

A Review of GEF Experience in Promoting Sustainable Fisheries

Concept Note

Background

1. The world's marine fishery resources face critical challenges. Based on the data reported in 2018 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), an estimated 33% of global marine fish stocks have been overexploited, while a further 60% are fully exploited. During the past three decades, the fraction of fish stocks that are within biologically sustainable levels has decreased from 90% in 1974 to 67% in 2015. Loss of coastal habitats, pollution and climate change are showing negative effects on global fisheries.
2. Improving fisheries management and promoting sustainable fishing practices has been one of the main strategic priorities in the international waters (IW) focal area at the GEF. The 1995 operational strategy for the IW focal area stated that the GEF's activities would focus mainly on seriously threatened waterbodies and the most imminent threats to their ecosystems, which included "control of unsustainable exploitation of living and nonliving resources resulting from inadequate management measures such as overfishing and excessive withdrawal of freshwater." Due to insufficient resources for the IW focal area in GEF-4, GEF support to fisheries management focused on coastal and marine fisheries¹ which was channeled through the IW strategic program on "restoring and sustaining coastal and marine fish stocks and associated biological diversity."
3. Since GEF-5, GEF investment in fisheries has highlighted multi-state cooperation to further reduce threats to the sustainability of marine fisheries. The GEF-5 IW focal area strategy specified two marine fisheries related objectives, namely "catalyzing multi-state cooperation to rebuild marine fisheries and reduce pollution of coasts and Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) while considering climatic variability and change" and "promoting effective management of Marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)." In GEF-6, the IW focal area set the target to move 20% of the globally over-exploited fisheries to more sustainable levels by enhancing multi-state cooperation and catalyzing investments to foster sustainable fisheries.
4. Moving to GEF-7, the IW investments in marine fisheries aim at strengthening Blue Economy opportunities through catalyzing sustainable fisheries management. The GEF will support investments targeting sustainable fishing practices and policy processes both at national and regional level. Additionally, the GEF intends to renew its efforts within the ABNJ through support to "foster information sharing to promote sustainable practices and inform decision-making by private businesses and regional organizations."
5. Previous studies on the IW focal area have assessed the implementation of the Transboundary Diagnostic Action (TDA) and Strategic Action Plan (SAP) methodology, as well as impacts of GEF support in selected water bodies. The most recent IW focal area study (2016) found that the largest level of

¹ According to the GEF-4 focal area strategy, IW focal area was the only focal area received a decrease for GEF-4 over GEF-3. Inland fisheries, among others, was no long supported in GEF-4 due to limited resources.

support by the IW focal area is dedicated to marine fisheries, in order to promote sustainable fishing practices and wider ecosystem stewardship on a regional level. However, the relevance and effectiveness of GEF's investments in fisheries management have yet to be reviewed.

Objectives and Questions

6. The purpose of this review is to present a synthesis of GEF's continuous support to global fisheries over the past three decades. The main objective is to identify good practices and lessons to inform project design and implementation. Specifically, this review aims to answer the following questions:

Relevance

- How has the IW focal area strategy evolved to promote sustainable fishing practices and wider ecosystem stewardship?
- How has GEF support to sustainable fisheries in LME and ABNJ been responding to the exploitation of marine fishery resources?

Effectiveness and Results

- What types of interventions and collaborative mechanisms have been supported by the GEF in its fisheries portfolio? What are the trends in performance and implementation?
- What are the global environmental benefits and social benefits generated by GEF supported fisheries projects and what are the factors affecting the achievements?

Sustainability

- Are the adequate enabling conditions in place to ensure long-term sustainability of the fisheries projects' results?

Scope

7. The review will cover projects that explicitly address fisheries related strategic priorities. These include projects and programs funded by the IW focal area, as well as multifocal area (MFA) projects with fisheries component.

Portfolio and Methods

8. As of March 2019, 89 fisheries projects have been approved by the GEF Council since the pilot phase, amounting to US\$ 558.9 million in GEF grants and US\$ 3.5 billion in cofinancing. GEF-5 has the largest number of fisheries projects (27), followed by GEF-4 (23) and GEF-6 (20). MFA projects with fisheries component have increased continuously from GEF-3 to GEF-6 (figure 1), the majority of them (78%, n=23) combined GEF funding from the BD and IW focal areas. BD focal area funding in the fisheries projects mainly focused on marine protected areas and biodiversity mainstreaming.

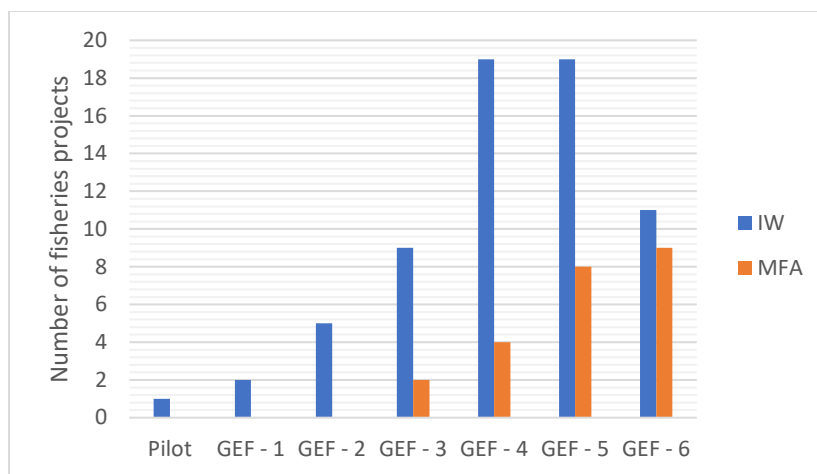


Figure 1: Distribution of fisheries projects by GEF phase and focal area

9. Thirty-five out of the 89 fisheries projects have been completed with available terminal evaluations. Of the completed fisheries projects, 79% have the outcome ratings in the satisfactory range, which is slightly better than the overall IW portfolio (75% as stated in the 2016 IW focal area study). Fifty two percent of the fisheries projects have a sustainability rating of moderately likely or higher, which is lower than the overall IW portfolio (62%).

