

OPS5

FIFTH OVERALL PERFORMANCE STUDY OF THE GEF

RELEVANCE OF THE GEF TO THE CONVENTIONS

OPS5 Technical Document #4

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Relevance of the GEF to the Conventions

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Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. RELEVANCE OF THE GEF TO THE CONVENTIONS.....	3
1. Nature of convention guidance.....	3
1.1 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).....	5
1.2 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	8
1.3 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	11
1.4 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	12
1.5 International agreements and other sources of guidance linked to International Waters.....	13
2. GEF responsiveness to convention guidance.....	14
2.1 Biodiversity	16
2.2 Climate Change Mitigation.....	17
2.3 Climate Change Adaptation under LDCF/SCCF	17
2.4 Land Degradation	18
2.5 Chemicals	18
2.6 International Waters	18
2.7 Overarching GEF Policies	20
3. Working relationship between GEF and Conventions	22
3.1 Formal and informal mechanisms of communication and collaboration	22
3.2 Improvement in the reporting to the conventions from GEF	23
3.3 Working relationship across Conventions.....	24

I. INTRODUCTION

As a part of the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5) of the Global Environment Facility, Technical Paper #4 on the **Relevance of the GEF to the Conventions** presents a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the nature of guidance issued by the COPs of the respective conventions to the GEF. Building on this assessment, it evaluates the responsiveness of the GEF to this guidance at the strategic as well as the portfolio level. Finally, the section provides a more in-depth look at the formal and informal working relationship between the GEF and the Conventions including collaboration with the Convention Secretariats.

II. RELEVANCE OF THE GEF TO THE CONVENTIONS

1. Nature of convention guidance

The Fourth Overall Performance Study (OPS4) highlighted a number of findings on the general nature of convention guidance that make the operationalization of guidance by the GEF challenging. Features of convention guidance highlighted by OPS4 include:

- a) The **accumulative** nature of guidance deriving from the fact that new guidance seldom replaces older guidance, creating a steadily increasing set of requirements and requests for the GEF to be responded to.
- b) The **repetitiveness** of some convention guidance, which is issued unchanged or with very minor changes in several decisions from one COP to the other, adding to the accumulation of irrelevant or obsolete items of guidance.
- c) The **ambiguity** of guidance formulation deriving from the nature of many COP decisions as a negotiated political compromise that deliberately leaves room for interpretation, which in turn complicates operationalization by the GEF.
- d) The **lack of prioritization** of requests to the GEF, which makes a strategic approach to the GEF response to COP guidance difficult.

The OPS5 review of convention guidance finds that these characteristics of COP guidance continue to apply in many cases and that the way in which convention guidance is formulated has not fundamentally changed. However, as OPS4 already mentioned, conventions have put in place several processes to streamline guidance to the GEF, consolidate obsolete and repetitive guidance, and to provide additional prioritization of requests to the GEF. Since there are significant differences between the conventions regarding the nature and processing of guidance the following sections provide a separate analysis for each convention.

Building on the OPS4 analysis, the OPS5 review of convention guidance further refined the quantitative assessment of guidance. Figure 1 and table 1 present the count of items of guidance defined as COP decision text that addresses the GEF directly (this excludes related guidance to GEF Agencies, Convention Secretariats, or other stakeholders) and expresses a request or invitation to act on a specific topic. Subparagraphs that address different topics are counted as separate items of guidance, which explains the difference in total numbers in comparison to OPS4. The guidance count for the UNFCCC includes guidance on climate change mitigation as well as adaptation operationalized through the LDCF/SCCF.

Figure 1: Guidance count comparison by convention

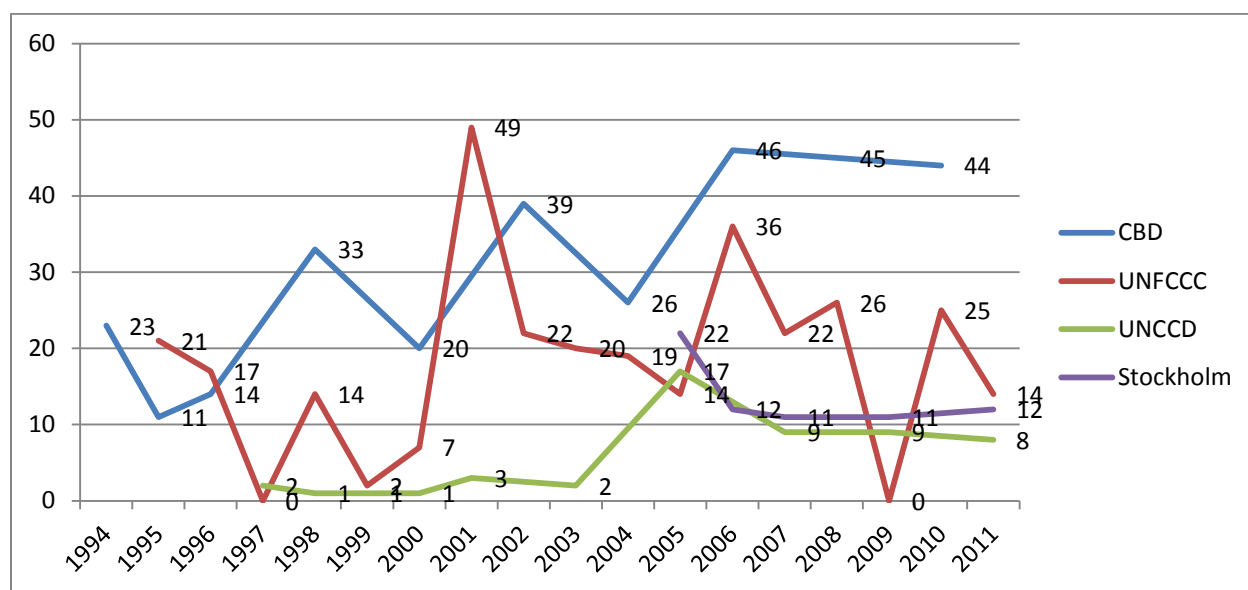


Table 1: Guidance count comparison by convention

Year	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	TOTAL
CBD	23	11	14		33		20		39		26		46		45		44		301
UNFCCC		21	17	0	14	2	7	49	22	20	19	14	36	22	26	0	25	14	308
UNCCD				2	1	1	1	3		2		17		9		9		8	53
POPs												22	12	11		11		12	68

Convention guidance can be classified in three categories that require different responses by the GEF. The first category is guidance on overarching principles, strategic directions, and eligibility criteria. The number of corresponding items of guidance tends to be high at the beginning of GEF’s role as financial mechanism and decreases over time. This general guidance is mostly reflected in the general principles of the GEF and does not require specific reactions by the GEF Focal Areas. The second category is guidance on GEF processes including resource mobilization, allocation and project cycle procedures. OPS4 already highlighted that a large amount of convention guidance falls into this category with the streamlining of access to GEF resources representing a particularly frequent issue. The GEF response to this category of guidance is mostly not Focal Area specific, but requires action at the corporate level.

