

## Terminal Evaluation Review form, GEF Evaluation Office, APR 2013

### 1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		1684	
GEF Agency project ID		36037	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-3	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		UNEP	
Project name		National Performance Assessment and Subregional Strategic Environment Framework in the Greater Mekong Subregion	
Country/Countries		Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, People's Republic of China (Yunnan Province), Thailand, and Vietnam	
Region		Asia	
Focal area		Multifocal	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		OP12: Integrated Ecosystem Management	
Executing agencies involved		Asian Development Bank (ADB)	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Consultation; beneficiaries	
Private sector involvement		Consultation; beneficiaries	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		Dec 2002	
Effectiveness date / project start		06 Oct 2003	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		31 Dec 2005	
Actual date of project completion		14 April 2008	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0	
	Co-financing	0	
GEF Project Grant		0.8	0.791
Co-financing	IA/EA own	1.0	0.619
	Government	0.3	
	Other*	0.3	
Total GEF funding		0.8	0.791
Total Co-financing		1.6	0.619
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		2.4	1.41
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		June 2008	
TE submission date			
Author of TE		Nao Ikemoto	
TER completion date			
TER prepared by		Pallavi Nuka	
TER peer review by (if GEF EO review)		Joshua Schneck	

\*Includes contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development, cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and beneficiaries.

## 2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF EO Review
<b>Project Outcomes</b>	S	S	N/A	MS
<b>Sustainability of Outcomes</b>	S	N/A	N/A	L
<b>M&amp;E Design</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	MS
<b>M&amp;E Implementation</b>	MS	N/A	N/A	MS
<b>Quality of Implementation</b>	S	N/A	N/A	MU
<b>Quality of Execution</b>	MS	N/A	N/A	S
<b>Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	MU

## 3. Project Objectives

### 3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

Based on the information presented in the project brief the GEO of the project is to better conserve the globally significant biodiversity (second only to the Amazon) and better manage the environmental services of the Greater Mekong Subregion in the face of growing population pressures and economic development.

### 3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

(Project Brief, pg. 1) “The goal of the project is to promote sustainable development, and achieve global benefits in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) through the creation of (i) country-specific environmental performance assessment systems for the GMS countries (for the PRC, Yunnan Province), containing indicators, computer models and databases, (ii) national performance assessment reports of the GMS countries, (iii) subregional environmental performance assessment systems, (iv) subregional national performance assessment report, and through the development of national and subregional capacity for implementing the performance assessment. These will consist the Subregional Strategic Environment Framework (SEF).”

According to the Project Brief, the expected outcomes of the project were to facilitate at the national and subregional levels:

- (i) informed decision-making through better understanding of environmental conditions, trends and impacts in national plans for sustainable development;
- (ii) enabling effective and efficient national environmental program management and improved public accountability for results for such environmental issues as biological diversity, climate change, use of water bodies, air and water pollution, and solid waste disposal; and
- (iii) support the national, subregional and international demand for environmental information and performance assessment on issues of regional and global importance, including national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and action programs on national level to combat desertification.
- (iv) facilitate review of the effectiveness of donor-supported projects, including those receiving GEF support; and
- (v) support performance-based lending requirements of donor organizations through the creation of systems on environmental indicators and performance assessments of developing countries in GMS, and the development of national and subregional capacity for implementing the performance assessment.

According to the project brief, the project was to achieve the above outcomes through the following activities:

- (i) Development of generic/prototype (a) set of core indicators, (b) database, and (c) technical guidelines

(ii) Country specific (a) needs assessment and gap analysis, (b) development of indicators, computer models, and database, (c) Case studies at local level, and (d) establishment of performance assessment system and implementation of the assessment

(iii) Subregional (a) needs assessment and gap analysis, (b) development of indicators, computer models, and database, and (c) establishment of performance assessment system and implementation of the assessment

(iv) Dissemination and replication of outcomes

### 3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation?

None noted in the TE report.

