

Independent Evaluation of the GEF COUNTRY SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR FOCAL POINTS (CSP)

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I would like to thank the CSP programme team for the excellent support provided throughout the evaluation. All members generously shared their time, ideas and information. The insight provided by GEF Focal Points and survey respondents, UNEP managers, GEF Secretariat, the GEF Evaluation Office and GEF agency resource persons was essential for the evaluation and is very highly appreciated.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CSP:	Country Support Programme
EA:	Executing Agency
FP:	GEF Focal Point
GEF:	Global Environment Facility
GEF 5:	GEF's Fifth Replenishment and Programming Cycle
GEFSec:	GEF Secretariat
IA:	GEF Implementing Agencies
IDB:	Inter-American Development Bank
KF:	Knowledge Facility
KM:	Knowledge Management
MENA:	Middle East and North Africa
NDI:	National Dialogue Initiative
OFP:	Operational GEF Focal Point
OPS:	Overall Performance Study
PFP:	Political GEF Focal Point
PIR:	Project Implementation Report
PSU:	CSP Programme Support Unit
RAF:	Resource Allocation Framework
SC:	Steering Committee
SIDS:	Small Island Developing States
STAR:	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
SRW:	Sub-regional Workshops
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP:	United Nations Environment Programme
UNOPS:	United Nations Office for Project Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Country Support Programme (CSP) is a US\$ 12.134 million capacity building initiative that is available to the 128 countries eligible for GEF support. The programme's overall objective is to strengthen the capacity of GEF Focal Points to effectively carry out their mandates for supporting global environmental programs in their countries and constituencies; this includes the improvement of national and constituency coordination on global environmental issues. Programme implementation has been organized around three main support components: (i) Country-specific financial support based on national work plans; (ii) development of a GEF country and constituency knowledge management framework; and (iii) targeted capacity building through sub-regional information exchange and training workshops. Travel and per diem support are also offered to Focal Points attending Constituency Meetings and Familiarization Seminars.

The evaluation findings indicate that the CSP is a successful initiative that is relevant to country needs and has generated medium to high levels of impact in its contributions to strengthened Focal Point and national capacities. The most important contributions are in (i) better understanding and application of GEF policies and procedures, (ii) more effective communications with GEF partners (GEF Secretariat and GEF agencies), and (iii) enhanced peer-to-peer learning and exchange between Focal Points. The CSP has had less effect on improving in-country project design and monitoring practices (performance indicators that are listed in the project document). Capacity building, coordination and peer-to-peer learning were interlinked throughout project implementation.

Each CSP component has contributed to capacity improvements in some way: Funding support for countries, while modest, has enhanced the articulation of national priorities for GEF support, expanded stakeholder involvement, built databases and strengthened institutional memory. GEF Focal points value the Knowledge Facility website's rapid access to GEF guidelines, Constituency pages and information on upcoming workshops. The website has helped in orienting new Focal Points, an important contribution in view of frequent turnovers. However, overall use of the website is somewhat below expectations and more so in the case of the Discussion Forum and other tools. The Sub-regional Workshops are the CSP's most valued activity and have improved Focal Point understanding of GEF policies and procedures, facilitated information exchange, and enabled direct and more effective communications between Focal Points and GEF partners. More than half of the surveyed Focal Points apply knowledge acquired from the Sub-regional Workshops to a high degree. More than 90% are willing to participate in a future phase of the CSP.

A key CSP contribution has been enabling periodic face-to-face dialogue between Focal Points and GEF Secretariat for the first time. The project supports this by facilitating bilateral consultations or "clinics" during Sub-regional Workshops, in addition to presentations by GEF partners and Focal Points, expert panels and

working group discussions. The improved access of Focal Points to the GEF partners - GEF Sec in particular - has assisted coordination on project and funding issues as well. Monitoring and evaluation topics were addressed at workshop sessions, and CSP workshops provided valuable feedback to the GEF Evaluation Office for the Overall Performance Study of GEF 4 and Mid-Term Review of the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF). These consultations have influenced the design of the new STAR funding mechanism under GEF 5. The examples suggest that the Sub-regional Workshops could offer GEF a viable long-term mechanism for coordination and consultation on policy and programme issues.

The CSP stands out for its responsiveness to user needs and concern for quality, in addition to the effective performance of UNDP, UNEP and the CSP programme team in particular. Outputs were delivered on time in most cases, and funding deficits were not encountered. Budget savings were re-invested in project activities. The CSP's implementation approach has balanced prescription with adaptive management and inclusiveness. The Sub-regional Workshops and Knowledge Facility website were designed on the basis of participant surveys and evaluations. GEF agencies provided resource persons for the workshops and participated in the Inter-Agency Steering Committee along with the GEF Secretariat and GEF-NGO Network.

There are few examples of cost-ineffectiveness or inefficiency in spite of the CSP's global scale and high implementation demands. To a large extent the direct funding support module was implemented independently of the other project components, with very limited coordination. Substantial time and effort were devoted by UNEP to processing direct support funding for some 80 countries. In hindsight, this process could have been streamlined (and transaction costs lowered) by applying bi-annual or one-time disbursements and reporting. There is an unspent balance of approximately US\$ 4 million in direct support funds due to the non-participation of approximately 30% of eligible countries, and delays by countries in signing MoUs to receive funding. More than one-quarter of surveyed Focal Points use the Knowledge Facility website regularly, yet a similar percentage does not use it at all. Some of the website tools and services appear to be over-dimensioned in design to user needs, in view of their limited use by Focal Points. They should be reviewed by the programme team and GEF Secretariat (considering Focal Point access to the internet among other factors) and adjusted to real demand. However, this does not undermine the core value of rapid on-line access to comprehensive GEF-related information and knowledge materials when it is needed.

The GEF Council has determined that the GEF Secretariat will take over the implementation of the CSP during GEF 5 as of January 2011. Programme functions and responsibilities should be gradually transferred to the new implementing team during the next months, to sustain momentum and effectiveness. As GEF Sec assumes the implementation of the next phase, it needs to ensure that the expanded scale and diversity of participants does not lower the pedagogic value or capacity benefits of the Sub-regional Workshops. The Sub-regional Workshops and Knowledge Facility website offer viable long-term mechanisms for interaction with

country Focal Points, and can be used more intensively in the future by the GEF Secretariat and GEF Evaluation Office for consultation and coordination purposes. The next phase of the CSP should be more closely coordinated with National Dialogues - especially in the provision of direct funding support to countries - in order to better link both initiatives operationally and raise cumulative impact. Larger direct support allocations should be considered for countries that have extensive territories, population or GEF portfolios. Consideration should be given to incorporating the Knowledge Facility website within the GEF web page to streamline information access and avoid potential duplications.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Contextual Background and Programme Overview

Since its inception, GEF's efforts to promote global environmental benefits and program resources have been influenced by the capacities of recipient countries, institutions and individuals –and in particular, those of national GEF Focal Points. Early initiatives to strengthen Focal Point capacities were largely *ad hoc* and did not address the growing need for more programmatic approaches to capacity building, as highlighted by several performance studies and evaluations (i.e. OPS 1-3 among others). The demand for more systematic support led to pilot initiatives such as *Strengthening National Focal points and Enhancing Constituency Coordination in GEF Recipient Countries* and the *GEF Council Member and Focal Point Support Program*, which were followed by the *Country Dialogue Workshops* (CDWs) and *National Dialogue Initiative* (NDI). The experiences and lessons drawn from these initiatives were fed into the design of the Country Support Programme. In this respect the Country Support Programme is part of an evolving and increasingly comprehensive approach to capacity building by GEF.

The Country Support Programme (CSP) is a global capacity building initiative available to the 128 countries that are eligible for GEF support. The programme's overall objective is to strengthen the capacity of GEF focal points to effectively carry out their mandates for supporting global environmental programs in their countries and constituencies; this includes the improvement of national and constituency coordination on global environmental issues. The CSP was approved in 2006 for a four-year period with a total budget of US\$ \$12,134,902 that includes \$11,864,902 of GEF financing and \$270,000 of in-kind contributions from participating governments.

The CSP's overall objective is supported by three immediate objectives:

- (I) Establishment of the Country Support Program to support GEF focal points in strengthening stakeholder involvement, creating institutional memory and increasing country coordination and ownership.
- (II) Creation and maintenance of a GEF knowledge management framework to support GEF focal points in carrying out their activities based on expressed needs
- (III) Targeted capacity building activities to support GEF focal points in carrying out their activities based on expressed needs.

CSP support is organized around three components that build on these objectives and are implemented by UNEP and UNDP (with UNOPS execution):

Component I: Country-specific assistance based on national work plans. This component has three modules encompassing (i) direct funding support for countries based on approved work plans; (ii) funding for multi-country Constituency Meetings to discuss GEF policy issues and develop common positions for the GEF Council; and

(iii) Familiarization Seminars to train new Focal Points. Under the first module, countries are eligible to receive US\$ 8,000 each year on the basis of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and annual work plans; the grants are replenished annually upon the approval of progress and financial expenditure reports. Funds are available for in-country awareness raising and information sharing, database development, design of national websites, and creation of reference libraries on GEF activities. This module is reflected in the project document and implemented by UNEP under a separate agreement. The combined allocation for Component 1 totals US\$ 6.856 million.

Component II: Development of a GEF Country and Constituency Knowledge Management Framework. This component has focused on the design of a Knowledge Facility website for GEF Focal Points (www.gefcountrysupport.org) that offers information on GEF Structure, Policies, Focal Areas and Project Cycle, in addition to knowledge materials (on topics such as national coordination, tracking country portfolios, mainstreaming environmental issues and the role of civil society), management tools (regional/country pages, rosters of GEF Council members, information on GEF Constituencies, Constituency Pages, an events calendar), a Discussion Forum for Focal Points, an advanced search tool and partnership links to related organizations and websites. The component is implemented by UNDP and executed through UNOPS, for a total allocation of US\$ 1.867 million.

Component III: Targeted capacity building through sub-regional information exchange and training workshops. Since 2007, the CSP has offered a series of annual Sub-regional Workshops (SRWs) for GEF Focal Points. The workshops are intended to provide Focal Points with an opportunity to meet GEF Partners (both from the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies) and counterparts from other countries to discuss and review policies and procedures, and to share experiences drawn from the development and implementation of GEF projects. The stated objectives of the SRWs include: (1) To facilitate Focal Points' learning about new directions and developments in the GEF and interactions with GEF Partners; (2) to share knowledge and learn from country and regional experiences on priority themes and topics; and (3) to help Focal Points in managing their workloads in relation to the GEF, providing information on the types of support available to them. In several workshops a 4th objective was to enable Focal Points' to participate in and provide feedback towards major GEF Evaluations (RAF Mid-term Review and OPS4). This component has an allocation of US\$ 2.740 million and is implemented by UNDP with UNOPS execution.

Management and coordination arrangements are multi-layered and involve GEF partner agencies at different levels: The CSP's Inter-Agency Steering Committee is responsible for providing overall strategic guidance to the program. UNEP designated a project coordinator to manage country funding under Component 1, and has provided administrative services as well. UNDP established the UNOPS-recruited Program Support Unit to manage capacity building and knowledge management under Components 2 and 3.

The PSU¹ is headed by a Global Manager with the support of a Senior Programme Advisor, a Senior Policy Advisor, and a Programme and Knowledge Management Associate. The same team also manages the National Dialogue Initiative. UNDP Country Offices provide “on the ground” knowledge for planning workshops and project visits; in several countries COs disburse funds for Component 1 as well. Resource persons from the GEF Secretariat and partner agencies have participated in and contributed to Sub-regional Workshops throughout the CSP’s implementation. The CSP programme team also cooperates with the GEFSec External Affairs team.

The Inter-agency Steering Committee that was created to oversee the National Dialogue Initiative also looks after the CSP. It is composed by representatives of the GEF agencies and GEFSec, and the GEF/NGO Network, and is chaired by the GEF CEO. The Steering Committee held face-to-face meetings during the first two years, meeting by teleconference since 2008.

1.2 Purposes and Scope of the Evaluation

This is an independent evaluation of the CSP that has the objective of analyzing the contribution of the Country Support Programme (CSP) to the objectives stated in the project document. It is based on an assessment of project performance and impact -addressing the implementation of programme components and the extent to which planned outputs and outcomes were achieved or are or are likely to be achieved by the end of the project. The analysis considers the following aspects:²

- Programme relevance to country needs, GEF policies and the findings of earlier GEF performance studies and evaluations. This includes elements such as stakeholder involvement, “country drivenness” and responsiveness to feedback provided by GEF Focal Points and programme partners during implementation.
- Programme management, coordination and oversight arrangements.
- Efficiency/cost-effectiveness of programme implementation.
- Quality and effectiveness of programme outcomes and outputs.
- Sustainability of project outcomes and outputs.
- Monitoring and evaluation.
- Contributing factors (internal, external) that affect the attainment of project outcomes and outputs.

On the basis of the above analysis, the final evaluation report is expected to reflect on the following:

- The extent to which CSP objectives have been met, noting gaps when applicable.

¹ The UNDP/UNOPS CSP Programme Support Unit is referred to as the “CSP programme team” in this report for ease of reference.

²² The Terms of Reference for the evaluation are attached as Annex 1.

- Lessons learned from the experiences of the project, considering those elements that have worked well (and those that have not).
- Recommendations for strengthening capacity building efforts and the ongoing dialogue process between GEF and participating countries.

It is hoped that the conclusions, lessons and recommendations of the report will contribute to the design of the CSP's next phase, which begins in 2011 within the framework of GEF's 5th Replenishment and programme cycle.

1.3 Methodological Limitations

The evaluation was conducted between June and September 2010. In view of time and resource constraints, the evaluation approach did not include country visits and relied instead on the following methods:

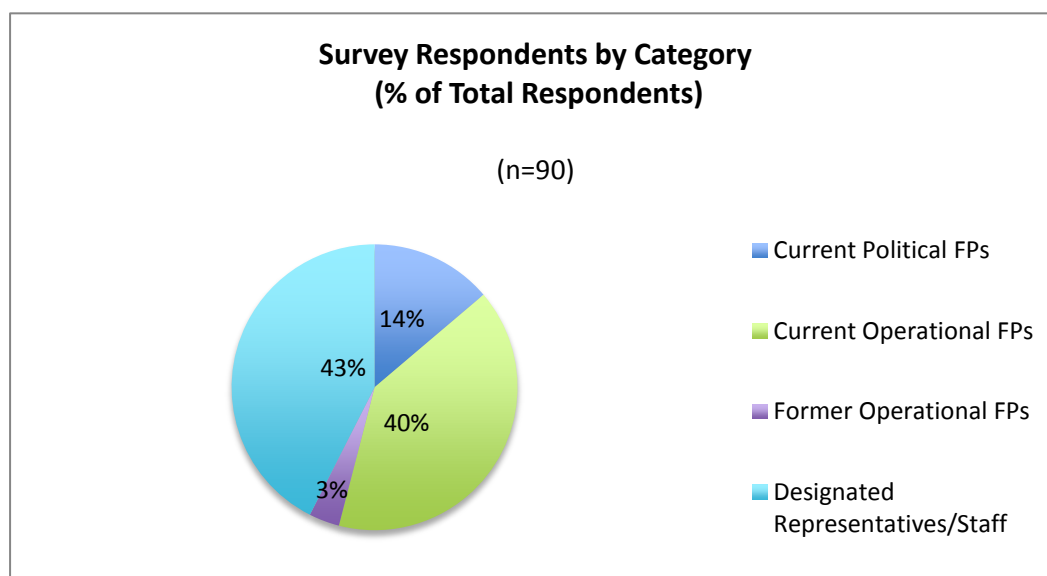
Desk Review of CSP Documents: The CSP has produced a large volume of documentation that offers essential information and insight to the evaluation. These include the project document and annual monitoring reports (APR/PIRs) prepared by UNDP and UNEP; Sub regional Workshop reports and participant evaluations; the Knowledge Facility website and a recent user survey; and the minutes of Inter-Agency Steering Committee meetings.

