OPS5

FIFTH OVERALL PERFORMANCE STUDY OF THE GEF

SUB-STUDY ON RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT IN GEF

OPS5 Technical Document #10

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Sub-study on Results Based Management in GEF

Frederick Swartzendruber (Lead Consultant)

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I. Introduction

1. The sub-study on GEF's Results Based Management (RBM) framework provides inputs for the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS-5) of GEF. Table 2 of the terms of reference for OPS-5 specifies results based management as one of the reform processes that would be assessed for and reported on in the Final Report of OPS-5. OECD/DAC defines results based management as "a management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes, and impacts." This definition has been adopted by GEF for developing its results based management (RBM) framework and has been used in this sub-study. This sub-study also examines GEF performance in terms of quality of project monitoring and evaluation and it also assesses effectiveness of GEF Tracking Tools in providing information on results at the focal area and program level.

2. Better management of limited resources, supported by measurement and accountability for results, has long been an important concern within the GEF partnership. While several elements of a RBM framework were already mainstreamed in the GEF partnership, a comprehensive effort in this direction is fairly recent. In 2005, the Fourth Replenishment of the GEF called for development of performance indicators and tracking tools for all focal areas, "to facilitate synthesis of results at the country and program level." Findings of OPS3 found several weaknesses in the extant results based management practices in the GEF partnership – it reported that log-frames even though included in the project documents were generally not used during project implementation. In 2005 the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness also committed donor countries and development agencies to "specific actions to further country ownership, harmonization, alignment, managing for development results, and mutual accountability for the use of aid." Thus, several factors were at play in creating a push for a more structured approach to results based management.

3. Similarly, GEF requirements for monitoring and evaluation have been strengthened over time, including adoption of minimum standards for M&E, evaluation of arrangements for M&E at entry, assessment of quality of terminal evaluations, and a revised GEF M&E Policy in 2010. Beginning during the GEF-3 period the GEF focal areas began introducing standardized Tracking Tools, beginning with the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) which was developed by biodiversity conservation experts for use in protected areas. Other tracking tools were added over time, and for GEF-5 all projects were required to use the tracking tools for focal areas being supported, including multi-focal operations.

4. During 2006 an effort was made to develop an RBM framework for the GEF as a whole, and in 2007 efforts towards development of an RBM framework was described as "the beginning of an ongoing process to better define the specific goals of the GEF and to design mechanisms to ensure the measurement of progress towards these goals." An RBM Framework was adopted by the Council in FY 2007, and a special RBM budget was approved in FY 2009. At that time, results-based management was defined as "an organization wide tool to foster results, enquiries, and learning to better inform decision making."

5. During the negotiations for the fifth replenishment of the GEF, the Secretariat was asked to prepare a work-plan for implementation of a results-based management (RBM) framework and for strengthening of portfolio monitoring within the GEF. GEF-5 also included a Corporate

Results Framework which mapped strategic goals against key expected results and targets identified during the Replenishment process. In addition to these strategic goals, the GEF-5 Corporate Results Framework identified several targets for strengthening institutional effectiveness and efficiency including "Results Driven Implementation" focused on grant performance ratings, learning as part of project implementation, and efficient reporting. During GEF-5 a results framework was also adopted for the LDCF and SCCF funds.

6. In November 2010 the GEF Secretariat, in collaboration with the GEF Evaluation Office, GEF Agencies, and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), presented to the GEF Council a new RBM work-plan addressing two objectives identified in the course of the 2009 Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) process: (i) to strengthen and update the tools and systems needed to capture standardized information; and (ii) to strengthen the Secretariat's ability to collect and report on portfolio level outcome and output indicators agreed in the GEF-5 Programming Document. To achieve these objectives, the GEF-5 work-plan included four main components:

- Establish and implement an updated AMR process for GEF-5;
- Upgrade and integrate portfolio monitoring in the PMIS;
- Develop tools to enhance portfolio monitoring; and
- Provide and develop internal guidance on GEF RBM.

7. The aim of GEF's RBM framework is to "improve management effectiveness and accountability by defining realistic expected results and targets, monitoring progress toward the achievement of expected results and targets, integrating lessons learned into management decisions, and reporting on performance."

1.1 Results based management at different levels in the GEF partnership

8. At the institutional level, overarching goals and priorities are established by the GEF Council. When setting priorities the Council is influenced by the guidance provided by the GEF relevant Conventions and by the agreements reached at the GEF replenishment process. This guidance subsequently gets mainstreamed in the priorities, programs and activities supported by the GEF. During replenishment negotiations, alongside discussing scale of replenishment, the replenishment participants also take stock of the progress made by the GEF and agree on the targets for, and policy reforms to be implemented in, the period covered by the replenishment. The proposals from the replenishment negotiations process are then adopted by the GEF Council. Through this mode the replenishment group determines the results that GEF commits to achieving and is accountable for.

9. The GEF Secretariat and the GEF Evaluation Office report directly to the GEF Council. The Secretariat ensures that the Council decisions are implemented. It coordinates the formulation of projects included in the work programs, oversees their implementation, and makes certain that operational strategies and policies are followed. The GEF Evaluation Office has the central role of ensuring the independent evaluation function within the GEF. It undertakes independent evaluations that cover GEF activities, programs, policies or processes. These evaluations are presented to the GEF Council. The Office also tracks adoption of the

Council decisions based on GEF EO evaluations by relevant actors within the GEF partnership through a Management Action Record (MAR) process.

10. Tracking tools have been developed for each focal area for gathering data at the individual project level and to help in aggregation of data at the focal area portfolio level. These are expected to provide information on how GEF focal area activities are leading to overarching objectives of the focal area.

11. At the project level, each project is now required to have a results framework that specifies its expected results. To receive GEF funding, among other things, a project's results need to be aligned with the priorities of GEF and those of the recipient countries. The executing and GEF agencies are responsible for tracking progress on reporting the indicators specified in the results framework included in the project proposal at the point of CEO Endorsement. They are also expected to track and report on progress on indicators of the focal area tracking tools. At the portfolio level the progress made by the projects that are under implementation is reported through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) prepared by the Secretariat, and the short term results (i.e. outputs and outcomes) achieved by completed projects are reported through the Annual Performance Report (APR) prepared by the Evaluation Office. Past reviews conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office that cover quality of M&E arrangements at entry and during implementation, have consistently found and reported on weaknesses related to design and during implementation and on areas where improvements have taken place.

12. Another key instrument that is expected to aid management decision making is the Project Management Information System (PMIS) (GEF/C.27/10). It records and provides information related to project cycle milestones, project status, project appraisal and related documents, project monitoring and evaluation, etc. The extent to which this system may be effective in aiding management decision making is dependent on both the type of information maintained in the system, and information quality and timeliness. The past reviews of the PMIS have shown that the quality of information provided by it is quite uneven.

1.2 Alignment of GEF activities and results with GEF priorities

13. For the RBM to function seamlessly, alignment in objectives, processes, procedures and practices, may be required at various levels within the GEF partnership. At the highest level GEF seeks alignment with the guidance provided by the relevant environmental conventions. Replenishment negotiations (and Council decisions based on these negotiations) specify the specific results that GEF is expected to achieve. These together determine the focal area priorities.

14. The focal area priorities form a basis for programming of GEF activities. To receive GEF funding, among other things, a project proposal (and the expected results of the project) should be aligned with the GEF priorities. In addition, a project proposal should also be aligned with the priorities of the recipient countries where it is being implemented. While an elaborate project appraisal process ensures that the projects funded by the GEF are aligned with the GEF priorities, the requirement that each project proposal be endorsed by the country government is expected to ensure alignment with the country priorities. The actual level of alignment is, however, an empirical question.