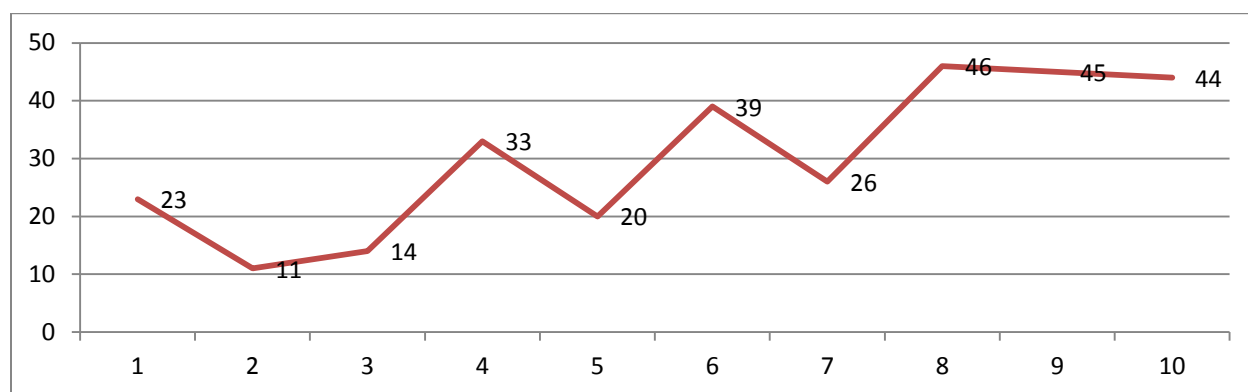
The third category of guidance is the most important in terms of operationalization through Focal Areas. It addresses the priorities for GEF programming and activities to be supported by GEF resources. Guidance on GEF programming falls into one of two subcategories: First, guidance on GEF support for countries to fulfill their obligations under the convention, including voluntary capacity development and knowledge creation initiatives to be funded through the GEF Enabling Activities modality. Second, guidance on activities operationalized under GEF Focal Area objectives and financed through full-size projects and medium-size

projects. Guidance in this category differs significantly between conventions and is further discussed in the convention specific sections below.

1.1 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The overall amount of CBD guidance issued to the GEF has been continuously high and slightly increasing over time (see figure 2). A large part of guidance at each COP has been repeating earlier guidance without adding new information. The majority of topics addressed by CBD guidance have been raised during COP I to COP IV, with few substantive additions during subsequent COPs.

Figure 2: CBD guidance count by COP



Challenge 1: Consolidation of guidance

The CBD has conducted two processes in order to consolidate repetitive and obsolete guidance. First, the CBD attempted to collect guidance to the GEF in one COP decision. This has been only partially successful. The respective COP decision provides a centralized overview of convention guidance addressing the GEF. However, additional items of guidance, mostly repeating the items already listed under the GEF decision, are still included in several other COP decisions adding to the growing body of repetitive guidance.

Second, the CBD made an effort to identify obsolete, repetitive and overlapping guidance, and prepared an updated compilation of existing guidance to the financial mechanism. The “Review of the Guidance to the Financial Mechanism” was requested by COP IX (Decision IX/31 C, paragraph 1) and was prepared by the CBD Secretariat. The Review was submitted as a working document to the *Ad Hoc Open ended Working Group on Review of Implementation*. The proposed list of obsolete, repetitive and overlapping guidance and the updated compilation of guidance was approved by COP X (Decision X/24). The process was successful in consolidating previous guidance. However, the process did not change the approach to formulating new guidance. Decisions addressing the GEF issued by COP X and COP XI again entail repetitive guidance.

Challenge 2: Prioritization of guidance

The challenge of lacking strategic prioritization of convention guidance to the GEF is particularly pronounced for the CBD. The qualitative review conducted as part of the

Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies (see table 3)¹ concluded that the CBD issued frequent guidance on a multitude of technical matters, identifying a high number of concrete areas to be supported by GEF financing. CBD guidance exerts a direct and strong influence on GEF programming at the strategy as well as the portfolio level. This becomes particularly clear in the qualitative comparison of guidance between different conventions. The other three conventions that issue direct guidance to the GEF as a financial mechanism largely refrain from guidance on GEF programming beyond the support for fulfilling national obligations to the conventions (see table 2).

Table 2: Comparison between UNFCCC and CBD guidance by category

Qualitative classification of guidance	Items of guidance	
	CBD	UNFCCC ²
1. General (overall principles, eligibility criteria,...)	24	53
2. Programming (guidance with direct influence on GEF strategies and portfolio)		
a) National reporting, capacity development, knowledge creation and dissemination	47	106
b) Priority areas, technical issues, instruments, approaches <u>Examples CBD:</u> Taxonomy, Protected Areas, Invasive Alien Species, ABS, Mountain ecosystems. Biosafety, Forest biodiversity, Inland Water Ecosystems,... <u>Examples UNFCCC:</u> Energy Efficiency, LULUCF, Carbon Capture and Storage	152	3
3. Procedures (project cycle, resource allocation, ...)	78	91

In the past, CBD guidance has provided limited direction on how it envisions these various aspects would be integrated into a strategic approach in a consistent, effective and efficient way. As a result of limited prioritization of guidance, formulating a coherent and streamlined GEF Focal Area Strategy on Biodiversity has been difficult. In other conventions that do not issue comparable programmatic guidance the necessity for clear prioritization of issues is not as pronounced. In the case of the CBD, prioritization is a prerequisite for the development of a strategic approach by the GEF.

In order to approach this challenge, the CBD has initiated several processes to improve the strategic coherence of CBD guidance and provide additional information on prioritization. The “Framework of programme priorities related to utilization of GEF resources” provides some guidance on the prioritization of GEF support. The “Strategic Plan of the CBD for 2011-2020” and the corresponding “Aichi Targets” aim to provide the basis for a more coherent and consistent overall framework for GEF support. On the one hand, these approaches still provide a very broad spectrum of priority areas representing an insufficient level of strategic

¹ The full analysis of CBD convention guidance is presented in Technical Paper #1 of the Focal Area Strategies Evaluation.

² The table displays number of items of UNFCCC guidance on Climate Change Mitigation. Guidance on Climate Change Adaptation under the LDCF/SCCF is more programmatic in nature as discussed in section 1.2.

prioritization. On the other hand, they represent important initial efforts and promising starting points to allow for a more strategic GEF approach to operationalize convention guidance. The Focal Area Strategies Evaluation therefore recommended further strengthening and intensification of these processes through collaboration between the GEF Secretariat and the CBD. The effects of these efforts will have to be assessed in future evaluations.

Table 3: CBD guidance by category and topic

Theme/COP	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL
I. GENERAL											
General	3	1						1	1	3	9
Policy and Strategy	4			4		1	1			1	11
Eligibility Criteria	1						1				2
Programme priorities general	1								1		2
II. PROGRAMMING											
Biodiversity planning	2			1		1	1	3	1	6	15
Identification, monitoring, indicators and assessments	2		2		1		1	1		2	9
Taxonomy				2	1	1	1	5		2	12
Protected areas							1	5	4	2	12
Species conservation	1					2				2	5
Invasive alien species				2	2	1	1	2	3		11
Article 8(j) and related provisions	1		1		1	1		1	1	2	8
Sustainable use							1				1
Engagement of business									2		2
Incentive measures	1		1	2	1	1					6
Research and training			1						2		3
Education and public awareness			1		1	1	1	2			6
Access and benefit-sharing			2	2	1	2	1			1	9
Technology cooperation/transfer	1						1		2	2	7
Scientific cooperation/CHM	1	2	2	3	1	1			3	2	15
Biosafety			1		1	1	3	3	1	1	11
National reporting		2		2	1	2	1	3	1	2	14
Ecosystem approach					1		1		3		5
Agricultural biological diversity			1		2	4					7
Forest biodiversity				4	1	1					6
Biological diversity of inland water ecosystems				3	1	2					6
Marine and coastal biodiversity	1	1			1	2	1			3	9
Island biological diversity								2			2
BD of dry and sub-humid lands	1				1						2
Mountain ecosystems	1										1
Climate change and biodiversity							1		2	4	7
Development activities	1						1			2	4
Sustainability	1								1		2

