

OPS5

FIFTH OVERALL PERFORMANCE STUDY OF THE GEF

META-EVALUATION ON COUNTRY OWNERSHIP AND DRIVENNESS

OPS5 Technical Document #6

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Meta-Evaluation on Country Ownership and Drivenness

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
CBO	Community based-Organization
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
CPS	Country Portfolio Study
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
EA	Enabling Activities
FSP	Full Sized Project
GEF	Global Environment Facility
LDC	Least Developed Country
LMIC	Lower Middle Income Country
MSP	Medium Sized Project
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
NIP	National Implementation Plans (for Stockholm Convention)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPS4	4 th Overall Performance Study
OPS5	5 th Overall Performance Study
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PMU	Project Management Unit
SGP	Small Grants Programme

1. Introduction and Background

The Country Level Evaluation Team's inputs to the First Report of the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) consist of two Technical Papers. The first is an assessment of **Trends in Country Level Achievements** (*Technical Paper 1*); the second - this document - is a **Meta-evaluation of Country Ownership and Drivenness** (*Technical Paper 2*) on the evaluative evidence produced from the country level evaluations conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office since 2006 to date. The Meta-evaluation provides the basis for an assessment of country ownership and drivenness in the GEF by relating ownership and country drivenness issues in the GEF to the international discussion of aid effectiveness, as expressed in the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership Declaration. The main objectives of the Meta-evaluation are:

- i. To assess the extent to which the GEF portfolio is owned by countries;
- ii. To assess the extent to which new projects are developed within countries and aligned with national priorities and policies;
- iii. To assess the extent to which needs of recipient countries have been met by the GEF, quantitatively and qualitatively, as well as vis-à-vis their obligations to the conventions; and
- iv. To compare where possible the results from the Meta-evaluation under each indicator with results reported for bilateral and multilateral organizations in the Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation.

The Meta-evaluation starts by introducing the concept of country ownership, outlining the Paris Declaration and then discussing the concept ownership / drivenness in the GEF. A methodology chapter follows presenting the analytical framework used for this analysis and the limitations encountered. Results and conclusions of the Meta-evaluation are presented in the closing chapters.

1.1 Country Ownership

Over the last decade the international aid architecture has shifted its focus from the donor driven decision-making to empowering recipient governments and other stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector to take ownership of development policies and aid programs and projects - the shift is embodied in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness signed in 2005 (see 1.3), and subsequently reaffirmed by the Accra and Busan Forums in 2008 and 2011.

Country ownership is often highlighted as a critical factor needed to underpin sustainable and effective development. It features prominently as a development principle for most donor organization - country recipient relationships, yet definitions vary and little clarity and significant diversity exists in how this concept is articulated and put into practice by donor and recipient countries (see Table 1).

Table 1: Country Ownership Definitions

Country Ownership Definition	Source
... Developing countries' exercising effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and coordinating development actions	Paris Declaration 1995
Country ownership means that there is sufficient political support within a country to implement its developmental strategy, including the projects, programs, and policies for which external partners provide assistance.	World Bank ¹
... Country ownership is the full and effective participation of a country's population via legislative bodies, civil society, the private sector, and local, regional and national government in conceptualizing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development policies, programs and processes.	InterAction Aid Effectiveness Working Group ²
Country ownership ... occurs when a country's national government controls the prioritization process during compact development, is responsible for implementation, and is accountable to its domestic stakeholders for both decision-making and results.	Millennium Challenge Corporation ³

Some definitions highlight leadership and political support for the development of policy and strategy, whilst others emphasize participation of government and other stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector in program or project development, implementation and results reporting. All definitions tend to imply that country recipients have the necessary institutional and / or individual capacities for country ownership.

It has been recognized that assessing country ownership is difficult because: (a) of the lack of a precise definition and indicators for measurement; and (b) the practice of ownership is not clear cut as the degree of ownership of a policy, strategy, program or project often cannot be solely attributed to recipient stakeholders or the donors, but rather it depends on particular context which is not uniform within countries. Furthermore, the nature of country relations between recipients and donors is characterized by dialogue and negotiation in which ownership within the partnership are changing.

1.2 Paris Declaration

Donors, developing country governments and multilateral organizations⁴ signed the Paris Declaration in February 2005. The Declaration went further than previous international aid agreements by developing broad consensus on how to make development assistance more effective through supporting recipient government to formulate their own development plans according to their national priorities, using wherever possible their planning and implementation systems.

¹ http://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01013/WEB/0_CON-5.HTM - defined within the context of the 'comprehensive development framework' (accessed on 14th of February, 2013).

² InterAction (2011) Country Ownership: Moving from Rhetoric to Action. InterAction. Washington DC.

³ MCC (2009) MCC's Approach to Country Ownership. Working Paper. MCC. Washington DC.

⁴ Although the GEF was not a signatory of the declaration, most of the GEF Agencies did sign and were mandated to adopt the principles in their work with developing country governments.

The Declaration is focused on five key inter-related principles:

- i. *Ownership*: Developing countries must lead their own development policies and strategies, and manage their own development work on the ground. This is essential if aid is to contribute to truly sustainable development. Donors must support developing countries in building up their capacity to exercise this kind of leadership by strengthening local expertise, institutions and management systems.
- ii. *Alignment*: Donors must line up their aid firmly behind the priorities outlined in developing countries' national development strategies. Wherever possible, they must use local institutions and procedures for managing aid in order to build sustainable structures. Donors committed to make more use of developing countries' procedures for public financial management, accounting, auditing, procurement and monitoring. Where these systems are not strong enough to manage aid effectively, donors promised to help strengthen them.
- iii. *Harmonization*: Donors must coordinate their development work better amongst themselves to avoid duplication and high transaction costs for poor countries. Donors committed to coordinate better at the country level to ease the strain on recipient governments, for example by pooling resources through programmed (policy-based assistance) to specific sectors (e.g., health, education, among others).
- iv. *Managing for results*: All parties in the aid relationship must place more focus on the result of aid, in terms of the tangible difference it makes in poor people's lives. They must develop better tools and systems to measure this impact.
- v. *Mutual accountability*: Donors and developing countries must account more transparently to each other for their use of aid funds, and to their citizens and parliaments for the impact of their aid.

