Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS-7): Knowledge Management

Concept Note

May 18, 2020

Background

1. Knowledge is an important resource of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) that supports its strategic objectives to address global environmental concerns. Over the years, the GEF facilitated generation and sharing of knowledge through its projects and programs, as well as through its corporate strategies and initiatives. Many GEF Agencies have their own systems for managing knowledge. However, sharing knowledge across the partnership has been a challenge due to differences in systems, processes, and procedures of member organizations. Many evaluations and studies, GEF Council sessions and replenishment meetings have discussed risks such a duplication of effort, missed opportunities, and failure to learn from the experience across the GEF partnership[1].

2. The current approach to managing knowledge in the GEF was set up during the previous replenishment phase (GEF-6, 2014-2018) due to demand by the participants of the replenishment negotiations who requested the GEF Secretariat to improve the uptake of the lessons learned in the GEF through the establishment of a learning platform and a comprehensive work plan for building a KM system[2]. In response, the GEF Secretariat created a knowledge management (KM) workstream and the KM Advisory Group consisting of representatives of various parts of the partnership, including GEF Agencies, member countries, civil society organizations (CSOs), the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), and the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO). The KM Advisory Group was expected to serve as an informal vehicle for collaboration and consultation on planning and implementation of the KM approach across the GEF partnership.

3. The Approach Paper to GEF Knowledge Management was approved by the GEF Council in 2015[3] and outlined the following objectives for knowledge management in the GEF partnership: (i) inform global, regional and national policy dialogues on options and approaches to reverse the course of action of environmental degradation; and (ii) improve the impact of GEF-supported projects and programs. Since

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[1] See, for example, the Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase of the GEF (1993), the Study of GEF's Overall Performance (OPS1, 1999), the Second Overall Performance Study (OPS2, 2002) among others.
[2] GEF. 2014. Report on the Sixth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund. GEF/A.5/07/Rev.01. May 22, 2014.
[3] GEF. 2015. GEF Knowledge Management Approach Paper. GEF/C.48/07/Rev.01. May 11, 2015.

the Council's approval of the approach paper, the GEF Secretariat organized semi-annual meetings of the Advisory Group and launched a number of KM-related activities, including:

a. A series of knowledge assessments and surveys that informed the KM Roadmap for the GEF
b. KM Pilot initiatives: (i) a study on lessons learned and best practices from completed multifocal area projects, followed by the inclusion of the functionality for entering the results information into the GEF's Project Management Information System (PMIS)[4]; (ii) GEF Kaleo, an online "Ask the Expert" tool to provide answers to common questions about the GEF, such as its policies and procedures; (iii) the inclusion in GEF's Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs) of a "Knowledge Day", learning and knowledge exchange events that target recipient country stakeholders.
c. GEF knowledge products, including videos and publications, as well as the "Art of Knowledge Exchange" guidebook and training that aimed to enhance the country and GEF partnership member's capacity on knowledge exchange and learning.
d. Introduction of knowledge and learning requirements for projects concepts and project proposals. Starting from GEF-6, the project identification form (PIF) and the project request form for CEO endorsement have included KM questions. The project concepts and proposals have been required to include activities to learn from other relevant initiatives, as well as activities to assess, document, and share lessons and experience generated during implementation. Starting from 2017, the Guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy (GEF/C.52/Inf.06/Rev.01, June 9, 2017) specified that KM-related projects and program expenditures were eligible for GEF funding.
e. KM-focused brown bag lunches and webinars, inviting GEF partnership members and external organizations to share their KM experiences.
f. A renewed focus on information technology: inclusion of KM in the redesign of the GEF website, creation of GEF intranet, work on redesign of PMIS as a GEF online platform to improve availability and accessibility of project-level information and knowledge, as a basis for developing a larger GEF knowledge and learning platform.