South-South cooperation										2	2	
III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES												
Co-financing				1	1	1			1		4	
Innovative financing mechanisms and resource mobilization						2		2	2	2	8	
Incremental costs				1							1	
Resource allocation								3	2		5	
Geographical consideration						1		4	1		5	
Gender									1	1	2	
Processing and delivery systems		4	1	2	1	8	4	3	2	2	27	
Review and evaluation			1	4		1	2	5	3		16	
GEF Reporting		1				2	1	1	5		10	
TOTAL		23	11	14	33	20	39	26	46	45	44	301

1.2 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Similar to the CBD, the UNFCCC issues a large amount of guidance to the GEF reflecting in parts the general characteristics of convention guidance: accumulative, repetitive and ambiguous. The amount of UNFCCC guidance has shown a slight downward trend. Guidance to the GEF is mostly centralized in one single decision for the GEF as the “operating entity of the financial mechanism” and a separate decision collecting guidance to the LDCF and SCCF. Some items addressing the GEF are issued as part of other COP decisions.

The UNFCCC COP distinguishes between guidance to the GEF as the financial mechanism, concerned with GEF activities on climate change mitigation, and the LDCF and SCCF as separate funds under the convention managed by the GEF that primarily address climate change adaptation. With regards to the GEF Focal Area on climate change mitigation, COP guidance focuses on issues relating to GEF support for national obligations under the convention as well as on capacity development and knowledge creation. A major part of UNFCCC guidance addresses activities tackled through the modality of Enabling Activities like National Reporting and Technology Needs Assessments (see table 4). UNFCCC guidance, in contrast to CBD guidance, hardly addresses other areas of GEF programming (see table 3). The few items of guidance relating to GEF programming are formulated as suggestions for consideration: *“Requests the Global Environment Facility to consider whether supporting carbon capture and storage technologies, in particular related capacity-building activities, would be consistent with its strategies and objectives, and if so, how they could be incorporated within its operational programmes”*. (Decision 5/CP.11, paragraph 3)

UNFCCC guidance to the LDCF and SCCF, as funds set up directly under the convention, formulates more concrete requirements for LDCF/SCCF programming. The LDCF received clear guidance to support the development of National Adaptation Programs of Action (NAPAs) and follow-up projects as identified in the NAPAs as well as National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). For the SCCF, UNFCCC guidance defines four general areas of activities (known as windows A-D) as well as a number of priority sectors to be covered by SCCF financed activities on climate change adaptation (window A).

Figure 3: UNFCCC guidance count by COP

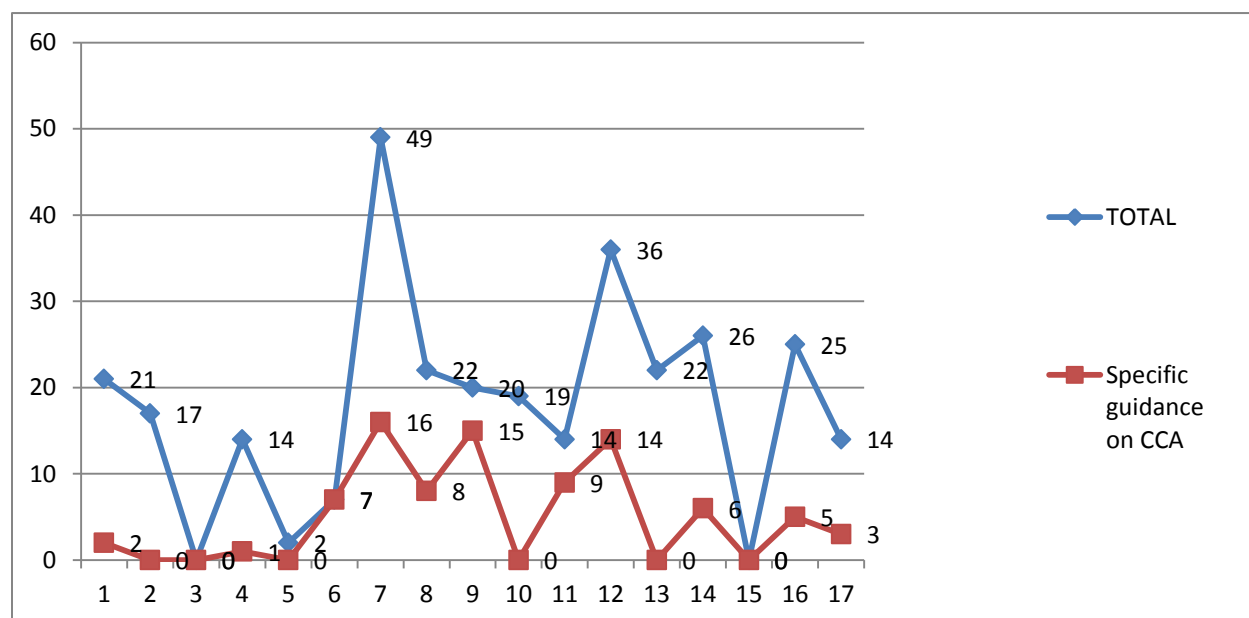


Table 4: UNFCCC guidance by category and topic

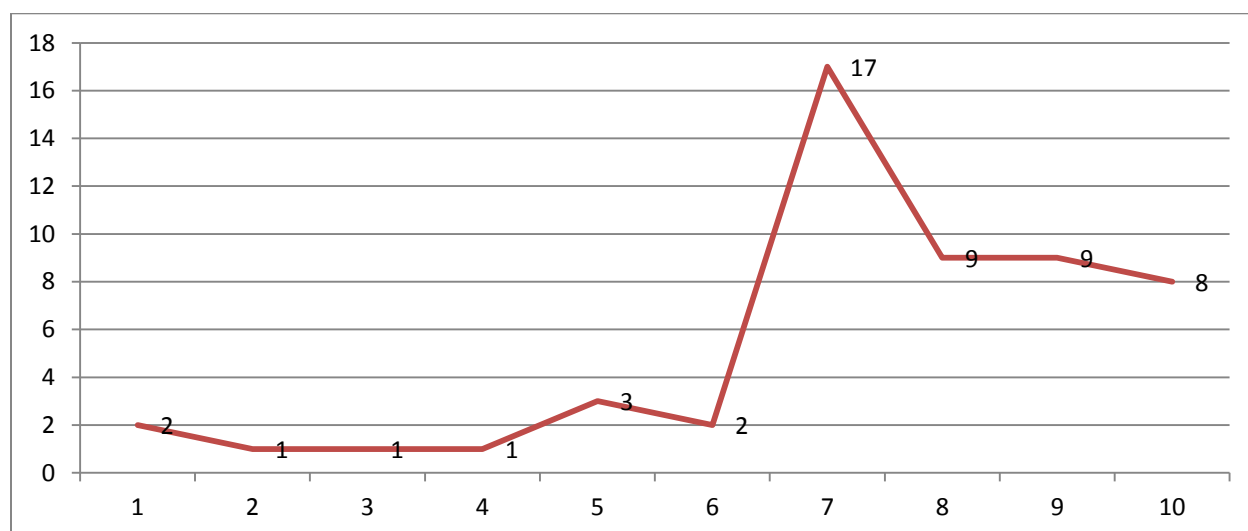
Theme/COP	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	TOTAL
I. GENERAL																		
General	1	3		1								1						6
LDCF general						1	1											2
SCCF general						2	1											3
AF general							1											1
Funding principles (general)	7	3					3	1				1				2		17
CCA funding principles	1			1														2
LDCF - Funding principles								4	1		7							12
SCCF - Funding principles									2			1						3
Eligibility Criteria	1																	1
II. PROGRAMMING																		
Funding priorities (general)	1													1		1	1	4
Research and systematic observation				1			7		1	1								10
Education, training and public awareness	2			1			5	2	1	3		1	2			2		19
National communications		3		2	2		1	1	1	2	1	2	5	4		4		28
National communications follow-up							1				1		1	2		1		6
National programs & planning	3			1			2									1	1	8
Capacity Development	1	1		1			3	1	1	6		3		1			1	19
Technology transfer and TNAs				1			1	1				3	5	3				14
Response measure impacts											2							2
Carbon Capture and Storage																1		1