In 2008 the Accra Agenda for Action followed up the Paris Declaration and identified areas where progress was too slow: (i) country ownership - specifically that developing country governments needed to take strong leadership over shaping and implementing their policies and strategies; (ii) building more effective partnerships between recipient government, donors, global funds, civil society and the private sector⁵; and (iii) placing more focus on accounting for development results and impact - in essence strengthening national statistics and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems.

The most recent forum held in Busan, South Korea further developed partnerships to work on aid effectiveness principles and Article 25 Sub-b of the Busan Partnership Declaration specifically mentions the role and integration of global funds in these efforts.⁶

1.3 Country Ownership in the GEF

GEF predominantly uses the term country-driven(-ness) instead of, but analogous to country ownership. The principle is emphasized in the GEF Instrument and strategies of the GEF. The Instrument emphasizes drivenness in relation to alignment with national priorities [policies and strategies] and also coordination:

⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/aideffectiveness/48726747.pdf> (accessed on 14th February 2013)

⁶ www.busanhl4.org, December 1, 2011 (accessed on 14th January 2013)

“The GEF shall ensure the cost-effectiveness of its activities in addressing the targeted global environmental issues, shall fund programs and projects which are country-driven and based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development and shall maintain sufficient flexibility to respond to changing circumstances in order to achieve its purposes.”

“Actions needed to attain global environmental benefits are strongly influenced by existing national policies and sub-regional and regional cooperative mechanisms. GEF financing will need to be coordinated with appropriate national policies and strategies as well as with development financing.”

The initial operational strategy (1995) outlined the eight operational principles to guide GEF program and project development - operational principle number four affirmed:

“The GEF will fund projects that are country-driven and based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development.”

The strategy also linked alignment with participation and consultation with local communities and other stakeholders therefore broadening the concept of drivenness and ownership beyond government:

“... consistent with, and support of, the recipient countries’ own actions for sustainable development. GEF programs and projects will be country-driven and will be linked to national sustainable development efforts. Public consultation and participation of local communities and other stakeholders will enhance the quality, impact, relevant and national ownership of GEF activities.”

Further elaboration of country drivenness and ownership was undertaken following on from the findings of OPS1, which highlighted weaknesses in country coordination, focal points and the ownership of projects. The second Replenishment Report of the GEF Council recommended:

“Participants stress that GEF activities should be country-driven and that country ownership is key to the success of GEF projects. To achieve this, GEF activities should be based on national priorities designed to support sustainable development and the global environment. Participants underscore the need for concerted efforts to advance recipient countries’ knowledge of the global environment and of the GEF, to facilitate country access to GEF financing and country ownership of GEF-financed projects, to strengthen national focal points, and to facilitate coordination at the country level. Participants recommend that the Council requests the Secretariat, in consultation with the Implementing Agencies, to review country level relations, including capacity building, training, outreach and information sharing, and prepare for Council approval an action plan to strengthen country level coordination and to promote genuine country ownership of GEF-financed activities, including active involvement of recipient countries and interested stakeholders. The action plan should also address: (i) the need for the Implementing Agencies to assist countries in identifying and implementing policies in support of the global environment; and (ii) means through which the Secretariat may work with the Implementing and Executing Agencies and other entities to strengthen the financial and institutional sustainability of GEF-

funded activities, and to better promote the use of local, national and regional expertise.”

An action-plan was therefore prepared for the GEF Council and submitted at the 12th Council in October 1998.⁷ The plan proposed to strengthen country level coordination and ownership of GEF operations and emphasized coordination particularly with regard to enhancing the role of the focal points, stakeholder involvement, alignment with national priorities, and improving GEF outreach and communication at the national / regional level.⁸ The following elements were proposed:

- Gather and disseminate information on best practices based on country experiences
- Evaluate the responsibilities and functions of the focal points
- Provide support to strengthen the country focal points
- Encourage countries to clearly identify their national priorities and programs concerning the global environment (i.e., biodiversity, climate change)
- Develop indicators of country ownership
- Conduct GEF Country Workshops
- Produce public information material
- Organize project-based or issue-based workshops at the meetings of the Conventions ... where feasible, field visits to GEF projects
- Contribute to GEF M&E activities concerning to preparation and dissemination of best practices and lessons learned
- NGO targeted outreach
- Strengthen information dissemination on project proposals, implementation and impacts to local, national and international audiences
- Promote coverage of GEF activities in the local, regional and international media
- Produce information to encourage private sector to contribute to GEF activities.

Some of the elements of the action-plan were implemented by the GEF Secretariat and the GEF agencies such as - strengthening of the focal points; conduct of country and regional dialogue workshops; improved outreach and involvement of NGOs; and improvements in outreach and public information material. Critically, there is no evidence that arguably the most important part of the action plan - indicators for country ownership were developed. Since then, there have been no further GEF Council papers specifically addressing drivenness / ownership.

⁷ GEF.C.12.8 Country Ownership of GEF Projects: Elements for Strengthened Country level Coordination and Ownership, and Greater Outreach and Communication (GEF Council, October 1998).

⁸ Communication and outreach was intended to (a) enhance awareness of the GEF mission, procedures, policies and operations; (b) strengthen national capacity to develop GEF financed activities thereby promoting ownership of such activities; to promote involvement of multiple constituencies, including NGOs, experts and community groups at the local and regional level; to disseminate good practices and lessons learned from GEF activities; to support country level coordination.

The concept of ‘commitment’ of stakeholders is implicitly related to ownership and has been predominantly associated with levels of co-financing.⁹ The co-financing paper presented to the 20th GEF Council in May 2003 states:¹⁰

Co-financing is an important indicator of the strength of the commitment of the counterparts, beneficiaries, and the Implementing and Executing Agencies to those projects and; and co-financing helps ensure the success and local acceptance of those projects by linking them to sustainable development ...

However, co-financing has not yet been specifically associated with country drivenness / ownership by the GEF. Moreover, the majority of analytical discussions of country ownership in the country level evaluations do not focus on co-finance.

