

GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Samoa (1992–2007)



Photo: Claudio Volonté, GEF Evaluation Office

From January to April 2007, the Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) carried out an evaluation of GEF support to Samoa, the third such country analysis undertaken by the Office. Samoa was selected for evaluation for several reasons, notably its long-term and diverse portfolio featuring national, regional, and global projects by all three GEF Implementing Agencies. Additionally, Samoa represents two groups of countries that are highly relevant to the GEF: small island developing states of the Pacific and least developed countries.

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 a portfolio of 18 projects accounting for an estimated GEF investment of \$7 million and explored three key questions:

- Is GEF support relevant to national development needs and challenges as well as to the GEF mandate, objectives, policies, and focal area programs and strategies?
- Is GEF support efficient as indicated by the time, effort, and money needed to develop and implement GEF projects; any particular issues related to regional projects; and synergies and partnerships between GEF projects and between GEF and government agencies as well as other GEF stakeholders?
- What are the results of completed projects?

Findings

Relevance of the Portfolio

GEF support has been relevant to both the Samoa Development Strategy and national environmental policies. GEF support can be directly linked to key outcomes

of the strategy such as protection/conservation of biodiversity; protection of water catchments; and increased awareness of potential climate change impacts, the importance of ozone-depleting substances, community-based natural resource management, and community development. It has also been instrumental in developing national environmental policies and strategies.

All GEF-funded projects are highly relevant to the GEF mandate and focal areas, but slow follow-up support from government sources could jeopardize the sustainability of results. GEF projects in Samoa have focused primarily on biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, and international waters; enabling activities have concentrated largely on capacity building. Despite the close linkages between GEF priorities and Samoan national priorities, the sustainability of results cannot be guaranteed because the government has provided inadequate follow-up funding.

Results of the Portfolio

Enabling activities have helped Samoa build the foundations for its environmental frameworks and strategies, which are necessary conditions for generating global environmental benefits. Samoa has completed all necessary national plans, policies, and legislation related to the environment; increased staff capacity substantially within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; and increased public awareness on key issues.

Completed projects have achieved concrete on-the-ground results; however, reporting on results is stymied by the poor quality of final evaluations and limited baselines. Notably, GEF support in the biodiversity focal area has contributed significantly to the conservation and sustainable management of forest and marine ecosystems. However, analysts' ability to quantify projects' good results are hampered by the information generated by project evaluations, which has been largely limited to reports on outcomes and does not address impacts on en-

vironmental conditions. The absence of such information is attributed to the fact that evaluations were conducted before intended project impacts could be discerned.

Efficiency of the Portfolio

Samoa has improved its efficiency in accessing GEF funding, although obstacles remain. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has improved its capacity and expanded its mandate, and action plans and strategies in many areas are ready for implementation. Additionally, the country's Small Grants Programme has been recognized as a useful mechanism for local communities to receive support. Among the obstacles to more efficient use of GEF funding are the cost and complexity of GEF projects; the delays between project preparation and actual start-up; and implementation of the Resource Allocation Framework, which has created additional uncertainties, particularly about the fate of projects in previous pipelines. Also, there has been no harmonization of efforts or funding among the various players working in the environment sector.

High transaction costs and limited appreciation of collaborative opportunities have kept most GEF Agencies from becoming involved in Samoa. Although most GEF Agencies have a presence in the Pacific region, several factors limit their involvement with Samoa, including the high transaction costs of developing stand-alone GEF activities in the Pacific, a lack of internal communications within Agencies about the possibilities of GEF and the logistics of GEF procedures, and limited GEF resources for Samoa.

Recommendations

To the GEF Council

Based on the GEF experience in Samoa, the programmatic approach for the Pacific SIDS should

- focus on assisting countries in establishing the foundation for policies and strategies and in developing action plans, frameworks, and priorities, primarily through enabling activities;
- be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the different capacities of the various Pacific island countries;

- reduce the high transaction costs associated with the region by avoiding stand-alone GEF projects and incorporating GEF activities into the programs of GEF Agencies working in the region;
- strengthen aid harmonization across GEF stakeholders;
- identify the global environmental benefits to be gained in Samoa and the Pacific.

To the Government of Samoa

- **Environmental concerns need increased visibility in the Samoa Development Strategy.** Although environmental issues have been well integrated into many sectors and policy areas, the strategy treats the environment as a cross-cutting issue rather than as a priority or sector. Donors consequently do not prioritize it for support.
- **Increased participation by additional stakeholders in implementing GEF-supported projects will increase national capacity.** The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment should build on its successes with GEF projects by reaching out to other sectors, both within government and in civil society, to assist in project implementation and to increase the country's capacity.

Follow-Up

The GEF Council reviewed this evaluation at its June 2007 meeting and requested that the Secretariat take into account Samoa's experience with the GEF in its further development of the GEF Pacific Alliance for 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 version of the *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: Samoa (1992–2007)* (Evaluation Report No. 37, 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.