15. GEF projects are implemented by GEF agencies. GEF has explicit policies to give preference to agencies based on their comparative advantage which may include scale and type of activity and the environmental concern being addressed. To some extent this ensures that the agency objectives are aligned with GEF objectives. However, given the diversity across agencies in terms of their M&E arrangements and RBM systems it is difficult to attain perfect alignment across the partnership. GEF aims at addressing these differences by requiring that its agencies adhere to minimum M&E requirements, which among other things includes reporting on project results.

1.3 Feedback on long term results and time-lags

16. A key purpose of an RBM framework is that gathered information is used in management decision making. A key challenge on this front pertains to the nature of problems that GEF is trying to address. After GEF supported activities have been completed, environmental status change often takes considerable time to manifest. Implementation of a significant proportion of the projects that are approved under a given replenishment period is yet to start by the end of the replenishment. After start of implementation, the projects are generally under implementation for five to eight years before they are completed. Furthermore, an even longer time may be required before the long term impacts of the projects become evident. This time lag implies that the lessons that may be learnt from the completed projects may not be available at least for two or more replenishment periods from the period of approval. Consequently, when strategies are revised for the new replenishment period the feedback on the long term results from implementation of the preceding strategies is not yet known. Impact evaluations, country portfolio evaluations, and other post project completion assessment of results, provide these lessons, which may then be taken into account in management decisions. To some extent the concerns related to long time lags in feedback on impacts are addressed by GEF taking into account the advancements in scientific knowledge on causal relationships. The support provided by GEF's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) in this area is important. In addition, in some instances the GEF also supports targeted research on topics that are relevant to GEF's work.

17. In contrast to the long time lags that are experienced in feedback on outcomes and impacts, feedback on organizational processes, project preparation and implementation, may be provided with a shorter time lag. Within GEF at the global portfolio level this feedback is provided through performance evaluations and thematic evaluations undertaken by the GEF EO, and the annual monitoring report prepared by the GEF Secretariat. At the project level annual project implementation reports, tracking tools, and information provided by PMIS are important instruments in gathering and reporting of this information.

II. Key Questions

18. Any comprehensive assessment of the RBM system of a complex partnership such as GEF requires considerable time and effort. Given the time and resource constraints, the sub-study was focused on the questions that were important and could be answered within the given constraints. This sub-study assesses the extent to which GEF's RBM framework is meeting its objectives,

lessons that may be learnt from the experience so far, and areas for further improvement. It assesses:

- The extent to which GEF has made progress in updating and strengthening the systems and tools for monitoring portfolio outputs and outcomes, including tracking tools;

- The extent to which arrangements are in place to monitor and report on environmental impact during project implementation and at project completion;

- The alignment of GEF tracking tools used for results-based management with focal area strategies, and the extent to which the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools for biodiversity have been applied for protected areas being supported by GEF projects;

- The extent to which RBM related systems and tools are being used for decision making and adaptive management across the GEF partnership including implementing and national agencies executing GEF projects, and the GEF Secretariat; and

- The extent to which the adopted RBM approach is appropriate and realistic, and has taken into account experiences in other organizations both within and outside the GEF partnership.

III. Methodological Approach

19. The sub-study began by reviewing information gathered by other teams within the Office on tracking tools, quality of data in PMIS, country ownership and alignment, and synthesizing and mapping this information from an RBM perspective. Additional work conducted for this sub-study included literature review and desk reviews of relevant documents, with particular attention given to Council documents, work plans of the GEF Secretariat and progress reports which address RBM related issues. In addition, an online survey was conducted, and interviews were held with stakeholders in 11 countries sampled for this study, covering staff of the GEF Secretariat, implementing and national agencies executing GEF projects, and GEF focal points. Stakeholders were asked about the extent to which information is being used in decision making at different levels, and the types of decisions that draw on the information base generated through the RBM framework. They were also asked about their use of focal area tracking tools for portfolio monitoring, any gaps in tracking tool alignment and pipeline planning, and about their perceptions of the flow of information within the GEF partnership. Data from the Annual Performance Report 2012 (APR 2012) were reviewed with respect to performance on monitoring and evaluation as these pertain to results-based management. Finally, assessments were conducted on the extent of project coverage using the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) in the biodiversity focal area, and on arrangements to measure environmental impact at project completion. To complement these data sets, evidence from other evaluations carried out during the GEF 5 period has also been taken into account.

IV. Key Findings

20. Modest progress has been made in updating and strengthening GEF's systems and tools for monitoring portfolio outputs and outcomes, but significant areas of shortcoming have yet to be addressed.

- While GEF M&E standards and requirements have been strengthened over time, only modest improvements have been achieved in providing project-level data needed to support results-based management.
- The tracking tools vary in their structure and alignment with the results frameworks for each focal area strategy.
- Protected areas supported by GEF show variations in compliance with the tracking tool requirements; archiving and accessing the datasets is complex and time-consuming.
- The GEF-5 RBM agenda was overly ambitious, and also lacked clarity about who was responsible for what, and how this was to be accomplished. Its results framework identifies too many goals, objectives, outcomes, targets and indicators to be useful as a management system; the total number of elements identified in the GEF-5 results framework now exceeds 600, more than double the number during GEF-4.
- As a partnership organization, the GEF should not be expected to employ results based management systems in the same manner as a stand-alone organization might. The Secretariat and Council may wish to explore more appropriate systems which can be better tailored to the management functions of different actors within the GEF system, rather than a framework which seeks to bring all of the actors within a single umbrella which cannot be effectively monitored or managed.

4.1 Systems and tools for monitoring portfolio outputs and outcomes

21. One area of improvement is the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) process. Part One of the revised AMR provides a macro overview of the GEF portfolio, and is presented at the fall Council meeting and incorporates data shortly after the close of the previous fiscal year. Part Two of the AMR, presented the following spring, provides a more detailed analysis of outcomes and lessons learned from GEF operations. The new AMR format helps to provide GEF partners with a snapshot of portfolio trends early in the fiscal year (in Part One), while allowing the Secretariat more time to prepare in-depth analysis of issues raised in project mid-term reviews or terminal evaluations, as well as results at the focal area level for presentation in Part Two.

22. The structure and timing of the revised AMR process represent an improvement over the previous portfolio monitoring system, but the value of this improvement has been undermined by three factors: (i) absence of candor and realism in the way some data are presented and/or inappropriate tools used for analysis, which gives an overly-optimistic picture of actual portfolio performance (e.g. improvements claimed in project preparation times[1]), (ii) persistent shortcomings in the PMIS system, and (iii) weaknesses in systems for monitoring project risks.

[1] See OPS-5 Sub-Study on GEF Project Cycle.

Project cycle reporting is discussed in a separate OPS-5 sub-study, and the PMIS is discussed in the next section.

23. For the present study, the on-line survey asked GEF stakeholders about the candor of PIR reporting on project implementation progress and issues; only 70% of those who responded agreed that project reporting was candid, while 15% disagreed, and the remaining 15% said they didn't have enough information to form a judgment. Operational Focal Point staff were particularly skeptical about the candor of project reporting, with just 40% finding project reporting to be candid, while 33% disagreed, and 27% said they didn't have enough information (see Table 1 below). Agencies executing GEF projects in countries were nearly unanimous in claiming to report candidly, though GEF agencies were more cautious in claiming candor. A significant number of respondents also felt they didn't have sufficient information to judge the candor of reporting.

