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OG KULTURMINNEFORSKNING

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DATO:

Evaluation of GBA

Please find enclosed the final report on the review and evaluation of the UNEP/GEF "Global Biodiversity Assessment" project. As agreed during my stay in Nairobi, I have communicated with some of the experts who were involved in the project, to obtain the experiences of outsiders in working with UNEP. This has definitely added to the value of the report, and I do hope that the delay has not caused you any inconveniences.

I have communicated the travel claim and other forms to Ms. Ines Verleye, and I trust that the processing of those matters is in progress.

It has been a pleasure working with this subject, and I hope that the report is of some use to you.

Yours sincerely,

Odd Terje Sandlund
Head of research division,
Conservation Biology

14 MAR 1996

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Review and evaluation of UNEP/GEF Global Biodiversity Assessment Project

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Trondheim, 20 February, 1996

Review and evaluation by
Odd Terje Sandlund
Head of Research Division
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Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The GBA output is a major achievement for the international scientific community working with biodiversity-related problems. The project objectives and the output is in good accordance with GEF objectives, and is of high relevance to all activities at the national and international level related to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). GBA may further contribute to the improvement of GEF strategies concerning biodiversity. The GBA does not present policy recommendations. This is to a large extent a consequence of concerns expressed at various CBD related meetings. This implies that mechanisms has to be developed and put in place nationally and internationally in order to translate the GBA findings into action.

- For future assessments, it is recommended that mechanisms should be considered in order to ensure that policy- and management-oriented recommendations possibly could be developed as a part of the scientists' task.

The implementing agency, UNEP, generally performed well in a project that posed tremendous logistic problems due to the high number of institutions and scientists involved. Some logistic and administrative problems, e. g. related to subcontracts, at the beginning of the project period were caused by the lack of full time project personell at UNEP headquarters.

- It is recommended that all projects must be operated by full-time personnel at the implementing agency throughout the project period. This includes both a task manager and a fund manager.

The project budget increased from USD 2 mill. to USD 3.3 mill. over the project period. The unpaid work put down by scientists all over the world in writing and developing the text and reviewing drafts amounts to at least a similar amount.

The planned follow-up includes a volume on human values of biodiversity, a popular version of the GBA, an electronic version, and various theme specific assessments.

- High priority should be given to develop an electronic (CD-rom, Internet) version, which should be updated at regular intervals.

Analysis and Evaluation

This evaluation is based on a review of relevant documents, discussions with project staff and others at the UNEP headquarters, and communication with the chairman, the executive editor, focal point co-ordinators, and co-ordinators.

The items (a-n) addressed below are listed in the same sequence as seen in the Terms of Reference (ToR, Annex 1).

(a) Comparison of GEF Project Brief and UNEP Project Document

The UNEP Project Document lists the following:

Short term objectives:

- To provide an independent, critical, peer reviewed, scientific analysis of the current issues, theories and views regarding the origins and dynamics, assessment, measurement, monitoring, economic valuation, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity globally.
- To identify critical scientific issues and draw attention to issues where there is a consensus of views amongst scientists and others where there are conflicting viewpoints.
- To examine the current status of knowledge, identifying the most important gaps.
- To review the effects of both natural factors and human activities and consider the priorities for action and the effectiveness of different conservation strategies.

Long term objective:

To contribute to the international, regional and national efforts to conserve global biodiversity.

The GEF Project Brief lists the following objectives:

- To produce a critical analysis of the current status of biodiversity globally, through a process of dialogue and analysis drawing on the best expertise from a variety of scientific disciplines, from all regions of the world.
- To assess the current status of biodiversity identifying the globally important classes of biodiversity, the richest sources of biodiversity within these classes, the relative degree of threat to this diversity, and hence the priorities for actions to conserve biodiversity, wherever feasible.

