to which the feedback provided by the panel was consistent across submissions and consistent with the gaps identified among agencies.

⁹ GCF/B.08/03 (Oct 2014)

The information gathered through various sources will be synthesized for preparation of the Council working paper, and the evaluation report.

Evaluation Team

The evaluation will be led by Neeraj Kumar Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer at the GEF IEO. The team will also include a senior consultant and two junior consultants.

Reference group

A reference group comprising of the key stakeholders including the staff from the GEF Secretariat, the Trustee, the Project Agencies, GEF Agencies, and comparator funds (Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund) will be formed. At the time the draft approach paper is circulated, the key stakeholders will be invited to nominate members for this reference group. The draft versions of the intermediary products of the evaluation such as the approach paper, technical papers, and evaluation report, will be shared with the reference group to get their feedback.

Activity Calendar

The Council has specifically asked that the process evaluation be presented in the summer 2015 Council meeting during the first week of June (2nd to 4th of June 2015). Given the time constraint, the evaluation will follow a relatively quick and time-bound schedule. Consultations will be undertaken through a teleconference at two stages – after sharing of the draft approach paper and after sharing of the draft report of the evaluation including the draft of the Council paper. Table 1 presents the important deadlines for the evaluation. Table 2 presents the activity schedule.

Table 1. Key Deadlines

Activity	End date
Approach paper	Feb 10 th 2015
Data gathering	25 th of March 2015
Analysis, Synthesis and Draft Report	10 th of April 2015
Draft Council Working Paper	10 th of April 2015
Sharing of the draft report with agencies for feedback	24 th of April 2015
Council Working Paper for upload	1 st of May 2015
Presentation of the Working Paper to the Council	First week of June 2015
Final Report	30 th of June 2015

Table 2: Evaluation Calendar

Activity \ Month	Dec 2014		Jan 2015		Feb 2015		Mar 2015		Apr 2015		May 2015		Jun 2015	
	1 st half	2 nd half	1 st half	2 nd half	1 st half	2 nd half	1 st half	2 nd half	1 st half	2 nd half	1 st half	2 nd half	1 st half	2 nd half
Approach paper phase														
<i>Preparation of draft</i>														
<i>Sharing of draft</i>														
<i>Consultation for approach paper</i>														
<i>Finalization of paper</i>														
Data gathering phase														
<i>Desk reviews</i>														
<i>Interviews</i>														
<i>Surveys</i>														
Analysis and synthesis phase														
Evaluation report														
<i>Draft report</i>														
<i>Draft Council Working Paper</i>														
<i>Sharing of draft</i>														
<i>Teleconference for consultations</i>														
<i>Council working paper</i>														
<i>Council presentation</i>														
<i>Final Report</i>														

Annex 1

Key Stakeholders Consulted so far

- Andrew Velthaus, GEF Secretariat
- Dima Reda, Adaptation Fund
- Elwyn Edward Grainger-Jones, GEF Secretariat
- Jean-Yves Pirot, IUCN
- Lilian Spijkerman, Conservation International
- Orissa Samaroo, Conservation International
- Praveen Desabatla, Trustee
- Ramesh Ramankutty, GEF Secretariat
- Stephanie Kwan, Green Climate Fund
- Yasemin Biro, GEF Secretariat

Annex 2: List of Applicants for the GEF Accreditation Pilot (Status as on December 1st 2014)

	Area	Type	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Remarks
DBSA	South Africa	National Agency	Approved	Approved	Accredited	Accredited
FECO	China	National Agency	Approved	Underway	N.A.	Not accredited yet
FUNBIO	Brazil	National Agency	Approved	Approved	N.A.	Not accredited yet
FONAM	Peru	National Agency	Approved	Rejected	N.A.	Not accredited
VTB	Russian Federation	National Agency	Approved	Withdrew	N.A.	Not accredited
ANII	Uruguay	National Agency	Rejected	N.A.	N.A.	Not accredited
CAF	Latin America	Regional Agency	Approved	Underway	N.A.	Not accredited yet
BOAD	Africa	Regional Agency	Approved	Underway	N.A.	Not accredited yet
SPREP	Pacific Islands	Regional Agency	Rejected	N.A.	N.A.	Not accredited
OSS	Africa	Regional Agency	Rejected	N.A.	N.A.	Not accredited
WWF-US	International	CSO	Approved	Approved	Accredited	Accredited
CI	International	CSO	Approved	Approved	Accredited	Accredited
IFRC	International	CSO	Approved	Rejected	N.A.	Not accredited
IUCN	International	CSO	Approved	Approved	Accredited	Accredited
WFP	International	Multilateral	Not eligible for Pilot	N.A.	N.A.	Not accredited
UN-HABITAT	International	Multilateral	Not eligible for Pilot	N.A.	N.A.	Not accredited