Phone Interviews with CSP Staff and Key Partners: The evaluator interviewed the UNDP/UNOPS CSP Programme Support Unit (implementing the second and third components), GEFSec members to the Inter-Agency Steering Committee, and the GEF Evaluation Office team. Phone interviews were held with the UNEP programme and financial managers responsible for Component 1. Only a few Steering Committee members responded to information requests; therefore the analysis of the Steering Committee's role in the programme is somewhat limited and member views are not fully reflected. Requests for phone interviews were e-mailed to more than 40 GEF Focal Points and agency resource persons identified by the programme team on the basis of their exposure to and knowledge of the CSP; less than half responded. The feedback obtained from these interviews provides more in-depth perspectives on programme performance and impact from GEF agency participants and Focal Points in particular.

Survey for GEF Focal Points: An online questionnaire was designed in English, Spanish and French using SurveyMonkey software. It was sent to all 660 GEF Focal Points (former and current) who have participated in the CSP since its beginning. In terms of regional distribution, this included Focal Points from Asia (106 recipients), the Pacific (63), Latin America (95), the Caribbean (70), West and Central Africa (87), East and Southern Africa (75), Europe/CIS (114) and the Middle East/North Africa (50). The survey attempts to capture qualitative/quantitative data and trends on various aspects of the project, based on the views of GEF Focal Points. Several questions were built around the performance indicators contained in the project document.

The survey responses are important to systematize Focal Point perceptions, and to triangulate these with findings emerging from the interviews and review of programme documentation. However, the level of response – 90 Focal Points answered the survey – limits its statistical value. Hence the survey figures should be viewed as indicative of general trends, rather than as being statistically representative.

Figure 1



Source: On-line Evaluation Survey for GEF Focal Points

The evaluation methodology initially contemplated sending questionnaires to a wide array of indirect programme beneficiaries, including environmental focal points from UNDP Country Offices. However, this was not carried out due to the limited involvement of COs in the CSP's implementation, beyond specific cases in which administrative support was provided for Sub-regional Workshops or small grant disbursements. Likewise, the limited familiarity of national stakeholders outside the GEF Focal Point network with the CSP was considered to offer little added value to the evaluation. As a result, efforts were focused on reaching GEF Focal Points and active participants from the GEF implementing agencies (including UNDP's Regional Centers).

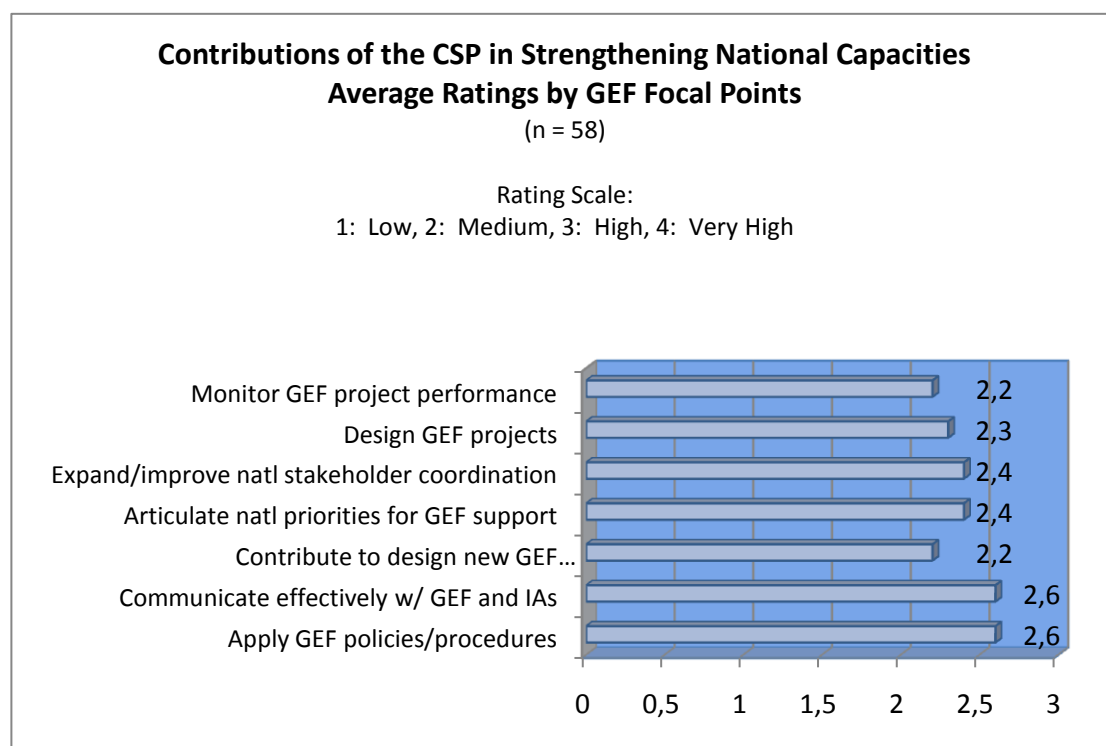
II. ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

2.1 General Findings

The evaluation findings indicate that the CSP as a successful initiative that has improved Focal Point knowledge on GEF policies and practices; facilitated coordination between GEF Focal Points, GEFSec and GEF Agencies; and enhanced opportunities for knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer exchange.

To a large extent the CSP addresses needs that were prioritized by Focal Points at various events and in several studies. These include updates on GEF policies and co-financing requirements; better monitoring and evaluation practices; exposure to successful GEF projects through information exchanges and site visits; and supporting the work of GEF Constituencies, among others. All of the Sub-regional workshops are planned and evaluated with feedback from Focal Points. The annual direct funding support grants, although small in size, have facilitated in-country programming and are used flexibly. The knowledge products and services of the CSP Knowledge Facility website were designed around user-needs surveys and workshop discussions. This level of attentiveness has sustained the programme's relevance and overall effectiveness, improving the likelihood of achieving results. The CSP has produced all of its planned outputs, which are described in detail in the Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) and reflected in the CSP KF website. In general, effective implementation is a recognized CSP characteristic that reflects on the performance of UNDP and UNEP as implementing agencies.

Figure 2



Source: On-line Evaluation Survey for GEF Focal Points

A fundamental question concerns the CSP's contribution to the broader objectives of improving Focal Point support to global environmental programmes, and strengthening national and GEF Constituency coordination. Survey responses from Focal Points indicate medium to medium/high levels of capacity improvements in areas that are linked to CSP performance indicators (Figure 2). The CSP's greatest

contributions to national capacities are in (i) communicating effectively with GEFSec and GEF Agencies, and (ii) applying GEF policies and procedures. It has had less effect on GEF project design and monitoring, despite close collaboration with the GEF Evaluation Office - which made presentations on tracking and monitoring national portfolios - and the inclusion of tracking guidelines in the KF website.

None of the expected CSP contributions listed in Figure 2 receive “high” or “very high” average ratings. This is not surprising and needs to be viewed in context: The CSP is a global programme that spreads resources across a broad country spectrum. Direct interaction with Focal Points is largely limited to annual Sub-Regional Workshops that last three days on average. The direct funding offered to countries is small in size (US\$ 8,000/year) and a number chose not to apply. As a global initiative, the CSP has not had the national presence or momentum needed to have greater in-country effect. As such, the evaluation considers that the programme’s contributions to national capacities are satisfactory and reflect an effective use of human and financial resources.

In several ways, GEF partners – and GEF Secretariat in particular - have benefited from the CSP as much as (if not more than) the targeted Focal Points. A key programme contribution has been enabling regular “face to face” interaction between GEF partners and Focal Points on a group basis for the first time. This is linked to improvements in the communication and application of GEF policies and procedures that are highlighted by survey respondents. The Sub-Regional Workshops have promoted better and more regular communications between Focal Points and GEF Sec ; in a number of cases, the development and funding of project proposals were expedited as a result. The GEF Evaluation Office has used the Sub-regional Workshops to consult with Focal Points for the Overall Performance Study of GEF-4 (OPS4) and Mid-term Review of the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF); the quantity and quality of feedback received would not have been possible in the programme’s absence. This has carried image benefits as well: The CSP has helped to de-mystify national perceptions of GEF as a “black box”; as a result, GEF is now perceived as being less distant and more accessible by many Focal Points.

2.2 Assessment of Results by Programme Outcome/Component:

2.2.1 Component 1: Country-Specific Assistance based on National Work Plans

This section looks at the results and impacts achieved from the three modules that constitute the first component: (i) Direct funding support for countries based on approved work plans; (ii) funding for multi-country Constituency Meetings; and (iii) Familiarization Seminars to train new Focal Points. The achievements of Component 1 are summarized below, based on the outputs and indicators listed in the project document and annual Project Implementation Reports:³

³ The Annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) provide detailed descriptions of CSP activities and outputs.

Figure 3

Summary of Findings: Component 1

Planned Outputs	Indicators	Level of Achievement
1.1 Implementation structures and processes developed and established.	<p>Specific examples of how activities conducted using support funds have contributed to strengthening stakeholder involvement, creating institutional memory and increasing country coordination and ownership.</p> <p>Guidelines established on procedures for requesting and obtaining approval of funding.</p> <p>Quality of information materials developed to guide GEF focal points to access and maximize effectiveness of available support.</p>	<p>A number of countries have developed databases, expanded stakeholder consultations, and conducted strategic evaluations and planning exercises. Some Focal Points perceive improvements in institutional memory and effective use of GEF resources at the country level. Financial support for 65 Constituency Meetings indirectly helped multi-country coordination and development of policy positions.</p> <p>Guidelines and procedures are contained in the Small Scale Funding Agreement, guidelines and toolkit.</p> <p>Most surveyed Focal Points consider that funding and reporting guidelines are clear.</p>
1.2 Strategic National work plans developed and carried out.	<p>Number of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) established with focal points to accommodate the agreed four-year work plan, and its financial operation.</p> <p>Workplans prepared and implemented by focal points.</p>	<p>89 MOUs were signed, representing 69.5% of eligible countries.</p> <p>Workplans were prepared and implemented in 89 countries, although in-country monitoring was not conducted to verify implementation.</p>
1.3 Financial Reports prepared and reviewed.	<p>Web -based financial tracking and reporting system developed and number of focal points making regular use of system.</p>	<p>The tracking and reporting system is underutilized and is a weak component. Recipient countries submit annual financial reports on grant expenditures.</p>

Module I: *Direct funding support for countries based on approved work plans.*

A total of 89 countries have signed Memoranda of Agreement with UNEP to receive annual funding support. They represent 69.5% of the 128 eligible countries, distributed regionally across Africa (37 countries), Asia (23), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (12) and Latin America and the Caribbean (17).

This has been a cumulative process, with countries signing up at different stages of the CSP's implementation. As a result, funding allocations vary: The 66 countries that signed MOUs in 2006/2007 did so for the total four-year allocation of US\$ 32,000, while 15 countries were approved for US\$ 16,000 each in 2008, and 8 countries for US\$ 8,000 in 2009. A number of countries were unaware of this opportunity during the programme's initial stages, and were late in applying. Both UNEP and the CSP programme team have announced the module at successive Sub-regional Workshops and through the KF website, to encourage more countries to apply. Likewise, Focal Points were asked to share their experiences in using direct support funds at workshop sessions (particularly during the programme's first year). However, almost a third of eligible countries did not apply due to the small grant size, yearly reporting requirements and detailed procurement guidelines.

Direct funding support was implemented on a "first come, first served" basis, and hence the total grant amounts received by countries vary according to the length of their participation. This has undoubtedly affected the level of activity and results achieved. Aggregate data on the use of grant funds is not available, and in-country monitoring was understandably not feasible for US\$ 8,000 annual grants that are spread across 89 countries. The main types of activity funded have been stakeholder consultations on needs assessments and priorities for GEF support, and improved data collection and management. The latter has fed into GEF project monitoring in several countries.

The following examples from the Focal Point survey give some insight on how funds were used in different countries:

- *"The Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency did not have an institutional memory for GEF projects, policies and procedures, and the management of the GEF portfolio was based on individuals rather than a system. The funds allocated helped in compiling all relevant documents related to GEF in soft and hard copies, thus establishing an institutional memory."*
- *"The money was received only once. It only helped the OFP to download information and put into CDs to distribute to relevant stakeholders as well as hold an information-sharing workshop. During that year, this helped improve stakeholder involvement and participation."*
- *"Within the Environmental Department of the Ministry, a library was created so that all stakeholders could gain access through documents as well as the Internet to environmentally related topics such as the GEF."*

- *“We have been able to monitor and assess projects that are funded by GEF for the purpose of capturing and replicating best practices to areas.”*
- *“Multiagency site visits were arranged in the development of a project proposal. “*
- *“We established a clear agenda for GEF5/STAR, and made a more complex process on deciding which agency will assess Guatemalan projects...”*
- *[The funds were used to] develop the first ever GEF booklet in Pakistan. “*
- *“With support of the CSP we organized three stakeholders meeting...to inform stakeholders about the GEF and interest stakeholders in writing project proposals for GEF funding. After these meeting a lot of proposals were submitted at the Ministry of Environment and some of them were clustered into one big project which is being formulated with the help of the Inter-American Development Bank.”*
- *“[Examples include]...Creating a website to provide information and monitor GEF projects as well as activities in connection with national coordination.”*
- *“A study [was done] reviewing the GEF project portfolio...aimed at revealing weaknesses and strengths and taking those into consideration when preparing and implementing future projects.”*

Each country was required to submit annual progress and expenditure reports, yet this documentation provides limited insight into the results or benefits resulting from the grant support. Several Focal Points have indicated improvements in country responsiveness and more efficient use of GEF funds, but as examples they are anecdotal.

Survey responses from Focal Points assign medium to medium/high contributions to Component 1 (Figure 4). In particular, improvements are perceived in the assessment and articulation of national environmental priorities for GEF support. This is followed by expanded/improved stakeholder involvement (a key aspect of the consultative process), improvements in institutional memory, and sustainable Constituency coordination mechanisms. Component 1 has had less effect in improving the financial tracking and monitoring of GEF projects, or in raising the quantity and quality of project proposals.

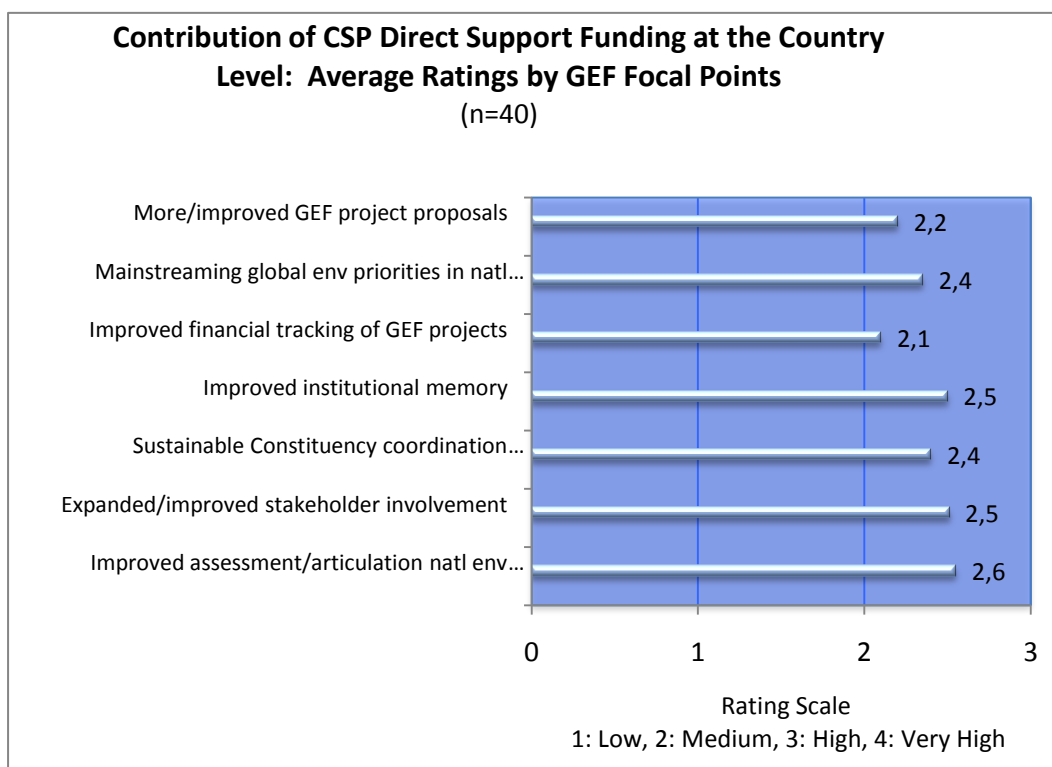
“There’s been a quicker country response to the proposals that have to be presented.”