Based on the Instrument, initial strategy and Council documents drivenness / ownership has been implied to consist of three elements: (1) alignment with national priorities [policies / strategies]; (2) coordination with development financing; policies and strategies (implying some overlap with alignment; however, coordination between agencies and recipient government ministries was not emphasized); and (3) stakeholder involvement, placing emphasis on local communities and other stakeholders. These elements have some resonance with the Paris Declaration definitions of ownership, alignment and harmonization. In general, the GEF concepts are less refined and detailed. For example, there is no emphasis on managing for results or mutual accountability and this in part reflects the time (1990s) in which they were developed (see Table 2).

Table 2: GEF and Paris Declaration Terminology

Paris Declaration		GEF	
Concept	Elements of Definition	Concept	Elements of Definition
Country Ownership	<p>Countries leading development: policy, strategy and manage development work [projects and programs] ‘on the ground’</p> <p>Ownership is dependent on leadership, individual and institutional capacities for management</p>	Country Drivenness	<p>No formal definition.</p> <p><i>Implied that drivenness is dependent on involvement and capacity of countries to define GEF projects and programs; strong national focal point mechanisms</i></p>
Alignment	<p>Donors align with and support developing country strategies / policies</p> <p>Use local systems and institutions to deliver aid and avoid parallel structures</p> <p>Use public financial management systems</p>	Alignment	<p>GEF projects and programs align with national priorities designed to support sustainable development</p> <p>Linked to national sustainable development efforts</p> <p><i>Implied that alignment with national priorities will lead to enhanced drivenness</i></p>

⁹ Co-financing was not highlighted as part of the earlier 1998 paper on country ownership.

¹⁰ GEF/C.20/6 Rev.1 Co-financing (GEF Council, May 2003).

Harmonization	Donors coordinate work and avoid duplication of efforts Pooling of resources in programmatic / sector-wide assistance	Coordination	GEF activities coordinated with national policies and strategies GEF activities coordinated with development financing <i>Implied that GEF activities coordinated with development financing and national policies and strategies will enhance drivenness</i>
Managing for Results	All parties focus on the results of aid. Better tools and systems for impact measurement	Stakeholder Involvement	GEF activities based on public consultation with participation of communities and other stakeholders <i>Implied that consultation and participation of stakeholders leads to enhanced drivenness</i>
Mutual Accountability	Donors and developing countries must account for the use of funds	-	-

In summary, despite the importance of country drivenness and ownership to the design and implementation of GEF activities and for the attainment and sustainability of the expected results, the principles have not been clearly defined by the GEF. Furthermore, although it is clearly stated that drivenness is important to achieve ‘successful projects’ and ‘global environmental benefits’, a theory of change has not been articulated to demonstrate the causal linkages between alignment, coordination and stakeholder involvement and results.

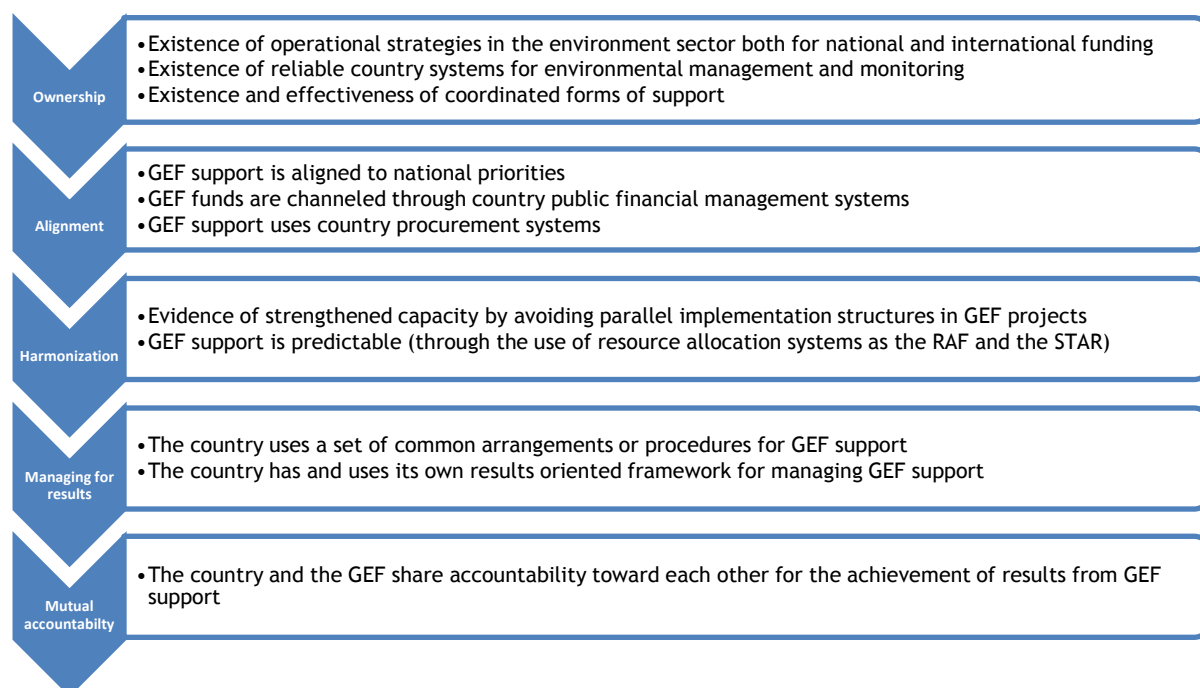
2. Methodology

This chapter details the methodology used in the Meta-evaluation. It summarizes the analytical framework developed by the GEF Evaluation Office for assessing country ownership using the evidence from country level evaluations; the approach taken to review the country level and other evaluations; and the limitations encountered.

2.1 Analytical Framework for Assessing Country Ownership

Comprehensive evaluations such as the overall performance studies of the GEF as well as the country level evaluations conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office have tended to report on issues of ownership without fully reflecting the on-going international discussion of aid effectiveness, as expressed in the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership Declaration.¹¹ OPS5 aims at relating ownership and country drivenness issues in the GEF to this international discussion, fully cognizant of the fact that cooperation towards global environmental benefits has some fundamental differences with traditional aid. To serve this purpose for OPS5 the GEF Evaluation Office has developed an analysis framework that contains a set of indicators extracted from the second phase of the evaluation of the Paris Declaration¹² and re-elaborated to serve this analysis (Figure 1). The analysis framework has been used to review the country level evaluative evidence on ownership and drivenness through a Meta-evaluation, the scope of which included all country level evaluations conducted since 2006 to 2012.