Thus, the substance of the project brief as endorsed by GEF Participants, and the UNEP project document (May 1993 with later revisions) are in full accordance with the objectives of the GBA. The rationale and the contents described in the two documents are also similar. The end result of the project (see item b, Outputs) is also in accordance with the project documents, although the emphasis on actual recommendations for action was reduced. This is due to political concerns that were expressed by countries and other constituencies in various form, e.g. at meetings convened in conjunction with the follow up and implementation of the GBA during the project period. These concerns encompassed the fear that the GBA would contain recommendations that could preempt the deliberations under the CBD and interfere with national plans and priorities on the implementation of the CBD. One of the concerns expressed by chapter co-ordinators is this lack of policy-oriented recommendations in the GBA.

During the course of the project, the project budget has increased substantially. The original budget amounted to USD 2 mill. During the process, the total budget was increased to USD 3.3 mill., of which GEF have funded USD 3 mill. USD 300,000 have

been funded by UNEP's Environment Fund, but may be reimbursed by GEF. This development reflects the hard work by UNEP's project staff to secure funding, resulting in a change in GEF's attitude towards the project; from serious misgivings to complete acceptance. The acceptance has reached the level that GEF wants to present GBA as a showcase.

It should be noted that the final project descriptions (UNEP's project document as well as the GEF project brief) differ quite markedly from the first project proposal (1992), where concepts touching on global lists of biodiversity centers and a biodiversity assessment expert panel restricted to biology experts were prominent.

The project document (May 1993) is characterized by a lack of detail as to the work plan and assessment process as this initially was left to the organizing committee to consider. UNEP and the project personell have therefore been given an unusual degree of freedom to chose their form of work. The results have to a large degree depended on the initiatives and planning within the project group, and to the efforts of focal point co-ordinators and co-ordinators. The successful outcome consequently gives extra credit to the involved personell.

(b) Nature, scope, quality and significance of outputs in relation to (i) expected outputs, and (ii) needed action to achieve GEF objectives

(i) The expected outputs were a book, divided into 9 sections, a Policy Makers' Guide and an Executive Summary. The final version of the book Global Biodiversity Assessment (GBA) contains 13 sections (plus 7 annexes mainly describing the organisation and personell of the GBA project). The increased number of sections is due to reorganisation of the report based upon editorial decisions in the course of the project. Important changes compared to the original project description are, e.g. that the original section 4: Magnitude and distribution of biodiversity, was somewhat extended and split in two. In the GBA book these are section 3: Magnitude and distribution of biodiversity, and section 8: The resource base for biodiversity assessments. The original section 6: Ecosystem function, has also been split in two. In the GBA book these are section 5: Biodiversity and ecosystem functioning: basic principles, and section 6: Biodiversity and ecosystem functioning: ecosystem analyses.

The Policy Makers' Guide and Executive Summary has been bound together in a small booklet of 46 pages with the title Summary for Policy Makers (SPM). The form and format should be most useful for the target groups. The production of the SPM proved to be difficult, and caused substantial controversy during the editorial workshop in Panama.

(ii) The GEF objectives are of a very general nature. On the area "Protection of biodiversity", project activities should be of global rather than local benefit, and target biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

The GBA forms an encyclopedia-like volume, containing the up-to-date synthesis of our present knowledge about biodiversity, as well as the most comprehensive and updated reference list on the subject. These aspects are of immense practical usefulness to all scientists and managers. The GBA also constitutes a basis for the identification of priority areas for research and action, This will help focus project planning and future GEF funding policies.

An additional output from the project is the involvement of a large number of scientists all over the world in a management and policy oriented exercise. This has forced many scientists, for the first time, to see their field of expertise in a wider context, and, hopefully, rendered them more useful for future assistance to management and policy makers. The project process has also proven that the international community of experts in ecology, biology and relevant social sciences are able to perform a large coordinated project. Although more restricted in funding, the GBA is in many ways analogous to the large international programmes in e.g. climate and ozone matters, medicine, and space research and other technical sciences.

(c) Achievement indicators

The achievement indicators listed in the project document are:

- use and discussion of the report by SBSSTA,
- targeted distribution and public demand for the outputs, and
- scientific interest and follow-up of the discussion.