“We’ve involved a larger number of national stakeholders on GEF topics.”

“We are using GEF funds more efficiently.”

- Responses from surveyed Country Focal Points

Figure 4



Source: On-line Evaluation Survey for GEF Focal Points

Module 2: *Funding for multi-country Constituency Meetings to discuss policy issues and develop common positions for the GEF Council.*

Constituencies are an increasingly important vehicle for consultations among countries and building consensus on GEF policy issues. There are presently 21 Constituencies that are organized around groups of recipient or donor country members; some constituencies include members of both categories. The CSP offered travel and per diem assistance to countries for two Constituency meetings each year, in order to facilitate discussions and develop common positions on GEF Council issues. Through UNEP, support was provided for 65 Constituency Meetings involving 19 Constituencies. This is below the potential number of meetings that could have been supported yet does not reflect on performance, as the initiative for organizing meetings – and requesting funds – depended on the GEF Council Members who represent Constituency member countries. In this respect, the CSP has played a purely facilitative role.

Those that participated in Constituency meetings are generally very positive in assessing the support provided by the CSP and the usefulness of the meetings themselves. Indeed, over 90% of the surveyed focal points give “high” to “very high” ratings to Constituency meetings for their usefulness in providing information on GEF matters and building consensus on policy positions.⁴ Some of the SIDS Focal

⁴ On-line Evaluation Survey for Focal Points

Points have emphasized the importance of this support in bringing dispersed small island states together, particularly in the Caribbean and Pacific region. There are a few critical observations concerning short meeting durations due to insufficient funds, unfocussed agendas, the need for secretariat support and broader translation services for multilingual sub-regions, and the advantages of including GEFSec and GEF Agency representation (an issue on which there are mixed views given the political nature of Constituency meetings). However, most of these are internal issues that are outside the programme's responsibility.

Module 3:*Familiarization Seminars to train new Focal Points.*

This is a small module that addresses an important need given the turnover of GEF Focal Points and low institutional memory affecting most countries. The CSP funded the travel of new Focal Points to two Familiarization Seminars organized by GEFSec at the World Bank and IDB headquarters in Washington DC. Over half (63%) of the surveyed participants gave "high" to "very high" usefulness ratings to the seminars for introducing them to GEF partners, policies and procedures.

2.2.2 Component 2: Development of a GEF Country and Constituency Knowledge Management Framework

Most of the activity under this component has revolved around the CSP Knowledge Facility (KF) website that was launched in May 2007. The main purpose of the KF is to support GEF focal points in their roles and responsibilities at both country and Constituency levels. It provides quick access to information and knowledge materials, as well as the opportunity to organize discussion forums with other Focal Points. To a large extent the website was designed on the basis of user surveys, presentations and working group discussions at Sub-regional Workshops. At the time of its launching, the KF represented a considerable improvement over the existing GEF website in terms of design, access and user-friendliness.

The Knowledge Facility offers the following products and services:

- *GEF Information:* GEF policies and procedures of interest to Focal Points (including guidance materials developed by the CSP such as the Focal Point's Handbook and step-by-step guidelines on the GEF Project Cycle).
- *Knowledge Materials:* Guidance materials developed by the CSP, GEF partners and the Focal Points themselves on key concerns identified by Focal Points.
- *Management Tools:* Information on support available through the CSP and National Dialogue Initiative, as well as interactive resources for exchange at the regional, country, and constituency level.
- *Discussion Forum:* A tool for on-line discussions and exchanges among Focal Points and GEF partners.

- *Advanced Search:* Access to relevant information and knowledge on subjects of interest by searching GEF Partner and Convention sites.
- *Partnership Links:* Annotated links to GEF Partner sites, and other organizations working on thematic, regional and knowledge management issues.

A user survey conducted by the CSP programme team in 2009 and presented in the corresponding PIR indicated that over half (63%) of the GEF Focal Points had visited the KF website, 56% had used the website a few times, and 8% used it regularly. This represented an increase in usage levels over a prior survey in 2008. Presentations on the KF website at Sub-regional Workshops were considered highly useful by 61% of the participants. Fifty countries had uploaded information to their Country Pages.⁵ However, consistent data on web counts, number of hits and most visited WebPages was not collected for the entire programme period, and hence is not available for the evaluation. The information that is documented (i.e. 64 visits in January 2007, 952 visits in April and 8,883 visits in July) does not reveal any particular trends beyond seasonal fluctuations.

The responses given to the evaluation survey almost one year later reveal that almost three-quarters of GEF Focal Points had used the website, with almost 30% using it on a monthly basis or more often. However, a similar percentage - 27% - claim to “never” use the website.⁶ Despite exposure to a wider range of Focal Points and an increase in total visits, there do not seem to be major fluctuations in the percentage of stable users over time. This is a positive finding, considering the high turnover of Focal Points.

The status of Component 2 by output and indicator is summarized below, followed by a more detailed analysis:

Figure 5

Summary of Findings: Component 2

Planned Outputs	Indicators	Advances and Achievements
2.1 Country Support Unit strengthened	Specific examples of how knowledge management framework has contributed to strengthening the ability of focal point to carry out their activities	Examples of strengthened FP abilities exist but are not systematically documented or quantified. The main contributions identified by surveyed FPs are: (i) Improved understanding of GEF policies/procedures; (ii) better access to information/ experiences of other countries; and (iii) stronger capacities for developing, coordinating

⁵ Data from the Project Implementation Report (PIR): July 2008-June 2009. The evaluator has not verified these figures.

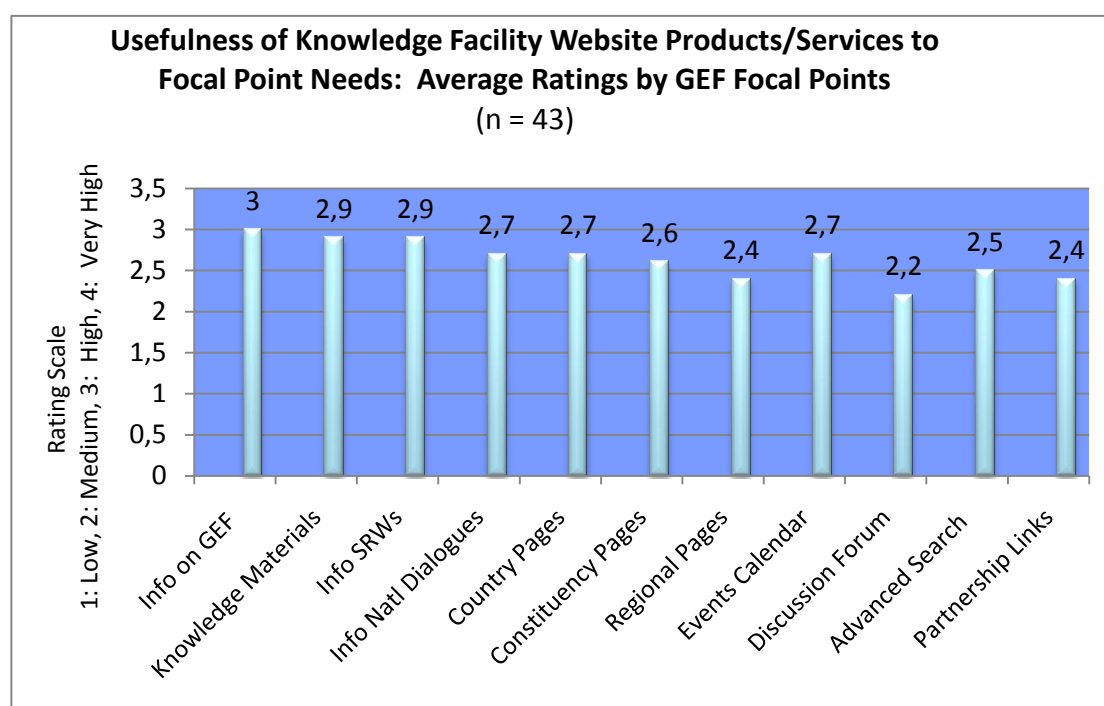
⁶ This may be influenced by the turnover of Focal Points participating in CSP activities.

2.2 GEF focal points' needs for capacity, guidance and training materials and tools compiled through sub-regional consultations (under the National Dialogue Initiative) and through written requests	Number of GEF focal points expressing needs for materials	and monitoring GEF projects.
	Variety of needs expressed by GEF focal points	Almost three-quarters of surveyed FPs have visited the Knowledge Facility website, in most cases on several occasions. Almost one-third of surveyed FPs visit the Knowledge Facility website at least monthly. However, a similar percentage has not used the website.
2.3 Capacity, guidance and training materials and tools developed to respond to needs, in various languages	Quality and quantity of capacity, guidance and training materials developed in various languages in response to expressed needs, and distributed to stakeholders	The design of the Knowledge Facility website was guided by user surveys and presentations at Sub-Regional Workshops; and adjusted periodically according to user needs.
2.4 Existing GEF and IA knowledge management frameworks surveyed to build on previous experiences and ensure transparent links to information and data	Survey of existing GEF and IA/EA knowledge management frameworks resulting in design considerations for GEF focal point knowledge management framework	The KF offers a variety of products and services available in English, French and Spanish. Surveyed FPs consider (i) information on Sub regional Workshops; (ii) knowledge materials on national GEF coordination, mainstreaming and tracking; and (iii) information on GEF policies and procedures, to be most useful to their needs. However, there is little use of KF Discussion Forum and Constituency pages.
2.5. GEF focal point knowledge management framework built and maintained containing information exchange forums, guidance documents, other information and data.	Development and maintenance of an evolving knowledge management framework used by GEF Focal Points	Achieved through consultations with GEF Evaluation Office and Partner Agencies, and review of the existing GEF website.
		The KF website is maintained and has been adjusted on the basis of user surveys. 50 countries have uploaded information to their Country pages. However, Country Pages and information on GEF projects are not regularly updated by FPs.

The CSP Knowledge Facility website has medium/high usefulness to Focal Point needs according to survey responses (Figure 6). There is little variance in the average ratings assigned to the various KF product and services. The only service that received a high average rating is “information on GEF structure, policies and procedures.” This is closely followed by “knowledge materials on national GEF coordination, environmental mainstreaming and others” and “information on Sub-

Regional Workshops.” At the lower end are the discussion forum, partnership links and events calendar with medium utility ratings. This is somewhat surprising as they also respond to needs expressed by Focal Points. In particular, the limited use of the discussion forum seems inconsistent with the reiterated interest in peer learning and exchange; there are only a few documented cases of on-line discussions by GEF Constituency members. Several Focal Points have expressed their reluctance to start on-line discussions and would be more inclined to join an ongoing forum.

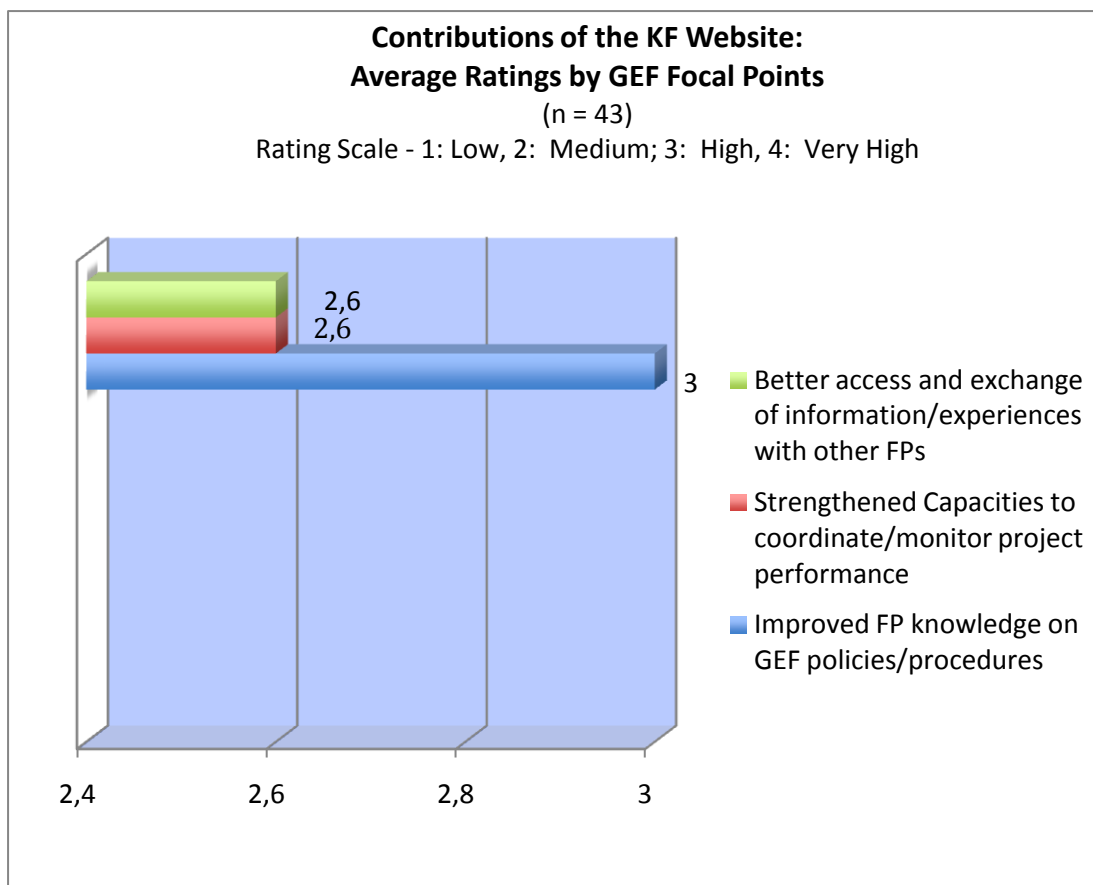
Figure 6



Source: On-line Evaluation Survey for GEF Focal Points

Some KF services appear to have improved Focal Point capacity and performance. Survey responses indicate that the CSP has contributed highly to improved understanding of GEF policies and procedures (Figure 7). This has been important in closing knowledge gaps caused by Focal Point turnover, and in guiding the development of proposals for GEF funding. Likewise, Focal Points feel the website has made a medium/high contribution to improved information access and exchange between Focal Points, although this is not reflected in the use of the discussion forum.

Figure 7



Source: On-line Evaluation Survey for GEF Focal Points

Several reasons are likely for the lower-than-expected use of the KF website. Many Focal Points have little time to take full advantage of the website, other than for immediate needs such as searching for specific GEF guidelines or checking for upcoming events. Connectivity problems in some regions (such as the Pacific), combined with cultural and generational preferences for face-to-face communication, are likely to be contributing factors as well. Focal Points that network tend to do so bilaterally on specific issues, or use conventional Internet services. According to some GEF respondents, delays in updating country pages and providing project information have also lowered the website's potential utility.

In hindsight, initial expectations concerning the demand for and use of some KF components may have been over-dimensioned. Focal Points have consistently supported the website's design through surveys and workshop consultations; yet back in the office their attention is divided among many other responsibilities. Website use does not necessarily follow a linear pattern and may vary according to the stage of the country's GEF cycle,

"I find the website knowledge facility a fantastic step forward."

- Country Focal Point

"...We can make it [the website] into a more useful and effective working tool."

- GEFSec representative

changes in GEF guidelines, turnover of Focal Points or other factors. These do not in any way lower the utility of having rapid access to online knowledge when it is needed. To make fuller use of the discussion forum, several respondents feel that GEFSec, GEF EO and the GEF Agencies should be more proactive in proposing, organizing and leading on-line discussions on topics of shared interest.

2.3.3 Component3: Targeted capacity building activities provided to support GEF focal points to carry out their activities based on their expressed needs.

Sub-regional Workshops (SRWs) are the CSP's most visible aspect and are highly valued by surveyed respondents. This is good news considering the amount of work the programme team has devoted to planning, implementing and evaluating 26 workshops at different venues across the globe. ⁷To date (through June 2010), over 1,200 participants have attended the workshops, including 665 Operational and Political Focal Points (or designated representatives) representing over 120 countries."