TOTAL	21	17	0	14	2	7	49	22	20	19	14	36	22	26	0	25	14	308
Specific CCA guidance	2	0	0	1	0	7	16	8	15	0	9	14	0	6	0	5	3	86

1.3 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Before the GEF assumed its role as financial mechanism to the UNCCD with COP 7 (2005), the UNCCD issued few items of guidance containing primarily invitations for collaboration and information sharing. The UNCCD guidance to the GEF issued at COP 7, mostly included as part of the “Memorandum of Understanding on Enhanced Collaboration”, defines the rules and procedures of the relations between the convention and the GEF as its financial mechanism.

Figure 4: UNCCD guidance count by COP



Subsequent UNCCD COPs followed the best practice of issuing guidance to the GEF in one COP decision. The guidance addressing the GEF issued by COP 8 to 10 focuses on the procedures for GEF reporting, the processes of GEF resource approval and disbursement and GEF support to countries for fulfilling their national obligations to the convention. To date, UNCCD guidance has not addressed substantive issues on GEF programming (see table 5).

Table 5: UNCCD guidance by category and topic

Theme/COP	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL
I. GENERAL											
General							1				1
Designation as Focal Area					2						2
Strategy Alignment/Focal Area Strategy							1	2		1	4
II. PROGRAMMING											
Funding priorities (general)						1		1	1		3
Capacity Development							2			2	4
National reporting & Action Plans							3	1	2	2	8
Support to GM		1									1

Special initiatives							1			1	2
III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES											
GEF reporting	1						2	2	4		9
Resource mobilization	1			1	1			1			4
Resource allocation									1	1	2
Resource approval and disbursement							1	2	1	1	5
Incremental costs							1				1
Institutional cooperation			1			1	3				5
Memorandum of Understanding							2				2
TOTAL	2	1	1	1	3	2	17	9	9	8	53

1.4 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

Similar to the case of the UNCCD, the Stockholm Convention issued guidance to the GEF at its first COP (2005) that primarily defined the role of the GEF as the convention's financial mechanisms, the procedures of institutional collaboration and GEF reporting, as well as the general principles of GEF support to eligible countries including the financing of convention obligations. To a large degree the Stockholm Convention adheres to the practice of centralizing guidance to the GEF in one decision. At subsequent COPs 2 to 5, Stockholm Convention guidance focused on procedural aspects and national obligations to the convention, but also issued guidance on several priority areas for GEF programming, including the use of DDT, the establishment of Regional Centers, and support for the Global Monitoring Report. Some of the areas identified by the Stockholm Convention COP for GEF support are potentially not compatible with GEF funding modalities as further discussed in section 2.2.

Figure 5: SC guidance count by COP

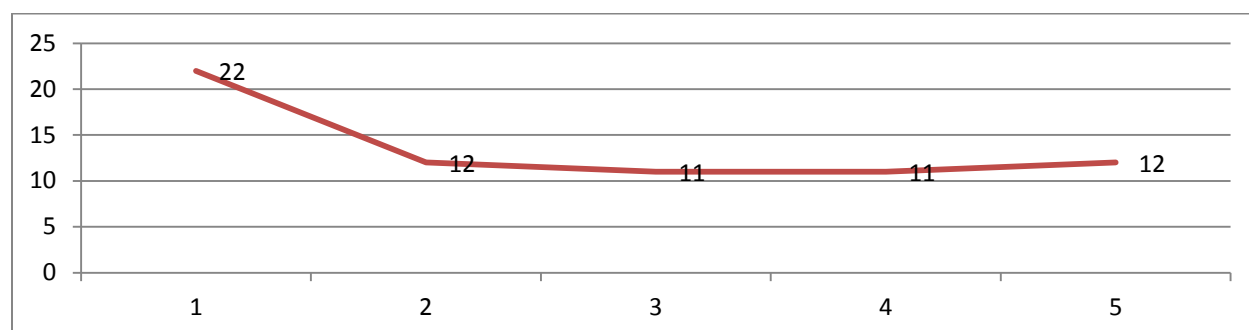


Table 6: SC guidance by category and topic

Theme/COP	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
I. GENERAL						
General	1			1		2
Funding principles	1					1
Eligibility Criteria	1	1				2
II. PROGRAMMING						
Funding priorities (general)	1					1
Capacity for effectiveness evaluation		1				1
National reporting & NIPs	1		3	2	1	7

DDT	2	1	1	1	1	6
Scientific and technical capacity		1				1
Regional centers			2	1	1	4
BAT/BEP			1			1
Global Monitoring Report			1	2	1	4
Clearing-House mechanism				1		1
Polychlorinated biphenyls elimination network					1	1
Newly listed chemicals					1	1
Elimination of unintentional releases of POPs					1	1
Collection of data on indicators					1	1
Technical assistance and technology transfer					1	1
III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES						
GEF reporting & information provision	7	2	1		3	13
Review of the Financial Mechanism				1		1
Resource mobilization		1		1		2
Resource allocation		1		1		2
Resource approval and disbursement procedures		1	1			2
Incremental costs		2				2
Co-financing			1			1
Institutional cooperation	4					4
Implementation of COP guidance	4	1				5
TOTAL	22	12	11	11	12	68

1.5 International agreements and other sources of guidance linked to International Waters

In contrast to other GEF Focal Areas, no centralized international convention exists to provide guidance for the GEF Focal Area on International Waters. Instead, the International Waters Focal Areas draws on a spectrum of sources, of which, OPS5 identifies the following three categories.

- a) **Country needs and willingness to cooperate:** the most important source of guidance for the International Waters Focal Area. GEF activities in the IW Focal Area depend on a common understanding and willingness of countries to work together on certain regionally agreed issues. The involved countries define the issues for joint action, ranging from foundational activities to SAP implementation. Since GEF involvement requires a common agreement and political will and willingness from countries to move forward, GEF IW activities are guided by country needs and demands. In some cases the GEF is not able to assist because of country circumstances and the geo-political context.
- b) **Multilateral mechanisms:** the International Waters Focal Area draws guidance from relevant multilateral instruments, most central being Chapter 17 and 18 of the Agenda 21, the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), United Nations General Assembly

Resolution on The law of Transboundary Aquifers as well as Convention for which the GEF serves as a financial mechanism (see table 7). These instruments identified selected key issues that undermine international waters sustainability and are globally recognized as central challenges. The GEF does not work on any of these specific issues in isolation. Instead, the IW Focal Area follows a holistic approach encompassing a broad spectrum of responses to multi sectoral problems and problem drivers.

