

GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Egypt (1991–2008)



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The Arab Republic of Egypt has been a long-standing partner of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), having received GEF financial support since 1991 for a variety of projects and activities in collaboration with the GEF

Agencies, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society. From November 2008 to March 2009, the GEF Evaluation Office carried out a country portfolio evaluation of GEF support to Egypt for the period 1991–2008. The evaluation, which was conducted by a team of Egyptian consultants and staff from the GEF Evaluation Office, had the following objectives:

- Independently evaluate the relevance and efficiency of GEF support
- Assess the effectiveness and results of completed and ongoing projects in each relevant focal area
- Provide feedback and knowledge sharing to the GEF Council in its decision-making process to allocate resources and develop policies and strategies, to the country on its participation in the GEF, and to the various agencies and organizations involved in the preparation and implementation of GEF support

The country portfolio evaluation included all 19 national projects undertaken by the GEF (a total investment of \$87.9 million), as well as 7 regional projects and 1 global project. The national component of the GEF Small Grants Programme has received \$4.32 million, bringing the total Egypt has received from the GEF to \$92.2 million.

One of the challenges facing the country portfolio evaluation team stemmed from the fact that the GEF does not develop or implement country-specific strategies; consequently, there are no specified programmatic objectives, indicators, or targets against which to evaluate the effectiveness and results of GEF projects. The evaluation therefore considered the objectives and internal coherence of portfolio projects and activi-

ties, and how the portfolio has evolved over time. The frameworks used for assessing GEF support to Egypt included the country programs of the GEF Agencies, as well as Egypt's national sustainable development and environmental policy, and the strategic frameworks and priorities within which these projects are prepared, approved, and conducted.

Findings

GEF activities in Egypt have been instrumental in focusing the attention of decision makers on the environmental issues at hand, promoting national policy changes, and mainstreaming environmental considerations into public policy, particularly in the climate change and biodiversity areas. The long-term sustainability of project results remains a challenge.

Results

GEF support to biodiversity in Egypt has been of strategic importance. The GEF has contributed significantly to developing institutional capacity within national and local authorities. Its activities have also helped raise awareness on biological diversity issues on the part of decision makers outside environmental circles, local administrators, the media, and the public at large. Consequently, biodiversity is now more visible and higher on the political agenda, and some biodiversity projects have generated considerable cofinancing from line ministries, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

Climate change activities have achieved results, particularly in the area of energy efficiency. GEF support has achieved particularly important impacts through the Energy Efficiency Improvement and Greenhouse Gas Reductions project, which is estimated to have achieved a cumulative reduction of 16.8 million tons of carbon dioxide. The project has achieved concrete results in other areas as well, which should result in still further carbon dioxide reductions. For example, transformations have been made in the energy efficient lighting system market, energy service companies market, and energy efficiency appliances market. Also, policies and regulations supporting project goals have been developed, including the

creation of energy efficiency standards and labels for three electrical appliances and energy efficiency codes for new residential buildings.

International waters projects have laid the foundation for collaboration between and among countries and have demonstrated innovative technologies and approaches for water conservation. GEF support has reached all of the main transboundary water bodies in Egypt: the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Nile River, and the Nubian aquifer. The evaluation found that these projects have succeeded in initiating a dialogue among the countries of the region and in supporting institutional arrangements such as the Nile Basin Initiative and the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Relevance

In general, GEF projects and activities address national priorities and align well with Egypt's environmental agenda. The majority of GEF projects and activities in Egypt address national priorities and are in alignment with the national environmental agenda as reflected in policy and legal frameworks.

Efficiency

Since the establishment of the GEF Unit and National Steering Committee in Egypt, the project approval process has become more systematic and follows clear priorities, and GEF project proposals have become more country driven. The diversity of representation in the National Steering Committee has proved successful and has firmly rooted the committee in the relevant ministries. Moreover, the ability of the focal point mechanism to fulfill its purpose has improved since the establishment of the GEF Unit and National Steering Committee. Certain other improvements in terms of GEF efficiency are still lacking, however:

- The project preparatory phase in Egypt is often too long, which runs the risk of country priorities, as well as GEF priorities, having shifted or changed by the time of project approval and implementation.
- Project supervision and/or steering committees need to be more proactive and responsive in addressing problems and should facilitate GEF project implementation in a timely manner.

Recommendations

- To address the key challenges facing countries like Egypt, the GEF Council should address the significant gap in resources available for land degradation. There is widespread demand in Egypt and other countries in the region for land degradation activities. The possibility of additional GEF allocations for work in this field should be explored.
- The Egyptian government should, through its GEF Unit and National Steering Committee, prepare a GEF national framework so GEF funds can be used strategically to support a planned program rather than a set of individual projects. Such a framework should include a national vision and strategic plan for future GEF activities in the country.
- The Egyptian government should improve the overall effectiveness of the GEF support.
 - The GEF Unit should help improve the coordination of and collaboration among institutions active in GEF projects, particularly in regional and global projects. It should also play a more central role in the integration and dissemination of GEF project outputs and outcomes.
 - The supervisory function of the National Steering Committee should be enhanced, and it should be given an explicit mandate to tackle project sustainability issues.
 - The GEF Small Grants Programme in Egypt should be linked to, and involved in, GEF medium- and full-size projects in the country. Where this kind of collaboration has taken place—albeit on a limited scale and an ad hoc basis—successful results have accrued in terms of project effectiveness and sustainability. The Small Grants Programme should help pave the way and prepare for these larger projects and should be involved in project follow-up activities and utilization of project products and results.

The GEF Evaluation Office is an independent entity reporting directly to the GEF Council, mandated to evaluate the focal area programs and priorities of the GEF.

The full version of the *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Egypt (1991–2008)* (Evaluation Report No. 51, 2009) is available in the Publications section of the GEF Evaluation Office Web site, www.gefeo.org. For more information, please contact the GEF Evaluation Office at gefevaluation@thegef.org.