At the present time it is too early to evaluate these points properly. The SBSTTA did accept the GBA as a useful document at their first meeting in Paris, but the book was only available in a pre-publication draft. The final published version of the GBA was nevertheless launched at the second Conference of the Parties (COP) in Djakarta (1995). The publication was well received, and it is quite evident that the GBA will be used as the common reference by SBSSTA in their future work. Some frustration has later been expressed over the fact that the distribution of the book has been slower than expected.

The book has been distributed by UNEP in a total number of 2,300 copies as of Feb. 1, 1996. Approximately 4,000 copies of the booklet (Summary for Policy Makers) have been distributed. The large number of books distributed from UNEP ensures that the outputs are quickly available to the scientific, management and policy makers' community. At the same time, this liberal distribution may be a reason why sales of the book have been relatively modest up to now. However, as the book and booklet become widely known, sales will probably increase. Some of the co-ordinators express doubts about the effectiveness of the launching of the book, both by UNEP and by the publishing company (Cambridge).

An efficient distribution of the outputs is necessary to enable management and policy makers at the national, regional and global level to base their planning and actions concerning conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity on the most updated information from the scientific community.

(d) Benefits from ongoing activities

The whole GBA exercise was based on the idea of close collaboration with the international scientific community to produce an updated review and synthesis of past and present research and implementation experiences. Thus, the GBA project could not have been performed without this. This synergy worked well, and the effect may be reinforced through a well planned follow-up to the GBA.

(e) Follow-up avenues

The GBA provides an invaluable baseline for all science-based implementation of the CBD. Its actual use within the CBD will be decided by the COP. The following avenues of follow-up have been decided.

Human values

An additional volume treating the human values of biodiversity particularly as seen from indigenous peoples is under work. It will be important to produce this volume according to the same principles as the GBA, i.e. peer reviewed text spelling out the consensus areas as well as the areas of conflict. Statements from indigenous groups as to their concepts of biodiversity value cannot easily be transferred to a rational scientific language in style with the GBA. However, a presentation of indigenous groups' statements with an introduction outlining the problems of communication between traditional concepts and the concepts of western science, and trying to bridge these two worlds, would probably be productive.

Electronic format

The GBA is already being used at the national level. To ensure its continual relevance it will be important that it is updated. This may be facilitated by transformation to an electronic format (CD-ROM, and on the Internet). This will also increase its audience. An Internet version could be updated annually, whereas a printed version may be revised every five years. It should be considered identifying a node and a modus operandi for this process, which may tentatively include e.g.:

- inviting and receiving proposals for revision from scientists, etc.,
- collecting and compiling new research data,
- incorporate new data and revise texts and reference lists,
- place revised version on the Internet once a year.

Popular version

Plans for follow-up also includes a shorter and more easily accessible version of the GBA.

Theme specific assessments

The intention is to perform theme specific assessments on biodiversity issues relevant i.e. for the CBD and CSD. SCOPE has for example proposed an international effort to develop a strategy on alien invasive species. This strategy is to be based on a comprehensive assessment of the problem.

It is important that the follow up to the GBA is taken care of by UNEP by assigning personell to the task, e.g. in the form of an interim project officer. It would be most unfortunate if the process now is allowed to grind to a standstill, as particularly the creation and maintenance of a electronic version of the GBA needs immediate attention.

(f) Linkages to UNEP mainstream activities and GEF funded activities in UNDP and WB

The GBA has substantive linkages to all biodiversity related activities in UNEP, as well as in the UNDP and WB. From UNEP's Programme of Work 1994-95, the subprogrammes 2. Freshwater Resources, 3. Terrestrial Ecosystems, 4. Oceans and Coastal Areas, 6. Environmental Economics, 7. Environmental Law, and 10. Earthwatch are conceptually closely linked to the GBA. In the UNEP Programme of Work 1996-97, subprogrammes 1. Sustainable Management and Use of Natural Resources, 4.