Figure 1: High-Level Indicators for Aggregated Analysis of Country Ownership



¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Annex 5 of the Paris Declaration Evaluation (Phase 2) includes a methodological discussion, including a table containing a “critique” of the indicators that were used to score progress towards fulfilling the Paris Declaration: <http://pd-website.inforce.dk/content/pdf/PD-EN-annex5.pdf>, page 214 (accessed on 14th January, 2013).

The indicators were applied to the country level evaluations through a document review protocol (see Annex 1). An additional set of indicators was added to assess the modalities and intensity of involvement of important non-government stakeholders such as civil society (CBOs and NGOs)¹³ and the private sector.¹⁴

2.2 Scope and Approach

The Meta-evaluation was based exclusively on documentary review - content analyses of the country level evaluations and also other relevant non-country evaluations. The scope of the review included all country level evaluations conducted since 2006 to 2012:¹⁵

- 14 Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPE)
- 3 Country Portfolio Studies (CPS)
- 10 OPS4 Country Studies

In addition, five Annual Country Portfolio Reports (ACPERs) - from 2008 to 2012 - were reviewed. Non-country level evaluations were reviewed to provide contextual and specific information for certain indicators. For example, several impact evaluations conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office were reviewed to provide general information on ownership, but also on private sector involvement in GEF projects (e.g. South China Sea, Ozone Depleting Substances, among others).

The approach taken to review the evaluation was primarily based on content analyses using the following word searches for the indicators:

- Ownership / owned; strategies / plans; commitment; institutional capacity / capacity; coordinate / coordination; focal point; country systems; driven / drivenness.
- Align / aligned; in-line; strategy / plan(s); policy; priority / priorities; financial management; procurement
- Harmonize / harmonized / harmonization; capacity; project implementation unit (PIU) / project management unit (PMU); RAF / STAR
- Results / results framework; framework; monitoring and evaluation (M&E); procedures;
- Accountable; accountability; focal point; committee
- Civil society; NGO; CBO; local community; community
- Private sector; firm; company

A basic qualitative rating system was applied to each indicator (see Table 3), based on strong - more than moderate - less than moderate - weak (and no evidence) classification. The ratings were generally in-line with the 4 and 5 point scales used in the Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation.¹⁶ The ratings were developed iteratively during the content analyses. Given the predominantly qualitative nature of the indicators some

¹³ Intensity and modalities of involvement in the development of national policies, strategies for environmental protection; involvement in GEF activities (SGP, MSPs and FSPs)

¹⁴ Scale and scope of private sector investment in environmentally friendly technologies introduced through GEF projects; scaling-up and / or replication by market uptake introduced through GEF support and replicated by private sector.

¹⁵ Evidence from Terminal Evaluation Review contents on country ownership has also been used.

¹⁶ Paris Declaration Phase-2 evaluation (operational matrix)

flexibility was used in determining ratings. Results are reported only for those indicators where sufficient data was available (see 2.3).

Information was prepared for the Meta-evaluation and put into a 'country ownership table' prior to undertaking the analysis. The focus was on extracting the relevant sections of the country level evaluations that specifically and explicitly addressed ownership. This allowed for the analysis to be 'jump started'.

Comparisons with the experience of bilateral and multilateral organizations were made based on qualitative data, as not all the Paris Declaration Phase 2 case studies provided ratings. Comparisons are drawn only for indicators for which there was sufficient data.

Table 3: Ratings

Rating	Definition
Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership: Evidence of significant operational strategies in environment sector (relating to all GEF focal areas including ratification of all major MEAs and / or for sustainable development / systemic and institutional capacities in place to manage the environment / inter-ministerial and donor coordination is taking place (evidence that coordination structures are in place - e.g., inter-ministerial committees / meetings, among others) • Alignment: All focal areas aligned with national priorities (policies and strategies); use of national execution and systems for project design and implementation (e.g., contracting and procurement systems) • Harmonization: Evidence of use of country systems across all projects (direct or national execution); evidence that RAF / STAR has made GEF support more predictable and that structures are in place to ensure national predictability and transparency • Managing for results / accountability: evidence of procedures for country involvement in design, implementation and monitoring of GEF activities; evidence of country-determined results frameworks (e.g., national strategy / portfolio formulation exercise or plan with appropriate monitoring (independent of GEF agencies)) • Involvement of civil society / private sector: SGP well established and giving support to civil society; involvement of national NGOs / CBOs in MSP and FSPs; involvement of private sector in MSP / FSPs leading to market transformation; introduction of environmentally friendly technologies.
More than Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership: Evidence of operational strategies in environment sector (relating to most but not all GEF focal areas) and / or for sustainable development / some systemic and institutional capacities in place to manage environmental issues but insufficient to address all aspects / coordination is taking place but lacks permanent structure or forum. GEF agencies not always coordinated. • Alignment: Partial GEF alignment with national policies / plans and strategies (i.e., national priorities). Not all focal areas are addressed; partial national execution - implementation integrated into Ministries for most projects but procurement and contracting handled by the GEF Agency. • Harmonization: Evidence of partial use (some PIU / PMU used) of country systems (direct or national execution); evidence that RAF / STAR has made GEF support improved predictability but structures are not fully in place to ensure national predictability and transparency. • Managing for results / accountability: evidence of some country involvement in design, implementation and monitoring of GEF activities but not all; evidence of some joint-results planning but no national portfolio formulation or results framework in place. • Involvement of civil society / private sector: SGP more recently giving support to civil society; Some involvement of civil society in MSP / FSPs; Some involvement of private sector in MSP / FSPs
Less than Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership: Some operational strategies for the environment but serious gaps remain; basic systemic and institutional capacities but with significant deficiencies; sporadic coordination and no framework in place. • Alignment: Limited GEF alignment with national priorities; design and implementation mostly conducted outside of Ministries and government systems because of governance and capacity constraints; procurement and contracting handled mostly by GEF Agencies • Harmonization: Country systems are limited and cannot be used for all projects, PMU / PIUs are used often; RAF / STAR allocation is used but programmed is not fully transparent or predictable. • Managing for results little evidence for country involvement in design and / or implementation and monitoring of GEF activities. Government systems to ensure accountability are not fully operational • Civil society and private sector are not significantly involved in MSP / FSPs. SGP may or may not be present.
Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership: No evidence of operational strategies; systemic broadly in place with weak institutional capacities; ineffective coordination • Alignment: Limited GEF alignment with national priorities; design and implementation conducted outside of Ministries and government systems; procurement and contracting handled exclusively by GEF Agencies • Harmonization: Country systems are not used, PMU / PIUs are used; RAF / STAR allocation is not used or programmed in a predictable or transparent manner. • Managing for results no evidence for country involvement in design and / or implementation and monitoring of GEF activities. No systems to ensure accountability • Civil society and private sector are not involved. No SGP. No evidence of private sector involvement in MSP / FSPs