Table 1 – Survey responses toquestion: "*Agencies are candid in theirreporting of theprojectprogress and, whereapplicable, pointouttheproblemsbeingfaced in implementation"*

	Agree	Disagree	Not enough information to respond
Operational Focal Points / OFP Staff	40%	33%	27%
Implementing Agency Staff	70%	11%	19%
Executing Agency Staff	94%	6%	0
Overall	70%	15%	15%

24. The PMIS has been a source of complaint from GEF partners for many years, and while many efforts have been made to clean-up inaccurate records and reconcile data with GEF agencies, new errors have soon propagated and continue to compromise the validity of PMIS reports. The preparation of AMR and Evaluation Office APR reports requires major efforts from staff across the partnership to reconcile even basic data such as project starting and closing dates. The Evaluation Office's Annual Performance Report 2012 again identified significant issues with the quality of data contained in the PMIS on topics such as project status.[2]

25. An independent review by Deloitte &Touche in 2011 identified a large number of critical issues in the systems used to record and manage the GEF project pipeline, and to share and report data across the GEF network. In January 2012 the World Bank's external auditor found a significant discrepancy related to reconciliation of the GEF Trust Fund accounts, which underscored the relevance of the Deloitte findings. The problem of reconciling data from multiple GEF agencies has probably increased with the growth in the number of participating organizations using different IT platforms and different milestones in their internal reporting processes. Plans are now being developed to integrate the PMIS into the World Bank's SAP-based IT platform (which is also undergoing a program of wide-ranging reforms), but this will not by itself resolve the challenges of reconciling and aggregating project data from multiple

[2] APR 2012 p.60

partners, especially for the period after CEO approval/endorsement and with respect to monitoring of disbursements.

26. The focal area tracking tools are another important element of the effort to strengthen the GEF's portfolio monitoring system. Agencies have improved their compliance rates in terms of submitting the required data to GEF Secretariat, but at present there is no system for efficiently aggregating reports in order to support analysis of trends, issues and opportunities. The raw data from each project are being stored as separate Excel sheets in various locations within GEFSEC, and the Evaluation Office has encountered numerous problems in validating the project-level data. During GEF-5, it was expected that data from the PMIS and the focal area tracking tools would be accessible through a GIS Data Mapping Portal, which would permit data queries and real-time analysis of operations and portfolio status using a spatial user interface, including data on outcomes of GEF projects. This was conceived as a "Mapping for Results" initiative which would significantly enhance efforts to manage the portfolio. At present the Data Mapping Portal permits users to see in which countries projects have taken place since the GEF pilot phase, and to generate simple tables and pie charts illustrating the number of projects and grant volumes by agency, focal area, country and region. The Portal has recently been upgraded, adding a feature to illustrate outcome indicators for GEF projects for which IP or DO ratings have been provided by GEF agencies (note that there can be a considerable lag in the reporting, and at present many projects have not provided this data). Secretariat staff has concluded that it is not technically feasible to base the Portal on a GIS system, Up to the present GEF agencies have not been asked to geo-reference project information, and retrofitting such data within the Secretariat would be impractical. At present, users are able to extract data on project cost and ratings into Excel spreadsheets for analysis, but Portal does not directly support data-querying and analysis.

27. Portfolio monitoring missions have been another element of the reform during GEF-5. Several field missions took place during FY10 to capture and document lessons from GEF operations, and to make these available in a simple, readily-accessible format. Countries included Zambia (biodiversity),(Burkina Faso (land degradation), South Africa (climate change), Romania and Turkey (international waters). Another mission was conducted in India during FY11, covering protected areas. Other missions took place during 2012 (East Africa) and 2013 (China), though these are not mentioned on the GEF website and the reports have not been finalized. (The website should be kept updated so that those who access it are not given the impression that the Targeted Learning program has been discontinued.) GEF Secretariat staff explained that some of the learning missions planned for 2012 and 2013 have been delayed because of work demands related to GEF 2020 and preparation for the GEF-6 replenishment.

28. The GEF-5 work plan for RBM also included development of an instrument for Portfolio Risk Assessment. Evaluation Office findings from GEF-4 had investigated two aspects of this issue: (i) quality at entry, and (ii) quality of supervision. The RBM work plan included development of a methodology for conducting quality at entry reviews every other year, similar to those which were carried out by the World Bank's Quality Assurance Group (QAG).[3]During GEF-5 the GEF Evaluation Office conducted an assessment of the quality of M&E arrangements at entry, as well as arrangements for impact evaluation. STAP has conducted reviews of climate

[3]QAG closed in July 2010, and as of August 2013 the World Bank was considering options for replacing the corporate-level quality assurance function formerly provided by QAG. Operating units such as Regional Vice Presidencies already have their own QA functions in place for VP-level reporting and management.

change risks and vulnerability assessments in GEF projects. The October 2011 RBM progress report noted that the intention was for GEF Secretariat, STAP and the Evaluation Office to develop a joint methodology in which each party would address particular aspects of quality at entry, focusing on each entity's specific area of expertise and accountability. Other thematic assessments have been done on the treatment of gender aspects and indigenous peoples in project design. These studies have helped to identify areas needing attention, as well as improvements which have already taken place in a cross-section of GEF-financed projects, but as yet there is no system in place for biannual assessment of overall quality at entry of the portfolio as proposed in the RBM work plan.

29.

30. In April 2011 GEF Secretariat produced an RBM guidance document, somewhat ahead of the schedule given in the RBM work plan. Two RBM workshops were conducted, in January 2011 and January 2012, but the training program has not continued since that time. The guidance document reviews the history of RBM in the GEF, including development of the first results framework linking GEF goals, impacts, outcomes and outputs (prepared during GEF-4), centered on the development of focal area strategies; the emergence of the focal area tracking tools, in order to monitor progress toward achievement of focal area objectives; the articulation of corporate-level goals for GEF-5; and revision of the M&E policy during 2010, which defined minimum standards for monitoring and evaluation in GEF projects. Taken together, these elements represent the policy framework for RBM in the GEF. The guidance document goes on to describe how each part of the project cycle is increasingly emphasizing results, in terms of alignment of proposals with focal area outcomes, technical screening by STAP, compliance with requirements for M&E arrangements, aggregation of project monitoring data into the AMR, and arrangements for terminal evaluation. Some of the additional measures previously described are also mentioned in the guidance document: arrangements for Quality at Entry, automation of data, and systematic collection of lessons learned.

31. The April 2011 document provides a useful overview of the history of RBM in the GEF, and reports on activities which were underway at that time. The document states that "Information from systematic monitoring serves as a critical input to ongoing management decisions (adaptive management), evaluation, and learning."[4] However, the document does not provide operational guidance in several important areas, such as how accountabilities are assigned and enforced, and how RBM information will actually be used for adaptive management at the project or portfolio level. As an overview of RBM issues and progress in the GEF, the April 2011 document represents a useful summary and also highlights important ongoing or future measures (quality at entry, automation of data systems, etc.). But the document has not been updated since 2011, and perhaps more importantly, it makes only passing reference to the fundamental issue of multiple accountabilities for results within the GEF partnership, other than to observe that this is "a complex picture" and that the "combined capacities of the GEF partnership" are needed.

[4] RBM System: Process to Ensure the Quality of Objectives, Baselines, and Results Indicators" April 2011, GEF/C.40/Inf.9, p.7

4.2 Arrangements to monitor and report on project performance and environmental impact

32. The 2011 Annual Performance Report, as with previous APRs since 2005, reported on two aspects of the arrangements for monitoring at the project level: (i) the quality of design of project M&E systems at entry into the GEF portfolio, and (ii) the quality of implementation of project M&E systems during project implementation. The APR 2011 review found persistent shortcomings in the quality of M&E design at entry, with just two-thirds of projects being rated moderately satisfactory or higher.[5] Moreover, there has been little sign of improvement in this area, as this rating is nearly identical to those found in the four-year APR cohorts of 2005-2008 (67% MS+) and 2009-2012 (65% MS+). Since assessment of M&E design began in 2006, around one-third of all GEF projects have been found to have significant deficiencies at entry, receiving ratings of moderately unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory or highly unsatisfactory.