- c) **Scientific community assessments:** the IW Focal Area also draws guidance from current scientific knowledge and new scientific evidence on IW related issues. One central example in this context is the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA), which provides a comprehensive scientific assessment of many different issues related to IW. However, GIWA provides few details on the relative prioritization of challenges, as noted in OPS5 interviews.

One of the particular features of the IW Focal Area is that it is not a passive recipient of guidance from these sources. To the contrary, the GEF is deeply involved in all three areas and contributes to advancement in these fields itself. Section 2.6 provides a more detailed look at how the GEF is an active player in these three categories.

Table 7 below summarizes the central international agreements representing the basis for GEF activities on International Waters as well as the main transboundary concerns addressed by these agreements.

Table 7: Summary of international agreements relating to IW

International agreement/instrument	Main issues addressed
I. Agenda 21 (Chapter 17 and 18)	Sustainable use of marine bio-diversity.
II. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)	International Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and in LMEs
III. United Nations General Assembly Resolution on The law of Transboundary Aquifers	Transboundary aquifers management, definition of Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions (ABNJ).
IV. United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)	Definition of targets for recovering and sustaining fish stocks, including regional and national-level reforms in legal frameworks and governance, access rights, and enforcement in Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs).
V. Conventions for which GEF serves as a financial mechanism	Example CBD: Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including targets 6, 10 and 11 directly related to marine and coastal biodiversity.

2. GEF responsiveness to convention guidance

OPS4 highlighted that the GEF is mostly responsive to convention guidance at the strategic and portfolio level across Focal Areas as well as with regards to adjusting processes and procedures at the corporate level. This finding is reaffirmed by evaluative evidence gathered since OPS4. All evaluation streams consistently report high levels of relevance to conventions

for GEF activities. The mapping of GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies conducted as part of the Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies concluded that **GEF-5 Strategies closely reflect convention guidance with few exceptions and are shaped by requests received from the respective COPs**. The additional evaluative work on GEF responsiveness to the convention conducted in the context of OPS5, including interviews with all four Convention Secretariats as well as the corresponding GEF Secretariat Teams, supports this general picture of GEF responsiveness. Nevertheless, the more detailed analysis points to several situations in which the operationalization and realization of convention guidance through the GEF is difficult. These cases, which are illustrated by concrete examples in the following sections, can be categorized as follows:

a) Limited flexibility between GEF replenishment periods: COPs that take place in the middle of GEF replenishment at times issue guidance that would require immediate reaction by the GEF and availability of additional financial resources beyond the allocation of the replenishment. Between replenishment periods, the GEF has little flexibility to make available additional funding or make adjustments to the set of activities eligible for GEF funding as set out in the Focal Area Strategies. In these cases, it is therefore difficult for the GEF to respond to convention guidance immediately. One recent example that is discussed in the following sections is the UNFCCC guidance on the biennial update reports (BURs).

This observation corresponds directly with the conclusions and recommendations of OPS4 stating that: “The GEF should be responsive to new guidance received between replenishments, either by including an unallocated amount in its replenishment or by accepting additional funds between replenishments to enable implementation of the new guidance.”

b) Convention requests outside the existing GEF mandate: The GEF’s mandate, operationalized in its funding modalities, excludes certain areas of activities like direct funding for basic research activities. Convention requests that are interpreted by the GEF as falling outside the GEF’s mandate and cannot be funded through the existing modalities are not fulfilled by the GEF. In some of these cases, the conventions and the GEF present different interpretation regarding eligibility for GEF funding (see sections 2.4 and 2.5).

c) Limited country demand or donor support: In some cases, convention guidance is fully operationalized by the GEF, but not translated into GEF projects because of country decisions. Since the STAR system leaves the decision on which areas to be addressed through GEF resources with the individual countries, some areas of activities mandated by the convention do not receive GEF funding due to limited country demand. This situation will be further assessed in the currently ongoing STAR Mid-Term Evaluation.

Examples for this situation are the areas of biosafety and ABS under the Biodiversity Focal Area (see section 2.1). Another situation arises for GEF managed activities under the SCCF dependent on donors’ voluntary contributions, where COP guidance is fully operationalized by the GEF, but donors’ choose not to provide funding for certain areas of activities (see section 2.3).

d) Funding modalities for Enabling Activities: One of the primary concerns raised by the COPs and Convention Secretariats with regard to GEF responsiveness is the delays in the provision of resources to countries for supporting recipients in fulfilling their national

obligations under the convention. The GEF modality for provision of these resources are the Enabling Activities, which usually provide three ways for recipients to access the corresponding resources: 1) by cooperating with a GEF Agency, which poses a problem as the amount of funding for these activities is often too small to be effectively managed through a GEF Agency; 2) by Direct Access by the country, which represent a long, complicated and challenging procedure many recipient countries are not equipped for or willing to undergo; 3) by Umbrella Projects set up by GEF Agencies that bundle recipient requests for EA resources. Some cases are briefly illustrated in the following sections. The currently ongoing Evaluation of Enabling Activities will provide more detailed information.

2.1 Biodiversity

The Guidance-to-Strategy mapping of the Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies concluded that the Biodiversity GEF-5 Strategy reflects COP guidance closely and tries to incorporate the multitude of areas for GEF programming mandated by CBD guidance. Due to the particular lack of prioritization in CBD guidance, the GEF responsiveness at the strategic level translates into a certain level of fragmentation and lower strategic coherence of the Biodiversity Strategy. As presented in section 1.1, the CBD has initiated processes to improve the strategic coherence of COP guidance and the Focal Area Strategies Evaluation recommended to strengthen these on-going processes and to intensify collaboration between the GEF and the CBD on strategy streamlining. The recommendation is reflected in the corresponding GEF Council decision. The necessity to focus guidance has already been raised under recommendation 3 of OPS4, stating that *“National governments should take the lead in prioritizing implementation of guidance from the conventions.”*

At the portfolio level, the Biodiversity Focal Area provides an example for the challenge of limited country requests. The programmatic areas of biosafety under the Cartagena Protocol as well as on Access and Benefit-Sharing under the Nagoya Protocol are operationalized through the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategy objectives BD-3 and BD-4, but countries are not requesting corresponding resources from their STAR allocations. Approved resources under the BD Focal Area are focused almost exclusively on activities under objectives BD-1 and BD-2. Possible explanations include that countries put higher priority on other GEF funded activities and overall STAR allocations are insufficient to also finance biosafety or ABS activities. Related interpretations of the lack of country demand is that countries have limited capacity to develop projects in the relatively new areas of biosafety and ABS and that national proponents of these activities are less influential within national bureaucracies making it less likely that they are prioritized for GEF funding by countries. These explanations for limited allocation of resources under BD-3 and BD-4 will be explored in more detail by the on-going STAR Mid-Term Evaluation as well as the Final OPS5 Report.