2.3 Limitations

The analysis faced a number of limitations. Firstly, many of the discussions of ownership in country level evaluations were limited to assessing stakeholder involvement in the design and implementation of projects. There was a paucity of data on harmonization; mutual accountability; managing for results; use of country systems for project implementation / procurement and contracting, and on the prevalence of parallel structures (e.g., PIUs and / or PMUs); private sector and to some extent civil society involvement beyond the SGP.

Secondly, data required to populate the document review protocol was not neatly discussed under *ad hoc* 'country ownership' sections of country level evaluations, but scattered within the Global Environmental Benefits Assessment and the Country Environmental Legal Framework technical documents, as well as the relevance and efficiency chapters. For example, operational strategies and priorities were often not discussed as ownership issues, but as issues of relevance. Similarly, alignment with regard to strategic and policy alignment was well covered by most country level evaluations (under relevance), but use of country systems and procurement / contracting was not (in the efficiency chapters). These issues were not part of the project review protocols used to aggregate data at the portfolio level and were infrequently addressed in the efficiency chapters.

Thirdly, the data was often imprecise or implicit, meaning that a significant level of flexibility was needed to interpret them. For example, ratings were provided mostly for ownership, however even the data often required interpretation and a flexible approach derived from an overall reading of the country level evaluation(s) rather than the data providing specific and succinct points against the indicator.

Fourthly, it was hoped that aggregated data from the country level evaluations could be compared with GEF Agencies' case studies conducted as part of the Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation. However, this was not possible on a wide-scale as only the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) conducted Paris Declaration evaluations of their organizations.

Finally, the Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation exhibited serious weaknesses with regard to a 'lack of standardized and defined criteria for rating judgments'. In essence, the case studies employed slight different rating scales with different meanings. Patton & Gornick (2011) in an independent review of the Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation notes:

The operational matrix provided scales for rating judgments. For example, each country evaluation team would be asked to assess results using a scale like Very significant change, Quite significant change, Limited change, Very limited change, or No change. Actual scales varied by questions. The most common scale used for rating progress was: Substantial progress; Some progress; Little progress; None; Regression.

Each country team then had to determine its own meaning for the points on the rating scale ... However, this approach invites criticism from measurement specialists that the aggregation and synthesis of scales that mean different things in different contexts essentially invalidates comparisons and is fundamentally uninterpretable. Thus, from a traditional measurement perspective this approach is a glaring weakness. On the other hand, from an inclusive and social constructivist perspective, this approach is a significant strength. These differing perspectives illustrate how divergent

*criteria lead to contrasting judgments about what constitutes strengths and weaknesses.*¹⁷

This meant the planned comparative analyses could not be carried out precisely at the level of ratings *per se*, but was more qualitative. Furthermore, as only two GEF Agencies conducted their own Paris Declaration Evaluations of performance (ADB and AfDB), this did not provide a basis for comparison or broader comment on agency performance.

¹⁷ Patton, M & Gornick, J (2011) An Evaluation of the Phase 2 Evaluation of the Paris Declaration. An Independent Review of Strengths, Weaknesses and Lessons. Utilization Focused Evaluation. Minneapolis Saint-Paul.

3. Results

3.1 Ownership

Existence of operational strategies in the environment sector for national and international funding^{18,19}

The country level evaluations indicate that 26 countries have in place more than moderate to strong environmental sector and / or sustainable development strategies and / or plans to guide national budgetary decisions and international funding decisions (see Table 4). In many cases some environmental (e.g., NEAPs) and sustainable development laws and strategies have pre-dated GEF funding or been put in place in the late 1980 and early 1990s in the run up to Rio 1992.²⁰

In many countries the key operational strategies and legal frameworks have been improved through the 1990s and early 2000s to guide support to the environment sector as the national importance of environmental sustainability has gained acceptance. Strategies related to international environmental conventions and treaties which countries have ratified²¹ and have mostly been developed with initial GEF support through Enabling Activities (EA) (e.g., NBSAP / NIP / NAPAs and national communications). In the majority of countries progress has been strong. In some countries progress has been more moderate because they are either still in process of developing or integrating environmental concerns and national strategies and development planning frameworks. Progress has sometimes been slower in outlining strategies in some areas such as biodiversity conservation or climate change, particularly where one has been favoured more than the other.

The only country with less than moderate set of operational strategies is Timor-Leste, which is still in the process of drafting key legal frameworks and policies to govern national environmental management. This is due to the fact the country only gained independence in 2002 and is still in the process of building legislative, strategic and institutional frameworks across all sectors. Furthermore, Timor-Leste Government placed initial emphasis on essential human and economic development strategies until the mid-2000s.

Many of the strategies developed as part of countries commitments to the environmental conventions have provided an opportunity for donors and follow-on GEF activities to support particular parts of those strategies, rather than adopting sector-wide approaches which are more common mainstream development aid (e.g., assistance to education and health systems, among others).

The Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation shows that for partner countries progress towards 'strong national development strategies and frameworks and detailed operational plans' has been moderate-to-fast for development strategies, but mostly slow on progress to toward operational planning.²² These results are broadly comparable to those emerging from the GEF country level evaluations and for the environment sector progress in developing operational

¹⁸ Operational strategies are defined as 'plans'; 'frameworks'; 'strategies' and / or 'policies' to structure and guide national budget allocations and decision-making and international funding.

¹⁹ The experience of South Africa with greater progressing being made on biodiversity vis-à-vis climate change is illustrative.

²⁰ For example: Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Madagascar, Mexico, Nicaragua, Samoa and Syria.

²¹ UNCCD, UNFCCC, UNCED and SC

²² See Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation: Synthesis Report (Pages 18 - 20).

planning seems to be more advanced in terms of offering donors a range of funding opportunities.²³

Table 4: Ownership²⁴

Country	Operational Strategies for National & International Funding				Reliable Country Systems for Environmental Management & Monitoring				Existence and Effectiveness of Coordinated forms of Support			
	S	MM	LM	W	S	MM	LM	W	S	MM	LM	W
Belize	X					X			X			
Benin	X						X				X	
Bhutan	X					X				X		
Brazil	X				X				X			
Cameroon	X						X				X	
Chile	X				X							
China	X					X						
Costa Rica	X					X					X	
Cuba	X					X			X			
Egypt		X					X			X		
El Salvador		X										
Ethiopia	X											
Iran	X					X			X			
Jamaica		X					X				X	
Madagascar	X							X				X
Mexico	X				X					X		
Moldova		X					X					X
Nicaragua	X									X		
OECS		X					X					X
Philippines		X					X				X	
Samoa	X						X			X		
Seychelles	X					X				X		
South Africa		X				X				X		
Syria		X					X					X
Timor-Leste			X					X				X
Turkey		X				X				X		
Uruguay		X										
Total	16	10	1	0	3	9	9	2	4	8	5	5
No data	0				4				5			

* OECS includes: Antigua; Dominica; Grenada; St Kitts and Nevis; St Lucia; St Vincent and Grenadines.

** Insufficient data to make a judgment.

Existence of reliable country systems²⁵ for environmental management and monitoring

Reliable country systems for environmental management and monitoring require institutional, individual capacity and financing from national (and international) budgetary sources for their operation. The review of country level evaluations has revealed a mixed set of results. Three countries - Brazil, Chile and Mexico have established capacities for environmental management²⁶ with strong national financing and institutional capacities when compared to the rest of the cohort. All of these countries are MICs with significant global environmental assets that have attracted international funding. For example, Brazil and Mexico have received US\$385 - 400 million of funding from the GEF which in part has contributed to

²³ However, there is a risk of fragmented support with the lack of sector-wide approaches to environmental support.

²⁴ No rating indicates insufficient data to make a judgment.

²⁵ Reliable country systems were defined as functioning institutions having responsibility for management of the environment.

²⁶ There was insufficient data to confirm monitoring capacities.

augmenting their environmental management capacity over the last 20 years.²⁷ Nine countries were judged more than moderately reliable systems - that is functioning managerial institutions but with some weakness relating to certain focal areas and/or environmental and project/portfolio monitoring.

Eleven countries were judged to have weak (2) to less than moderately (9) reliable systems. Two countries have systems that are characterized by weaker institutional and individual capacities and inadequate funding: Madagascar and Timor-Leste. These tend to be LMICs and / or LDCs and both countries have been subject to civil and political disturbances or are emerging from fragile situations. Furthermore, assistance to both countries has been characterized by the use of parallel systems, which may have inhibited capacity development in line Ministries.

Innovative approaches developed and tested by the GEF such as Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation have proved to be effective at building in-country national capacity for environmental management and in the process ownership in LMIC / LDCs. However, this approach requires strong institutional and political governance underpinned by accountability and transparency.²⁸

Evidence from the Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation reports that partner country progress on 'building of capacity in systems' has been rated 'mostly slow'. It was reported in several country case studies that 'insufficient progress' and / or 'overstretched capacities'. Furthermore, progress in putting monitoring and evaluation systems in place was also reported to be 'slow'. A combination of factors underpinned the result such as lack of attention among donors and countries to building capacities to measure results; and lack of organizational culture and interest in results from the side of the partner countries.

Existence and effectiveness of coordinated forms of support

Coordination within national government between Ministries and other stakeholders is critical for the sustainable and effective management of environmental issues, and also to develop broad based ownership of GEF activities. The GEF has placed strong emphasis on coordination through the strengthening of the role of the focal point (political and operational) over the last decade. The country level evaluations indicate that achieving effective coordination to support GEF activities has been mixed in practice, with twelve countries having more than moderate (8) to strong (4) inter-ministerial and stakeholder coordination, and ten having weak (5) to less than moderate (5) coordination. The main reasons for weak performance have been: (a) unstable capacity particularly within the focal point position / offices resulting in a loss of coordination momentum due to staff changes²⁹; (b) conflicts between Ministries and Departments;³⁰ (c) Ministries working in isolation and sometime leadership to guide coordination and communication.³¹

Strong to more than moderate performers include Brazil, Cuba, Egypt and Iran, which have established various inter-Ministerial committees to address climate change, biodiversity and water resource management (e.g., Cuban Government Working Group on Water, Sanitation

²⁷ Brazil, and Mexico contain global biodiversity hotspots which have attracted considerable funding (between US\$385 - 400 million) through the GEF.

²⁸ Bhutan OPS4 case study - in this respect Bhutan is not typical of an LDC as it has stable government with capacity, accountability and transparency which ensure efficient and effective working of the trust fund.

²⁹ For example: Benin, Madagascar and OECS.

³⁰ See Cameroon and Timor-Leste.

³¹ For example: Costa Rica, Moldova, Nicaragua and Philippines.

and Conservation of the Bay of Havana). Egypt passed a decree in 2004 calling for the establishment of an inter-Ministerial GEF National Committee to improve coordination and cooperation. However, the presence of committees is not norm in all good performers, continuity at the GEF focal point level is also important to build relations between government Ministries and with donors, as has been demonstrated in Bhutan.