33. Although some projects show evidence of having made improvements in M&E arrangements during project implementation, the APR 2011 ratings for M&E implementation were only marginally higher than the ratings for quality at entry, with 68% rated moderately satisfactory or higher. The APR also found a strong association between quality of M&E arrangements at entry and quality of M&E implementation during project implementation: projects rated moderately satisfactory or higher at entry were likely to also be rated moderately satisfactory or higher during implementation, and projects scoring poorly on M&E design were also likely to demonstrate significant shortcomings during project implementation. Thus in spite of increased attention to M&E requirements over the last several replenishment periods, GEF agencies appear to be making little progress in ensuring that all projects are being designed with appropriate mechanisms to provide the performance data necessary to support adaptive management—a key element of any results-based management system.

34. For OPS-5, a special study was also carried out to assess the quality of arrangements to measure environmental impacts at project completion. This review aimed to assess the extent to which arrangements were in place to monitor and report environmental impact during project implementation and at project completion. The likelihood of monitoring arrangements being implemented after project completion was assessed based on the availability of permanent institutions that had the mandate and capacity to conduct environmental monitoring, as well as the mechanisms for the use and reporting of data collected. Of the 491 projects that submitted terminal evaluations from 2005 to 2012,[6] 343 were included in this review. (Eighty-four of the 491 projects did not have sufficient information on monitoring arrangements that could be assessed, 59 did not require environmental monitoring arrangements, and five were phases of projects already included in the 343, and therefore were not assessed separately.) Information on impact monitoring arrangements was culled from terminal evaluations (TEs) and terminal evaluation reviews (TERs) using standardized instruments.

35. Of the 343 projects that could be assessed, 143 (42%) had arrangements that were implemented during the project, half of which had arrangements to continue impact monitoring after project completion (Table 2). One hundred forty projects (34%) had monitoring

[5] APR 2012, pp.47-49
[6] These are the projects in the cohort covered by the Fourth and Fifth Over-all Performance Studies (OPS4 and OPS5).

arrangements that were partially implemented. This includes those that had arrangements implemented during the project and at completion but used irrelevant parameters (2%), or arrangements that were not implemented systematically (32%). Twenty-seven (8%) planned or established arrangements that were not implemented during the project's lifetime, while 56 (16%) did not have any arrangements at all.

Table 2. Extent of impact monitoring arrangements during project implementation and at completion

Extent of Impact Monitoring Arrangements	No. of projects	% of projects
Arrangements to continue at completion	71*	21%
Regularly implemented during project only	72**	21%
Partially implemented during project	140	34%
Planned or established but not implemented	27	8%
None	56	16%
TOTAL	**343**	**100%**

*includes 13 projects (4%) with monitoring indicators whose relevance could not be assessed due to lack of data
**includes 10 projects (3%) with monitoring indicators whose relevance could not be assessed due to lack of data

36. Ozone-depleting substances (ODS) and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) projects had the greatest percentage of projects that had monitoring activities both at project implementation and completion (Table 3). Impact monitoring arrangements for ODS projects all followed the same framework outlined under the Montreal Protocol. Since ODS projects focused on industry-wide phase-outs of CFCs/HFCs, impact monitoring focused on the narrow sector that produced and used these compounds. POPs projects were typically capacity-building projects focused on building analytical and laboratory capacity to identify, test, and monitor POPs sites and utilization of POPs in agricultural inputs and in manufacturing a very limited set of products (e.g. heavy duty capacitors). The POPs projects did not have impact monitoring during implementation; rather, the intention was to put in place the capacity to monitor environmental threats.

37. Climate change (CC) projects had the largest percentage of projects (30%) that had no arrangements for monitoring in place during or after the project Project design varies more among CC projects, from designing better heating stoves in Ulan Bator to photovoltaic market transformation to improving energy efficiency of building stock in Romania. A large number of CC projects also include a private sector component either seeking to transform markets or underwriting private sector investments in new technology. Project impact indicators therefore vary widely, with a common one being reduced emissions of GHG. However, few projects are able to put in the technology to actually measure GHG emissions and rely on estimates based on assumptions about uptake of new technology.

Table 3. Extent of impact monitoring arrangements by focal area

Extent of Impact Monitoring Arrangements	BD (n=187)	CC (n=69)	IW (n=34)	LD (n=10)	MF (n=34)	ODS (n=4)	POP (n=5)
Arrangements to continue at completion	20%	17%	26%	0%	18%	75%	60%
Regularly implemented during Project only	23%	17%	12%	20%	29%	25%	0%
Partially implemented during project	35%	26%	44%	60%	32%	0%	40%
Planned or established but not implemented	9%	9%	9%	20%	0%	0%	0%
None	13%	30%	9%	0%	21%	0%	0%

38. Most of the biodiversity (BD) projects had arrangements for monitoring in place, as monitoring methods in this focal area are relatively straightforward compared to other focal areas. Many of the projects have precise indicators for expected outcomes and targets are clear (e.g. number of hectares under protection, increase in species populations). Most projects were able to establish at least a baseline through biodiversity surveys, identification of hotspots and mapping of flora and fauna. Often the arrangements for impact monitoring were tied to protected area (PA) management plans within the framework of the METTs, and biodiversity monitoring was viewed as an adaptive management tool. Species counts, for example, could be used to identify stresses/threats, and a management response might be to issue or revoke hunting permits. However, only 20% of BD projects had arrangements in place at completion.

39. For the sample as a whole, just over half of the projects had information on how monitoring data was compiled and archived, and slightly less than half had information on how this data was accessed or used. Conversely, almost half of the projects had no information on how monitoring data was used by the project, or whether any arrangements were in place to continue this function following project completion. The positive aspect of this study is that some projects have plans in place to sustain impact monitoring after project completion; the table below describes these arrangements. From the point of view of results-based management, however, the fact that almost half of the projects are able to provide no information points to a serious problem of sustainability of GEF-financed monitoring systems after project completion.

Table 4. Means of providing access and/ or use of impact monitoring data

Type of Access to Monitoring Information	TOTAL (n=147)	Arrangements to continue at completion (n=71)	Regularly implemented during project only (n=72)	Partially Implemented during project (n=140)	Planned or established but not implemented (n=27)
Not accessed/ used at all	**11%**	1%	0%	0%	0%
Database accessible to network of users	**31%**	30%	26%	6%	7%
Decision-making/ action by managers and lawmakers	**63%**	58%	42%	20%	11%
Regular reporting to management body/ stakeholders/ public	**41%**	37%	38%	9%	4%
Indications of access but unclear how	**2%**	1%	1%	1%	0%
Limited/Sporadic Shared/published reports	**9%**	3%	4%	6%	4%
Solely for project progress	**4%**	0%	0%	2%	4%
Other	**3%**	18%	3%	2%	0%

40. Finally, a recent cluster evaluation of the impact of GEF support to the South China Sea (in the international waters focal area) provides another source of detailed evidence on the use of monitoring and evaluation tools at the project level for a cluster of projects. This evaluation report, released in December 2012, looked in depth at four aspects of M&E: (i) data collection, (ii) data compilation and analysis, (iii) the use of information for environmental management and decision-making, and (iv) reporting for project accountability. At the level of field sites, the evaluation assessed 40 cases that could be expected to have had monitoring activities in place at the time of field verification; of these 40, 32 (80%) were found to be periodically collecting data, mostly on habitat and biodiversity parameters. However, data was available only in 19 cases where the data reportedly was being collected, indicating that this monitoring information is

probably not being analyzed and used for management purposes. The evaluation also reported that use and reporting of analyzed data took place in 9 out of 20 completed demonstrations.[7]

41. The South China Sea cluster evaluation concluded that there has only been limited adoption of the information management systems supported by the GEF. In many cases the technologies being introduced were not appropriate to local conditions. In other cases there was no budget to sustain the information systems following project completion, and the sometimes-sophisticated monitoring techniques installed by the GEF-financed project are unlikely to be sustained after GEF financing and technical support ceases. (A new project is currently under preparation which would address the financial sustainability of the PEMSEA regional partnership.)