## 4. GEF EO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

Please refer to the GEF Terminal Evaluation Review Guidelines for detail on the criteria for ratings. Relevance can receive either a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating. For Effectiveness and Cost efficiency, a six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess. Sustainability ratings are assessed on a four-point scale: Likely=no or negligible risk; Moderately Likely=low risk; Moderately Unlikely=substantial risks; Unlikely=high risk. In assessing a Sustainability rating please note if, and to what degree, sustainability of project outcomes is threatened by financial, sociopolitical, institutional/governance, or environmental factors.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>4.1 Relevance</b>	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
<p>As noted in the Project Brief (pg. 1), “in 1992 the six GMS countries entered into a program of economic cooperation (the GMS Program),” that “stimulated a portfolio of economic development, poverty reduction, and environment and natural resource management projects, including many whose impacts span national boundaries.” As part of the GMS program, a technical assistance (TA) by ADB for subregional strategic environment framework (SEF) was implemented in 1998-2002. This TA was focused on hotspots and developed a prototype database, software, and methodologies for environmental assessments. Recognizing the need for a dynamic regional strategic environmental framework to conduct national and subregional environmental assessments, the Working Group on the Environment of GMS and the Tenth and Eleventh Ministerial Conferences of Subregional Economic Cooperation in 2001 and 2002 endorsed this project to essentially extend the work. The GMS Summit of Heads of State in November 2002 identified this as a flagship program.</p> <p>This technical assistance program was designed by ADB to develop common environmental strategies for protecting the environment, globally significant resources, and community interests.</p> <p>The project is linked to the OP 12 strategic objectives by developing environmental indicators in Biodiversity, climate change land degradation, forestry and other natural resources. It includes a regional biodiversity assessment in collaboration with the Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency as well as an assessment on Vital Functions of Mekong River Water. The outputs of these activities are aligned with the strategic targets of OP 12.</p>	
<b>4.2 Effectiveness</b>	Rating: <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>

Based on reporting in the TE report, the project successfully contributed to (i) shared recognition of the causal

relationships between environmental threats and responses, and (ii) the development of a framework for national environmental performance assessment. In the process it generated interest among donor agencies to continue supporting capacity building for strategic environmental performance assessment, and led to the development of the Core Environmental Program and Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative in the GMS. However, the project did not fully succeed in building countries' capacities to independently implement environmental performance assessments.

The six GMS countries produced their National Environmental Performance Assessments (NEPAs) through participatory consultations. Indicators were selected in the following categories: forest resources, biodiversity threats, fish resources, water resources, agricultural land management, air pollution, hazardous substances, inland water pollution, and climate change. The NEPA indicators developed during the TA activities were endorsed by the GMS environment ministries. The PRC State Environmental Protection Agency adopted the methodology used to develop the EPA for Yunnan Province for replication in other provinces. Myanmar also decided to continue the NEPA activities beyond the TA period with its own funds. The indicators developed under the TA are being used as a reference point to refine the environmental priorities of the GMS countries and incorporate social concerns in development planning.

Each participating GMS country produced two case studies based on their priority concerns, applying a Pressure-State Response (PSR) model to location-specific environmental problems. As with the NEPA, the quality of the draft case studies varied between participating countries. Additional support was provided to improve the studies. The TE report concludes that “the intermittent consulting and lead agency inputs during the TA were not adequate for building country capacity for EPA monitoring and reporting.”

The PSR model was applied to priority concerns like fisheries, illegal trade in wildlife, hydropower, tourism, irrigation, navigation, and degree of harmonization of policies and regulations in an attempt to identify subregional indicators. Geographic differences and limited data reliability made it difficult to identify common indicators.

As part of the Subregional EPA, efforts were made to develop the Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI)—a composite index reflecting different environmental states, pressures, and responses—to allow comparisons of environmental performance between countries. Using the ESI methodology originally developed at Yale and Columbia universities, the consulting team selected 13 national policy concerns and 3 transboundary policy concerns as core areas for indicators and conducted country consultations to validate the data sets and the methodology. While the methodology needs to be improved, the ESI was the first systematic attempt to demonstrate and compare environmental conditions in the GMS countries. Country specific environment performance assessment (EPA) systems, indicators, data bases have been developed. Computer models have been updated.

Secretariats of Convention were invited for the third national workshop to share the findings of draft EPA reports. Final EPA reports were submitted to various Secretariats. EPA reports will be used in preparation of the National Sustainable Development Strategies under the ongoing ADB RETA 6289.

<b>4.3 Efficiency</b>	Rating: <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>
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Despite significant delays in project implementation and the failure of expected cofinancing inputs to materialize, project costs remained within budget. Both the final PIR and the TE report attribute the delays to the limited staff resources allocated by UNEP at the start of the project. The delay was also due in part to challenges in getting the nation counterparts (and counterpart institutions) on board and up to speed with the project. Based on the evidence in the TE report and final PIR, the project management team was efficient in coordinating activities and managing tasks. The final PIR notes that the management team “put great efforts to enhance the country ownership and to build capacity on EPA which was also very low at the beginning.”