Since the CSP started in 2007, SRWs have been implemented as planned and on schedule - the sole exception being the postponement of a 2009 Pacific SIDS workshop to coincide with a Constituency Meeting scheduled in 2010. The 26 workshops have been implemented in the 8 sub-regions as follows:

Africa (Eastern & Southern): Nairobi (2007), Windhoek (2008), Nairobi (2009)
Africa (West & Central): Dakar (2007), Douala (2008), Accra (2009)
Asia: Bangkok (2007), Manila (2008), Bangkok (2009), Hanoi (2010)
Caribbean: Nassau (2007), Havana (2008), Bridgetown (2009)
Europe & CIS: Istanbul (2007), Belgrade (2008), Dubrovnik (2009), Istanbul (2010)
Latin America: Sao Paulo (2007), Mexico City (2008), Lima (2009)
Middle East & North Africa: Bali (2007), Casablanca (2008), Cairo (2009)
Pacific: Apia (2007), Auckland (2008), Port Moresby (2010)

The Sub-regional Workshops are the largest recurrent gathering of GEF Focal Points by region. As such, they are important for enabling direct communication and building rapport between the GEF partners and Focal Points. SRWs apply a multi-faceted approach to capacity building that combines plenary presentations, working group sessions, peer-to-peer exchanges, project site visits and bilateral consultations with GEFSec or partner agencies. In some cases, there are optional side events on topics of specific regional or thematic interest.

These factors are conducive to a "win-win" situation that benefits both Focal Points and GEF Partners. The SRWs are an effective way to drive key messages to Focal Points who lack time to read the extensive GEF documentation. SRWs also help to bring in the perspectives from Agencies who are involved in implementation of GEF projects (for example in sessions such as "What constitutes a successful GEF project?"). They also offer an important venue for exposure and communication

⁷ A total of 28 Sub-regional Workshops are planned by the end of the programme.

between GEF Focal Points. In some cases the SRWs are the only opportunity for face-to-face meetings between Focal Points from the same country.

Figure 8

Summary of Findings: Component 3

Planned Outputs	Indicators	Advances and Achievements
3.1 GEF focal points' priorities for capacity building activities compiled through sub-regional consultations under the National Dialogue Initiative and through written requests.	Specific examples of how information learned/exchanged through workshops has contributed to strengthening the ability of focal points to carry out their activities	Examples of strengthened FP abilities exist but have not been systematically documented. Three-quarters of surveyed FPs apply information and capacities acquired at the SRWs to a "high/very high" degree.
3.2 Exchange and targeted capacity building materials, methodologies and tools, as outlined in Output 2.3 adapted to support sub-regional specific contexts in response to expressed needs.	Number of GEF Focal Points expressing capacity building needs through GEF sub-regional consultations (within GEF National Dialogue Initiative)	FP capacity building needs were initially assessed through sub-regional consultations under the NDI, and fed into the CSP's design.
	Examples of how GEF focal point expressed needs are addressed in sub-regional workshops	FP needs are assessed prior to each workshop through on-line surveys. FP feedback is included in all workshop evaluations.
3.3 Sub-regional information exchange and training workshops conducted for GEF focal points in response to expressed needs.	Number of GEF focal points participating in sub-regional information exchange and training workshops	A total of 1,212 participants in sub-regional workshops to date, including 665 current/former FPs and national representatives from 120 countries in addition to GEFSec, Agency resource persons, representatives of regional organization and observers.
	Number of sub-regional information exchange and training workshops conducted	26 Sub-Regional Workshops have been implemented on schedule. A total of 28 SRWs are planned by the programme's termination.
	% of GEF Focal Point workshop participants able to provide some examples of knowledge gained through information exchanged and training	Not documented during implementation. Focal Point survey responses provide examples of knowledge benefits, yet the scale or percentage cannot be quantified with the available information. Almost three-quarters of surveyed Focal Points apply capacities acquired at SRWs to a high /very high degree.

The SRWs have helped in operationalizing the 4th GEF programming cycle, and contributed to the formulation of GEF 5 policies and procedures. The views expressed by Focal Points at workshop sessions informed the performance

"We need to be present at all Sub-Regional Workshops, because they are a lifeline for our own evaluations."

- GEF Evaluation Office participant

evaluations of the 4th programme cycle (OPS4) and the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF), and influenced the design of the new cycle and STAR funding mechanism. The GEF Evaluation Office estimates that the SRWs provided direct access to approximately 30% of GEF member countries, in settings that facilitated group dynamics.

The SRWs have generated capacity improvements more so than other CSP components, according to survey responses. In particular, the workshops improved Focal Point understanding of GEF policies and procedures to a high/very high degree (Figure 9), a contribution that is recognized in successive workshop evaluations. Other SRW contributions include: Learning from exchanges with Focal Points, improved coordination with GEF Partners and GEFSec in particular, improved interaction with the GEF Evaluation Office, exposure to successful projects and "best practices", and enhanced opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

Most important, these capacity improvements are being applied. Almost three-quarters of surveyed Focal Points apply capacities acquired at SRWs to a high /very high degree; a quarter apply capacity improvements to a medium extent and only 6% to a low extent. This is a positive finding given the high turnover of Focal Points.

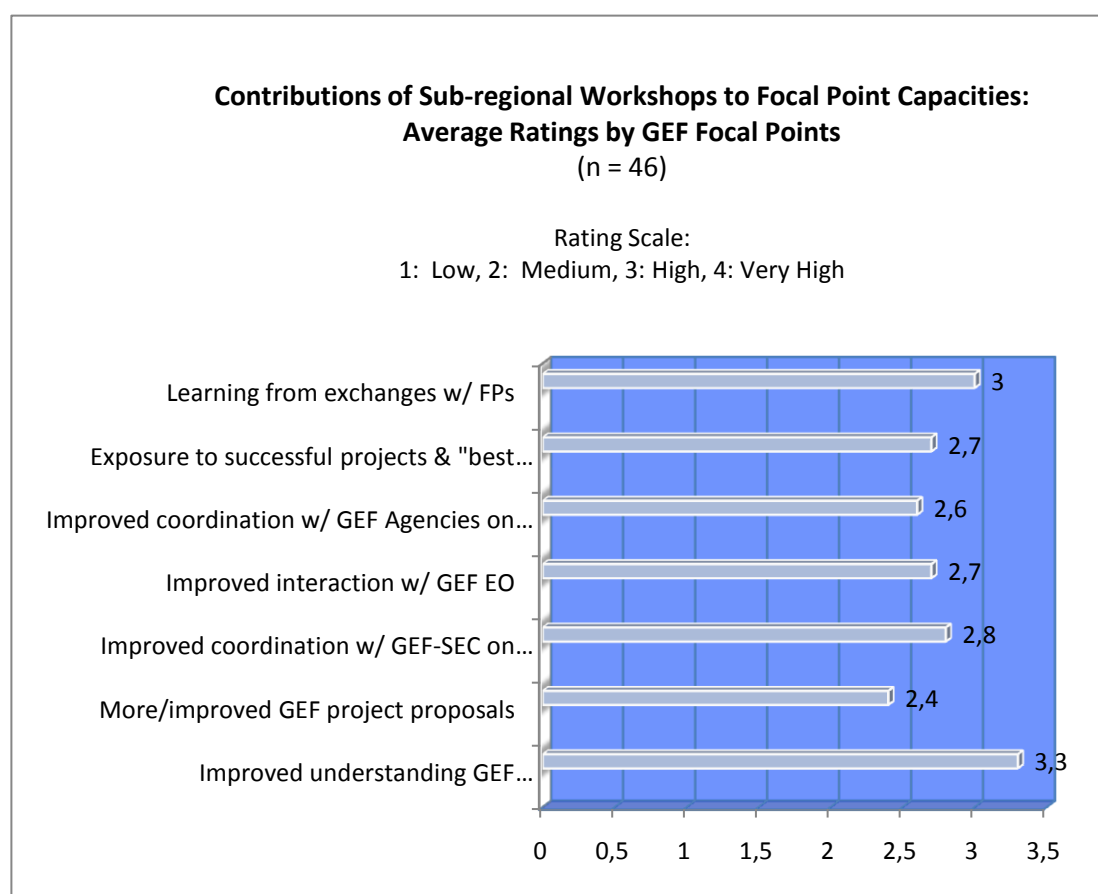
56% of surveyed Focal Points apply the knowledge and capacity improvements acquired at Sub-regional Workshops to a "high" degree, while 15% apply them to a "very high" degree.

More in-depth analysis is needed to understand how capacity building initiatives such as the CSP affect performance at the country level. The evaluation was only able to gather anecdotal examples of capacity improvements that are being applied. Exchanges of experience on successful projects, coordination experiences and other topics – i.e. Climate Change communications and national CC adaptation planning - have helped countries learn from each other. There have been transfers of GEF project "best practices" between *Latvia* and *Armenia*. A case study on water management from *Macedonia* was disseminated to interested countries. Several *Caribbean* and *Pacific* SIDS were able to maximize use of RAF funds through consultations with peers and GEF Partners. There have been discussions on establishing standards or criteria for successful GEF projects. Focal Points have shared their experiences with National Dialogues at workshop sessions. All SRW presentations on country experiences and best practices are posted on the Knowledge Facility website.

A number of country Focal Points have highlighted the benefits of direct access to the GEF partners and GEFSec in particular, in guiding the development of national project proposals, expediting slow or stalled project approval processes, and

speeding up RAF disbursements. *Peru* has achieved a better understanding of the RAF mechanism, and was able to re-activate a dormant project proposal on protected area management through direct communication with GEF Sec at the workshops. Similar examples were offered by the Focal Points for *Colombia, Egypt, Uruguay* and *Ethiopia* among others. The concerns of Pacific Island states regarding RAF allocations for marine conservation was reflected in the OPS 4 evaluation, and a regional programme that was set up in response.

Figure 9



Source: On-line Evaluation Survey for GEF Focal Points

III. ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND ISSUES AFFECTING PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

3.1 Design and Relevance

The CSP was conceived to strengthen the capacities of national GEF Focal Points to implement their mandates in support of global environment programmes in their countries and constituencies. It is GEF's main effort to date in offering a systematic mechanism for capacity building and exchange among Focal Points on a

regional scale. To a large extent CSP design builds on the findings of earlier performance studies and evaluations that highlighted the need for more comprehensive approaches to capacity building and country support.

The importance of strengthening national capacities to develop, manage and mainstream GAFF projects was underscored in OPUS, OPUS and OPUS – the landmark studies of GEF's performance since its creation. These studies identified limitations in the information and tools available to GAFF Focal Points, as well as unclear mandates, weak inter-agency coordination and low civil society engagement in GAFF programming. They recommended making Focal Points more effective advocates for GEF programmes and global environmental issues through better coordination, information dissemination and understanding of GEF policies and practices. The *Report on the 2nd Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund* (2001) proposed an Action Plan with capacity building, training, outreach and information sharing components to strengthen national coordination and ownership of GEF-financed activities. The GEF Council approved a pilot project titled the *GEF Council Member and Focal Point Support Program* in 1999. This was followed by *Strengthening National Focal points and Enhancing Constituency Coordination in GEF Recipient Countries*. The need for further training and capacity building to carry out Focal Point mandates was highlighted by the evaluations of these programmes as well.

The CSP's design was strongly influenced by the *National Dialogue Initiative* (GLO/03/G34). One of the first activities of the CSP was to undertake an extensive, in-depth Focal Point needs assessment based on information and perspectives collected in 8 Sub-regional Consultations held in 2006 under the auspices of the National Dialogue Initiative. The consultations convened GEF Focal Points for the first time and sought their feedback on priority topics that have fed into the CSP's design. Both initiatives address similar concerns: The knowledge obtained from the CSP is supposed to "empower" national GEF focal points, promote increased interaction between government agencies and stakeholders, and help integrate/mainstream global environmental activities nationally.⁸ National Dialogues often address these issues as well. The CSP and NDI share management arrangements and use the same Steering Committee. These links have facilitated communications between both initiatives: Country experiences with national dialogues have been posted on the KF website and in several cases were presented at Sub-regional Workshops by the respective Focal Points (i.e. Honduras, Burkina Faso, India, Cameroon, Seychelles).

The CSP has offered GEF a means to inform countries on new policies and practices under the 4th Replenishment - including the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) funding mechanism – and communicate periodically with Focal Points on a sub-regional scale. Indeed, the CSP's timing was planned to coincide with GEF 4's implementation. As noted earlier, the Sub-regional Workshops enabled the GEF

⁸ Country Support Programme project document, pg. 4

Evaluation Office to reach a wider Focal Point audience, enriching the OPS-4 and the RAF evaluations.

During the course of implementation, the CSP has exchanged information with other GEF initiatives and facilitated project site visits by Focal Points. According to the programme team there were exchanges and joint activities with the Country Programme Partnerships (CPP) on Land Degradation, GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), National Capacity Self-Assessments, National Communications Support Programme for the UNFCCC, National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs); Regional programmes such as the Mediterranean Strategic Action Programme, the Coral Triangle Initiative, and the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem project. Issues of concern and questions regarding the GEF Small Grants programme and its future directions have been discussed and debated by countries and GEF partners in virtually all Sub-Regional Workshops conducted over the past 4 years.

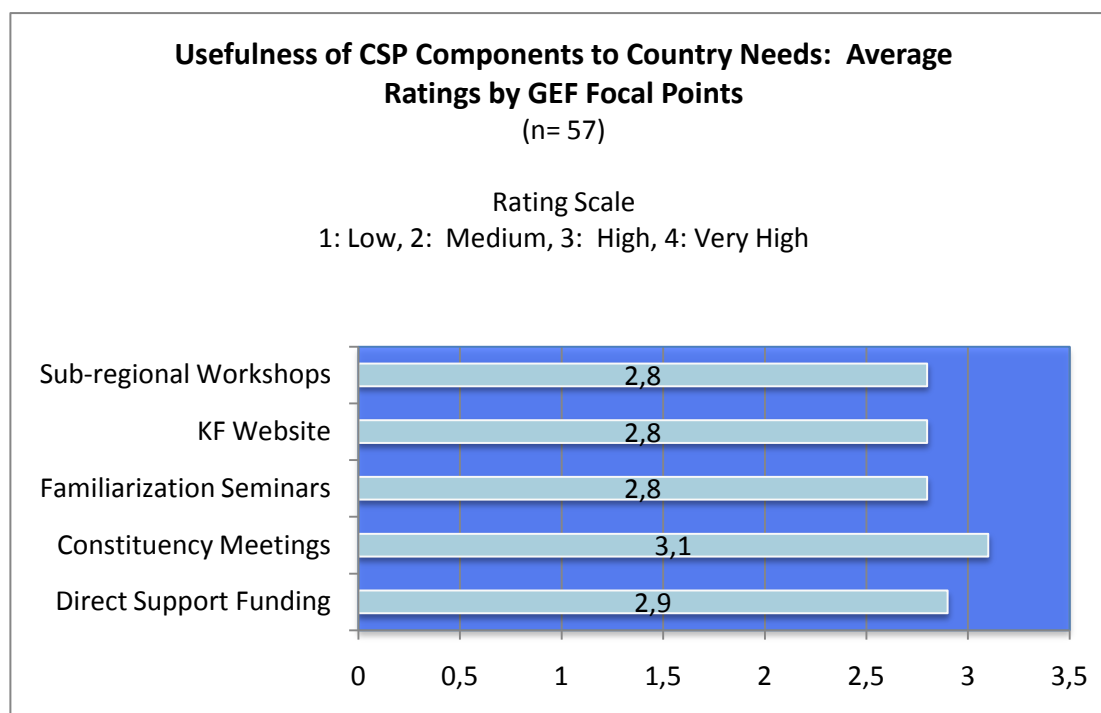
At the Pacific region workshops, consultations between Focal Points and GEF partners led to the development of a programmatic approach to operationalize the Pacific Alliance for Sustainability (PAS). Likewise, workshop discussions have focussed on the development of programmatic frameworks for the Caribbean, MENA and West/Central Africa regions.

These linkages support the view that the CSP (and related initiatives such as the NDI) are part of a cumulative learning process within GEF that draws from the experiences of prior programme cycles.