4.3 Alignment of RBM Tracking Tools with Focal Area Strategies

42. The OPS-5 evaluation assessed the alignment of Result Based Management tracking tools to GEF Focal Area Strategies, to gain an understanding of how the tracking tools reflect each Focal Area Strategy results framework, and to highlight any gaps. The assessment provides a mapping of the types of data collected through tracking tools[8] and an assessment of their alignment with the Focal Area Strategy[9] Objectives, Expected Outcomes, and Outputs by focal area. The findings of the assessment are summarized below:

- **Alignment:** The data collected through the tracking tools align at different levels in the results framework across all Focal Area Strategies. While some tracking tools report on project data at the Expected Outcome level, others request information on the Output level or Outcome/Output Indicator level.

- **Baseline:** There is a large degree of variation across the tracking tools on the amount of baseline and/or contextual project information that is required. The Biodiversity tracking tool, for example, has an exhaustive list of contextual questions that need to be reported on; while other focal areas have a smaller amount of baseline information to report.

- **Structure:** The structure of the tracking tools varies from those organized according to Objective, to those organized according to thematic areas. For example, Climate Change Mitigation and Land Degradation are organized by Objective. Alternatively, POPs and International Waters are structured by the category or impact area of the project.

- **Gaps:** There are a few alignment gaps between the Focal Area Strategy Results Frameworks and the tracking tools. Some of the tracking tools did not report on specific items that are mentioned in the Focal Area Strategy and results framework (see Table 7).

- **Indicators:** Tracking tools are explicitly mentioned as indicators in some Focal Area Strategy results frameworks (e.g. Biodiversity, SFM/ REDD+, POPs). They are mentioned either on the Output Indicator level or the Expected Outcome Indicator level.

[7] South China Seas Evaluation, Dec. 2012, p.144
[8] The tracking tools can be found at: http://www.thegef.org/gef/tracking_tools
[9] Focal Area Strategies and their respective results frameworks can be found at: http://www.thegef.org/gef/pubs/GEF-5_FA_Strategies

- **Guidance:** All of the tracking tools have guidance or guidelines that explain how the tracking tool works, and helps clarify specific questions. Some are very extensive (such as Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Climate Change Mitigation GHG accounting); others provide a short set of instructions (e.g. POPs/Chemicals).

- **Multi-Focal Area:** The clarity of reporting for Multi-Focal Area projects is mixed. Some of the tracking tools (e.g. Land Degradation, Sustainable Forest Management/REDD+, Climate Change Adaptation) explicitly mention how to use the tool in the case of Multi-Focal Area projects, the others do not.

43. In general, the data collected through the tracking tools align at different levels in the results framework across all Focal Area Strategies. There is no consistent pattern of where the alignment occurs. While some tracking tools report on project data at the Expected Outcome level, others request information on the Output level or Indicator levels (Table 6). The alignment is the clearest when the Focal Area Strategy results framework mentions the indicator that the tracking tools are going to measure. In these instances, the project team knows in advance what data is going to be collected from the tracking tools, and can make a connection between that data and where it fits within the results framework. The results frameworks for Biodiversity, Chemicals, and Sustainable Forest Management/REDD+ make some mention of the tracking tools. For example, the results framework for Biodiversity has indicators such as: "National biosafety decision making systems operational score as recorded by the GEF tracking tool"; and "Protected area management effectiveness score as recorded by Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool."In some instances, the tracking tools asked for information that did not exist in the various Focal Area Strategy results frameworks; some of this information can be attributed to background or baseline information.

Table 6: Tracking Tool Alignment to the Results Framework

Focal Area Strategy	**Expected Outcome**	**Expected Outcome Indicator**	**Core Output**	**Core Output Indicator**
Biodiversity	x	x	x	
CC Mitigation	x	x	x	
International Waters	x	x	x	
Land Degradation	x			
Chemicals	x	x	x	x
SFM/ REDD+	x			
CC Adaptation		x		x

44. There are some alignment gaps between the Focal Area Strategy results frameworks and the tracking tools, where as some of the tracking tools did not report on specific items that are mentioned in the results framework. These gaps are included in the table below along with an explanation from the Technical Teams as to why those discrepencies are present.

Table 7: Areas in the Results Frameworks that were not Included in the Tracking Tools

Focal Area Strategy	Gaps	Explanation from Technical Teams
Biodiversity	**Objective 4: Build capacity for the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety**. These are not reported in the tracking tool. However, the results framework states that a tracking tool will be developed to measure the national ABS frameworks operational score.	The tracking tool does not currently measure this Objective concerning ABS, however, the tracking tool metric is being developed at the time of writing. It will be piloted with existing projects during the GEF-5 period, with an aim to have it finalized for GEF-6.
	Objective 5: Integrate CBD obligations into national planning processes through enabling activities. Information on this objective is not recorded in the tracking tool.	This Objective was never meant to be tracked with a tracking tool but instead through an evaluative process after all the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans are developed and published on the CBD website (in 2015). The Biodiversity Technical Team will review all of them to assess the degree to which this target is reached: "50% of parties that revise NBSAPs successfully integrate measurable biodiversity conservation and sustainable use targets into development and sectoral planning frameworks."
Climate Change	**Objective 2, 3, and 4** express the importance of investment mobilization for low-carbon technologies at the Expected Outcome level. However, there are no measurements in the tracking tool on investment mobilized by the project.	There is no specific tracking tool on investment mobilization; however, the tracking tool does measure the additional financing that has been mobilized from the project, which can capture some of the information on investment mobilization. As well, Objective 2-4 measures the establishment of financial facilities "innovative mechanisms", which can also

		capture investment mobilization.
International Waters	**Expected Outcome 3.5: Political agreements on Arctic LMEs help contribute to prevention of further depletion/degradation**. There are no specific tracking tools on Arctic Large Marine Ecosystems (LME).	Although there is not a specific indicator on measuring political agreements on Arctic LMEs, this specific outcome is to be captured under the tracking tool indicators that measure LMEs, such as indicators 1-7 (on regional agreements and cooperation frameworks).
	Expected Outcome 3.4: Targeted research networks fill gaps. There is no tracking tool measurement on research networks.	There is no specific indicator on targeted research networks, as the IW focal area traditionally have been funding a maximum of 1 or two targeted research projects per replenishment. However, it is important to note that the information from targeted research projects is informing ongoing projects, to strengthen outputs and outcomes, while also in instances creating the foundation for new investments.
Land Degradation	N/A	N/A
Chemicals	**Objective 2: Phase out ODS and reduce ODS releases**. There are no tracking tool measurements that specifically monitor information related to the Montreal Protocol, ODS, or HCFCs.	The reason why there is no tracking tool measurement is that the ODS portfolio is small (in GEF-5 there is only one project). The information can be easily tracked without needing additional measurements in the tracking tools.
	Objective 3: Pilot sound chemicals management and mercury reduction. The tracking tool does not measure mercury management or SAICM.	Most of the information for this Objective can be gathered through other measurements in the tracking tool.
SFM/ REDD+	**Expected Outcome 1.3: Good management practices adopted by relevant economic actors**. The tracking tool does not specifically record information on this, but instead asks about forest	This was recently amended in the SFM/REDD+ tracking tool and included in the most updated version.

	management practices in general.	
	Expected Outcome 2.1: Enhanced institutional capacity to account for GHG emission reduction and increase in carbon stocks. The tracking tool does not measure this even though the results framework says this will be monitored: "Capacity to certify forest derived carbon credits (score as recorded by tracking tool)".	The tracking tool monitors national carbon stock monitoring systems. Although this metric doesn't exactly measure the Expected Outcome, they are somewhat related and the information gathered from it reflects one form of institutional capacity.
CC- Adaptation	N/A	N/A

45. The structure of each tracking tool is also very different. The International Waters and Chemicals tracking tools are organized by category or theme of the project, as opposed to the Objective. This might make it difficult for a project team to know what information to report on. In contrast, the Biodiversity, Climate Change Adaptation, Climate Change Mitigation, Sustainable Forest Management/REDD+, and Land Degradation tracking tools are organized in some manner according to Objective and Expected Outcomes. The tracking tool that follows the results framework the closest is the Climate Change Adaptation tool. It is structured according to Objective, Expected Outcome and Indicators that make up the results framework. The advantages of choosing one structure over another have yet to be assessed.