Despite the efforts of the project management team and the extensions granted to the project, some activities/outputs were dropped. For example, the project was not able to develop the decision support software as expected. The project also re-allocated some resources to produce additional outputs such as an Environmental Sustainability Index and Regional Biodiversity Model. Overall, efficiency would have been improved if the project had been allocated sufficient resources at the outset that would have enabled it to quickly meet the needs of participating countries and to deliver expected outputs within the expected timeframe.

4.4 Sustainability	Rating: <b>Likely</b>
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<b>Financial Sustainability</b>	Financial resources have been secured under the Core Environment Program of the GMS to continue project activities and EPA work. The Core Environment Program has been approved by ADB. About \$2.5 million has been allocated for EPA section of Core Environment program. Myanmar also decided to continue the NEPA activities beyond the TA period with its own funds.	<b>L</b>
<b>Socio/political</b>	No socio-political factors were highlighted in the TE report or final PIR as risks to sustainability. During implementation the project team worked to ensure broad stakeholder engagement. Several consultative workshops were held at the start to build ownership and get consensus on common approaches and methodology.	<b>L</b>
<b>Institutional Sustainability</b>	The project has operated through environmental ministries in the participating countries. The next phase of the project plans to establish EPA sub-units in each GMS country. Financial resources have been allocated for the next phase. The NEPA indicators developed during the TA activities were endorsed by the GMS environment ministries. The PRC State Environmental Protection Agency adopted the methodology used to develop the EPA for Yunnan Province for replication in other provinces. Myanmar also decided to continue the NEPA activities beyond the TA period with its own funds.	<b>L</b>
<b>Environmental</b>	No environmental factors were identified as risks to sustainability.	<b>L</b>

## 5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

5.1 Co-financing. To what extent was the reported co-financing essential to the achievement of GEF objectives? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

**Co-financing:** Expected co-financing of US\$ 300K from the Institute of Global Environment and Society (IGES) of the United States, the National Institute for Environmental Studies (NIES) of Japan did not materialize. This mean the project was able to develop a decision support module for the monitoring system. This also led to some re-allocation of financing among the different activities, but details on this are not provided in the TE report.

Country/government co-financing (largely in-kind through seconded personnel, office space, etc) appears to have

materialized as expected based on information in the TE report. The TE report does not provide a detailed cost breakdown.

5.2 Project extensions and/or delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

**Delays:** Delay in the initial implementation and publication led to three extensions of the project completion. The international and national consulting services were also extended (by 5 months for international and 6 months for national). According to the TE report, the limited staff resources (only one full-time coordinator) allocated by UNEP were a delaying factor. To fulfill a condition set by ADB for approving the extension, the UNEP assigned three more staff members to the project in July 2005 to strengthen management capacity.

5.3 Country ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links:

According to the final PIR, country ownership increased substantially during the project implementation particularly through the EPA process. However, the evidence in the TE report suggests that country ownership was more limited and that "more emphasis [should have] been placed during TA design on country ownership and activities that matched the needs of the participating countries and the skills of the participating institutions." The TE report further notes that "the intermittent consulting and lead agency inputs during the TA were not adequate for building country capacity for EPA monitoring and reporting."

## 6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory=no shortcomings in this M&E component; Satisfactory=minor shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Satisfactory=moderate shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Unsatisfactory=significant shortcomings in this M&E component; Unsatisfactory=major shortcomings in this M&E component; Highly Unsatisfactory=there were no project M&E systems.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>6.1 M&amp;E Design at entry</b>	Rating: <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>
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The project's logical framework (in project brief) lists indicators and targets for all objectives and outputs, monitoring mechanisms, as well as assumptions and risks. The indicators are largely output oriented (i.e. Development, amendment and implementation of national and subregional plans and programs as well as individual projects in line with sustainable development) and vague, making it difficult to measure progress towards outcomes/impacts.

The Project Brief also specifies a project workplan, and notes that ADB will supervise the MSP according to its TA procedures through regular review missions including at inception, mid-term and final stages. Review workshops were to be held annually, in order to review the achievements in each year and give directions to the following activities. Expert Group Meetings were to be used by stakeholders to monitor and evaluate project activities and outputs. An end of project evaluation was also planned.

The M&E arrangements at entry did not include a separate budget for project M&E.

<b>6.2 M&amp;E Implementation</b>	Rating: <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>
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According to the TE report, the ADB conducted five TA review missions and periodic progress reports were submitted to the GEF. The TE report does not mention how the project M&E arrangements operated otherwise, or whether any use was made of the workplan and logical framework. The final PIR notes that “Evaluation and monitoring plan in the RETA paper closely followed in accordance with ADB internal project monitoring system.”

