

Approach Paper

OPS-6: Knowledge Management Study

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Background

1. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) provides grants to developing countries and countries with economies in transition for projects and programs that address global environmental concerns related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation and chemicals. The GEF is the financial mechanism of the most important international environmental conventions. These include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Biodiversity Convention (UNCBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Projects are implemented by eighteen GEF Agencies, comprising international financial institutions, UN entities, international non-governmental organizations and national agencies. The governance structure of the GEF includes an Assembly, a Council, a Secretariat, a Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and an Independent Evaluation Office (IEO).

2. As part of its work program for GEF-6, IEO has been tasked to review the current role of the GEF as a knowledge broker and provider, both within the GEF partnership and beyond, in the international environmental community of practitioners. The aim is to check whether there are any systemic issues that need to be addressed in planning for GEF-7. This study is an input to the Sixth Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS-6).

Knowledge Management in the GEF

3. The GEF considers knowledge a primary asset that supports its strategic objectives.¹ A number of studies, evaluations, GEF Council sessions and replenishment meetings have discussed knowledge-related issues such as duplication of effort, missed opportunities, and failure to learn from operational

¹ GEF/C.48/07/Rev.01

experience across the GEF partnership.² As a result, of the findings of the second Overall Performance Study, the GEF “Business Plan for FY05-07”³ included a component aimed at the development of a KM framework that would have been piloted in climate and biodiversity focal areas. In May 2004, Council endorsed KM as a corporate-level task, and approved a \$0.49 million budget to launch this effort⁴.

4. The third Overall Performance Study of the GEF - OPS-3 (2005) gave significant attention to the topic of lessons learned and knowledge management. The study found that while signs of progress could be seen (notably in the case of IW:Learn)⁵, there were many unresolved questions within the GEF partnership as to how the KM function should be structured and operationalized. Importantly, OPS-3 raised concerns about how to ensure that KM reflected a real demand and was not simply a supply-driven exercise. Importantly, shortcomings in the KM function were found to be closely linked to persistent problems in the GEF’s Project Management Information System (PMIS). OPS-3 recommended the GEF Secretariat to develop “*an overall information management function... that encompasses both KM and MIS functions.*”

5. In 2009, the fourth Overall Performance Study of the GEF - OPS-4 (2009) concluded that while learning was clearly taking place in many areas of the partnership, there wasn’t a comprehensive KM strategy “*that pulls all the learning efforts together in a planned and organized manner*” . Sensitive to this finding, participants to the GEF-5 replenishment negotiations requested Council to approve a GEF-wide Knowledge Management Initiative (KMI), to be prepared by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration with the GEF Evaluation Office,⁶ GEF Agencies, and STAP. The KMI was developed in parallel with the implementation of a GEF Results-Based Management (RBM) framework. Both were approved by Council in November 2010⁷. The KMI was launched by the GEF Secretariat in December 2010 with the overall goal of ensuring that: “*...GEF knowledge, information and data are identified, captured, and shared in their entirety and developed as a strategic asset in a coherent and comprehensive manner.*” In April 2011, a strategic framework and a work plan were issued to operationalize the KMI in GEF-5⁸.

6. The fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF - OPS-5 (2014) found that IW: Learn continued to be a highly relevant and effective learning mechanism serving the International Waters focal area, which unfortunately was not replicated in other GEF focal areas. As for KMI, OPS-5 concluded that it had many sensible elements, but missed an opportunity to involve a broader range of GEF stakeholders in the process of its operationalization. Key parts of the work plan did not obtain budget or staffing allocations from GEF management, significantly undermining the achievement of stated KMI objectives.

7. During the negotiations for GEF-6 replenishment, participants stressed the importance of developing a KM system that aims at improving the GEF’s partnership ability to learn by doing and thereby enhance its impact over time. Participants requested the Secretariat to improve the uptake of lessons learned in the GEF through the establishment of a learning platform and a comprehensive work plan for building a KM system.⁹ In May 2015, the GEF Secretariat responded to this request by preparing

² See for example the Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase of the GEF (1993), and the first and second Overall Performance Studies of the GEF - OPS-1 (1999) and OPS-2 (2002) - conducted by the M&E Unit.