46. There is a large degree of variation across the tracking tools on the amount of information that is requested concerning the project background and/or contextual project information. For example, the International Waters and Climate Change Mitigation tracking tools require little contextual information compared to the Biodiversity and Land Degradation tracking tools, which have an exhaustive list of contextual questions (some examples include: information on the category of land, amount of hectares, and socio-economic background of the communities affected by the project). Information on the baseline of the project can be tracked in the tracking tools at the CEO endorsement period of the project cycle. All of the tracking tools have guidance or guidelines that explain how the tracking tool works, and helps clarify specific questions. Some are very extensive (such as Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Climate Change Mitigation GHG accounting), others provide a short set of instructions (e.g. Chemicals).

47. Finally, the clarity of reporting requirements for Multi-Focal Area projects is mixed. Some of the tracking tools (e.g. Land Degradation, Sustainable Forest Management / REDD+, Climate Change Adaptation) mention how to use the tool in the case of Multi-Focal Area projects, the others do not (see table 8). Many stakeholders interviewed for the OPS-5 evaluation expressed concern about the large volume of data required for multi-focal projects; most indicated that they had been instructed to use the complete set of tracking tools for each focal area covered in the

project, resulting in a very large volume of data that needs to be collected and reported, regardless of the specific circumstances of a given project.

Table 8: Guidance on Multi-Focal Area	
Focal Area Strategy	Specific Guidance
Land Degradation	"Each project submitted for financing under the LDFA must be accompanied by a completed PMAT at time of CEO Endorsement/ Approval. This includes multi-focal area projects with LDFA financing as well as LDFA funded projects under the SFM/REDD+ incentive program. For LDFA projects with funding from one or more other focal areas, relevant sections of the other focal area tracking tools must also be completed."
SFM/ REDD+	"…Project teams will have to complete tracking tool returns relevant to the GEF Focal Areas (FAs: biodiversity, climate change and land degradation) providing funding for the project. The GEF Agency/ Executing Agency will guide the Project teams in the choice of the tracking tools."
Climate Change Adaptation	"The AMAT tool will also apply to multi-sector projects using LDCF/SCCF financing."

4.4 Usage of Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools for Protected Areas

48. The OPS-5 evaluation assessed the availability of Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METTs) for all protected areas directly supported by GEF projects that were CEO endorsed/approved on or after July 1st, 2004[10]. The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools (METT) were developed to assess progress over time in protected area management, as well as enable GEF to systematically track the impact of its investment in protected areas. METTs for all protected areas supported by a project are to be submitted at three stages of implementation: (i) at CEO Endorsement for full-sized (FSP), or CEO approval for medium-sized projects (MSP), (ii) at project midterm and (iii) at project completion. The METT is the first focal area tracking tool to become a requirement for GEF-financed operations, and the study for OPS-5 provides the first assessment of how this requirement is being implemented. This issue is important from the standpoint of supporting results-based management at the focal area level, as well as providing project performance information needed for adaptive management at the project level.

49. The review identified a total of 1,865 protected areas across 251 projects, of which 1,209 (65%) submitted METTs at the required stages of project implementation.[11] Of the 1,575 protected areas supported by ongoing projects, 1,138 (72%) had at least one METT at entry. For this review, METTs submitted at entry were considered sufficient to meet the minimum requirement for ongoing projects, because it is difficult to identify which projects are at

[10] This date was identified by GEF Secretariat staff as the start of when tracking tools were required to be submitted for GEF projects directly supporting protected areas. Only full- and mid-sized projects that were CEO-endorsed and implemented (not dropped or cancelled) after this date were considered for the analysis. These projects were further reduced to only those that had interventions in protected areas and were required to submit tracking tools. Thus, SGP and CEPF projects were not included.
[11] Some of these projects may have supported other protected areas which did not have the full set of required METTs.

midterm,[12] at which point the GEF requires two tracking tools per protected area. The performance is significantly weaker at project completion, with three-fourths of protected areas failing to meet the METT requirements.

Table 9. Compliance with GEF METT Requirements for Protected Area Sites			
	Expected	Submitted	Percentage
Ongoing projects	1575	1138	72
Completed projects	290	71	24
Total	1865	1209	65

50. The study also uncovered significant shortcomings in the arrangements for storing and accessing project-level METT data within the Secretariat. Although the Secretariat is responsible for monitoring compliance with the tracking tool policy and receives the monitoring data from GEF-financed projects, the evaluation team learned that there is not a centralized system in place for archiving and managing this data. In fact, the study team found that tracking tools are stored in a variety of locations, and in many cases are duplicated in more than one location. The GEF's central PMIS system, which is intended to be the foundation for the results-based management system, was found to hold just 64 out of 363 complete METTS which could be accessed. More than 100 METTS were found only on a personal hard drive in the Secretariat. Some METTS were stored at an agency, which apparently had not forwarded the data to the Secretariat. Many others were stored in duplicate locations, or on a shared hard drive in the Secretariat. The Results-Based Management unit, which is responsible for preparing focal area monitoring reports, had 100 METTS stored on its hard drive, but was missing all of the others.

51. The difficulty in accessing monitoring information raises questions about whether this information is actually being used (apart from being presented in the Annual Monitoring Report), a point frequently raised by GEF partners in the course of the OPS-5 evaluation. This point is discussed in Topic 4, below. Over time, the volume of data being stored will increase significantly, when one considers that all GEF focal areas now require the use of tracking tools. The rapid growth during GEF-5 in the number of multi-focal areas presents additional challenges, since each focal area covered in such projects is expected to fully comply with that focal area's tracking tool.

4.5RBM used for decision making and adaptive management

52. Most staff of GEFagencies claimed that their organization was performing well in terms of RBM, but were skeptical about the role of RBM in other parts of the GEF partnership. OFPs indicated that they had a limited role in RBM and little awareness of it, and that most of the communication was direct between GEF agencies and GEF Secretariat. GEF Secretariat staff point out that as the GEF is a partnership organization, partners have specific responsibilities at different points in the project cycle, and this significantly complicates the process of defining accountabilities for adaptive management. This is an important point, since the literature on results-based management makes clear the importance of clearly defined accountabilities to

[12] This reflects a shortcoming in the PMIS system, which is described in Topic 1.

ensure that performance monitoring information is able to feed back into timely management responses.[13]

53. Many of those interviewed during country visits said that they were not very familiar with the GEF's RBM framework, but were better informed about the project supervision being conducted by GEF agencies. Among OFP respondents to the survey, 93% said that GEF agencies were supervising GEF projects in a satisfactory manner, while only 7% disagreed. But when asked if GEFagencies provided supervision inputs regularly and in a timely manner, only 69% of country executing agency respondents agreed, while 31% disagreed.

