

Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership Concept Note

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Contacts

Geeta Batra, Chief Evaluation Officer (gbatra@worldbank.org)

Neeraj Kumar Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer (nnegi1@thegef.org)

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Background

During early years of its establishment, GEF implemented its activities through three agencies – the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP. From 1999 to 2003 seven other multilateral organizations were added to the GEF partnership in a phased manner and these progressively gained direct access to GEF resources. During the GEF-5 replenishment negotiations it was agreed that the GEF partnership needs to be broadened further to enhance country ownership in the GEF operations and to provide recipient countries greater choice in terms of agencies with which they work. In November 2010, GEF Council decided that the broadening will be undertaken on a pilot basis and based on accreditation. In its May 2011 meeting, GEF Council approved the policies, procedures, and criteria for accrediting new institutions.

At the request of GEF Council, GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO) conducted a *'Process Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership'* to assess the design, transparency and efficiency related aspects of the accreditation process. The evaluation was presented to the Council during its June 2015 meeting within the framework of GEFIEO's *'Semi Annual Evaluation Report'* (SAER). The Council acknowledged the emerging lessons from the accreditation pilot and requested the Secretariat to take them into account in preparing proposals regarding possible directions on accreditation.

As a response to the Council's request, the Secretariat prepared *'Future Directions on Accreditation'* (GEF/C.49/04) and presented it to the GEF Council at its October 2015 meeting. The paper provided an initial assessment of potential impacts of expansion of GEF partnership on coverage, competition, engagement and efficiency related aspects. The paper indicated that expansion of GEF partnership involves trade-offs and that some of the important impacts may become evident only with passage of time and with in-depth analysis. It also linked further expansion of the partnership with size GEF replenishment. After reviewing the paper, the GEF Council requested the IEO to *"conduct a survey across GEF Partner Agencies and recipient countries on the current structure of the GEF Partnership, and make recommendations based on the results of this survey to feed into the planned review of the health of the GEF Partnership as part of the Sixth Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS6)."*¹ The Council requested the GEF IEO to present a preliminary analysis of the survey in its June 2016 meeting.

This concept note provides the conceptual framework of the evaluation that the GEF IEO would undertake to address the Council's request. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the present structure of the GEF partnership is meeting the needs of its key stakeholders. It will assess the extent to which the structure is optimal for delivery of GEF program and activities, and for promoting country ownership. It would assess the emerging impacts of the recent round of expansion on criteria such as: country and focal area coverage; competition among agencies and its implications; efficiency of the system; agency inclusion and engagement within the partnership.

¹ Joint Summary of Chairs. 49th GEF Council Meeting, Oct 2015. Decision on Agenda Item 6 – Future Directions on Accreditation.

The GEF IEO will undertake the evaluation in two phases. During the first phase a preliminary analysis based on the survey of GEF Partner Agencies and of key stakeholders in recipient countries will be prepared. The analysis will be shared with the GEF Council during its June 2016 meeting. The second phase would involve more in-depth analysis based on information from multiple sources, including the survey data sets, interviews of the key stakeholders, and additional information on emerging GEF project portfolio and results of completed projects.

Key Questions

Overall Questions

Overall the evaluation will seek to answer following questions:

- To what extent does the structure of the GEF partnership enable the generation of global environmental benefits and promote country ownership?
- To what extent are the Partner Agencies adding value to the GEF partnership in terms of the services they provide and the countries that they cover?
- What are the factors that enable or restrain GEF Partner Agencies in meeting the expectations of key stakeholders?
- What have been the results of expansion of the GEF partnership in terms of coverage, competition, systemic efficiency, inclusion and engagement within partnership?

First Phase Questions

The first phase of the evaluation will have a narrower focus. It will seek to answer some aspects of the key questions of the evaluation. The questions for the first phase are:

- To what extent do Partner Agencies provide GEF access to new capacities and networks to deliver on its environmental agenda?
- To what extent to Partner Agencies, especially the more recent addition to partnership, facilitate GEF in supporting priority actions in countries that face capacity constraints?
- To what extent are the Partner Agencies able to service needs of the recipient countries?
- What are the factors that enable and/or hinder Partner Agencies in being effective in their role?

To what extent do Partner Agencies provide GEF access to new capacities and networks to deliver on its environmental agenda?

The evaluation will assess the extent to which the Partner Agencies brought onboard through expansion provide GEF access to new capacities and networks. It will assess the extent to which the new Partner Agencies address specific GEF focal area objectives and whether there is a difference in the environmental concerns addressed by them vis-à-vis the agencies that have been in the partnership for a longer period.

To what extent to Partner Agencies, especially the more recent addition to partnership, facilitate GEF in supporting priority actions in countries that face capacity constraints?

The evaluation will assess the extent to which the existing structure of the partnership allows GEF to support priority actions in countries such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), or fragile economies, where service delivery might be difficult due to capacity constraints including those related to economic, security, and scale related barriers.

To what extent are the Partner Agencies able to service needs of the recipient countries?

The evaluation will determine the extent to which the key stakeholders in the recipient countries such as Operational Focal Points, Convention Focal Points, and the members of the CSO Network, perceive that the Partner Agencies are able to service country needs. It will gather their perceptions on the extent to which the expansion of GEF Partnership have enhanced their choices and the effect that these have had on country ownership. It will also assess the areas of service delivery where the performance has been strong and areas where there is room for further improvement.