Globalization and the Environment, and 5. Global and Regional Service and Support (e.g. 5.1 Environmental assessment) are particularly closely linked to the GBA, and these programme activities will be greatly helped by the synthesis of data available in the GBA.

The most recent Quarterly Operational Report from GEF (August 1995) lists 32 UNDP- and 33 WB-implemented ongoing GEF-funded projects relating to biodiversity. All these projects will substantially benefit from the outputs of the GBA. Several climate-related projects, e.g. those concerning carbon sequestration, will also benefit.

(g) Contribution to development of GEF strategies

The GBA should have a substantial effect on GEF strategies, policies and priorities in the biodiversity concentration area. The synthesis given in the GBA may be used as guidelines to help GEF focus their efforts. The available documents on GEF strategies in this field indicate that a better focus is needed. However, GBA contains no recommendations, in accordance with advice from various scientific meetings under the CBD during the GBA process. Agencies that may want to use the GBA as a basis for their planning, will not find ready made recommendations, but a comprehensive basis for developing their own plans and strategies.

(h) GEF criteria

The GEF generic criteria are not fully relevant to a project like GBA. However, a few short comments may be made.

Global environmental benefits

Due to its status as a complete synthesis of the present knowledge on biodiversity (see e.g. item b, c, d, e, f), the GBA provides a resource to help improve the natural resources management and environmental policies worldwide.

Innovativeness

This kind of synthesis has never been done before in the area of biodiversity, and represents probably the most complex assessment in terms of issues and disciplines in the area of environment and development. Other important assessments are carried out in the fields of climate change and ozone depletion. The GBA provides a sound basis for future research on biodiversity.

Demonstration value

The operation of the GBA project shows that this type of international synthesis may be done, and points to a possible approach to reviewing present knowledge in other fields.

Replicability

The plan is to update the GBA at suitable intervals in the future. A similar procedure may also be applied to reviewing and synthesising global scientific knowledge in other fields.

Sustainability

The GBA is sustainable in terms of the establishment of a one time picture with regard to the state of knowledge. It will, however, require regular update in order to achieve maximum sustainability.

Incremental costs

This criterium does not seem very relevant, although the GBA has a value both on the global as well as the national and regional level.

(i) Advancing scientific knowledge and STAP functions

The GBA forms a basis and starting point for future research activities. It has also contributed substantially to the theoretical framework for biodiversity research.

(j) GEF's operational strategies and policies

See items b (ii) and f.

(k) Environmental assessments and international agreements

GBA provides the factual framework which may facilitate a more focused activity regarding biodiversity assessments, policies and action plans on all levels.

(l) Efficiency and effectiveness of project management

The quality of the project output compared to the time restrictions imposed on the project demonstrates that project management in general must have been relatively efficient. There are, however, a number of points to be considered to gain experience from the operation of this project. The planning of the project was complicated, with several rounds of discussions between GEF and UNEP before endorsement. As this was a completely original exercise in the field of biodiversity, experience regarding methods and procedures had to be sought in e.g. the climate and ozone depletion assessments. Project staff (task manager, assistant (JPO), secretary, and a second assistant, part time, and a part time fund manager, see Annex 2) was too restricted. Much of the work had to be done by subcontractors which were responsible for specific sections of the GBA. The high number of contracts with subcontractors resulting from this project structure contributed to the need of a fund manager. Section co-ordinators agree that the lack of specially assigned personell to handle this task at UNEP headquarters for the first few months delayed the start of the productive development of the project. Delays in finalizing subcontracts created much frustration among subcontracted institutions and NGOs.

At the start of the process, there was a lack of concrete planning, and correct appreciation of the logistics involved in producing the assessment. This probably lead to a less efficient process, an significant levels of frustration among co-ordinators and other participants. The inadequate planning contributed to an even more restricted time frame than indicated by the length of the project period. A large contribution to the project is not reflected in the project accounts. Several thousand working hours were provided free of charge by hundreds of individual scientists who wrote contributions to chapters and reviewed drafts of the text.