54. The on-line survey also asked about the effectiveness of the GEF's RBM framework in providing information useful for adaptive management. Just 55% of those responding agreed that the RBM framework is useful for adaptive management, while 15% disagreed, and 30% lacked the information needed to judge this (see Table 11). GEF agencies were the most skeptical about the GEF's RBM arrangements, though about one-third of all of the stakeholders felt they were unable to assess this topic.

Table 11 – Responses tosurveyquestion: *"The RBM framework of GEF is effective in providing project managers information useful for adaptive management"*

	Agree	Disagree	Not enough information to respond
Operational Focal Points / OFP Staff	60%	33%	30%
Implementing Agency Staff	46%	23%	31%
Executing Agency Staff	64%	7%	29%
Overall	55%	15%	30%

55. Survey respondents were also asked whether the OFP office had a good sense of the progress of GEF projects under implementation. Only 59% of respondents agreed, while 31% disagreed that the OFP office had a good sense of project progress. Many interviewees indicated that they made little direct use of the monitoring data being provided from GEF projects in their country, and that they were not sure how this data was being used after being sent to Washington. Several expressed concern that the exercise has become primarily a compliance function rather than something used in adaptive management, though they felt that the original principal was valid. Many of the staff interviewed in national agencies executing GEF projects and OFP offices stated that they had little knowledge of the tracking tools, and that the reports were being prepared by consultants or staff of GEF agencies rather than being internalized within national management systems. One implementing agency manager observed that the data required by GEF were insufficient for his agency's internal management needs, and at the same time were too complex for existing country systems to effectively absorb and manage.

56. One exception is the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool for protected area systems, which is the oldest of the focal area tracking tools and which is now well-known and accepted among conservation professionals.[14]But even in this case, protected area managers questioned whether data reported to GEF Secretariat were being used for decision-making or priority-

[13]See, for ex., UNDG (2010), Results-Based Management Handbook, p.13

[14]The METT was pilot-tested in 1999, and results published in Hockings, M., Stolton, S. and Dudley, N. (2000). Evaluating Effectiveness: A Framework for Assessing the Management of Protected Areas. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 6. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.

setting, since they received little or no feedback after submitting their reports. Topic 3 (above) described the difficulties in accessing METT data which has been provided by projected areas projects. Another issue relates to the data requirements for multi-focal projects, with many partners expressing concern that too many indicators have been specified, resulting in a disproportionate burden on project M&E systems. If these data requirements are perceived to mainly represent a compliance function rather than adding value to project implementation, their usefulness for results-based management is likely to be significantly undermined.

57. The survey asked about the OFP offices' role in tracking project progress and giving attention to projects experiencing problems and needing corrective action. OFPs and OFP staff admit to not having a strong grasp of the progress of implementation of GEF projects, with just half responding to the question positively, and fewer than half say that the RBM framework is providing them with information on project progress. Moreover, only half of OFPs and OFP staff say that their office provides more attention to those projects which are facing difficulties. As noted above, the highest scores in the survey were the OFP ratings of the quality of project supervision by GEF agencies. To some extent this would seem to reflect a degree of faith in the performance of these agencies, since the OFPs and OFP staff admitted that they did not have a strong grasp of project-level progress or issues. The GEF agencies have confidence in the results-based management systems within their respective organizations, and make a distinction between their internal systems (which are used regardless of funding source) and the RBM arrangements of the GEF as a whole.

58. In addition to issues of management at the project level, the results-based management approach was expected to strengthen GEF management at the portfolio level. As has already been noted, the portfolio risk assessment system has made little progress during GEF-5, and the basic tools for portfolio monitoring (notably PMIS) require significant reform. The targeted learning series remains in its early stages, though reportedly there has been an increase in the use of biodiversity threat reduction indicators in line with the findings of the Zambia Learning Mission on biodiversity. The AMR process has yet to forthrightly address the issue of overly-optimistic project performance ratings, though the GEF Secretariat has recently acknowledged that its approach for tracking time lags in project cycle efficiency presents an unrealistic impression of progress and needs to be revised.

59. The stakeholder interviews during country visits and the on-line survey provided evidence of several shortcomings in portfolio management at the focal area and country levels, including lack of transparency and perceived arbitrariness in pipeline decisions by OFPs as well as in cofinancing requirements from GEF Secretariat; skepticism about candor and realism of project performance ratings; communication barriers among OFPs, GEF agencies, and GEF Secretariat; and a widespread perception that monitoring data are not being used for management decisions, with the exception of project supervision carried out by GEF agencies. These findings raise a larger question concerning the realism of the GEF-5 objectives for RBM, which is discussed below.

4.6Realism and appropriateness of RBM approach

60. The findings on portfolio monitoring point to a number of improvements which have been achieved in the systems and tools which are a prerequisite for results based management (though

not a sufficient condition to achieve it). Improvements include the revised AMR process, adoption of the focal area tracking tools at the project level, initiation of a targeted learning program based on field visits to selected countries, and cooperation between GEF Secretariat, STAP and the Evaluation Office to address various dimensions of project quality at entry. Staff training on RBM concepts was provided in 2011 and 2012, and a guidance note lays out the vision for RBM in the GEF, explaining how these different elements are intended to interact in order to help the GEF to efficiently achieve global environmental benefits. Plans are now being developed to integrate the PMIS into the World Bank's MIS platform while retaining certain GEF-specific analysis and reporting features. The GEF website has been equipped with a mapping tool which can be queried to identify GEF-financed operations by country, focal area, replenishment period, and cost. At the corporate level, GEF Secretariat monitors effectiveness and efficiency targets agreed for GEF-5 in areas such as financing efficiency, corporate visibility, project cycle efficiency, quality at entry, staff retention and gender balance, project performance, and conflict resolution. The strategic goals agreed for GEF-5 at the focal area and convention level are being reviewed as part of the GEF-6 replenishment process, along with the effectiveness and efficiency targets.

61. The findings on project performance monitoring indicate that the introduction of these new monitoring and reporting systems and tools has not yet brought about a situation in which the GEF partners are able to use monitoring data for adaptive management at the project or portfolio level. Where adaptive management is taking place, this appears to be more the result of internal management systems of individual agencies in the course of project supervision, rather than the result of information flows arising from GEF systems. OFPs admit that they do not have a strong grasp of portfolio trends or project progress, but generally trust that GEF agencies are doing a satisfactory job of supervision. Nearly all stakeholders maintain that the GEF's monitoring data have little utility for decision-making, apart from data which they are already using for their own purposes (such as the METT in protected areas management). Another point raised by some partners is that GEF investments should be guided by demand from member countries, rather than technical considerations applied by staff in the Secretariat. Several of the agencies have expressed concern that the RBM approach of the GEF has resulted in an expanding role for the Secretariat as well as new mandates from the Council, at the expense of new burdens on implementing and national agencies executing GEF projects. This issue is examined in a separate OPS-5 sub-study on Health of the GEF Partnership.

62. For this study, a comparative assessment was done of the results frameworks approved by Council in GEF-4 and GEF-5, to identify changes in the scope of what was expected to be monitored, managed and reported in the RBM system of the GEF. Additionally, the assessment examined the results frameworks from all GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies and classified each component according to the level at which reporting was to be conducted (i.e. project reporting/monitoring, portfolio reporting by the Secretariat, etc.). As shown in the table below, the results framework for GEF-4 covered focal area strategies only, whereas GEF-5 added new results frameworks for the LDCF, SCCF, at the corporate level, and for private sector engagement.