10. This review will use mainly portfolio review and analysis, formative review, post-completion evaluation and case studies to address the key questions.

Key questions	Source of information	Methodology
How has the IW focal area strategy evolved to promote sustainable fishing practices and wider ecosystem stewardship?	GEF programming documents, Focal Area Strategies	Desk analysis
How has the GEF support to sustainable fisheries in LME and ABNJ been responding to the exploitation of marine fishery resources?	Project documents, Terminal Evaluations	Portfolio review; Formative review; Case study
What types of interventions and collaborative mechanisms have been supported by the GEF in its fisheries portfolio? What are the trends in implementation and performance?	Project documents, Terminal Evaluations, GEF portal data	Portfolio review and analysis; Formative review
What are the global environmental benefits and social benefits generated by GEF supported fisheries projects and what are the factors affecting the achievements?	Terminal Evaluations, Interviews (if field visits not possible)	Portfolio review and analysis; Post-completion evaluation
Are the adequate enabling conditions in place to ensure long-term sustainability of fisheries projects' results?	Project documents, Interviews (if field visits not possible)	Formative review; Post-completion evaluation

Quality Assurance, Timing and Resources

11. The draft approach paper and the report will be circulated and validated before finalization by appointed internal reviewers in IEO.
12. The report of this study will be produced by September 2020 and presented at the December 2020 Council meetings. A four-page summary of the report will be produced and posted on the website. A detailed dissemination plan will be prepared and implemented under the IEO knowledge products plan.
13. This study is being carried out by a task manager from the IEO with oversight from the Chief Evaluation Officer.

Annex: Portfolio Review Framework

This portfolio review framework is designed to review completed fisheries projects with available Terminal Evaluations (TE). When gathering data and information, CEO endorsement documents are used to answer question 1-6, TEs are used to gather information for the rest of questions.

1. Project Objective
2. Which IW focal area objective is this project align with?
 - Fisheries
 - IW else
 - BD
 - other focal area(s)
3. Incremental reasoning of GEF support (additionality)
 - Regional approach
 - Institutional capacity building
 - Cross-sectoral cooperation
 - Focused entirely on GEB: The project is primarily focused on production of GEBs and no other significant sources of funding are available.
 - Economic and financial viability: Without GEF grant support the proposed project that is expected to generate global environmental benefits will not be viable.
 - Speeding up: The GEF grant allows the project to be implemented earlier and, therefore, generate global environmental benefits earlier than it otherwise would.
 - Greening: Within the proposed project, GEF grant will be used to mainstream activities that generate global environmental benefits but for which funding from other sources is not available.
 - No clear reasoning
4. Which types of interventions are funded by the GEF in the project?
 - Legal and regulatory framework
 - Institutional and governance
 - Management approaches
 - Financial interventions
 - Socio-economic interventions
 - Innovation
 - Others
5. Which environmental indicators are identified in the project's results framework?
 - Ecosystem quality
 - Reduction in environmental threats
 - Biodiversity and/or species populations
 - Vulnerability/resilience
 - Others
6. Which socioeconomic indicators are identified in the project's results framework?
 - Economic growth/financial revenue
 - Employment/Job creation

- Income or access to capital
 - Access to recourses/equipment
 - Health/nutrition/safety
 - Cooperation/reduction in conflict
 - Gender equality
 - Participation in Environmental activities
 - Others
7. Intermediate outcomes achieved by the project:
- outcomes related to Legal and regulatory framework linked to GEF support
 - outcomes related to Institutional and governance linked to GEF support
 - outcomes related to management approaches linked to GEF support
 - outcomes related to knowledge management linked to GEF support
8. Broader adoption mechanism (if happened, document the process)
- Mainstreaming
 - Replication
 - Scaling-up
 - Sustainability
 - Market change
9. Does the TE mention trade-offs between environmental and socioeconomic outcomes, or among focal areas, that might occur or have occurred as a result of this project?
10. Does the TE mention synergies being created among focal areas, or between environmental and socioeconomic outcomes?
11. Does the project intend to achieve any environmental outcomes by the time of its completion? (if no, skip the rest questions)
12. Environmental outcome achieved by the project (positive, unintended)
- Ecosystem quality
 - Reduction in environmental threats
 - Biodiversity and/or species populations
 - Vulnerability/resilience
 - Others
13. Positive socioeconomic outcome achieved by the project (positive, unintended)
- Economic growth/financial revenue
 - Employment/Job creation
 - Income or access to capital
 - Access to resources/equipment
 - Health/nutrition/safety
 - Cooperation/reduction in conflict
 - Gender equality
 - Participation in Environmental activities
 - others
14. Project related factors affecting achievement of benefits (identify contributing or hindering, then document the reasoning)
- project design

- Project restructure during implementation
 - Project management (implementation, M&E, etc.)
 - incentives/disincentives
 - participatory processes
 - ownership of intervention
 - Multi-stakeholder interactions
 - Others
15. Contextual factors affecting achievement of benefits (identify contributing or hindering, then document the reasoning)
- political priority
 - support of influencer
 - long-term structure set up
 - continuity of staff
 - sustainable financing after project ends
 - country ownership/government support
 - Others