³ GEF/C.22/6

⁴ GEF/C.23/9

⁵ IW:Learn is a pioneer web-based knowledge platform set up in 2001 by the International Waters team of the Secretariat. Information on the platform history and current activities is accessible on: <http://iwlearn.net/>

⁶ In 2004 the M&E Unit became the GEF Evaluation Office.

⁷ GEF/C.39/6/Rev.1

⁸ GEF/C.40/Inf.03

⁹ GEF/A.5/07/Rev.01

a KM Approach Paper for GEF-6.¹⁰ The paper sets two overarching objectives to be achieved through the establishment of a KM guiding framework:

- i. Inform global, regional, and national policy dialogues on options and approaches to reverse the course of environmental degradation; and
- ii. Improve the impact of GEF-supported projects and programs.

8. In line with the proposed KM guiding framework, the Secretariat created a KM work stream within its Policy, Partnership and Operations (PPO) Unit to coordinate KM work across the GEF partnership. The KM work stream, consisting of one full-time KM coordinator and several part-time Secretariat staff members, became operational in September 2015. In October 2015, the Secretariat also established the KM Advisory Group consisting of representatives from GEF Agencies, STAP, IEO, the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Network, member countries and UN conventions. The group serves as an informal vehicle for collaboration and consultation on planning and implementation of the renewed approach to KM across the GEF partnership. Following the establishment of the work stream and the advisory group, the Secretariat launched a number of important KM-related activities, including:

- i. A series of knowledge assessments and surveys, including: 1) a GEF Knowledge Assets Assessment in the context of the GEF project cycle, conducted jointly with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); 2) a partnership-wide KM Audit; 3) KM Country Surveys, reaching out to key counterparts during GEF Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs); and 4) an Internal KM Survey, reaching out to the entire Secretariat. The results of these studies are being included in the KM Roadmap for the GEF, currently under development in the context of the preparations for GEF-7.
- ii. Three KM pilot initiatives, including: 1) a study on capturing lessons learned and best practices from completed GEF projects based on agency reports and terminal evaluations, followed by the inclusion of a function for entering the resulting information in PMIS; 2) an “Ask the Expert” online tool, designed to create a comprehensive knowledge base on GEF operations; 3) the inclusion in GEF Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs) of a “GEF Knowledge Day” with field visits and learning stations, targeting recipient country stakeholders, which have been implemented at 13 ECWs throughout 2016 and will be implemented in 13 ECWs in 2017.
- iii. Several new GEF knowledge products, including videos and publications as well as a GEF Art of Knowledge Exchange Guidebook and regional workshop series, targeting wide audiences including recipient countries.
- iv. KM focused Brown Bag Lunches (BBLs) and seminars, inviting GEF partners and external organizations to share their KM experiences and insights.
- v. A renewed focus on information technology: inclusion of KM in the redesign of the GEF website (open for public) and creation of a GEF Intranet (internal for the GEF Secretariat); developing a GEF document management system; and ongoing work on redesigning PMIS as a new GEF online platform that improves the availability and accessibility of project-level information and knowledge, as a basis for developing a larger GEF Knowledge and Learning Platform.

¹⁰ GEF/C.48/07/Rev.01

Purpose and Objectives

9. The objectives of the KM study are to assess the role of the GEF partnership as a knowledge broker and provider, the relevance and effectiveness of knowledge management and sharing across the GEF partnership, as well as the barriers to and opportunities for successful implementation. The overall purpose is to identify any eventual systemic issues that need to be addressed in planning for GEF-7.