As a partial remedy to this situation, a dedicated fund separate from the STAR allocation for the implementation of activities relating to the Nagoya Protocol, the NP Implementation Fund (NPIF), was created under the GEF BD Focal Area. However, CBD stakeholders interviewed for the OPS5 analysis have expressed concerns that the original setup and activities under the NPIFs were not fully consistent with the objectives of the Nagoya Protocol, limiting the NPIFs utility as an instrument for channeling resources into NP implementation.

2.2 Climate Change Mitigation

Since UNFCCC guidance largely refrains from addressing programming issues that go beyond support for national obligations under the convention, responsiveness of the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategy on Climate Change Mitigation does not face the same challenges as the Biodiversity Focal Area. Accordingly, the Climate Change Mitigation Strategy fully reflects convention guidance at the strategic level. At the portfolio level, the Climate Change Mitigation Focal Area provides a recent example for the challenge of limited flexibility between GEF replenishment periods. UNFCCC COP 17 in Durban (2011) decided on the guideline for UNFCCC biennial reporting for non-Annex I parties and under Decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 44, issued the following guidance to the GEF: *“Urges and requests the Global Environment Facility to make available support to non-Annex I Parties preparing their first biennial update reports as early as possible in 2012 and on the basis of agreed full-cost funding.”*

Given the resource allocation made available for the Enabling Activities modality within the Climate Change Mitigation Focal Area, the operationalization of this guidance in the requested timeframe for all eligible countries was impossible as the GEF has limited instruments for the provision of additional resources between replenishments. The available instrument of creating a separate, dedicated and donor supported fund to be managed under the Climate Change Mitigation Focal Area was not requested by the UNFCCC COP. Thus far, the resource situation has not translated into a bottleneck as only few countries have requested support for BURs at this point in time. However, the case highlights the challenge of limited flexibility between replenishments, which has already been stressed by OPS4. Options to address this challenge recommended by OPS4 are the inclusion of unallocated resources in the GEF replenishment and/or the possibility to accept “additional funds between replenishments to enable implementation of the new guidance.”³

2.3 Climate Change Adaptation under LDCF/SCCF

The UNFCCC issues more programmatic guidance to the LDCF/SCCF as discussed in section 1.2. The recent evaluations on LDCF and SCCF presented by the GEF Evaluation Office conclude the responsiveness of activities under both funds to the convention. The SCCF evaluation presented to the LDCF/SCCF Council in November 2011 conducted an analysis of SCCF relevance to the convention at the strategic and portfolio level and concluded a high level of responsiveness. Convention requests and guidance on sector prioritization have been operationalized.

At the same time, the SCCF provides an example for the challenge of limited and selective donor support. UNFCCC guidance defines four general areas for support under the SCCF. SCCF-A on climate change adaptation and SCCF-B on technology transfer are operationalized and the SCCF provides support to corresponding activities. Support for SCCF-C on sector specific activities and SCCF-D on economic desertification on fossil fuel dependent economies has been operationalized by the GEF. However, donor countries have decided not to provide resources for the areas of activities. Consequently, the SCCF cannot support activities in these areas despite existing convention guidance.

³ See OPS4, page 12, under Recommendation 3.

2.4 Land Degradation

Since the GEF has assumed its role as the financial mechanism of the UNCCD in 2005, the UNCCD has not issued substantive guidance on GEF programming beyond GEF support for national obligations under the convention, namely national reporting to the convention as well as the development and formulation of National Action Plans (see section 1.3). As outlined above, the LD Focal Area uses three channels for the provision of corresponding resources: 1) funding through a GEF agency up to a total of \$150 000; 2) Direct Access by the country up to \$150 000; or 3) funding through an umbrella project set up by UNEP. Resources under the umbrella project are capped at \$50,000 per participating country. Given the difficulties with the first two options outlined above, most countries choose to request reduced funding through the UNEP umbrella project. To this point, 94 of the 143 eligible countries have applied to access EA funding. Ten countries used the direct access modality, twelve countries applied through GEF Agencies and 72 countries used the umbrella project modality (52 in umbrella project I and 20 in umbrella project II).

In addition, UNCCD guidance invites GEF support for the development of regional and sub-regional action plans (RAPs and SRAPs). Several UNCCD Parties interpret corresponding convention guidance as a request for GEF support for RAPs and SRAPs through the Enabling Activities modality responding to obligations under the convention. The GEF Secretariat maintains that RAPs and SRAPs fall outside the GEF mandate covered through the Enabling Activities modality as they lack the eligibility criterion of country drivenness.

2.5 Chemicals

As for the other Focal Areas, the OPS5 analysis concludes that the Chemicals Focal Area under its objective CHEM-1 is largely responsive to relevant guidance issued by the Stockholm Convention. That said, however, a recent decision of the Stockholm Convention also provides an example for guidance that, following the GEF Secretariat's interpretation, issues a request outside the GEF's mandate and the set of activities defined as eligible for GEF funding. In Decision SC-5/23, paragraph 3, the Stockholm Convention COP "*Requests the financial mechanism of the Convention [...] to provide financial support for country-driven training and capacity-building activities related to activities of the polychlorinated biphenyls elimination network.*" The Chemicals Focal Area of the GEF Secretariat interprets requested support for activities of the PCB Elimination Network (PEN) to be ineligible for receiving GEF resources.

2.6 International Waters

Given that the IW Focal Area is not directly linked to a specific international convention it does not respond to convention guidance as a financial mechanism. Instead, the IW Focal Area primarily draws its guidance from country needs and willingness to cooperate on certain issues with additional inputs from frameworks and targets embodied in IW related multilateral agreements as well as relevant evidence and knowledge created by the scientific community (see section 1.5 for further detail). The totality of guidance drawn from these sources defines activities for GEF support on 1) multi-state cooperation to balance conflicting water uses in transboundary surface and groundwater basins and to rebuild marine fisheries and reduce pollution of coasts and Large Marine Ecosystems, 2) support foundational capacity building, portfolio learning, and targeted research needs for ecosystem-based, joint management of transboundary water systems and 3) promote effective management of Marine Areas Beyond

National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), as defined by the GEF-5 IW Focal Area Strategy. The Impact section of the First Report of OPS5 as well as the recently concluded South China Sea Impact Evaluation provides a more detailed discussion of particular issues addressed through the IW Focal Area.

OPS5 finds that in comparison with other Focal Areas where the GEF serves as financial mechanisms for their related conventions and from which it draws its guidance, the International Waters Focal Area is characterized by a stronger focus on a bottom-up approach, since country needs and demands represent the most important source of guidance for activities under the GEF International Waters Focal Area. As noted above, the GEF depends on an understanding and willingness for countries to work together either on foundational activities or on opportunities to take further project steps. This dimension of transboundary cooperation is a unique feature of the GEF International Waters Focal Areas.

As noted in section 1.5, the IW Focal Area is not a passive recipient of guidance from the three general sources, but is deeply involved as an active player in all three areas. Most importantly in this context, GEF activities under the International Waters Focal Area are characterized by the strong, systematic and long-term support for the development and formulation of multilateral agreements and structures for collaboration as well as support to the overarching regional environmental architecture. The GEF-5 International Water Strategy notes that GEF has provided direct support to 8 of the 18 regional seas conventions, 6 of the shared inland water agreements, and 5 regional fisheries commissions. In this way, the International Water Focal Area does not only draw on international agreements and country based needs, but is also directly involved in creating new regional instruments and guidelines.