The CSP is relevant – and in some aspects very relevant - to country needs. The CSP's design builds on requests by GEF Focal Points for capacity building and financial support to strengthen their abilities and performance. The emphasis on consultation and inclusiveness is perhaps the project's most outstanding quality in terms of design and implementation approach. Baseline consultations and surveys were built into the project document and budgeted for, helping the CSP acquire a good understanding of present capacity needs. The planning and consultation that went into capacity building and knowledge management have absorbed considerable staff time. However, this has also strengthened the CSP's relevance to user needs, contributing to adaptive management and overall effective implementation. The returns to the time invested are positive.

Survey responses indicate medium/high and high levels of usefulness to country needs among the main CSP components (Figure 10). Direct funding support given to countries and assistance for constituency meetings receive the highest scores. Other CSP components follow closely behind, indicating consistent levels of relevance and appropriateness to country needs.

Figure 10



Source: On-line Survey for GEF Focal Points

The CSP's design was not limited to a pre-approval formulation exercise, and aspects of the programme have evolved over time. The Sub-regional workshops and the Knowledge Facility website are revisited and adjusted periodically, often in consultation with user groups. Workshop content and methods have been adapted on the basis of needs identified and suggestions made by Focal Points in workshop evaluations. The CSP drew on capacity building and knowledge management expertise from GEF agencies and the GEF Evaluation Office among others. Their support has enriched the design of these components, while reinforcing the sense of partnership.

The CSP implementation approach combines prescription and flexibility in a manner that meets the challenges of operating on a global scale. Support is provided for training, outreach and knowledge sharing through three components that combine different types and levels of intervention – annual country grants, website-based knowledge management, group exchange and training. While coordination between the direct funding support module and the rest of the programme has not been strong during implementation, the CSP's design encouraged synergy and cumulative impact.

The CSP budget of US\$ 12.134 million ⁹ appears to be well allocated and adequate for the programme's needs, despite rising travel and workshop costs. Critical funding

⁹ This includes US\$ 270,000 in government cost-sharing.

gaps or deficits were not faced during implementation. The experience of the National Dialogue Initiative, in addition to research on travel costs and alternative workshop locations have helped in calculating resource needs. The use of the NDI for sub-regional consultations and the merging of management structures for both initiatives enabled the hiring of a 4th staff that had not been initially budgeted. The CSP has not undergone major budget revisions, and was able to extend Sub-regional workshops and other project activities into 2010 with savings.

Substantial critiques of project design were not raised during the evaluation. There are minor semantic inconsistencies in the project document – i.e. the outputs contained in the logical framework are listed as activities in the text - that do not affect overall design quality. Some respondents consider that the annual reporting and processing requirements for the direct funding support module (Component 1) are excessively complex. The required bidding procedures are often difficult to apply in the case of small expenditures. These factors, combined with the small grant size, have discouraged a number of eligible countries from participating – contributing to a significant unspent balance for the module. With regards to Component 2, various respondents feel that KF website tools and services are under-utilized by Focal Points.

A common challenge faced by capacity building initiatives is selecting indicators that are able to measure quantitative and qualitative effects. The CSP's Logical Framework includes detailed performance indicators for the second and third components. In practice, however, monitoring has been event-driven and concerned with output delivery and quality – i.e. workshops and website products – with little attention to the outcomes or effects resulting from the combined programme components. This omission is partially understandable given the CSP's geographic extension, low levels of in-country activity, and staffing/resource constraints. Indicators that address capacity improvements at the country or sub-regional level are difficult to measure, especially in the absence of field monitoring.

3.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the CSP's most outstanding quality, in combination with responsiveness to country needs. Most of the interviewed respondents have highlighted this aspect when describing the project. The main partners (UNEP, UNDP and UNOPS) and the CSP programme team in particular deserve recognition for their effective performance.

Implementing the CSP has been challenging for various reasons that include geographic scale, the diversity and turnover of Focal Points, and the complexity of some of the issues addressed. The CSP is responsible for processing annual direct support funding for up to 89 countries, organizing sub-regional workshops, providing travel support and promoting knowledge management. These combined factors have a strong potential for coordination difficulties, which fortunately has not been the case. The coordination of institutional roles and implementation responsibilities between UNDP, UNOPS and UNEP has worked well in general, despite weak linkages

between the direct support funding module and the other programme components during implementation.

The CSP has delivered practically all of its outputs on schedule, with commendable level of responsiveness to user needs and quality. This reflects well on the dedication and performance of the CSP programme team and the UNEP staff responsible for the first component. The CSP programme team has given the project more substance and participation than was originally envisioned, and is an effective arbiter in balancing the involvement of GEF partners. The programme team's ability to adjust capacity building and knowledge management activities to user needs over time indicates good adaptive management capabilities.

Delivery has been satisfactory in spite of the challenges. For Component 1, 75% of the surveyed Focal Points feel that national work plans were approved in an effective and timely manner "always" or "most of the time". Over half of the Focal Points consider that adequate guidance was provided in submitting national work plans to a "high" or "very" high degree. Annual support funding was "always" disbursed in a timely manner for 29% of the respondents, and "most of the time" for 37% (approximately one-third of the Focal Points responded "sometimes" or "hardly ever" on this issue).¹⁰ However, an unspent balance of almost US\$ 4 million in country grants remains due to the non-participation of 30% of eligible countries and delays in approving MoUs. Several Focal Points consider that the annual US\$ 8,000 allocations have had little effect and that larger allocations are necessary - especially for countries that have larger territories, populations or GEF portfolios.

- 75% of GEF Focal Points feel that national workplans for Component 1 were approved in an effective and timely manner.

- Annual grants were disbursed in a timely manner "always" or "most of the time" for two-thirds of Focal Points

UNEP and the GEF Secretariat jointly managed the direct funding support module under the first programme component. Focal Points were required to submit annual progress reports to GEFSec and expenditure reports to UNEP. The replenishment of funds for the following year was contingent on the clearance of both reports, and GEFSec's authorization for further disbursement by UNEP. Although the scrutiny applied in monitoring the use of US\$ 8,000 grants in 89 countries was quite superficial (understandably as neither UNEP nor GEFSec have country representation) the process appears to have worked smoothly. However, there are inevitable difficulties in managing a dual system of this nature, and in several cases Focal Points attempted to expedite UNEP disbursements by claiming that GEF had already cleared their final reports (when in fact this was not the case). While disbursement delays were noted by more than one-third of Focal Points, these were often caused by in-country difficulties in opening bank accounts or transferring funds.

¹⁰ Based on responses to the *On-line Evaluation Survey for GEF Focal Points*.

The CSP Knowledge Facility website (Component 2) was designed in consultation with Focal Points through on-line surveys and workshop sessions. Knowledge management expertise was tapped from the GEF Evaluation Office and partner agencies. However, the website is not utilized to the extent that was initially expected. As noted by more than one respondent, the KF website is very professional in design yet several of its services may be over-dimensioned in relation to user needs. Most respondents agree that the CSP Knowledge Facility was a major improvement over the existing GEF website in design and search capabilities when it was launched. Since then, GEF has developed its own website considerably and made the Project Management Information System (PMIS) available to Focal Points. As a result, the incorporation of the Knowledge Facility website or selected tools within the GEF web page appears more viable and merits consideration during the next CSP phase, which will be implemented by GEFSec.

The CSP project team has made efforts to design and adjust the website to user preferences. Focal Points completed an online survey on it in 2008 and 2009, and the Knowledge Facility continues to be updated as new GEF policies or guidelines come into effect. Adjustments were made to website pages to improve access in low-connectivity areas, and many pages offer downloadable and printable versions.

"The CSP has become a brand name. People ask when the next workshop will take place."

- CSP Programme Team member

The 26 Sub-Regional Workshops held since the CSP's initiation in 2007 offer the best examples of effective implementation. This is a demanding task: A 2-3 day workshop has high lead time requirements and takes approximately three months to organize from initial design to workshop report completion. On the logistical and administrative side, the programme team identifies and negotiates workshop and hotel venues, oversees travel arrangements, prepares workshop materials and copes with the inevitable contingencies. Organizing project site visits as part of the workshop agenda have taken a "tremendous" amount of time according to the project team. UNDP COs provided advice on venues, local vendors and project site visit possibilities, and helped in arranging Focal Point travel and DSA (although the instructions come from CSP and the authorizations from UNOPS).

The programme team takes a lead role in the preparation, facilitation and conduction of the workshops to ensure neutrality and minimize any potential susceptibilities among participants. The programme team works with GEFSec and GEF Agency resource persons who participate as presenters, discussants, vice-chairs, and rapporteurs for various sessions. Similarly, the programme team works with Focal Points in advance of the workshop to solicit presentations on country experiences and successful projects. Requests by Focal Points for bilateral meetings with GEFSec, GEF Agencies or the GEF EO are noted in needs assessment surveys and set up at workshops; this helps to ensure effective use of limited time slots within the agenda. These consultations or "clinics" have helped Focal Points advance on specific issues of interest and resolve practical matters relating to project design, funding and approval.

To cope with the turnover of Focal Points, different interests and experience levels, parallel sessions and side events are offered at each workshop. Although some participants note repetitions in workshop presentations and content, the mixing of new and experienced Focal Points enhances opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

"I have only praise and am grateful to the UNDP team for their work in organizing the Sub-Regional Workshops. They do it with great professionalism."

"The CSP has a very calm team, which is important for a programme of this size. They are very enthusiastic and effective. The Sub-Regional Workshops were extremely well organized."

- GEFSec and Agency respondents

A major challenge has been maintaining the pedagogic quality and relevance of the SRWs in the face of participant turnover and different levels of experience. The programme team has addressed this issue effectively: Two months before the scheduled workshop, on-line surveys are sent to Focal Points to get feedback on their expectations and the topics they would like to see covered. All workshops are subject to participant evaluations upon completion. The structure, contents and organization of the workshops are adjusted periodically, based on previous workshop experiences and the evaluation feedback from Focal Points.

Workshop evaluations have been positive for the most part, and participants appreciate the opportunity to receive updated information, exchange views, and interact with GEFSec and Agency representatives. Critical observations are generally concerned with form rather than substance: Tight workshop schedules and the need for additional time, more open discussion sessions, and prior circulation of issues to be discussed in order to prepare country positions.

The project team has been effective in reporting on and documenting CSP activities. Aside from meeting the standard reporting requirements, many of the documents produced have supported the project's adaptive management, monitoring and evaluation needs:

- Information and guidance materials posted on CSP Knowledge Facility at www.gefcountrysupport.org.
- Briefing materials provided to Inter-Agency Steering Committee.
- Targeted presentations prepared for Sub-Regional Workshops and other events.
- Summary reports of (i) all Sub-Regional Workshops held, available on-line and shared with GEF Focal Points and Steering Committee; (ii) needs assessment surveys of GEF Focal Points prior to each Sub-regional Workshop; and (iii) participant evaluation reports compiled for all Sub-regional Workshops.
- Survey findings on Focal Point use of the Knowledge Facility.

The Inter-agency Steering Committee has the dual function of overseeing the CSP and the National Dialogue Initiative. Although few members responded to

information and interview requests for the evaluation, the Steering Committee appears to have been effective during the CSP's first two years. During this period the Steering Committee provided a framework for agency collaboration and convergence that raised the level of ownership. Agency representatives on the Steering Committee have been helpful in briefing resource persons before workshop events and in reviewing draft presentations to ensure consistency.

Steering committee members serve as liaisons with their Agencies. They receive and convey information about upcoming events, respond to requests (such as providing access to Agency websites for KF search function), review and approve CSP/NDI plans and evaluation TORs and reports. Since 2008 the Steering Committee has substituted formal meetings with teleconferences and written briefings. Some respondents have noted a decline in the motivation and initiative of Committee members. According to others, the CSP's stable implementation and lack of emergent critical issues have lowered the need for direct involvement by the Steering Committee.

3.3 Efficiency

In general, the CSP has been implemented in a cost-effective manner despite its global scale and travel-intensive costs that have increased over time. There were no significant budget shortfalls or gaps, and financial savings have been re-allocated to hire staff and extend some project activities.

This has required careful planning and use of funds by the CSP programme team. During the inception stage, the merging of managerial posts with those of the National Dialogue Initiative generated savings that enabled the addition of a full-time capacity specialist. By designing components of the Knowledge Facility website internally, the project team saved additional funds that have been channelled to support Sub-regional Workshops. Research into travel costs and workshop venues and the experience of the NDI - were critical in earmarking adequate funds for the workshops. SRWs were organized back-to-back with Constituency Meetings in East and Southern Africa (twice), West and Central Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, the Pacific, and Europe/CIS (twice).

The cost-effectiveness of the Knowledge Facility website merits consideration in view of the US\$ 1.8 million that were allocated to this component, and the lower than expected use of some of the website's knowledge products and tools. In terms of expenditure, the construction of the site involved approximately US\$ 500,000 for research and design, as well as maintenance and updates over 4 years. About US\$ 400,000 was absorbed by staff time devoted to the KF's design and content, including research and production of knowledge materials, surveys, queries, and updating. An additional US\$ 100,000 was spent in other direct expenses such as website hosting, programming, and design, as well as translations and consultant costs.

From a budgetary perspective, the second component has been cost-effective in

view of the considerable savings (approaching US\$ 800,000) that were used to fund a fourth staff position and extend the entire programme by six months.¹¹ However, a more comprehensive analysis is limited by the absence of targets or indicators on website use, as well as the lack of data on website visits and “hits” covering the full programme period (the available information only covers several months for each year). While Focal Points assigned high ratings to the website’s value as a source of information on GEF policies and guidelines, the lower ratings given to several tools – and very low use of the KF by 25% of the surveyed Focal Points – suggest that the component’s cost-effectiveness might have been enhanced by adjusting the range of website products and tools to actual demand. As noted earlier, however, these considerations do not undermine the core value of offering on-line access to GEF information and providing essential guidance to new Focal Points. Given the relatively low operational and maintenance costs, it is likely that the component’s cost effectiveness will increase over time if the website is extended beyond the current programme phase and streamlined with the existing GEF web page.

“It is quite a procedure for countries to prepare annual reports on US\$ 8,000 for clearance by GEFSec.... It was a real exercise to get government clearance and signatures.”

- UNEP’s Financial Manager for Component 1

The overall performance of the implementing agencies has been well worth the 7% service fee. The implementation of the CSP involves considerable work and high transaction costs, particularly with respect to the direct funding support under Component 1: The processing of annual expenditure statements and progress reports for up to 89 countries has been very labour-intensive for UNEP, which certainly put more work into the Component than is reflected in the fee received.

In retrospect, the annual reporting and financial tracking requirements were over-dimensioned for the small grant amounts involved. A number of Focal Points were discouraged in using funds for small expenditures due to the strict bidding requirements. A significant unspent balance is left over from Component 1 as almost one-third of eligible countries chose to not participate. These combined factors have lowered the cost-effectiveness of a key project component. In retrospect, the approval of larger allocations and/or more intermittent reporting (for example, a bi-annual or final report) might have lowered the component’s transaction costs and raised cost-effectiveness.

3.4 Sustainability

The CSP project document recognizes that training Focal Points is, by definition, an ongoing activity. The stated aim of the programme has been to establish sustainable mechanisms for national coordination, and institutionalize knowledge at the country level. In this context the CSP encourages countries to

¹¹ The significant gap between budgeted and actual cost suggests that the website component may have been over-budgeted during the CSP’s design. However, the programme team considers that their direct involvement in the website’s design, content and maintenance/updating – combined with the support of resource persons from the GEF implementing agencies – were decisive in generating these savings.

“...‘institutionalize’ the functions of the GEF focal points within the relevant government office, rather than vesting them in an ‘individual’.”¹²

While these are reasonable expectations for a country-based project, the analysis needs to consider the CSP’s scale and implementation approach. As a global initiative with responsibilities to 128 countries, the CSP has had limited opportunities (or resources) to engage consistently with national stakeholders. The combination of on-line knowledge services and annual sub-regional workshops – in addition to the direct funding support – was expected to generate spill over effects and catalyze capacity improvements on a wider scale. However, the level of support provided is in many cases insufficient to establish sustainable national coordination mechanisms or institutionalize GEF functions at the country level.