Scope and Key Questions

10. Building on the conspicuous body of available evaluative evidence, the study will look at KM in the GEF in the period since the start of GEF-5 in 2009 to date. The following are the main questions the study will aim to answer:

- i. How relevant and effective the management and sharing of knowledge is for mainstreaming and upscaling of results within the GEF partnership, in relation to its corporate mandate of achieving global environmental benefits?
- ii. What is the role of the GEF Partnership, if any, as a knowledge broker in the broader international environmental community, and how are the results from innovative mechanisms piloted in GEF projects and programs shared more broadly?
- iii. How does the GEF compare to similar publicly-funded partnership organizations in terms of their respective knowledge management systems, products and services?

11. An evaluation matrix composed of evaluation questions and sub-questions, relevant quantitative and qualitative indicators, sources of data and information, and methods has been developed as a result of a detailed evaluability assessment (Annex 1). The matrix is structured around the three key evaluation questions listed above.

Approach, Resources and Timeline

12. The study will apply a mixed methods approach, encompassing desk and literature review, perceptions gathering through central level interviews/focus groups and an online survey specifically designed to gather country stakeholder views and information. Specific methodological components of the study include: (i) a meta-analysis of KM-related evaluative evidence contained in 26 country level evaluations and studies conducted by IEO from 2005 to 2016;¹¹ (ii) a benchmarking exercise to compare the GEF KM function to similar international partnerships; and (iii) a citation analysis to identify the number and typology of GEF lessons and experience used both within and outside the partnership.

13. Triangulation of the information and quantitative as well as qualitative data and information collected will be conducted at completion of the data analysis and gathering phase to identify main findings, conclusions, and issues for the future. A number of key stakeholders both at central and country levels will be consulted all along the study to identify any eventual information gaps and test preliminary findings.

14. The study will be conducted by a team led by a Senior Evaluation Officer and task managed by a Knowledge Manager Officer, both from the IEO. The team includes an externally recruited senior evaluator and a research assistant. The skills mix required to complete this study includes evaluation experience and knowledge of IEO's evaluation tools, methods and practices; familiarity with the policies, procedures and operations of GEF and its Agencies; knowledge of the GEF and external information sources; demonstrated skills and long term experience in knowledge management in international

¹¹ This work consists of updating the draft meta-analysis on 24 country evaluations conducted in 2015 with the last two country evaluations completed in 2016 in Morocco and Tajikistan.

institutions, including demonstrated experience in evaluation of knowledge management initiatives. Ad hoc missions to conduct central level interviews with relevant stakeholders will be conducted on an opportunistic basis.

15. The review will be conducted between January and September 2017. The initial work plan presented here below will be adapted as a result of further preparations.

Timetable

Task	Year Month	2017								
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Approach Paper										
Background information and scoping (issues/questions, time/scale, portfolio)	x									
Draft Approach Paper uploaded on the IEO website	x									
Data Gathering and analysis										
Preparation of tools (interview guide, survey questionnaire, benchmarking, others)		x								
Document and literature review		x								
Central level interviews and country stakeholders online survey		x	x	x						
Online survey		x	x	x						
Meta-analysis of country level evaluations		x								
Citation analysis				X						
Benchmarking exercise				x						
Preliminary findings					x					
Gap filling/additional analyses/consolidation					x					
Draft Report										
Due diligence (gathering feedback and comments)						x				
Final Report										
Incorporation of comments and feedback in final report							x			
Presentation to Council in the SAER at the October meeting										->
Edited report										->
Dissemination and outreach										->

References

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- GEF 2015. Progress Report on the Implementation of the GEF Knowledge Management Approach Paper. GEF/C.49/Inf.04
- GEF 2015. GEF 2020 – Strategy for the GEF. Washington, DC
- GEF 2016. Progress Report on Knowledge Management. GEF/C.50/Inf.06

Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix

Key questions	Sub-questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
A) How relevant and effective is knowledge management within the GEF partnership?	How effective is KM in contributing to global environmental benefits?	- Evidence/examples of KM contributing to GEBs - Evidence/examples of broader adoption stimulated by KM	Central level stakeholders (GEF Secretariat, STAP and GEF Agencies)	Interviews
		- Aggregated project KM effectiveness and sustainability ratings - Aggregated KM results (outputs, outcomes, impacts)	Other IEO evaluations	Document review
		- Evidence/examples of KM contributing to GEBs - Evidence/examples of broader adoption stimulated by KM	Cohort of Terminal Evaluations (TEs) reporting on projects containing KM outcomes, assembled for STAP in 2015	Portfolio analysis
	How relevant is KM to the GEF mandate?	- Existence and operationalization of a corporate KM function - KM roles of the various entities in the GEF partnership - Level and type of institutional support and funding commitment for KM	Updated Meta-analysis of evaluative evidence on KM in CPEs	Document review
			Central level stakeholders (GEF Secretariat, STAP and Agencies)	Interviews
		Evidence/examples of GEF KM lessons used at country level Evidence/examples of GEF Secretariat's publications used by the GEF Partnership	Documentation on GEF KM funding, institutional set-up and guiding framework, described in the "GEF Knowledge Management Approach Paper (GEF/C.48/07/Rev.01)" and related progress reports Country level stakeholders - Online platforms (including but not limited to IW:Learn) - Central level stakeholders - Country level stakeholders	Document review Online survey Web search Interviews Online survey
B) What is the role of the GEF as a knowledge broker and provider?	What is GEF KM role for the broader international environmental community?	- Number of times GEF lessons/ approaches is cited in the literature - Typology of citations	- Environmental information web repositories - Academic journals and databases	- Citation analysis - Google Scholar - Literature review
	How are the results from GEF projects and programs shared more broadly?	Existence of mechanisms to share knowledge	Central level stakeholders (GEF Secretariat, Council, STAP and agencies)	Interviews
		Evidence/examples of GEF sharing knowledge reported in GEF TEs, IEO evaluations, and non-GEF evaluations	- Updated Meta-analysis of evaluative evidence on KM in CPEs - Cohort of TEs reporting on projects containing KM outcomes, for STAP - Other IEO evaluations - Other non-GEF evaluations of KM initiatives	Document review
		Evidence/examples of GEF lessons used outside the GEF partnership	- Environmental information web repositories and journal databases - Other non-GEF evaluations of KM initiatives	- Literature review - Document review - Web search
Evidence/examples of GEF KM lessons used at country level	Non GEF country level environmental actors (<i>if contacts can be assembled</i>)	Online survey		
C) How does GEF knowledge management compare to similar organizations?	How do GEF KM systems compare to similar publicly-funded partnership organizations?	Ratings/types of GEF KM systems, based on internationally accepted benchmarking criteria (e.g. institutional support, strategy, KM roles, funding, results)	- Documentation on KM in GEF comparable organizations and GEF Agencies - Relevant KM literature - Documentation on GEF KM funding, set-up and strategy - Staffs in GEF comparable organizations and GEF Agencies	- Literature review - Document review - Online survey - Benchmarking analysis ¹²
		Evidence/examples of GEF lessons used at country level	Staffs in GEF comparable organizations and GEF Agencies Other non-GEF evaluations of KM initiatives	Interviews Document review
	How do GEF KM products and services compare to similar publicly funded partnership organizations?	Evidence/examples of project results originated from linking KM, hard science and the science of delivery ¹³	- Updated Meta-analysis of evaluative evidence on KM in CPEs - Cohort of TEs reporting on projects containing KM outcomes, for STAP - Other IEO evaluations - Other non-GEF evaluations of KM initiatives	- Literature review - Document review - Qualitative comparative analysis

¹² See for example: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/200772784_Successful_Knowledge_Management_Projects

¹³ See for example: <https://kmonadollaraday.wordpress.com/2013/10/31/km-me-the-art-and-science-of-delivery/>