Table 12 – Results Frameworks Included in Sub-Study

GEF-4	GEF-5
Focal Area Strategies	Focal Area Strategies
	LDCF/SCCF
	Corporate Results Framework
	Private Sector Engagement

63. The assessment found that there has been a significant increase in the amount of reporting between GEF-4 and GEF-5 (Chart 1). In GEF-4 there were 285 elements that were counted in the RBM framework, whereas in GEF-5 a total of 616 were counted, more than double the number of items to bemonitored, managed and reported. A majority of these elements are used for both project reporting and portfolio reporting by the Secretariat. Parallel to the increase in the number of elements being reported, there has also been an increase in the monitoring categories included in the results frameworks– GEF-5 RBM frameworks include new levels of monitoring that were not included in GEF-4, such as goals, targets, outputs and output indicators, in addition to corporate-level activities. The GEF-5 framework has 11 categories, many of which are not clearly defined, while the GEF-4 framework had five categories with more consistent use. The figures below illustrate the extent of the increase from GEF-4 to GEF-5, both in terms of categories of what is to be covered, as well as in the total number of elements within the results framework.

Chart 1: RBM elements in GEF-4

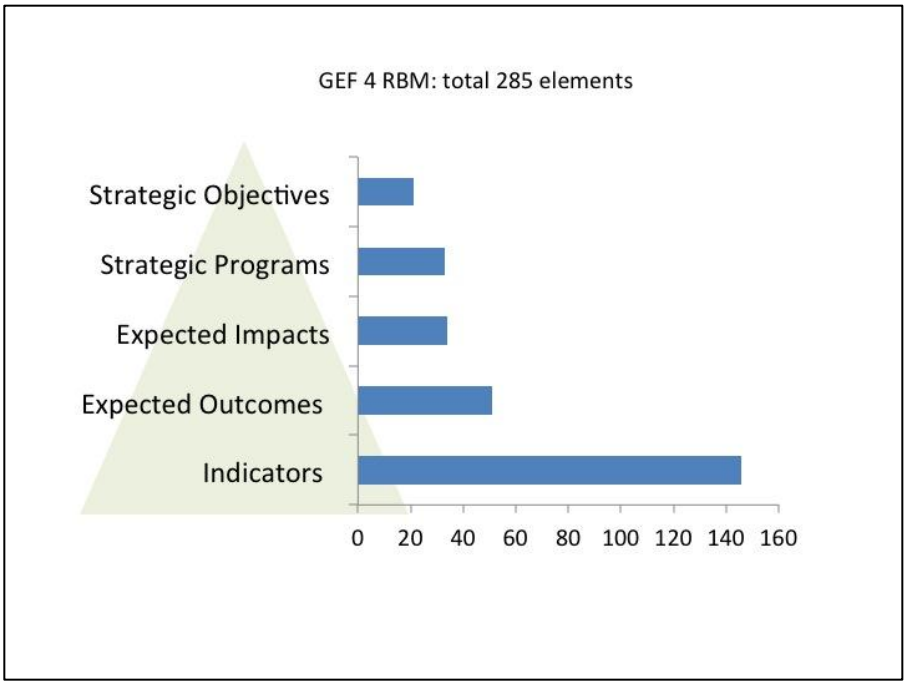
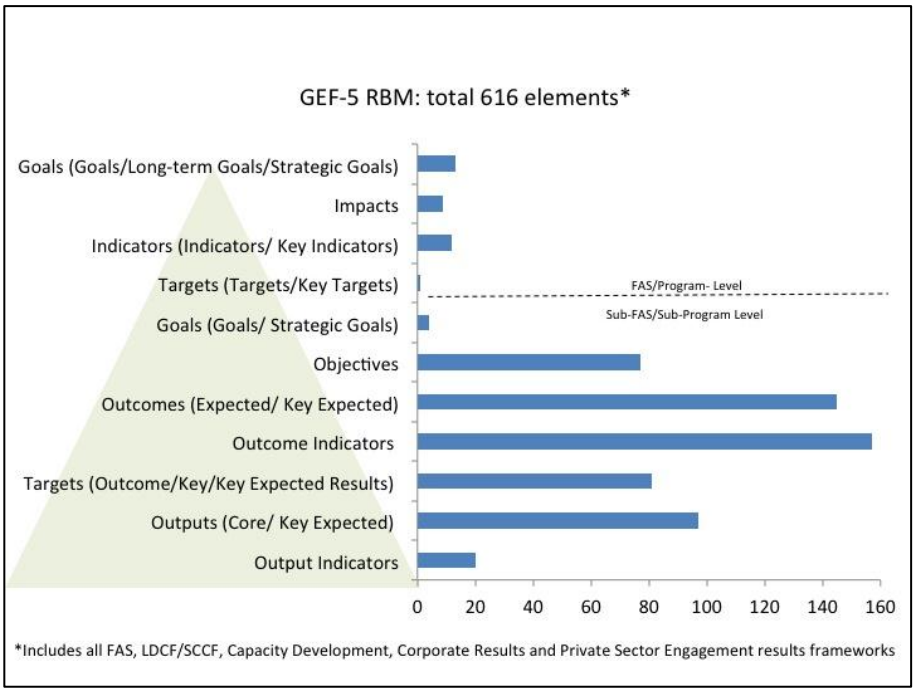


Chart 2: RBM elements in GEF-5



64. The literature on RBM stresses that a minimum approach should be followed. The handbook "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System"[15], which focuses on the role of monitoring in RBM, argues that an absolute minimum of indicators must be chosen to measure whether outcomes have been achieved. The updated version of this, included in the handbook "The Road to Results" indicates that ideally no more than 2-7 indicators should be selected.[16] The Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank, which has recently reviewed more than 50 global funds and programs, recommends no more than 5-10 "easily measured outcome indicators for which data are readily available".[17] For a complex fund like the GEF this could be translated into a maximum of five (preferably fewer) easily measured outcome indicators per focal area.

65. The GEF has a dual objective in gathering and analyzing data: it wants to report on its achievements and it wants to contribute to crucial knowledge about the environmental issues it addresses. For example, the biodiversity tracking tools go beyond the RBM framework for biodiversity and deliver data to the global METTS database. This additional objective of some data gathering may not be fully recognized in the RBM framework and may have led to an additional burden on projects and on partners in the GEF (including the Secretariat) that has never been adequately recognized in funding and staffing. This has been insufficiently recognized and separated from the management function of data gathering and analysis.

[15]Jody ZallKusek& Ray C. Rist. Ten Steps to a Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation System. A handbook for development practitioners. Washington, the World Bank, 2004
[16]Linda G. MorraImas& Ray C. Rist.The Road to Results. Washington, the World Bank, 2009. P. 117
[17]IEG.Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. Global Program Review Volume 6, Issue 2. Washington, the World Bank, 2012 and Anna Aghumian. Results Frameworks for Global Partnership Programs: Lessons from IEG Reviews. Presentation at the American Evaluation Association, October 19, 2013.

66. Moreover, the GEF as a funding agency has no direct hierarchical connection to what is happening in projects. From the standpoint of RBM, the Secretariat is essentially a recipient of information–it does not manage the projects which receive GEF financing. It is the GEF agencies that need to ensure monitoring, and need to incorporate this in the contractual or legal arrangements they have with executing agencies or recipient governments. The lack of direct hierarchical connections points to the need for a system that reduces measurements and reporting to the absolute minimum of what is required to measure whether the GEF is achieving its outcomes through its funding, while the GEF agencies take the responsibility for adaptive management of projects and reporting on their results.

67. One possible avenue of progress is the idea of results-based financing, in which agencies (as well as countries and focal areas) would receive GEF funds only upon delivery of verified results. An arrangement of this type would require carefully defined contractual relationships between organizations as well as agreed verification processes, critical factors which are lacking in the GEF's current RBM framework.

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

www.gefieo.org

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