Focal Point survey responses indicate that the CSP has had medium to medium/high levels of impact on stakeholder consultations, coordination mechanisms and the articulation of national environmental priorities for GEF support. However, the CSP does not appear to have made significant progress in establishing sustainable national coordination mechanisms (which is ultimately the responsibility of the recipient country). Again, this needs to be viewed in context, as the CSP has not had the in-country presence – or been able to offer the scale of support – needed to overcome the internal factors that undermine sustainability in many countries. In this respect, a higher profile at the country level is essential to consolidate advances and enhance conditions for post-project sustainability.

The clearest manifestation of sustainability at this stage is the GEF Council’s decision to extend the CSP beyond 2010. The next project phase offers opportunities to build on existing momentum and consolidate capacity improvements, enhancing perspectives for in-country sustainability. More than 90% of the surveyed Focal Points indicate they would participate in a future phase of the CSP.¹³

The proposed expansion of national participants (“expanded constituent meetings”) at Sub-regional Workshops could generate the critical mass needed to institutionalize and sustain capacity improvements at home, particularly if coordinated with National Dialogues (to avoid duplication) and the support activities implemented under Component 1. However, the challenge of maintaining pedagogic quality with a considerably larger and more varied target audience also needs to be considered.¹⁴

3.5 Catalytic Role

The CSP is catalytic by design. The project’s knowledge management and exchange components target Focal Points as catalysts for strengthening national

¹² Country Support Programme (CSP) Project Document, Section 7 “Sustainability”, p. 13

¹³ On-line Evaluation Survey for GEF Focal Points

¹⁴ More than three-quarters of survey respondents feel that the Sub-Regional Workshops should involve a wider range of national stakeholders.

capacities to program GEF resources, expand stakeholder coordination and institutionalize knowledge. Although project effects at the country level have not been documented on a systematic basis, anecdotal examples were provided to the evaluation that support the CSP's catalytic role. Countries have developed databases on GEF projects and related issues, and expanded stakeholder consultations on environmental priorities for GEF funding - which in turn expand expectations and encourage stakeholder support. The extent to which these advances are institutionalized will depend on the ability of Focal Points and key national partners to sustain them beyond the CSP.

As a global initiative, the CSP has limited replication possibilities at the national level and is not expected to generate parallel country initiatives. As mentioned earlier, the main evidence of replication lies in the GEF Council's decision to fund and implement a subsequent phase, applying some of the lessons learned from the present initiative.

3.6 Monitoring

The CSP has complied with the monitoring and reporting guidelines required by GEF and the implementing agencies. Component 1 has been subject to standard UNEP monitoring guidelines, and Components 2 and 3 to those of UNDP. Annual Project Reports (APRs) and Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) were prepared each year and financial expenditures were tracked. The meetings of the Inter-agency Steering Committee have served the function of Tripartite Reviews (TPRs) by monitoring progress and discussing project issues.

Country activities and expenditures under Component 1 were accounted for in annual reports prepared by Focal Points. GEFSec and UNEP required these reports for subsequent grant disbursements. In-country monitoring was not practiced (nor was it feasible) due to the small grant size and large number of participating countries. Monitoring has been event-driven and focused on output delivery and quality, rather than outcomes or capacity effects resulting from the combination of CSP components. In this respect, it would have been interesting to conduct a thematic evaluation of GEF capacity development initiatives – the CSP and NDI among them – in a sample of countries, to determine how national capacities are affected, the extent to which capacity improvements are sustained, and the degree by which the different GEF initiatives complement each other.

Implementation is closely monitored by the CSP programme team. The second and third components are periodically evaluated via user surveys and workshop evaluations. In particular, the evaluation and 'quality control' of Sub-regional Workshops stand out as a rolling process that feeds into the planning of successive events. At the conclusion of each workshop, participants complete an evaluation questionnaire that assesses the adequacy of the topics covered, the quality of the information and training provided, opportunities for exchange, and suggested follow-up actions. The Knowledge Facility website has also been evaluated through

a user survey, and visits or “hits” are monitored with web tracking software (although consolidated data covering the full project period is not available).

As noted in other sections of the report, the programme team has demonstrated strong adaptive management capabilities. In particular, the programme team has shown high levels of responsiveness in adapting work plans and implementing changes in programme execution, based on Focal Point and GEF partner feedback.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. The Country Support Programme is a successful initiative that has had medium to high levels of impact in strengthening Focal Point and national capacities. The CSP emerges as an effective capacity building and coordination initiative that has strengthened Focal Point and country capacities. The various CSP components and activities received medium to medium/high ratings from surveyed Focal Points in terms of their contribution to improved capacities. The evaluation considers the CSP’s overall level of achievement to be satisfactory – and in some cases, highly satisfactory in view of the programme’s global scale and limited in-country presence. The three programme components are considered highly relevant to national needs by Focal Points, with direct funding support for countries and sub-regional workshops being the most highly valued. Over 90% of surveyed Focal Points have indicated that they would participate in a future phase of the project.

The most important CSP contributions to national capacities are (i) better understanding and application of GEF policies and procedures, (ii) more effective communication with GEF Partners, and (iii) enhanced peer-to-peer learning and exchange. Capacity building, coordination and peer-to-peer learning are closely linked and mutually reinforcing. This largely accounts for the high value attached to Sub-regional Workshops and Constituency meetings by Focal Points. Conversely, the project has had less effect in improving project design or monitoring practices at the country level.

2. Each project component has contributed to capacity improvements in its own way. Direct funding support to countries under Component 1 has led to more effective articulation of national environmental priorities for GEF support, expanded stakeholder involvement, development of databases and improved institutional memory. GEF Focal points value the rapid access to information on GEF policies and procedures, sub-regional workshops and Constituencies offered by the Knowledge Facility website (Component 2). The website has helped in orienting new Focal Points, an important contribution in view of turnover levels. The Sub-regional Workshops organized under the third project component are the CSP’s most valued initiative and have improved Focal Point understanding of GEF policies and procedures, facilitated exchanges of information between Focal Points, and enabled direct and more effective communication with the GEF partners and GEFSec in particular. Reserving time for open bilateral consultations at the workshops has been critically important for both Focal Points and the GEF partners. In a number of

cases, the direct access of Focal Points to GEF Secretariat resource persons has helped in expediting project approval and funding processes that were stalled or slow moving. More than half of the surveyed Focal Points apply the knowledge and capacity improvements acquired at Sub-regional Workshops to a “high” degree.

3. The CSP’s most outstanding qualities are its responsiveness to user needs and concern for quality, combined with effective performance by the implementing agencies and CSP project team in particular. It is fair to say that the CSP stands out more for its effective performance than impact. The programme components generate significant workload demands: UNEP has reviewed expenditure reports, processed and disbursed direct support funding to up to 89 countries each year, entailing high transaction costs. The annual Sub-regional Workshops that are held in the 8 sub-regions require considerable lead-time to organize and significant staff resources and oversight to conduct. Workshops and website products have been adjusted on the basis of participant surveys and evaluations. The UNEP the UNDP/UNOPS staff have responded very effectively to the challenges of implementing a global-scale initiative. The CSP programme team has balanced prescription with adaptive management and responsiveness to Focal Point needs. Indeed, the programme team considers that the CSP has offered a “democratic space” by enabling Focal Points to interact directly with GEF partners, shape discussion agendas and influence GEF policies.

4. There are few examples of cost-ineffectiveness or inefficiency, in spite of the CSP’s globalscale and delivery demands. Programme delivery has been effective and generally on-schedule. However, an unspent balance of US\$ 4 million in direct funding support remains, due to lower-than-expected country participation and delays by countries in approving MoUs to access funds. UNEP devoted considerable effort to processing and disbursing annual US\$ 8,000 grants to more than 80 countries. In hindsight this process could have been streamlined – and transaction costs lowered - by disbursing larger allocations through one or two payments, and by requiring less frequent reporting.

Each 3-day Sub-regional Workshop took an average of three months to organize, conduct and evaluate. Organizing travel and visa arrangements for hundreds of workshop participants has been a cumbersome task that could have been contracted to a private firm, as done by other global initiatives. However, the processing of travel arrangements by UNOPS in conjunction with UNDP Country Offices has worked quite well according to the CSP programme team.

The Knowledge Facility website offers high-quality tools and knowledge products that are used by Focal Points to varying degrees. More than one-quarter of surveyed Focal Points use the website regularly; a similar percentage doesn’t use it at all. Website use is not linear, and available statistics indicate considerable fluctuations in visits and “hits” fluctuate according to CSP workshop schedules, Focal Point turnover, and stages of the GEF programming cycle. There is little use of the Discussion Forum and Partnership Link tools. However, these inconsistencies do not

undermine the core value of rapid-on-line access to GEF information and knowledge materials when needed.

5. The CSP's capacity building effects are very much nurtured by the direct interaction and exchange between Focal Points and GEF partners. This is closely linked to the improved communications and application of GEF policies and procedures that are highlighted by Focal Point respondents. The Sub-regional Workshops and support provided for Constituency Meetings are key in this respect: The didactic benefits of face-to-face interaction and exposure to other experiences and "best practices" have enhanced coordination and rapport between Focal Points and GEF partners. To an extent this has also contributed to closing knowledge and capacity gaps between Focal Points.

6. GEF partners have benefited from the programme as much as most national Focal Points and participant countries. The presence of GEF partner representatives at Sub-regional Workshops has been critical in building relationships with national Focal Points; as a result, there is enhanced communication on project and funding matters that in several cases has yielded positive results. An important CSP contribution has been to enable direct communications between Focal Points and the GEF Secretariat on a recurrent basis; this has facilitated the development of sustained relations beyond the immediate scope of the programme. The GEF Evaluation Office used workshop sessions to consult with Focal Points on OPS 4 and the RAF Mid-term Review. The feedback provided has informed these evaluations and influenced aspects of GEF 5 including the design of the new STAR funding modality. Likewise, the combination of these factors enhanced GEF's corporate image among Focal Points in terms of openness and accessibility.

7. Programmatic linkages and coordination were lacking between the UNEP-managed module for direct financial support to countries and the other CSP components. There were instances of communication between the direct country support module and other CSP components: The module was jointly announced at various workshops and through the Knowledge Facility website. Several Focal Points shared their experiences in using direct support funds at workshop sessions. Yet to a large extent, this module has been a 'stand-alone' initiative by design – a situation reinforced by the implementation of project components by different agencies (UNDP, UNEP) under an arrangement that was politically expedient and inclusive, yet not very practical. Functionally, the direct support module is closer to the National Dialogue Initiative – also supported by GEF – than to the CSP. In many cases grant funds were used to support activities that bear direct relevance to national dialogues, which are country-focused and hence more likely to be sustained at the national level. It is likely that this module would have been better placed (and perhaps had greater impact) as an extension of the National Dialogue Initiative. The merging of the direct country support module with the NDI under the next programme phase - or establishing closer operational and programmatic linkages - would be a positive step.

8. The design of the CSP and related initiatives such as the NDI indicates a cumulative learning process within GEF that draws from the experiences of earlier programme cycles. Building on the experience of prior initiatives and the findings of performance evaluations has been critically important to programme design. The Overall Performance Studies of GEF programme cycles (OPS1, OPS2 and OPS3), the Report on the 2nd Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund and other documents identify recurrent limitations and propose actions that are reflected in the CSP's main support components. CSP design was additionally influenced by the *National Dialogue Initiative* (GLO/03/G34), which supported initial Focal Point consultations and shares the same programme team and Inter-Agency Steering Committee. As a result, the CSP started with a clear understanding of Focal Point capacity needs and has been able to manage implementation on a global scale effectively. The competence and dedication of UNEP and UNDP/UNOPS staff have also contributed significantly in this respect. The existence of a learning curve within GEF is a positive finding that reflects well on its institutional memory and adaptive management capabilities.

V. LESSONS

1. The availability of administrative and logistical support at the country level has been key for the CSP in general and Sub-regional Workshops in particular. The demands of organizing eight sub-regional workshops every year - addressing accommodation needs, visa requirements, protocol issues, advance payments and project site visits - would have been overwhelming for the CSP programme team without the support of UNDP's country office network. The demands of organizing eight sub-regional workshops every year - addressing accommodation needs, visa requirements, protocol issues, advance payments and project site visits - would have been overwhelming for the CSP programme team without the support of UNDP's country office network. The programme team has needed an average of three months to plan, implement and evaluate individual workshops attended by Focal Points and GEF partners. If the next CSP phase expands the number of workshop participants - as planned with the "extended constituencies" - the lead-time and on-the-ground support needs will increase accordingly. UNDP Country Offices were also instrumental in disbursing direct support grants when there were difficulties transferring funds to government accounts. A global support network or arrangement that provides in-country service is therefore critical for the continued effectiveness of the programme.

2. There are methodological challenges in evaluating the capacity effects of a global initiative such as the CSP. The CSP has had little country presence in most cases. Direct interaction with national Focal Points was largely limited to sub-regional workshops, and the scale of in-country activity under the first component was very small in most cases. The CSP programme team has been very efficient in monitoring (and documenting) the implementation of the project components it manages. Yet there is limited insight into the 'bigger picture' of what difference, if

any, the CSP has made in its fundamental objective of strengthening Focal Point capacities to carry out their mandates in support of global environmental issues, and improving national and constituency coordination. The evaluation findings are not comprehensive in this respect and rely largely on the responses to an e-survey and interviews with a limited sample of Focal Points, GEFSec representatives and GEF agency participants. A more comprehensive evaluation effort - encompassing a combination of GEF capacity building initiatives - is needed to better understand the aggregate effect of these initiatives on Focal Point performance and GEF programming. A thematic evaluation of GEF's capacity building efforts would provide an interesting option in this respect.

3. Inclusiveness and responsiveness to user needs in global scale capacity building programmes is critical for success, provided it does not overwhelm the absorptive capacity of target clients. The programme team's emphasis on consultation and responsiveness are good practices that merit recognition and emulation. This attitude is reflected in the three components and is most evident in the planning of Sub-regional Workshops and design of the Knowledge Facility website. There is no doubt that the spirit of consultation and inclusiveness has enriched the CSP and brought positive returns both in relevance and results.

However, the stakeholder priorities and endorsements that are manifested at workshops or other special events are not always consistent with the day-to-day realities that prevail outside the immediate project environment. Hence the overall use of some website knowledge products by Focal Points remains below initial expectations; the discussion forum and partnership links tools are well designed yet appear to exceed Focal Point needs at present. Although website design was endorsed by Focal Points through surveys and workshop consultations, Focal Points attend other responsibilities outside of GEF and in many cases lack the time (or may not need) to take full advantage of the website's potential. Intervening factors that affect website use include connectivity issues, and cultural or generational preferences for face-to-face interaction. Focal Points do communicate among themselves but tend to do so bilaterally around specific issues, using other Internet services. 'Less may be more' in the case of the Knowledge Facility website; several of its products and tools need to be reviewed and adjusted to real demand. This is part of the CSP's learning process and does not undermine the programme's merit in designing quality products and services for Focal Points.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. GEFSec needs to ensure that the capacity benefits of the CSP and Sub-Regional Workshops in particular do not diminish, as the scale of participants (and expectations) expand during the next project phase. This is important to sustain the quality and relevance that are highlighted under the third conclusion. There should be continued balance and synergies between the CSP's core capacity building objectives and enhanced coordination opportunities brought by the planned

inclusion of larger national delegations at the “expanded constituency meetings” and workshop events. It is expected that expanded constituency meetings will bring together GEF Operational and Political Focal Points, Focal Points to the Conventions and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and selected NGOs. This is a positive move that underscores the programme’s inclusiveness and significantly expands opportunities for the direct communications and peer-to-peer learning that are highly valued by Focal Points. It also supports the majority view of surveyed Focal Points who feel there should be wider stakeholder participation at the workshops. The combined presence of Focal Points and key stakeholders may also enhance the CSP’s ability to strengthen national constituencies on global environmental issues.

However, there are potential risks and trade-offs that should be considered. As GEFSec organizes larger CSP workshops that are attended by a wider range of participants, it will need to ensure that the diversity of mandates, experience levels and interests are considered. This may require more lead-time than has been the case, especially if the present high level of responsiveness to user needs is maintained. Workshop agendas will need to balance group and individual interests by combining plenary topics of general interest with a larger number of side events that address the needs of various sub-groups. This is also important to avoid ‘diseconomies of scale’ in the size of workshop sessions that would lower their pedagogic quality. It also calls for more resource persons and support staff, and possibly longer workshop durations beyond the 2-3 days that are currently allotted.