What are the factors that enable and/or hinder Partner Agencies in being effective in their role?

The evaluation will gather the Partner Agency perceptions on the factors that enable and/or hinder their effectiveness. It will gather information on aspects such as support provided by the GEF Secretariat during their onboarding, access to information relevant for project preparation and implementation, adequacy of resources both in terms of project portfolio and project fees, their relationship with the recipient governments and with executing agencies.

Evaluation Approach

Annex 1 provides detailed expansion of the key questions and the tools and methods used to gather information relevant for answering those questions. Briefly, the evaluation will draw from interviews of key stakeholders and experts, online survey, analysis of the PMIS dataset, and focus group discussions. The key stakeholders include the relevant staff of the Secretariat, the Partner Agencies, GEF Operational Focal Points, Convention focal points in recipient countries, and GEF Trustee. Perspectives of the key stakeholders will be captured through face to face or telephone interviews and in some instances through written responses. During the first Phase of the evaluation a customized online survey will be administered to reach out to the GEF Operational Focal Points, Convention focal points, and members of the GEF CSO network. The evaluation will conduct an analysis of the project portfolio of the GEF to determine how portfolios of different Partner Agencies have evolved. It will also provide information on the countries being served by different agencies and the activities being undertaken there.

Evaluation Team

The evaluation will be led by Geeta Batra, Chief Evaluation Officer, GEF IEO. Neeraj Kumar Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer, will be the task manager. The team will also include a senior consultant and a junior consultant.

Activity Calendar

The Council has specifically asked that the preliminary analysis of the evaluation be presented in the summer 2016 Council meeting. 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 1. Key Deadlines

Activity	Duration / end date
Stage 1	
Elaboration of approach: Survey tools and interview protocols	November 15 th 2015 to January 10 th 2016
Data gathering: Survey and Interviews	January 10 th to March 10 th 2016
Analysis and Synthesis	March 10 th to 10 th of April 2016
Draft Information Document	20 th of March to 10 th of April 2016
Sharing of the draft report with GEF IEO stakeholders	April 10 th 2016
Council Working Paper for upload	6 th of May 2016
Final Report for Stage I	30 th of June 2016
Stage 2	July 2016 to February 2017

Annex 1. Key Questions and Tools & Method Matrix

This matrix elaborates the key questions of the evaluation and aligns them with the relevant sub-question, tools and methods, and the evaluation phase during which they will be tackled. The questions for Phase 1 are embedded in the overall questions.

Key Questions	Sub question/Indicator	Tools and methods	Phase
To what extent does the structure of the GEF partnership enable the generation of global environmental benefits and promote country ownership?	How do the project portfolios of the GEF Partner Agencies compare in terms of geographical coverage, focal area objective/ priorities addressed, GEF funding, trends?	Portfolio analysis	Phase 1, with update in Phase 2
	To what extent do GEF Partner Agencies support priority actions in LDCs, SIDS, and fragile economies?	Portfolio analysis	Phase 1, with update in Phase 2
	What are country expectations from the Partner Agencies, and to what extent do Agencies meet them?	Online survey Interviews Focus group discussions	Phase 1 Phase 1 and 2 Phase 2
	To what extent does the existing structure of the GEF partnership promotes country ownership?	Online survey, Interviews Focus group discussions	Phase 1 Phase 1 and 2 Phase 2
To what extent are the partner agencies adding value to the GEF partnership in terms of the services they provide and the countries that they cover?	How has the role of the GEF partner agencies evolved?	Interviews and literature review	Phase 2
	What have been the drivers in evolution of the GEF portfolio of partner agencies?	Interviews and literature review	Phase 2
	What is the niche and comparative advantage of partner agencies within the GEF partnership?	Interviews and literature review	Phase 2
What are the factors that enable or restrain accredited agencies in contributing as GEF Partner Agencies?	What are the key factors that enable and/or hinder the effectiveness of the Partner Agencies	Survey, Interviews	Phase 1
	To what extent did the new Partner Agencies receive support from the GEF Secretariat during their onboarding?	Survey, Interviews	Phase 1

	To what extent, and the level of ease with which, Partner Agencies are able to access information relevant for project preparation and implementation?	Survey, Interviews	Phase 1
	To what extent are the resources – both in terms of project portfolio and project fees – adequate for Partner Agencies in carrying out their responsibilities?	Survey, Interviews	Phase 1 & 2
	To what extent do Partner Agencies receive support from the recipient countries?	Survey, Interviews	Phase 1 & 2
	To what extent do Partner Agencies collaborate to harness synergies?	Interviews, Focus Group	Phase 2
What have been the results of expansion of the GEF partnership in terms of coverage, competition, systemic efficiency, inclusion, and engagement within partnership?	What has been the effect of the expansion of the GEF partnership on coverage of countries and environmental concerns addressed?	Portfolio analysis	Phase 1 and 2
	What has been the effect of the expansion on competition among agencies?	Interviews	Phase 2
	What has been the effect of expansion on efficiency of GEF processes and supported activities?	Desk review, Interviews	Phase 2
	What has been the effect of expansion on inclusion and engagement of both the new and the older partner agencies?	Interviews	Phase 2
	What have been the costs and benefits of the expansion of GEF partnership?	Desk review Portfolio Analysis Interviews	Phase 2
	To what extent is there is scope for further expansion or of streamlining of the GEF partnership?	Desk Review, Interviews, Focus group	Phase 2