4. The Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the GEF (2017)[5] acknowledged the progress made in KM during GEF-6, but concluded that systemic issues continued to be barriers to knowledge sharing, including the availability of an information management system to capture and provide access to project-level documentation; the guidance on KM for GEF-supported projects and programs throughout the project cycle; the capacity within the GEF Secretariat to connect with GEF Agencies' knowledge systems and platforms and to create the enabling environment for corporate-level learning and collaboration across the GEF portfolio. The evaluation recommended to the GEF Secretariat to place a high priority on improving the quality and availability of project-level documentation from a KM perspective, including lessons learned during design and implementation. The evaluation also recommended to the GEF Secretariat and KM Advisory Group to develop a work plan on learning activities and knowledge products along with a proposed resource envelope and mechanisms to disseminate knowledge.

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[4] This system is now replaced by the GEF Portal, a new platform to share, manage, and retrieve data on GEF projects and programs.
[5] GEF IEO. 2017. The Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the GEF. 2017.

5. During the replenishment negotiations for GEF-7 (2018-2022), the participants reiterated the role of knowledge as critical asset of the GEF Partnership and requested the GEF Secretariat to make use of IT-based solutions to capture, analyze, and share lessons learned and best practices from GEF projects and programs, in collaboration with GEF partners, and encourage efforts to foster peer learning and South-South exchange across GEF projects and programs[6].

6. Although during GEF-7 KM is guided by the 2015 Approach Paper[7], there has been some evolution in activities, and new initiatives have been introduced, namely:

   a. GEF Academy, a learning initiative that provides online and face-to-face courses to enhance the capacity of GEF partners and stakeholders to engage with the GEF and deliver global environmental benefits. So far, two online courses have been developed, including "Introduction to the Global Environment Facility", and "Gender and Environment".
   b. GEF Portal (replacement of the GEF Project Management System, PMIS), a new platform to share, manage, and retrieve data on GEF projects and programs. Although the Portal is not a knowledge management initiative, it is expected to contribute to sharing knowledge and lessons across GEF interventions.
   c. Good practice briefs (currently a pilot) aim to identify and share good practices from GEF projects and programs in line with current strategic priorities, as outlined in the GEF2020 Strategy, GEF-7 Programming Directions and Policy Recommendations. The identification and preparation of briefs have been done in collaboration with GEF Agencies.

7. Other ongoing KM initiatives continue from the previous replenishment phases:
   a. Further development of knowledge and learning requirements for project concepts and project proposals (first introduced during GEF-6). The good practice criteria for assessment of KM in project identification forms and requests for CEO endorsement have been developed and shared with GEF Agencies. The examples of how these requirements had been addressed by projects were discussed during inter-agency retreats.
   b. Targeted projects to support knowledge generation and sharing, including knowledge platforms. Since its early years, the GEF has funded specialized knowledge and learning projects (such as research projects, projects that documented and shared good practices and lessons on promising global environmental solutions, communities of practice). More recently, GEF introduced "knowledge platforms" to support learning in its integrated programs (Integrated Approach Pilots during GEF-6 and Impact Programs during GEF-7). These platforms are designed to coordinate sharing of knowledge across participating projects, countries, cities, and agencies.
   c. Web-based tools, such as Kaleo ("Ask the Expert" question and answer platform), KM webpage at the GEF website.
   d. GEF "Knowledge Days" during the Expanded Constituency Workshops, as well as other targeted training workshops, such as GEF introduction seminars.

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[6] GEF. 2018. Report on the Seventh Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund. GEF/A.6/05/Rev.01. June 27, 2018.
[7] GEF. 2015. GEF Knowledge Management Approach Paper. GEF/C.48/07/Rev.01. May 11, 2015.

e. Publications and videos, presentations at global environmental forums, use of social media tools (blogs, twitter).

The objective, scope, and key questions

8. The objectives of this review are to update the 2017 GEF IEO KM Evaluation[8], to assess the effectiveness of the GEF KM approach in strengthening the use of knowledge across the GEF partnership in relation to GEF's mandate to achieve global environmental benefits, and to identify any systemic issues that need to be addressed in planning for GEF-8. The review will contribute to the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7) and will identify lessons for the next replenishment phase.