3.2 Alignment

GEF support is aligned to national priorities

Alignment with national plans, strategies and policy frameworks [priorities] is well reported in the country level evaluations (under the relevance chapters). All country level evaluations indicate more than moderate to strong alignment of GEF projects with national policies and strategies (see Table 5).

Table 5: Alignment

Country	GEF support is Aligned with National Priorities			
	<i>S</i>	<i>MM</i>	<i>LM</i>	<i>W</i>
Belize	X			
Benin	X			
Bhutan	X			
Brazil	X			
Cameroon	X			
Chile	X			
China	X			
Costa Rica	X			
Cuba	X			
Egypt		X		
El Salvador	X			
Ethiopia		X		
Iran	X			
Jamaica	X			
Madagascar	X			
Mexico	X			
Moldova	X			
Nicaragua	X			
OECS	X			
Philippines	X			
Samoa	X			
Seychelles	X			
South Africa	X			
Syria		X		
Timor-Leste		X		
Turkey		X		
Uruguay	X			
Total	22	5		
No data	0			

Some of the plans, strategies and policies related to biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation have been developed by GEF Enabling Activities (EAs) or following on from EA and been nationally owned with subsequent GEF activities aligned to those plans and strategies (e.g., El Salvador, Jamaica and Nicaragua). Therefore, the GEF has helped to develop the national priorities with which future activities have been aligned. The process is currently most pronounced in Timor-Leste where the GEF has been a major catalyst since mid-2000s in assisting the Government to ratify and then subsequently develop national strategies

and priorities for climate change, biodiversity and land degradation in relation to poverty reduction and state-building priorities.

In Egypt, Syria and Turkey the evaluations indicated that GEF support has not been completely relevant to national priorities mainly because of failure to respond to national priorities related to land degradation. In Ethiopia the main environmental concern is land degradation and the country has received relatively little support to address the challenge. In Egypt the key challenges are water and sanitation, and these issues tend to be local or national issues beyond the remit of the GEF global environmental mandate.

The Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation reported that bilateral and multilateral donor alignment with country priorities and systems (e.g., financial and procurement) was ‘mostly slow’ with the distance remaining to achieve alignment being rated as ‘substantial’. In comparison the GEF results seem to indicate that it has performed regard to alignment with priorities. There was insufficient evidence to judge the GEF performance on the use of country public financial management systems and procurement systems.

3.3 Harmonization

Evidence of strengthened capacity by avoiding parallel implementation structures in GEF projects

Country level evaluations do not report precisely or consistently on this issue and hence it is difficult to ascertain for most countries if parallel implementation structures are in use or not. From the available data a mixed picture emerges, with six countries having more than moderate (3) and to strong (3) results and six having less than moderate (4) to weak (2) results (see Table 6).

Cameroon, Madagascar and Timor-Leste country level evaluations reported the use of separate ‘project implementation units / management units’, and national ownership was negatively impacted because leadership and institutional capacity was not always effectively built in ministries required to sustain project activities ex-post. Cameroon has made an attempt through the recently completed Forest Environment Development Program (FESP) to use country structures and systems and avoid the use of PIs, but this initiative was reported to have failed.³² In other countries with stronger national capacities (civil service cadres) such as Brazil, Costa Rica and South Africa national-led execution has been the norm and capacity has been built to manage national and global environmental concerns. Jamaica and Samoa as Small Island Developing States (SIDSs) report the use of international consultants to design and implement projects alongside national government staff.

Bhutan has taken the initiative of putting in place a system where by nationals are given specific administration and / or technical training or scholarships (often outside of the country) and are then required to return and serve a minimum of twice the time of their scholarship (typically 4 to 10 years). In this way the country has sought to reduce dependence on international expertise and the need to set up parallel project structures.³³

³² <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2012/01/16388332/cameroon-forest-environment-development-program-project-cameroon-forest-environment-development-program-project> (accessed on 18th February 2013)

³³ Bhutan OPS4 case study

Some GEF Agencies such as UNIDO do not usually support national execution of GEF projects. UNIDO has traditionally operated an implementing - executing agency model and use of PIU / PMUs is common alongside use of international consultants.³⁴

Table 6: Harmonization

Country	Evidence of Strengthened Capacity by Avoiding Parallel Implementation Structures				GEF Support is Predictable (use of RAF / STAR)			
	S	MM	LM	W	S	MM	LM	W
Belize								
Benin							X	
Bhutan		X					X	
Brazil	X							
Cameroon			X			X		
Chile								
China								
Costa Rica	X							
Cuba								
Egypt						X		
El Salvador								
Ethiopia								
Iran						X		
Jamaica			X				X	
Madagascar				X			X	
Mexico					X			
Moldova			X					
Nicaragua								
OECS								
Philippines								
Samoa		X						
Seychelles			X				X	
South Africa	X						X	
Syria								
Timor-Leste				X			X	
Turkey		X				X		
Uruguay								
Total	3	3	4	2	1	4	7	0
No data	17				14			

The Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation reported that donors' use of country systems and progress towards avoidance of parallel systems was 'mostly slow'. The debate over the use of parallel systems such as PIUs / PMUs is not clear cut and is context specific though, as the evaluation states:

The continuing prevalence of project implementation units is noted in the Senegal and Vietnam evaluations but in neither case is this simply seen as a result of donor non-compliance. More generally, the reliance on these units does not emerge from the Evaluation as either a simple issue... It is not easy to distinguish the 'parallel' units that can have negative effects on country systems, and there are many grounds for countries as well as donors to want to continue to use parallel structures.

³⁴ For example see UNIDO (2012) Thematic Evaluation of UNIDO's work in the area of Persistent Organic Pollutants. UNIDO Evaluation Group.

On the negative side of the ledger, a large majority of the [country] evaluations find only limited if any overall increase by most donors in the use of country systems and procedures, notably. Half of the evaluations find that the limited use of country systems is mainly explained by a continuing lack of confidence by donors in those systems and/or concerns about prevailing levels of corruption, as well as concerns that country systems can still be slower and more cumbersome than those of donors.³⁵

GEF support is predictable (through the use of resource allocation system such as the RAF / STAR)

The evidence from country level evaluations is somewhat uneven and inconclusive. Most of the studies report on initial RAF implementation - which created some uncertainty, lack of transparency and confusion. However, at the same time RAF and its successor the STAR has provided countries with certainty in terms of their focal area resource allocations and this has been reflected in some of the more recent country level evaluations.