As noted, the expanded constituency meetings will bring a larger number of participants with issues to consult. This is good and should be supported, as bilateral consultations address concrete operational or funding matters and are highly valued by participants. However, an increase in the demand for bilateral consultations should be managed in a way that does not override the workshops’ core objectives. Otherwise, they may gradually evolve into expanded coordination conferences or ‘talk shops’ that are very useful to disseminate new policies, discuss *ad hoc* project issues, and document Focal Point feedback for evaluations and performance studies – but with less attention to the more pedagogical dimensions of capacity building.

2. The Sub-regional Workshops and Knowledge Facility website offer long-term mechanisms for interaction with country Focal Points, and should be used more intensively by the GEF Secretariat and implementing agencies. The CSP programme team has made commendable efforts to ensure that the website and workshops were designed around user needs and priorities. However, both the workshops and (to a lesser extent) the website have also benefitted the GEF partners, as noted under the sixth conclusion. In particular, workshop consultations have contributed to the evaluations of OPS-4 and the RAF, as well as to the design of the GEF’s new programme cycle. The workshops and website offer important mechanisms for direct communication and feedback on specific topics. They can (and should) be used more often by GEF and partner agencies to interact with country clients, with the possibility of “mainstreaming” this interaction as an

institutional practice beyond the next programme phase. The annual Sub-regional Workshops in particular have the potential to become a permanent venue for dialogue, coordination and incorporating country feedback to performance studies, forward planning exercises, regional or thematic evaluations and other policy/programme issues.

The Knowledge Facility website could be used to gather and systematize feedback from GEF Focal Points and other clients on the effectiveness of GEF support at different stages of the programme cycle, the performance of GEF implementing agencies, and the identification of operational constraints and emergent needs. Periodic consultations could assist the monitoring of overall implementation/delivery trends (i.e. by region or thematic area) in coordination with GEF's Project Management Information System (PMIS). Likewise, GEFSec and GEF-EO can be more proactive in organizing on-line discussions on policy and programme topics of mutual interest. An interesting option may be to use the website for on-line query and referral services, through which *ad hoc* inquiries and information requests would be circulated among Focal Points, GEFSec and agency resource persons for response within a specified time limit. This could assist the coordination needs between Focal Points and the GEF partners, alleviating the demand for direct consultations during workshop time.

3. Direct funding support for countries (Component 1) should be more closely coordinated with National Dialogues during the next phase of the CSP. This recommendation is based on the findings presented under Conclusion 7. Direct funding support to countries may be better placed within the NDI in order to link up with ongoing country processes and raise cumulative impact. Larger allocations should be considered for countries that have extensive territory/population or large GEF portfolios. The streamlining of administrative, disbursement and reporting functions with those of the NDI or similar GEF initiatives may also raise overall cost-effectiveness. The next phase of the CSP offers an opportunity to move forward on this issue. Likewise, it is possible that a more systematic synchronization of National Dialogues and Sub-regional Workshops may help in relaying country positions at regional forums more effectively. The environmental priorities and capacity needs identified at National Dialogues can feed into the development of regional platforms at Sub-regional Workshops and Constituency meetings.

4. During the next phase, consideration should be given to incorporating the Knowledge Facility website (or selected tools) into the GEF web page. As noted under the sixth conclusion, the CSP has generated benefits for the GEF Secretariat and GEF Evaluation Office that can be built on and "mainstreamed". The Knowledge Facility website offers an immediate opportunity to begin this process. Indeed, as GEF assumes implementation responsibilities for the CSP, maintaining a separate project website may no longer be necessary or desirable. The design and accessibility of the GEF website have improved in recent years according to several respondents, and the Project Management Information System (PMIS) database is now available to Focal Points. Integrating both websites should be approached in a

manner that conserves the Knowledge Facility's identity and ensures direct access to CSPknowledge products and tools.

5. The continued participation of GEF Agencies is important for practical and political reasons. This recommendation relates to the issues raised under the first lesson. As GEF begins a new phase of its evolution and assumes implementation functions that were previously assigned to partner agencies, it needs to take stock of its present capacity to manage an initiative of this scale (and with these demands). The GEF Secretariat lacks the in-country representation or service arrangements to attend the project's recurrent demands: Issuing small grants to countries across the globe, arranging workshop and hotel venues, processing travel arrangements and flying workshop participants from many countries, dealing with protocol and visa issues, and organizing site visits in addition to the inevitable contingencies.

These service requirements are likely to increase to the extent that there are larger Sub-regional Workshops with more participants. Relying on host governments to organize Sub-regional Workshops is not a good idea, as GEFSec will need to have control over this process. At least in the short-term, it may have to contract support from partner agencies with networks of country offices (and more implementation experience) to maintain the CSP's effective performance record. This will also allow GEFSec to focus on more substantive aspects of the project. Travel support services can be outsourced to a private firm, an arrangement that has worked well for other initiatives including the GEF Biosafety Clearinghouse project.

Further involvement by GEF implementing agencies is also desirable at a programmatic level. The CSP Inter-Agency Steering Committee should be maintained during the next phase; the GEF Secretariat can benefit from the continued support and advice of partner agencies as it assumes direct implementation. Agency representatives should continue to participate in the organization and delivery of Sub-regional workshops, in order to familiarize Focal Points with the services that are available, and enable them to make informed decisions in selecting implementing agencies for GEF projects. The institutional knowledge of GEF agencies can be shared with Focal Points and expanded constituencies at future workshops, enhancing their ability to link national needs to global environmental priorities.

Likewise, the cumulative experience gained by agencies in implementing GEF projects over the years can be harnessed to systematize and convey "best practices" in project formulation and management. The CSP potentially offers a platform for inter-agency collaboration on initiatives of mutual interest including joint project implementation arrangements, thematic evaluations, and the consideration of global environmental concerns within internal programming processes and during the development of project portfolios. These issues (and others linked to the role of GEF Agencies during the next CSP phase) need to be considered in greater depth; a Steering Committee meeting could be convened for this purpose in the near future.

6. A gradual transfer of project functions and responsibilities is recommended to sustain momentum and effectiveness between programme phases. The UNDP/UNOPS and UNEP programme teams have acquired the experience and work dynamics that are needed to manage the support components effectively. Given the imminent changes in the CSP's institutional home and implementation arrangements, it is important that this capacity be transferred as well. As GEFSec prepares to assume implementation, it should work out a chronogram with UNDP and UNEP for the gradual transfer of responsibilities to the next programme team. New programme staff should be designated in advance and, if possible, spend time in New York to learn the various support functions before the next phase begins in 2011.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Project Overview

Introduction

The GEF Country Support Programme (CSP) is a global corporate GEF programme implemented by UNDP and UNEP on behalf of the GEF Secretariat and the 10 GEF Agencies. The programme began implementation in 2006 and the overall project budget is \$12.13m (\$11.86m is provided by the GEF while \$270,000 is government in-kind contribution). It is governed by an Inter-Agency Steering Committee chaired by the GEF CEO and including representation of all GEF Agencies. The CSP is one of the key initiatives of the GEF directed towards strengthening capacity of national focal points and other national stakeholders on global environment issues.

Background

The CSP follows an early initiative to support focal points approved by Council in May 1999. An evaluation of this initial programme found that it had a positive, but limited effect on the capacity of focal points to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. The results of the evaluation made it clear that there was a continuing need for more comprehensive and systematic support to focal points, to strengthen capacity for coordination of environmental activities at the country level, raise awareness of GEF priorities, policies and programs, strengthen stakeholder involvement in global environmental programmes, and enhance the capacity of countries to develop and implement GEF projects.

In June 2005, the GEF Council approved elements for a new four-year phase of the programme of assistance to strengthen capacity of national focal points and Council Members (elaborated in GEF/C.25/9, *Elements for Strengthening National Focal points and Enhancing Constituency Coordination in GEF Recipient Countries*). This new approach was developed in response to the evaluation of the earlier focal point support programme, the recommendations of the three GEF Overall Performance Studies as well as the 3rd Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund. The Country Support Programme for Focal Points (CSP) was subsequently developed by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration with UNDP and UNEP and approved by the GEF Council in November 2005.

Rationale

The need to enhance the capacity of countries to develop, manage and mainstream GEF projects was underscored in successive studies of the GEF's overall performance (OPS1, OPS2 and OPS3) which also identified a number of weaknesses with regard to information and tools available for focal points to carry out their duties. These included lack of clarity about mandates, functions and general terms of reference of focal points, as well as institutional weaknesses. Inter-agency coordination mechanisms were found wanting and focal points did little to reach out to civil society stakeholders or did not have the budgetary resources to do so. The limited availability of local language GEF publications and information was also noted. The Performance Studies called for the GEF to take action to

enable GEF focal points to become more effective advocates for GEF programmes and issues. Recommendations included focusing more on the coordination and information dissemination roles of focal points and called for the GEF Secretariat to take a more vigorous approach to disseminating information about GEF programmes and policies to the focal points.

Most recently, with the implementation of the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) under GEF-4 commencing in 2006 and ensuing policy and programming changes, the role of national focal points has become pivotal in ensuring national level coordination and prioritization of projects submitted by countries to the GEF. A series of Sub-Regional Consultations conducted under the auspices of the GEF National Dialogue Initiative during January through July 2006 leading up to the 4th Replenishment of the GEF helped identify crucial issues by convening GEF Focal Points at the sub-regional level for the first time and seeking their feedback on priority topics and concerns. These meetings enabled consultations between GEF partners and national Operational and Political Focal Points in GEF recipient countries on a range of issues, and facilitated inputs by GEF focal points towards the implementation of the CSP. The CSP as the primary initiative targeting capacity building needs of focal points has had to respond to the evolving knowledge and capacity needs of focal points during its period of implementation (June 2006 – June 2010) which coincided with GEF-4.

Objectives and Activities of the Programme

The main objective of the CSP is to strengthen the capacity of GEF focal points to effectively carry out their mandates in support of the global environmental programmes in their countries and constituencies including the improvement of overall national and constituency coordination of global environmental issues.

The programme has the following three immediate objectives:

Immediate Objective 1: Country Support Programme established to support GEF focal points in strengthening stakeholder involvement, creating institutional memory and increasing country coordination and ownership

Immediate Objective 2: GEF knowledge management framework built and maintained to support GEF focal points to carry out their activities based on their expressed needs

Immediate Objective 3: Targeted capacity building activities provided to support GEF focal points to carry out their activities based on their expressed needs

The CSP provides direct annual funding to focal points for activities related to training, outreach and information sharing, and strengthening country and constituency level coordination to promote country ownership and facilitate active involvement of recipient countries and interested government and civil society stakeholders in global environmental activities. It supports the development of a country and constituency knowledge management framework to support access of focal points to information relevant to their needs, and delivers targeted capacity building activities through sub-regional information exchange and training workshops designed to promote dialogue among focal points and GEF Partners as well as updating focal points on GEF policies and developments and seeking their feedback on issues and concerns. The CSP also provides support to GEF Council Members and provides funds to convene twice annual meetings of GEF Constituencies. It also supports

annual “Familiarization Seminars” held at the GEF Secretariat for newly designated focal points.

The overall indicators identified in the project document include:

- 1) Focal points with improved access to newest information on GEF policies and procedures
- 2) Focal points with improved and sustainable constituency and national, multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms in place and contributing to mainstreaming global environmental activities into national planning frameworks
- 3) Focal points applying knowledge gained through the knowledge management framework and regional capacity building activities to improve their support for Global environmental programs at national level
- 4) Institutionalized capacity strengthened to coordinate, develop programs and monitor performance of national environment programs

Implementation Arrangements

With regard to implementation of the programme, the three immediate objectives of the CSP essentially mirror the following key components:

- Component 1: Country specific assistance based on national work plans
- Component 2: Development of a GEF Country and Constituency Knowledge Management Framework
- Component 3: Targeted capacity building through sub-regional exchange and training workshops

The CSP is jointly implemented by UNDP and UNEP with the overall strategic guidance provided by the GEF Secretariat. UNEP is responsible for implementing Component 1 and UNDP for Components 2 and 3. Oversight is provided by an Inter-Agency Steering Committee.¹⁵

Component 1 of the CSP is financially managed by UNEP/DGEF with involvement of the GEF Secretariat in approving countries’ workplans. In addition, financial support is also provided to enable the participation of the operational focal point and the political focal point or their designates at up to two constituency meetings convened each year. It also provides financial support to selected newly appointed focal points to participate in the GEF Familiarization Seminars.

Components 2 & 3 of the CSP are implemented by UNDP and executed through UNOPS. The CSP is managed within UNDP by a Programme Management Team which is responsible for the implementation of the CSP alongside another GEF corporate programme – the National Dialogue Initiative. The joint management of the two programmes facilitates the scheduling and sequencing of complementary activities involving GEF recipient countries and GEF partners. The components of the CSP – the online Knowledge Facility, and Sub-regional

¹⁵ The Inter-Agency Steering Committee of the CSP and National Dialogue Initiative was established in late 2006 as the oversight mechanism for the corporate programmes. It convened for the first time in December 2006. It is chaired by the GEF CEO with representation of all 10 GEF Agencies as well as the GEF-NGO Network.

Workshops for GEF Focal Points – complement the support provided by the GEF through National GEF Dialogues in selected countries.

Current status of programme implementation

The current status of the CSP, following approximately 3 years of full-scale implementation is as follows¹⁶:

Component 1: This component consists of three modules:

- Module-1: Direct annual funding to countries: Countries may access up to \$8,000 in funding to support Operational Focal Points based on approved annual workplans. Out of the targeted 128 countries, only 89 countries have accessed the 1st tranche of module 1 direct annual funding (see Annex 2). 35 countries out of this have accessed the 2nd tranche, 14 have accessed the 3rd tranche and only 1 country has accessed the final 4th tranche of CSP funding.
- Module-2: Constituency meeting support programme: Financial support is provided to enable the participation of the GEF operational and political focal points or their designates at up to two constituency meetings convened each year, 543 focal points have been supported in participating in 65 constituency meetings as of June 2010.
- Module-3: Support for GEF Familiarization seminars: Financial support is provided to new GEF focal points to attend GEF Familiarization seminars, 16 focal points have been supported to attend 2 seminars as of end 2009.

Component 2: the CSP Knowledge Facility (www.gefcountrysupport.org) has been up and running since May 2007, and is regularly updated with new information and expanded in terms of topics covered. The site serves as a mechanism for exchange of country experience among focal points. Demonstrations of the site are regularly provided as well as guidance to focal points in accessing interactive site features. Over 50 countries have posted materials on their country pages, while a few constituencies have started using their dedicated constituency pages.

Component 3: Sub-Regional Training and Exchange workshops have been held in all sub-regions for 3 successive years (see Annex 3), involving GEF Focal Points in most GEF recipient countries, GEF partners and donors in addition to observers from regional organizations, regional programmes, and NGOs. These workshops have provided a forum for exchange between GEF partners and countries at the sub-regional level. They have been designed to serve the purpose of updating focal points on GEF policies and procedures (such as the new project cycle, revised focal area strategies, comparative advantages of Agencies, and the implementation of the RAF), promote exchange of knowledge among countries through sharing of country specific experience on management of GEF portfolios, coordination issues, priority setting etc., and to elicit focal points' inputs and feedback towards two major evaluations during GEF 4 (the RAF Mid-Term Review, and OPS 4) as well as in the design and implementation of regional programmatic approaches.

2. Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

¹⁶ For further detailed information about the current status of the project, as well as progress made against the programme's objectives and outcomes, please refer to the Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) prepared for the years 2006-mid 2008, and mid 2008-mid 2009.

Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The objective of the evaluation is to analyze the contribution of the Country Support Programme (CSP) against its objectives as stated in the project document. In doing so, the evaluation will undertake a thorough assessment of the implementation and results of the project to date. It will also consider the degree of responsiveness of the programme in taking on board the feedback received from its target beneficiaries and partners, and guidance received from the its Inter-Agency Steering Committee.

