

GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: The Philippines (1992–2007)

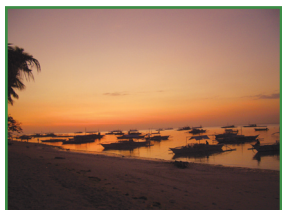


Photo: Anna Viggh, GEF Evaluation Office

From December 2006 to April 2007, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Evaluation Office carried out an evaluation of GEF support to the Philippines. This was the second in an ongoing series of evaluations using a country as the unit of analysis. The Philippines was selected because it has been one of the largest country recipients of GEF support, it will receive country Resource Allocation Framework allocations in both climate change and biodiversity, its GEF Small Grants Programme is one of the longest running such country programs in existence, and the environment sector is an essential part of its national sustainable development agenda.

Conducted by Evaluation Office staff and a team of international and local consultants, the evaluation combined qualitative and quantitative methods and tools, including review of existing information, extensive interviews with key GEF stakeholders, one major consultation workshop, and site visits to selected projects. The evaluation focused on 30 GEF national projects, the GEF Small Grants Programme, and a few selected regional projects in which the Philippines participates. These activities represent an investment of \$145 million.

The evaluation explored three key questions:

- Is GEF support relevant to the Philippine national development agenda and environmental priorities and to the GEF mandate?
- Is GEF support efficient as indicated by the time, effort, and money needed to develop and implement GEF projects and to develop synergies and partnerships among GEF projects and between the GEF and government agencies as well as other GEF stakeholders?
- What are the results of GEF support?

Findings

Relevance of the Portfolio

GEF support has been relevant to Philippine national development plans and environmental priorities. The GEF focus on biodiversity conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy in this country has been in line with the development and national priorities established in the country's medium-term development plans; however, GEF project documents have often failed to establish links to these plans and how projects would support them. The relevance of GEF support to national action plans developed within GEF focal areas has also been very high.

GEF support to the Philippines has been relevant to the objectives and mandate of the GEF. GEF support has targeted conservation and sustainable use of species, focusing on 8 of 16 terrestrial biogeographic regions, although mostly on the country's large islands. In climate change, GEF activities have mainly supported reduction of carbon emissions and increased energy efficiency. With GEF support, the Philippines has developed a national action plan to reduce and eliminate releases of persistent organic pollutants and participates in the GEF-supported Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia.

Results of the Portfolio

GEF support to the Philippines has produced a range of global environmental benefits. GEF-supported activities probably slowed a downward trend in conservation status of several threatened species, and several Philippine protected areas demonstrate best practices in biodiversity conservation. GEF-supported renewable technologies have significantly offset greenhouse gas emissions, and the Philippines is now an important global power in geothermal energy. Approaches and experiences produced through GEF support in the Philippines have or could be replicated, increasing GEF impact.

Declining environmental trends and lack of compliance in the Philippines endanger these achievements. The amount of land protected still falls below Asia's average. Loss of forest cover in 1990–2005 reduced GEF achievements to negative 1 million hectares of protection, and GEF efforts to protect vulnerable ecosystems on small islands have been limited. Predicted increases in carbon dioxide emissions indicate that the GEF should focus more on primary emission sources, specifically, land degradation and forest conversion to agriculture. The GEF has only recently supported adaptation to climate change impacts and has not supported government efforts on electrified mass transportation.

The GEF portfolio in the Philippines exhibits several inefficiencies. Time-consuming project preparation and approval may have led to setbacks and loss of stakeholder commitment. Lack of transparency and poor quality data on the GEF Activity Cycle have produced stakeholder confusion and frustration. Absence of a clear, publicly accessible proposal-tracking mechanism has been a critical shortcoming. Unclear information on Resource Allocation Framework implementation has left room for interpretation by various stakeholders, who have not always understood the criteria for decision making and perceive inconsistencies and arbitrariness in the process. Furthermore, the position of the GEF operational focal point has not been institutionalized, posing a range of challenges for the Philippines in its interactions with the GEF.

Recommendations

To the GEF Council

- **The GEF should develop country strategies for large recipients of GEF support.** Lack of a GEF strategy in the Philippines has reduced potential results and led to inefficiencies. A coherent, publicly debated, transparent GEF strategy with clear targets and objectives, and a long- and short-run vision and program, would address some weaknesses identified in the evaluation.

To the Government of the Philippines

- **Compliance with environmental policies and regulations requires urgent attention.** Government steps in this direction, especially a programmatic approach to envi-

ronment and natural resource management, are welcome. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources should further strengthen and institutionalize collaboration with other departments to increase environmental governance, linking with broader government efforts to fight corruption and improve public sector effectiveness.

- **The Philippines should consider including in future GEF support globally unique small island regions, land degradation, and improvement of climate change resilience.** It should balance GEF assistance more equally among the 16 unique land-based biogeographic zones and increasingly include projects that take into account adaptive actions related to land degradation, biodiversity, and integrated ecosystem management.
- **The country should improve the efficiency of GEF mechanisms in the Philippines.** This can be effected by strengthening and institutionalizing operational focal point functions, developing and implementing a national GEF country framework, transferring monitoring of the GEF portfolio to the National Economic and Development Authority to improve accountability and transparency, and improving coordination among GEF Agencies.

Follow-Up

The GEF Council reviewed this evaluation at its June 2007 meeting and asked the Secretariat to prepare a proposal on developing country assistance strategies that lead to better coordination and programming at the country level. The Council also asked the Secretariat to ensure the transparency of and better access to information on GEF procedures and the status of projects in the GEF Activity Cycle.

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: Philippines (1992–2007)* (Evaluation Report No. 36, 2008) 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.