The RAF / STAR in the eleven countries with less (7) to more than moderate (4) results. The main benefit of the RAF/STAR has been enhanced organization and coordination sometimes through the creation of specific inter-ministerial committees to make decisions on the use of allocations. Most of the cohort analysed does not specifically report on changes in predictability, which is more of an implied result and may be more easily observed in the forthcoming National Portfolio Formulation Exercises (NPFs) evaluation by the GEF Evaluation Office.

The Paris Declaration Phase 2 Evaluation reported that progress towards more predictable and multi-year commitments on aid flows has been 'mostly slow', although there have been good performers such as DFID which provides the majority of its aid through budget support and 10 year development partnership arrangements. Hence, taking a more strategic approach to developing long-term partnerships with countries combined with a delivery mechanism (e.g., budget support) allows countries to have greater control over how aid is used across a range of sectors.³⁶ The GEF STAR in essence provides a 4/5 year budget for countries, with some level of control dependent on their use of NPFs. However, the project-based delivery mechanisms remain and the GEF has yet to move towards sector-based support in the environment.

³⁵ See Paris Declaration Evaluation Phase 2: Synthesis Report. Pages 22 - 25.

³⁶ Ibid., see pages 30 - 32.

4. Conclusions

The key conclusions from the Meta-evaluation of country ownership and drivenness are presented in the box here below.

Conclusion 1: The GEF has not yet developed an official definition of country drivenness and/or ownership. Furthermore, it has neither a clear framework outlining how country ownership is expected to contribute to results (successful projects and programs), nor indicators for its measurement. There is unfinished work with regard to providing further definition for and indicators of country drivenness and/or ownership.

Conclusion 2: Country drivenness within the GEF is mainly associated with alignment with national priorities; coordination with policies and strategies, and development financing; and stakeholder involvement in project design and implementation. There is some overlap with Paris Declaration principles, particularly for alignment, but not for managing for results and mutual accountability. Furthermore, the terms used by the GEF are not fully aligned with the internationally accepted terms used in the Paris Declaration.

Conclusion 3: Country ownership/drivenness does not appear to be closely related to co-financing. Co-financing has been related directly to country drivenness and ownership. However, the available evidence on ownership shows that it is now associated with assessments of co-financing.

Conclusion 4: GEF activities are strongly aligned with national priorities in the majority of countries. There is only one exception to the GEF strong alignment to national priorities. In a small number of countries the GEF has not responded adequately to national priorities related to sustainable land management/land degradation, and this has reduced relevance.

Conclusion 5: The GEF has contributed to the development of country operational strategies in the environment sectors, which guide national and international funding. In doing so, the GEF has assisted countries in meeting their commitments to international environmental conventions, as well as providing the foundation for future projects.

Conclusion 6: Strong country capacities for environmental management and monitoring engender ownership of GEF activities; however, the results are mixed. The MICs (e.g., Brazil and Mexico) have made the most progress, although monitoring of results and broader environmental monitoring remains challenging in the majority of countries reviewed.

Conclusion 7: Coordination of GEF assistance within countries is improving; however, challenges remain and are related to (a) weaknesses in operational focal point positions; (b) frequent changes in staff, which disrupts continuity and capacity and (c) conflicts between Ministries. Coordination is improving. The available evidence indicates that committee structures are the most common vehicle for fostering inter-ministerial communication.

Conclusion 8: Evidence for the use of or avoidance of parallel structures is inconclusive. Country level evaluations have not systematically reported or collected data on the use of country-systems and avoidance of PIU / PMUs

Conclusion 9: Evidence that the RAF / STAR have improved predictability of GEF funding to countries is inconclusive. Most of the country level evaluations do not report explicitly on this issue.

4.1 Issues for Further Consideration

Taking into account the limitations of the Meta-evaluation and its key conclusions, some of the gaps in the assessment could be addressed through a more detailed desk review of terminal evaluations and terminal evaluation reviews to assess:

- The prevalence of use of parallel structures (PIU / PMUs) and situation in which they are helpful for implementation;
- The use of local procurement and country systems; and
- The involvement of civil society and the private sector.

Interviews and survey of focal points and GEF Agency staff could be conducted to provide more in-depth qualitative data on harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability in GEF operations, as well as change in the character of ownership in the reviewed countries.

The analytical framework developed for this Meta-evaluation has proved to be a useful tool for systematically assessing country ownership and drivenness in the GEF using internationally accepted standards and definitions. It should be used as a standard tool in forthcoming country level evaluations.

Annex 1: Document Review Protocol

Country:
 Document Title:
 Document Date:

A1. OWNERSHIP: Existence of operational strategies in the environment sector both for national and international funding

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i> ³⁷

A2. OWNERSHIP: Existence of reliable country systems for environmental management and monitoring

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

A3. OWNERSHIP: Existence and effectiveness of coordinated forms of support

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

B1. ALIGNMENT: GEF support is aligned to national priorities

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

B2. ALIGNMENT: GEF funds are channeled through country public financial management systems

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

B3. ALIGNMENT: GEF support uses country procurement systems

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

C1. HARMONIZATION: Evidence of strengthened capacity by avoiding parallel implementation structures in GEF projects

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

C2. HARMONIZATION: GEF support is predictable (through the use of resource allocation systems as the RAF and the STAR)

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

³⁷ S = strong; MM = more than moderate; LM = less than moderate; W = weak, NE = no evidence.

D1. MANAGING FOR RESULTS: The country uses a set of common arrangements or procedures for GEF support

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

D2. MANAGING FOR RESULTS: The country has and uses its own results oriented framework for managing GEF support

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

E. MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY: The country and the GEF share accountability toward each other for the achievement of results from GEF support

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

F. INTENSITY AND MODALITIES OF INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

G. INTENSITY AND MODALITIES OF INVOLVEMENT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

<i>Evaluative evidence</i>	<i>Rating</i>

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