A recent example is the adoption of a regional fisheries refugia system for transboundary fisheries management in the South China Sea, as reported in the impact evaluation report on the GEF South China Sea and adjacent areas project. At completion of the project the ASEAN and SEAFDEC adopted the guidelines formulated by the RWG-Fisheries in 2006 as part of the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Regional Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries in Southeast Asia for adoption in each member country. Subsequently, the fisheries refugia system was promoted as a tool in the Plan of Action on Sustainable Fisheries for Food Security for the ASEAN Region towards 2020 adopted by the ASEAN-SEAFDEC ministers in April 2012. This example illustrates the replication at the regional level of a successful local initiative.

Another prominent recent example is the upcoming Benguela Convention, which culminated the GEF support for a major regional cooperative initiative. It was launched in the 1990s jointly by Angola, Namibia and South Africa "to develop the enhanced science capacity required for the optimal and sustainable utilization of living resources of the Benguela ecosystem by (a) improving knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of important commercial stocks, their environment and linkages between the environmental processes and the stock dynamics, and (b) building appropriate human and material capacity for marine science and technology in the countries bordering the Benguela ecosystem." Based on the project, Angola, Namibia, and South Africa created the new, ecosystem-based Benguela Current Commission, the first Large Marine Ecosystem commission in the world. The Commission, launched in 2007, demonstrates how the political commitment of three countries can combine to address ecosystem sustainability. In response, the GEF funded a second and final project to operationalize the Commission and support negotiations for a legal agreement, the Benguela Current Convention, among the three countries to sustain its work.

The Convention, signed in late 2011, will be ratified on March 18, 2013. As with the Danube Convention (another example of GEF support for regional conventions), this binding agreement will provide the foundation for long-term cooperative management of the Benguela Current LME. The Convention will enable the Benguela Current Commission to fulfill its role of marrying science with management to improve decision-making in fisheries, coastal management, mining, and energy.

Additionally, OPS5 notes the central role of the scientific community assessment in providing guidance for GEF International Water Focal Areas activities. One important example is the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA), which provides a comprehensive scientific assessment of many different issues related to IW. However, GIWA provides few details on the relative prioritization of challenges, as reported in OPS5 interviews, which GEF addressed through further analysis and assessments. In addition, through its long-standing support for analytical and foundational work through Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses as part of the TBA-SAP approach, the IW Focal Area has become a major contributor to scientific advancements related to international water issues. In addition, the initiative IW:LEARN created and managed by GEF, UNEP and UBDP facilitates project level experience sharing and learning, helping scientific advancement on a number of priority needs for targeted research. Additionally, scientific and technical assessment within the International Focal Area is further provided by the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA) as noted in the GEF-5 IW strategy. For example, the Benguela project benefits and the early scientific and technical assessment are available on IW:LEARN.

2.7 Overarching GEF Policies

Some convention guidance, issued by different conventions, addresses issues that are not specific to any single Focal Area, but have overarching significance for GEF activities under several or all Focal Areas. This section presents related COP guidance and corresponding GEF policies and procedures. GEF policies are one standard channel for the GEF to respond to convention guidance with overarching significance. This guidance can be described as operational issues concerning the overall procedures of the GEF, such as cofinancing, as well as topics addressed by special GEF policies, including gender and private sector engagement. In some cases, the relevant GEF policies might explicitly mention conventions while in others the relationship is implicit. Table 9 lists convention guidance and decisions and illustrates how GEF policies relate to them.

a) Cross-cutting guidance differs between conventions: OPS5 finds that on gender and indigenous population, CBD provides direct and detailed guidance, while other conventions do not provide significant guidance on the issue. One relevant example is CBD Decision IX/11, A, paragraph 7 that “Urges Parties, the Global Environment Facility, and relevant organizations to include gender, indigenous peoples and local communities perspectives in the financing of biodiversity and its associated ecosystem services” and Decision X/42, paragraph 6, which “Invites the Global Environment Facility, international funding institutions and development agencies and relevant non-governmental organizations, where requested, and in accordance with their mandates and responsibilities, to consider providing assistance to indigenous and local communities, particularly women, to raise their awareness and to build capacity and understanding of the elements of the code of ethical conduct.” GEF responds to this type of guidance at a corporate level by reflecting

this guidance in its overarching “GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming” and the “Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples.”

b) Evolution of GEF and Convention Secretariats relationship: OPS5 finds that, in explicit response to convention request, as already highlighted in OPS4, GEF has improved its reporting on overarching policies related to cofinancing, in particular. For more details, see section 3.2 Improvement in the reporting to the conventions from GEF.

c) GEF Council policies and procedures on overarching issues reflect both convention guidance and agenda: OPS5 notes that while some GEF policies and procedures are related to convention guidance issued directly to the GEF, others are similar to convention decisions that do not directly address the GEF. This similarity in substance illustrates that the GEF Council and the conventions share a comparable agenda on different issues. One relevant example is UNFCCC decisions on gender that are not directly addressed to GEF but are reflected in GEF policies. Another example is the UNFCCC decision on “Safeguarding environmental integrity” (1/COP.16).

Table 9: Examples of GEF policies responding to convention guidance and decisions

Example of convention guidance and decisions	Main issues addressed	Example of GEF Policy
<p>CBD, Decision IX/11, A, paragraph 7: “Urges Parties, the Global Environment Facility, and relevant organizations to include gender [...] in the financing of biodiversity and its associated ecosystem services”.</p>	<p>Gender mainstreaming. Develop capacity of women in affected communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The GEF acknowledges that project results can often be superior when gender considerations are integrated into the design and implementation of projects. * GEF funding to Partner Agencies conditional to policies, strategies, or action plans that promote gender equality. * corporate-wide guidance on the inclusion of gender aspects in the design of projects
<p>CBD Decision I/2: Article 8(j): “The programme priorities are as follows: [...] Projects that strengthen the involvement of local and indigenous people in the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components</p>	<p>Involvement of local and indigenous people in biodiversity conservation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * GEF-5 issued requests to support projects that strengthen the involvement of local and indigenous people in the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components
<p>UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16: “Decides to consider the establishment [...] of one or more market-based mechanisms [...] taking into account the following: [...] Safeguarding environmental integrity;” CBD COP 10 Decision X/33: “In collaboration with the Global Environment Facility [...] to develop tools to evaluate and reduce the negative impacts of climate change mitigation and adaptation activities on biodiversity based on [...] the environmental safeguard policies in place within the Implementing Agencies of the Global Environment Facility;”</p>	<p>Ensure the application of environmental and social safeguards, e.g. related to REDD+</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * A key principle that the GEF has followed [...] is that GEF-financed operations that achieve benefits in one area should not lead to adverse environmental or social impacts in other areas. * establishment of the minimum standards on environmental and social safeguard systems that all GEF Partner Agencies shall be expected to meet in order to implement GEF-financed projects., including Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, Protection of Natural Habitats and Involuntary Resettlement

3. Working relationship between GEF and Conventions

OPS4 assessed the relationship between the GEF and the Secretariats of the Convention and concluded that important steps have been initiated to improve the relationship between the GEF and the conventions as well as their secretariats, most notably the climate change convention. OPS4 implies that the steps that have been taken to improve the relationship with the UNFCCC can serve as a model for other conventions as well. OPS4 indicated that there is room for further improvement of the relationships in some areas, most importantly on GEF reporting to the conventions (see section 3.2). OPS5 reaffirms the positive trend concluded in OPS4 and finds that **the relationship continued to improve and progress was made toward implementation of the OPS4 recommendations.**