## **7. Assessment of project implementation and execution**

Quality of Implementation includes the quality of project design, as well as the quality of supervision and assistance provided by implementing agency(s) to execution agencies throughout project implementation. Quality of Execution covers the effectiveness of the executing agency(s) in performing its roles and responsibilities. In both instances, the focus is upon factors that are largely within the control of the respective implementing and executing agency(s). A six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

<b>7.1 Quality of Project Implementation</b>	Rating: <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>
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UNEP oversight of the project was adequate and the choice of ADB as executing agency was appropriate given that (i) ADB is heavily invested in the region and (ii) ADB has been assisting the GMS with subregional projects including working with the GMS Working Group on the Environment. .

The project design was detailed and thorough, but the stated objectives and expected outcomes were ambitious given the scale of inputs and actual project activities. Moreover, the differing technical capacities of participating countries is an issue that the project design tried to address, but implementation was still uneven across countries. The variation in the quality of outputs across the countries is a running theme in the TE report. Inclusion of even more capacity building activities for the poorer countries at the start of the project might have helped.

According to information in the TE report and final PIR, the project’s financial planning and management processes were in accordance with UNEP and ADB procedures. The project steering committee and the GMS Working Group in Environment closely supervised the progress of the project. However, delays in the initial implementation and publication led to the extension of the project completion date. According to the TE report, and final PIR, the limited staff resources allocated by UNEP was the key delaying factor.

<b>7.2 Quality of Project Execution</b>	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
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Based on information in the TE report and final PIR, the project Executing agency (ADB) allocated adequate resources to implement, monitor and evaluate the progress of the project. It also put great efforts to ensure continuity of the environmental performance assessment having realized that 1) one snap shot of environmental performance assessment (EPA) will not bring measurable results 2) GMS countries are at early stage of development and their priorities on pressing needs such as poverty reduction overshadow the sustainable development planning effort, therefore these countries should be provided continuous supports.

GMS countries are the first ever Asian low income countries which were subjected to EPA. The level of country ownership was very low at the beginning of the project. During implementation, the project team, put great effort into enhancing the country ownership and building capacity on EPA which was quite low at the beginning.

## 8. Lessons and recommendations

8.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects.

1. The initial delay during TA implementation could have been avoided had more emphasis been placed during TA design on country ownership and activities that matched the needs of the participating countries and the skills of the participating institutions. For instance, the development of decision support software was dropped and the expected technical inputs from IGES did not materialize.
2. It is also important to ensure that (i) the lead agency has adequate staff resources, and (ii) participating countries are well informed and fully supportive of the project activities.
3. Without an agreed baseline and a single subregional institution mandated to monitor environmental progress, subregional indicators will be difficult to institutionalize. The intermittent consulting and lead agency inputs during the TA were not adequate for building country capacity for EPA monitoring and reporting.”

8.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

1. The indicators developed under the TA are being used as a reference point to refine the environmental priorities of the GMS countries and incorporate social concerns in socioeconomic development planning, under the EPA and sustainable development planning component (component 3) of TA 6289-REG. Close monitoring of component 3 activities is recommended, to be able to integrate relevant indicators in future ADB-funded projects and country environmental analyses.



## 9. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

A six point rating scale is used for each sub-criteria and overall rating of the terminal evaluation report (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory)

Criteria	GEF EO comments	Rating
To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	The report contains a brief assessment of outcomes relative to project objectives, but there is little discussion of impacts.	<b>MS</b>
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	No inconsistencies were noted and the evidence presented supports the conclusions. No ratings were presented in the report.	<b>S</b>
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	There is no assessment of sustainability or project exit strategy since this project was not a stand-alone project, but rather an input into a larger initiative.	<b>N/A</b>
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	The lessons learned are supported by the evidence presented, but cover only implementation issues.	<b>MS</b>
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	Only total grant disbursement amounts are presented. No project costs are detailed.	<b>U</b>
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	The report does not evaluate the project's M&E system.	<b>U</b>
<b>Overall TE Rating</b>	The TE report (Technical Assistance Completion Report) provides an adequate assessment of project outcomes and implementation. However there is no assessment of the project's M&E system, project impacts, sustainability, or costs and cost-effectiveness.	<b>MU</b>

10. Note any additional sources of information used in the preparation of the terminal evaluation report (excluding PIRs, TEs, and PADs).

No additional documents were consulted.