Future projects with similar limited time frames would benefit substantially from having sufficient permanent staff allocated to them. In this case, assistants in the form of JPOs should have been secured from the start of the project, and a part time (50%) fund manager should have been funded from the project budget. To ensure a good quality output within the agreed deadlines, proper staffing of the projects is essential. Although

UNEP has a tradition for informal inhouse ad-hoc solutions to solve problems, project planning and budgeting should not rely on this mechanism.

(m) Administrative, operational, and technical problems

The flow chart of the GBA process is shown in Annex 3. The GBA project took on a formidable task, within a very restricted time frame and with a minimum staff. The number of experts involved in the process amounted to some 300 scientists from more than 50 countries contributed to the production of the text, and over 1100 scientists from over 80 countries were invited to participate in the peer review process. The process of producing the GBA was lead by a Chair of the Assessment, an Executive Editor, and a Task Manager in UNEP supported by four Honorary Advisers, a Steering Group, and an Editorial Group. The work was organized into 13 teams of experts, each with up to four coordinators and several lead or contributing authors. Each team was lead by a focal point coordinator. Each team was supplied with financial resources through subcontracts.

The Executive Editor issued editorial guidelines and a first draft was produced by each of the teams. This draft was sent to peer review, followed by editorial meetings to identify gaps, overlaps and inconsistencies in the text. The second draft was then subject to the scrutiny of an expert workshop before the preparation of a third draft. This formed the basis for the final editing and publication. Parallell to this process was the preparation of the Summary for Policy makers (see Annex 3).

Unlike the Climate and Ozone Depletion processes, the GBA has had no formal intergovernmental component or direct links to the CBD or other intergovernmental processes. However, governments have been continuously kept informed about the process, and governments were asked to nominate peer reviewers. The finalization of the GBA occurred according to the revised time schedule of 1994, when the final deadline was moved from May 1995 to November 1995.

It appears that the technical and operational aspects of the GBA process generally worked out very well. However, the lack of staff on the administrative side, e.g. a permanent fund manager, caused this aspect to be given less priority. This caused serious delays at the beginning of the project. For the same reason the accounts are still in the process of being finalized.

(n) Financial management

Administrative and overhead charges vs. substantive outputs

It is somewhat premature to evaluate this issue at this point in time, as the closing procedures for the project accounts will probably be finalized by June 1996. An overview of the actual expenditures under the sub-contracts will be available in May/June 1996. However, some general comments may be made.

The total budget of the GBA project is, after the latest revision (Rev 8) USD 3,300,000. All revisions to the budget during the course of the project have been accepted by GEF. The project has been organized as an umbrella project with 12 subprojects on contract to various institutions, largely in accordance with the GBA Sections. The total expenditures under the umbrella project are approximately USD 1,300,000, and approx. USD 1,000,000 are assigned to 12 subprojects. The actual value of the work put down

by professionals in the GBA process is vastly higher than the project budget of USD 3.3 mill. The value of 1,300 experts' efforts would by normal costing probably reach at least the same amount. Thus the substantive output is very good value for money, and is to a large extent testimony to the importance of the GBA as seen by the scientific community.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION OF
UNEP/GEF "GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT" PROJECT**