Evaluative work on the relationship and mechanisms of cooperation and consultation between the GEF Secretariat and the Secretariats of the Conventions and the COP meetings conducted in the context of OPS5, including interviews with all four Convention Secretariats as well as the corresponding GEF Secretariat Teams, supports the general findings of responsive and expanding processes of collaboration and consultation between the GEF and the Convention Secretariats. The analysis pointed to areas of the relationship where difficulties have subsided as well as those where further improvement is needed. These cases, which are illustrated in concrete examples in the following sections, can be categorized as follows:

- a) **Communication, collaboration and consultation processes are conducted at both formal and informal levels:** regular consultation mechanisms have included joint retreats of the GEF and Convention Secretariats, inclusion of Convention Secretariats in regular GEF Focal Area task force meetings as well as informal channels of communication. OPS5 finds that the relation between GEF and the conventions is maturing and evolving toward increasing collaboration.
- b) **Improvement in the reporting to the conventions from GEF:** OPS4 identified categories of information that could be addressed by the GEF Secretariat in their reports to the COP in order to enhance the quality of GEF reporting, such as the inclusion of cofinancing data. OPS5 found that corresponding improvements in GEF reporting to the conventions have been made.
- c) **Challenges and opportunities to formalize and realize synergies remain,** despite intensifying interest in Multi-Focal Area activities and attempts to facilitate cross-convention linkages in reporting, project design and implementation.

3.1 Formal and informal mechanisms of communication and collaboration

Overall, OPS5 determines that the working relationship between the GEF and the conventions has been positive and responsive and was conducted at both formal and informal levels. The GEF Secretariat and Convention Secretariats maintain a steady dialogue on issues related to the implementation of the conventions. In some cases, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the working relationship is primarily informal based on and benefitting from staff continuity, as reported in interviews. Other Focal Areas have created more formal structures of coordination and collaboration.

Examples of mechanisms for collaboration underpinning this relationship are GEF and Convention Secretariats retreats. As reported in interviews with GEF Secretariat Teams and elaborated in GEF Secretariat reports to the conventions, participants noted that retreats helped define a more formal set of areas of collaboration, identify point persons in the Convention Secretariat and enhance direct communication between counterparts in the Secretariats. This enhanced working relationship facilitated requests submitted by the Convention Secretariats when information was needed from the GEF Secretariats. Retreats helped create the structure and guidance for this communication. The Land Degradation focal area particularly benefited as it held its first retreat during GEF5. Both Secretariats plan to organize a retreat every other year, similar to the UNFCCC and GEF Secretariats retreat, therefore taking up the OPS4 recommendation that “the steps that have been taken to improve the relationship with the UNFCCC can be taken with other conventions as well.”

Interviews have also highlighted how regular contacts, formal and informal, with the Convention Secretariats prior to the COP meetings were beneficial for the reason that both Secretariats teams were involved in consultations and negotiations before the COP meetings and during the process of implementing Conventions obligations and projects, and have an understanding of the way they operate. Yet, interviews revealed that the GEF Secretariat sees opportunities for an enhanced communication and consultation with the Convention Secretariats before and during COP meetings, especially in order to avoid situations where the COP issues requests to the GEF that are outside the GEF mandate or are not supported by sufficient resources. The Convention Secretariats seem to be in a position to advise the COPs before issuing this type of guidance and inform them that realization would be challenging.

OPS5 acknowledges progress and a strong feedback process in place, as part of the mechanisms detailed above. As reported in interviews with GEF Secretariat Teams and reports, convention secretariats provide useful format and scope recommendation on reports that GEF submits to the COP meetings. For example, the UNFCCC has amended guidance on what reports should contain and its secretariat has been helpful in clarifying to GEF opportunities to conduct changes in format and provided advice on accuracy in how the GEF Secretariat interpret guidance from the COP.

Finally OPS5 highlights that relationships are dynamic and evolving. For example, with regard to the LDCF, the relationship moved past the foundational phase and has engaged in implementation. While the first phase of the LDCF funded only National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) reports through enabling activities, the LDCF/SCCF Secretariat is now approving full- and medium-size projects for the implementation of NAPAs. Similarly, on issues related to land degradation the GEF and UNCCD are expanding and deepening their relationship, collaboratively entering a phase of substantiation of strategies and the design of indicators and targets.

In conclusion, OPS5 found that GEF and convention secretariats expanded mechanisms of communication and collaboration with a focus on steps that OPS4 identified as best practice, such as retreats, and following improvement in the quality of GEF reports to the COP.

3.2 Improvement in the reporting to the conventions from GEF

OPS4 identified areas of improvements to enhance the quality of reporting to the conventions from GEF that OPS5 reviewed. OPS5 assessed that progress was made toward implementation of the recommendations, most notably in the following two areas.

Cofinancing data: GEF Secretariat reports to the Conventions include information and data on cofinancing, such as the ratio of cofinancing in the respective GEF Focal Area portfolio. While cofinancing data is found across reports to conventions from the GEF Secretariat, this is most notable in the reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity from GEF. An example is a breakdown of total GEF allocation for the projects conducted from January 2008 to June 2010, including details about the amount of funding leveraged as cofinancing for the projects from partners including the GEF Agencies, bilateral agencies, recipient countries, private foundations, and the private sector. This information is included in the Executive Summary of the report.

Assessment of project implementation: An assessment of the implementation of GEF projects is included in the GEF reports to the conventions, including projects that have been under implementation for a brief period of time only. Reports provide lessons that can be drawn from early project monitoring and other implementation reports. For example, in the report to the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention, the Secretariat provides detailed information on project implementation for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 October 2008, such as delays in implementation typically related to general lack of capacity and readiness of various project stakeholders, possibly leading to financing shortfalls; substantial variations of costs for transport and disposal of POPs wastes; limited capacity of local companies to handle POPs wastes; inventories that increase beyond original estimates as the project is implemented and more is known of reality on the ground; issues related to permitting and siting of hazardous wastes disposal facilities; as well as challenges related to the management of contaminated sites.

3.3 Working relationship across Conventions

OPS5 finds that opportunities to formalize and realize synergies remain. Various Multi Focal Area projects were initiated during GEF5. Yet, while a large and increasing number of Multi-Focal Area projects were designed and implemented, cooperation between the conventions remains at a low level. As reported during interviews, reaching common perceptions and approaches towards cross-cutting issues like food security between conventions can be challenging. Additional analysis on the working relationship across conventions will be added for the Final Report of OPS5.

A notable effort is a recent UNEP led pilot project that tested the possibility of an enhanced joint reporting format among the three Rio Conventions - the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention to Combat Desertification, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - and the need to streamline reporting requirements on benefiting countries. All three convention secretariats were involved in the effort, which intended to reduce the amount of information requested from countries, especially these countries with weaker reporting capacity. The project concluded with the design of a template for a single report format across conventions, with the understanding that while commonalities among conventions exist, there are also specifics to each convention in terms of requirements within countries, coordination mechanisms and time of the sequencing. Moving the process forward will require parties and convention secretariats to express interest and engage in the exercise, as reported in interviews.

OPS5 also notes that convention focal points attend all Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECW) but often parties send representatives that are not convention focal points.

Global Environment Facility
Independent Evaluation Office
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20433
USA

www.gefio.org