

GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Madagascar (1994–2007)



Photo: Lee Risby, GEF Evaluation Office

Madagascar is one of the most important biodiversity conservation “hotspots” worldwide. Although it takes up less than 2 percent of the Africa region, it is home to about 25 percent of all African plants. About 80 percent of its flora is endemic, as is nearly 100 percent of its fauna. With nearly 5,000 kilometers of coastline, the country is rich in marine biodiversity and the site of significant coral reefs and wetlands. However, because nearly 80 percent of Madagascar’s poor live in rural areas and the agricultural sector (including forestry and fisheries) accounts for nearly 35 percent of Madagascar’s gross domestic product and 70 percent of its export earnings, terrestrial and marine biodiversity is increasingly threatened by human activities. Slash-and-burn agriculture, timber exploitation, fuelwood collection, and uncontrolled grazing have contributed to an 80 percent reduction in forest cover. Also, overfishing is increasingly diminishing marine biodiversity.

Madagascar has received financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) since 1994. Almost all of this funding has supported projects in biodiversity, with additional projects in the climate change and persistent organic pollutant focal areas. Madagascar also participates in 13 regional GEF-supported projects addressing international waters, land degradation, persistent organic pollutants, and biodiversity.

From November 2007 to February 2008, the GEF Evaluation Office undertook a country portfolio evaluation of Madagascar, examining the totality of GEF support in the country across all GEF Agencies and programs. Similar evaluations were concurrently undertaken in Benin and South Africa; the results of these three evaluations are synthesized and presented in the Office’s *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation 2008* to assess the experiences and common issues across various countries on the African continent. Madagascar was selected for evaluation because of its large portfolio, programmatic approach, emphasis on biodiversity, large allocation for biodiversity under the GEF Resource Allocation Framework, and status as a global biodiversity hotspot.

The evaluation assessed all 10 GEF national projects, which together received nearly \$36 million in GEF funding, most devoted to implementation of the Madagascar National Environmental Action Program. Eight regional projects—half of which involved international waters—which received nearly \$175 million in GEF funding were also selected for evaluation because they had significant Malagasy involvement.

Findings

Relevance

The GEF portfolio in Madagascar is relevant for national priorities and strategies, and GEF support is aligned with global environmental benefits. Implementation of the “Durban Vision,” the government’s strongly stated commitment to conservation, has intensified protected area coverage of coastal and marine ecosystems. Opportunities now exist to link biodiversity conservation with land degradation and climate change adaptation.

The issue of country ownership and capacity to create ownership remains a key challenge for the Madagascar government and donors. The Ministry of Environment, Water, Forests, and Tourism lacks capacity and leadership and has high staff turnover. This situation has led to a dependence on the GEF Implementing Agencies to drive GEF projects, particularly the National Environmental Action Program, which increasingly operates within a complex array of other institutions, further weakening national and local capacity. One exception to this general rule is the Anjozorobe Forest Corridor project, which is implemented by a national nongovernmental organization (NGO) demonstrating strong ownership and commitment.

Results and Effectiveness

GEF support has contributed to significant results in biodiversity conservation. GEF support has increased the size and coverage of protected areas from 21 to 46 and helped decrease deforestation in them. GEF assistance on the National Environmental Action Program has raised policy-maker awareness, established relevant national institutions, and broadened protected area classifications. The GEF supported the first example of

sustainable community protected area management in the Anjozorobe Forest Corridor.

GEF is enabling Madagascar to address other environmental challenges. GEF support has broadened the range of national and global environmental issues addressed by the government and stakeholders to include persistent organic pollutants, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and land degradation. For international waters, the GEF has mainly invested in coordinating with African and Indian Ocean states on oil pollution.

GEF portfolio results are at risk because of weak financial, institutional, and socioeconomic sustainability. Few protected areas are able to finance their own operations. Significant donor support has yet to strengthen institutional sustainability, and capacity at both the institutional and individual levels is uneven and diffused. Although environmental programs have consistently emphasized integration of biodiversity conservation with local community livelihoods, poor communities surrounding protected areas still pay a price for global environmental benefits.

Efficiency

The complexity and inefficiency of the GEF Activity Cycle make for barriers to project development. Most stakeholders confirmed the findings of the GEF Agencies' Joint Evaluation of the GEF Activity Cycle, noting the cycle's costliness in terms of financial and human resource inputs.

Stakeholder roles and responsibilities are not clear, and coordination is suboptimal. Numerous stakeholders are engaged in the environmental sector in Madagascar, and clear leadership and coordination are distinctly lacking. This situation is well known to donors, the government, and international NGOs, but they have not yet determined a solution. One recent effort is establishment of a multidonor and government steering committee for the final phase of the Environment Program, but it is viewed as donor driven.

The operational focal point mechanism is currently undersourced and unable to be operational. The position of operational focal point has changed hands 11 times in the past 10 years, exacerbating the lack of institutional continuity and leadership regarding the GEF. Madagascar also lacks a stable national committee to program GEF resources efficiently and strategically.

Knowledge management and lesson learning are not formalized, which is impeded by a lack of monitoring and evaluation. There is no formal modality in Madagascar for exchanging lessons learned and sharing knowledge among GEF projects and programs, and with other donor and international NGO environmental programs. Poor project monitoring and evaluation mean that project managers and stakeholders are unable to know the reasons for a given project's success or failure. Until this situation is improved, knowledge management on project experiences and best practices will remain limited.

Recommendations

To the GEF Council

- Consider further support to trust funds as an approach to improving the sustainability of global environmental benefits.
- Develop a strategy to improve capacities to address global environmental issues in least developed countries.

To the Government of Madagascar

- Consider establishing a permanent interministerial and multidonor environmental committee.
- Address threats to sustainability through increased diversification of investment in the environmental sector.

To the GEF Implementing Agencies

- Work more closely with the government and other stakeholders to enhance country ownership.
- Work with the government and other stakeholders to develop additional sectorwide and programmatic approaches to supporting environmental sustainability.

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 versions of the *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Madagascar (1994–2007)* and *GEF Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report 2008* (Evaluation Report Nos. 42 and 44, 2008) are 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.