1. Under the overall guidance of the UNEP/GEF Executive Coordinator and supervision and coordination of the GEF Programme Officer responsible within UNEP for the focal area of Biodiversity, and in close cooperation with the relevant project Task Manager and Fund Management Officer, the evaluator shall undertake a review and evaluation of project 'GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT'
2. Specifically, the evaluator shall;
 - (a) Compare the project brief, as endorsed by GEF Participants, with the UNEP project document, identify any substantive discrepancies between them, and ascertain their rationale and significance.
 - (b) Assess the nature, scope, quality and significance of the project's outputs in relation to; (i) expected outputs; and (ii) needed national/regional/global action to achieve relevant GEF objectives.
 - (c) Evaluate how, and to what extent, the stated project objectives were met, taking into account the "achievement indicators" specified in the project document. Ascertain the appropriateness of the "achievement indicators" in relation to GEF objectives, and in light of UNEP's experience with project implementation, make suggestions for their revision for operational follow-up.
 - (d) Ascertain to what extent the project's implementation benefitted from relevant ongoing and past research and operational activities of the United Nations system, the scientific community and the Implementing Agencies, and indicate how such potential synergy may be better realized.
 - (e) Ascertain avenues of effective use of the project's outputs for follow-up, in terms of Implementing Agencies' operational work and national-level action to achieve global environmental benefits, taking into account their intended use as specified in the project documents. Ascertain how the scientific and technological advance and evolution of policy, strategy and operational guidance, which occurred during the course of the project's implementation, may influence operational uses of the project's outputs.
 - (f) Identify the project's substantive/proramme linkages to UNEP's mainstream programme activities and to GEF activities implemented by UNDP and the World Bank. Evaluate the influence exercised by these linkages on the project's implementation and possible follow-up, on UNEP's own activities and on GEF-related activities of the World Bank and UNDP.
 - (g) Assess the eventual contribution of the project to the development of GEF strategies, policies and priorities in the biodiversity concentration area.

- (h) Assess how, and to what extent, the GEF generic criteria of global environmental benefits, innovativeness, demonstration value, replicability, sustainability, and incremental costs were fulfilled by the project, and identify any practical difficulties encountered in the process.
 - (i) Ascertain the nature and significance of the project's contribution to advancing relevant scientific and technical knowledge and ascertain in what ways, if any, the project's implementation and outputs would facilitate the fulfillment of STAP's role and functions.
 - (j) Determine the significance of the project outputs for the continued development of GEF's operational strategies and policies.
 - (k) Delineate the project's actual and potential contribution to furthering the objectives of relevant global, regional and national environmental assessments, policy frameworks and action plans, and to strengthening international environmental agreements, the Convention on Biological Diversity in particular.
 - (l) Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the project's substantive management (coordination, guidance, reporting, monitoring, internal evaluation and dissemination of results), with specific reference to the role played, and input provided, by UNEP Secretariat and the organizations involved in the project's execution. Analyze specifically:
 - the effectiveness of arrangements relevant to staffing and operational mechanisms and procedures; and
 - the effectiveness of the monitoring of the project's progress through periodic internal evaluations, as well as the initial and follow-up guidance provided by UNEP to the organizations participating in the execution of the project.
 - (m) Identify the administrative, operational and technical problems and/or constraints, either internal to UNEP or external, which influenced the effective implementation of the project, as well as approaches and measures which may alleviate these problems and constraints.
 - (n) Evaluate the financial management of the project, including expenditures on administrative and overhead charges as distinguished from those related to substantive outputs.
3. The evaluator shall prepare his/her report in a form of:
- (a) a concise summary (3-4 pages) covering items (a) - (n) listed in paragraph 2 above; and
 - (b) a detailed evaluation report (about 12 pages) addressing items (a) - (n) listed in paragraph 2 above.

4. The work envisaged under these terms of reference shall be carried out by the evaluator in the period 29 January 1996 - 28 February 1996, partly at his home and partly during visit to UNEP Headquarters, according to an agreed schedule.
5. The GEF Programme Officer responsible within UNEP for the focal area of biodiversity and the relevant Task Manager and Fund Management Officer will arrange that the evaluator receives the basic documentation needed as background for his/her work prior to her/his visit to UNEP Headquarters.

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Annex 2

Project staff

Ivar Baste, Task manager, August 1993 - September 1995. Covered by GBA project funds.

Marasse Buranathai, Senior secretary, December 1993 - October 1995. Covered by GBA project funds.

Ines Verleye, JPO, project assistant, August 1994 - March 1996. Covered by the Belgian Government.

Feargal Duff, Fund manager, part time associated August 1993 -December 1995. Covered by Country Study project funds.

Hanne-Rie Madsen, Fund manager, part time associated, December 1995 - March 1996. Covered by Country Study project funds.

Annex 3

Flow chart of the various stages of the GBA process