9. There is a range of activities that support knowledge management in the GEF partnership, including those implemented by GEF Agencies and member countries. The main focus of this review will be on the recently launched initiatives after the last review and the KM approach implemented by the GEF Secretariat across the GEF partnership since GEF-6. The effectiveness of these KM activities, including those by the GEF Agencies and member countries, will be assessed. In addition, the KM elements such as the knowledge platforms of the of the integrated programs (Integrated Approach Pilots and Impact Programs), will be evaluated.

10. The review will seek to answer the following questions:
    1. To what extent have the recommendations of the 2017 KM Evaluation been implemented?
    2. To what extent have the recent GEF KM initiatives been effective in strengthening knowledge generation and sharing across the Partnership? What has been the role of the GEF Agencies and member countries in KM initiatives?
    3. To what extent have the knowledge platforms been effective in supporting learning in integrated programs (Integrated Approach Pilots and Impact Programs)?
    4. What are the lessons and implications for future policy, strategy, and management decisions to further enhance knowledge management in the GEF partnership?

Methodological Approach

11. The review will apply a mixed methods approach and will use several information sources.

12. Document and literature review will synthesize key lessons and systemic issues on knowledge management and learning in the GEF Partnership from the previous IEO evaluations, as well as progress in implementation of the GEF KM approach. The study will review in detail the documents on the current KM approach led by the GEF Secretariat (starting from GEF-6), including relevant Council documents, activity reports, meeting notes, knowledge outputs and products. The study will also review the available documents on the relevant KM activities of GEF Agencies and member countries.

13. Key informant interviews and online survey. Members of the GEF Partnership (GEF Agencies, GEF Secretariat, STAP, GEF CSO Network) will be interviewed on their experience and perspectives on the effectiveness of knowledge management in the GEF Partnership. Questions relevant to perspectives of

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[8] GEF IEO. 2017. The Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the GEF. 2017.

broader stakeholder groups (GEF operational and political focal points, executing agencies, project/program staff and consultants, external partners) will be integrated in an online stakeholder survey for OPS7. This will be done to avoid respondent fatigue as the same respondents might need to answer questions on other topics covered in OPS7. A separate brief survey will also be considered if necessary, for GEF Agencies on their related KM initiatives.

14. Quality-at-entry review: a sample of GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects and programs will be reviewed to assess the implementation of the GEF project cycle knowledge and learning requirements and their relevance to enabling the knowledge sharing and learning within projects and programs, across the GEF partnership, and with broader audiences.

15. Case study analysis: An in-depth analysis of knowledge platforms introduced in Integrated Approach Pilots and Impact Programs will be conducted to identify early lessons on their effectiveness in coordinating.

16. Usage statistics: an analysis of statistics on KM tools and initiatives (mentioned in paragraphs 6 and 7 to assess their use.

17. Triangulation of the information gathered will be conducted at the completion of the data gathering an analysis to determine trends, and identify main findings, lessons, and conclusions.

Activity calendar

The review will be conducted between April and December 2020. The initial work plan presented below will adapted as a result of further preparations.

Activity	Timeframe	Milestone
Document and literature review	April-May 2020	End by May 31, 2020
Development of data collection protocols and templates	April-May 2020	End by May 31, 2020
Key informant interviews	May-June 2020	End by June 30, 2020
Quality-et-entry review	June-September 2020	End by September 15, 2020
Case study analysis	June-September 2020	End by September 15, 2020
Online survey (targeted questions as part of the OPS7 survey)	September 2020	End by September 30, 2020
Triangulation	September	October 10, 2020
Draft Report	October 2020	October 20, 2020
Final report	November 2020	November 8, 2020
Dissemination and outreach	post- November 2020	post-November 2020