In addition to forming an integral part of the project cycle, the evaluation of the CSP is also expected to lead to recommendations and lessons learned to assist GEF partners in defining the future directions of the ongoing capacity building, dialogue and outreach activities to support participating countries.

The evaluation will consider the following specific aspects of the project:

- (1) Project design: Review the original programme objectives and assess quality of design for delivery of planned outputs in the context of the ongoing evolution of the GEF and taking into consideration the country needs as outlined in the successive Overall Performance Studies of the GEF (OPS2 and OPS3).
- (2) Project implementation: Assess the following key aspects of project implementation:
 - a. project management arrangements, i.e., effectiveness of UNDP and UNEP's overall management on behalf of the GEF partners and the GEF Focal Points, the role of the GEF Secretariat in approving workplans under Component 1
 - b. quality and timeliness of outputs and activities,
 - c. governance of the project: the role of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee as an oversight and advisory body
 - d. cooperation among GEF partners in project implementation including GEF Secretariat, UNDP, UNEP, World Bank, ADB, AfDB, EBRD, FAO, IDB, IFAD, UNIDO, and UNOPS.
- (3) Project Results: Assess the
 - a. extent to which the project outcomes were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, using the indicators as defined by the project document.
 - b. consider if the project has led to any other short term or long term positive or negative consequences
 - c. catalytic role of the project – whether it was able to produce any catalytic or replication effects in the countries supported

Limitations:

The evaluation will consider the project's implementation from its start in 2006 through the end of 2009. The evaluation will consider the responsiveness of the project's design to relevant studies and evaluations in the course of GEF 4 (such as the implementation of the RAF and the RAF MTR results) but will not consider these aspects (and results of OPS 4 released recently in November 2009) when assessing the relevance of the original design of the project document and objectives stated in the project document which predate such findings. Findings of the RAF MTR and OPS4, especially in relation to the CSP may inform

this evaluation and may be taken in consideration with regards to recommendations for the future.

Key Questions guiding the Evaluation

In line with the GEF Evaluation Office's "Guidelines for Implementing and Executing Agencies to Conduct Terminal Evaluations" (May, 2009), the evaluation report should cover the following key aspects:

A. General Information about the Evaluation

This will provide information on when the evaluation took place, who was involved, the key questions, the methodology, and places visited. The evaluation report should also include the evaluation TOR and any response provided by the programme's management team as an annex.

B. Assessment of Project Results

The following criteria will be used to assess the extent of achievement of project outcomes and objectives:

- **Relevance:** Given that this is a multi-focal area GEF corporate programme, the evaluation will assess the programme's relevance in terms of consistency with overall GEF policy documents, including the GEF Instrument, the recommendations of OPS2 and OPS3. It will also consider its responsiveness to the overall GEF 4 Business Plan, and consider the findings of the RAF Mid-Term Review and OPS4 in coming up with recommendations for the future.
- **Effectiveness:** The evaluation will consider the extent to which the actual project outcomes and outputs are commensurate with the original or modified project objectives.
- **Efficiency:** The evaluation will consider the degree to which the project was cost effective.

C. Assessment of Sustainability of Project Outcomes

Assessment of sustainability will be undertaken, in the context of this project, keeping in mind that the project is designed to deliver upon a series of short-term national level support activities - Sub-Regional workshops, Constituency meetings, knowledge and exchange materials, and direct annual funding support - to assist GEF recipient countries and build capacity of focal points. The evaluation will assess at a minimum the "likelihood of sustainability", while giving attention to the analysis of risks that are likely to affect the persistence of project outcomes.

The evaluation will also take into account how other contextual factors not related to the project may affect sustainability. For example, where longer term sustainability has been realized as a follow-up to project activities – for example through the establishment/strengthening of GEF coordination mechanisms in a country following a Sub-Regional Meeting or following in-country consultative meetings supported with Direct Support funds – other contextual factors generally also play a significant role in the realization of such an outcome. The following dimensions or aspects of sustainability may be considered:

- Socio-political: Are there any socio-political risks that may affect sustenance of the project's outcomes? What is the risk that the level of ownership by countries will be insufficient to allow project outcomes/benefits to be sustained?
- Institutional framework and governance: Do legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits?

Given that the CSP is a fully funded GEF corporate initiative to build capacity of GEF focal points in recipient countries, the following two additional dimensions of sustainability may be less significant, but may be considered in the evaluation if relevant:

- Financial resources: consider the likelihood that necessary financial and economic resources will be unavailable or insufficient to meet countries continuing needs.
- Environmental: consider any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes.

D. Catalytic Role

The evaluation will describe any catalytic or replication effect of the project, as well as the catalytic or replication actions carried out by the project.

E. Assessment of M&E Systems

The evaluation will assess whether the project met the minimum requirements for project design of M&E, and the implementation of the project's M&E plan. The following aspects will be considered:

- M&E design: consider the use of sound monitoring and evaluation systems within the project to track progress and results – including baseline data, indicators, data analysis systems, and evaluation studies at specific times to assess outputs.
- M&E plan implementation: verify that an M&E system was in place and facilitated timely tracking of progress towards project objectives. The evaluation will also consider the degree of responsiveness of project management to adapt to and implement changes in programme execution based on, for example:
 - feedback received from countries (through participant evaluations of the CSP Sub-Regional workshops, and the Knowledge Facility, etc.) and
 - feedback received from GEF partners (e.g. strategic guidance provided by the programme's Inter-Agency Steering Committee in the course of implementation).
- Budgeting and Funding for M&E activities: assess whether M&E was adequately funded during project planning and implementation.

F. Assessment of Processes that Affected Attainment of Project Results

The evaluation may also consider the following additional factors to the extent that they may have a bearing on project implementation and attainment of project results:

- Preparation and readiness: Were the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its time-frame? Were capacities of executing agencies and counterparts properly considered in project design? Were lessons

- from other relevant projects properly incorporated? Were partnership arrangements properly identified and negotiated prior to project approval?
- Country ownership/drivenness: Was the project in line with the development and sectoral priorities and plans of countries? Are project outcomes contributing to national priorities and plans? Were relevant country representatives involved in the project? Have governments approved policies or regulatory frameworks in line with the project's objectives?
- Stakeholder involvement: Did the project involve the relevant stakeholders through information sharing, consultation, and by seeking their participation in the project's design, implementation, and M&E? Did the project make use of appropriate outreach? Did it make use of the skills, experience and knowledge of the appropriate government entities and other relevant stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of project activities?
- Financial planning: Did the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allowed management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allowed for timely flow of funds? Was there due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits?
- Implementing Agency's supervision and backstopping: Did Implementing/Executing Agency staff identify problems in a timely fashion? Did they provide quality support and advice to the project, approving modifications and restructuring the project when needed? Did the Implementing/Executing Agencies provide the right staffing levels, continuity, skill mix?
- Delays and Project Outcomes and Sustainability: Did delays affect project implementation and completion? If so what were the reasons? Did delays affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability, if so how?

G. Lessons and Recommendations

The evaluation will present lessons and recommendations on all aspects of the project that are considered relevant – including special attention to analyzing lessons and proposing recommendations on aspects related to: attainment of project objectives; sustainability of project benefits; catalytic effect and replication; and project monitoring and evaluation.

Methodology & Sources of Information

The evaluation methodology will rely on the following sources of information to collect quantitative and qualitative data – in cases where reliable data may not be available, the evaluator may use triangulation of the evidence collected through the various sources of information available in order to be able to present evidence based findings and derive solid conclusions:

- (1) **review of documents**, including the project document, presentation and reference materials, Annual Workplans and reports, the Knowledge Management Framework, Sub-Regional Workshop participant evaluation synthesis reports and Workshop summary reports prepared by the CSP, monitoring reports including CSP Annual project reviews/Project implementation reviews (APR/PIRs) jointly prepared by UNDP and UNEP, statistics and facts and figures recorded by the project based upon registered lists of participants and reports to and minutes of the Steering Committee meetings;

(2) **synthesis of questionnaires distributed.** Survey questionnaires may be distributed to the following project stakeholders:

- a. direct project beneficiaries: including GEF operational and political focal points, Council Members and Alternates.
- b. indirect beneficiaries who have been involved in CSP funded activities at the national level, such as representatives from other government agencies, civil society, and other stakeholders involved in GEF projects may also be consulted as relevant.

(3) **telephone interviews** with key project stakeholders including:

- a. direct project beneficiaries: including GEF operational and political focal points, Council Members and Alternates.
- b. individuals involved in project implementation: including UNDP and UNEP staff specifically working on the CSP Programme, GEF Secretariat staff, UNDP Country Office staff in countries which have hosted Sub-Regional Workshops, UNOPS principal manager, and relevant staff in UNDP, UNEP, World Bank, ADB, AfDB, EBRD, FAO, IDB, IFAD, and UNIDO who have participated in project activities.

If necessary a sampling of countries may be selected for more in-depth assessment of all CSP components accessed by those countries – in this case effort will be made to ensure a balanced representation with regard to regional distribution, country size, country context (e.g. LDC status, SIDS, economy in transition, etc.), as well as the size of a country's Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) resources under GEF-4.

Products expected from the evaluation

Based on the above points, the final evaluation report should assess what project activities, outputs and outcomes have been achieved to date, and reflect in specific upon the following aspects:

- (1) the extent to which project objectives have been met and noting where gaps are evident;
- (2) lessons learned from the experiences of the project, particularly considering those elements that have worked well and those that have not; and
- (3) recommendations to strengthen capacity building efforts and the ongoing dialogue process between GEF and participating countries, taking into consideration focal point and country needs and recommendations outlined in the OPS2, OPS3 and OPS 4 Reports.

Profile of Evaluator

The evaluation will be conducted by one senior evaluator. The evaluator is expected to have the following knowledge and competencies:

- Extensive knowledge of global environmental frameworks and multilateral environment agreements;
- Specialist in capacity building, institutional strengthening and mainstreaming environmental issues

- Strong evaluation expertise
- Prior experience in capacity building initiatives, public participation, stakeholder consultations and facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue;
- Extensive experience working on environmental issues in a wide variety of developing countries;
- Preference will be given to candidates with knowledge and understanding of the GEF, its procedures, policies and institutional structure;
- Language skills to facilitate interviews with some national stakeholders, particularly in French, Spanish and Russian speaking countries, would be a plus.

Timing

The evaluation is proposed to be carried out by the evaluator within a three-month period from mid-May to mid-August 2010.¹⁷

Guidance

The evaluation report and recommendations should be guided by the following relevant guidelines:

- The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, GEF Evaluation Office, Evaluation Document, 2006, No. 1
- Guidelines for Implementing and Executing Agencies to Conduct Terminal Evaluations, GEF Evaluation Office, May 9, 2007
- The Evaluation Policy of UNDP, Executive Board of the UNDP and UNFPA, May 2006
- UNEP Evaluation Policy, August 2009

In addition, the Evaluation is expected to be in line with the Standards and Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, issued by the UN Evaluation Group in April 2005.

Reporting

This independent evaluation is being commissioned by the CSP on behalf of the programme's Inter-Agency Steering Committee.

To safeguard this evaluation effort in the context of structural independence, as indicated in the GEF M&E Policy, an independent advisory panel including a representative each of the Evaluation Offices of UNDP, UNEP and the GEF will peer review and quality assure the Terms of Reference of the Evaluation as well as the interim and final drafts of the Evaluation Report.

The CSP Inter-Agency Steering Committee will approve the final TOR as well as accept the final Evaluation Report.

The CSP programme staff at UNDP and UNEP will furnish all necessary materials, information, inputs and contacts to the Evaluator and will be available to respond to questions and provide additional clarifications as necessary in the course of the evaluation.

¹⁷ A suggested timetable for organizing key tasks and deliverables in the course of the evaluation is provided in Annex I.

ANNEX 2

PERSONS INTERVIEWED

UNDP

CSP Project Team:

Steve Gold, Global Manager

Seemin Qayum, Senior Policy Advisor

Tehmina Akhtar, Senior Programme Advisor

Frances Lim, Programme and Knowledge Management Associate

Yannick Glemarec, UNDP GEF Executive Director

Juha Uitto, Director, UNDP Evaluation Office

UNEP

Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Task Manager, UNEP CSP (Component 1)

Lydia Eibl-Kamolleh, Fund Manager, UNEP CSP (Component 1)

Justus Mutiga, Finance Assistant, UNEP CSP (Component 1)

GEF Secretariat

William Ehlers, Team Leader

Henry Salazar, Senior Country Relations Officer

GEF Evaluation Office

Rob Van den Berg, Director

Claudio Volonte, Senior Evaluation Officer

Juan Portillo, Senior Evaluation Officer

Sandra Romboli, Senior Evaluation Officer

Country GEF Focal Points

A.F. Elisa, GEF Political Focal Point – Samoa

Roberto Elissalde, GEF Operational Focal Point – Uruguay

Shimelis Fekadu, GEF Operational Focal Point - Ethiopia

Ms. Yasmine Fouad, Head of GEF Unit, Environmental Affairs Agency - Egypt

José Antonio Gonzales, GEF Operational Focal Point – Peru

Justin Nantchou, GEF Operational Focal – Cameroon

Carmen Silva, ex-GEF Operational Focal Point – Colombia

Nayanika Singh, GEF Consultant, Ministry of Environment and Forest - India
Analiza Teh, GEF Operational Focal Point – Philippines
Philip Weech, GEF Operational Focal Point - The Bahamas

Agency Resource Persons

Jo Albert, GEF Focal Point for Latin America & Caribbean, World Bank
Mirey Atallah, UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre for Eastern Europe & CIS
Pablo Huidobro, UNIDO
Rikke Olivera, FAO
Nick Remple, UNDP Panama Regional Centre for Latin America & the Caribbean

ANNEX 3

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Country Support Programme for Focal Points: Project Document (GEF, 2006)

Country Support Programme for Focal Points: Project Implementation Reports/PIRs (CSP, 2008-2009)

Country Support Programme (CSP): Summary Report on Component 1 (UNEP, 2009)

Focal Point Surveys for Sub-Regional Workshops (CSP, 2006-2009)

Second Meeting for the Fifth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF, 2009)

Overview of the GEF Country Support Programme (CSP) and National Dialogue Initiative (NDI) – Power Point (2009)

Reforming the Country Support Programme and Procedures for Implementation (GEF, 2010)

Independent Evaluation of the GEF National Dialogue Initiative (J. Bellamy, 2009)

GEF National Dialogue Initiative and Country Support Programme: Inter-Agency Steering Committee Meeting Minutes (2007-2009)

Joint Response of the GEF Executing Agencies to the Paper Prepared by the GEF Secretariat on Comparative Advantages and Complementary Roles of the Implementing Agencies and Executing Agencies of the GEF (Prepared by the GEF Executing Agencies, 2006)

CSP Knowledge Facility: Areas of Work for Completion and Enhancement of the Site (CSP, no date)

Knowledge Management Tools: Presentation to GEF Council – Power Point (CSP, 2007)

Knowledge Management Framework (KMF) for GEF National Focal Points: Preliminary Assessment of its Purpose, Functions and Structure (CSP, no date)

GEF Focal Point Feedback on the CSP Knowledge Facility (CSP, 2008)

GEF Subregional Consultation Reports (GEF/NDI, 2006)

CSP Subregional Workshop Reports (2007-2010)

CSP Subregional Workshop Evaluations (2007-2010)

Annex 4

On-line Survey Questions for GEF Focal Points

1. Please indicate whether you are:

- GEF Political Focal Point (current)
- GEF Political Focal Point (former)
- GEF Operational Focal Point (current)
- GEF Operational Focal Point (former)
- Designated representative or staff of Political/Operational Focal Point

I. Component One

Module 1: Direct Funding Support for Countries based on Annual Work Plans

2. Has your country received Direct Support Funding (up to US\$ 8,000 annually), based on national work plans?

- Yes
- No

3. If you answered "yes" indicate how often your country benefited from Direct Support Funding:

- One year
- Two years
- Three years or more

4. To what degree have the activities funded by the CSP Direct Support Funding contributed to the following:

(Low: 1, Medium: 2, High: 3, Very High: 4)

- Improved assessment/articulation of national environmental priorities for GEF support
- Expanded and/or improved national stakeholder involvement during the GEF programming cycle
- Sustainable constituency coordination mechanisms
- Improved institutional memory on GEF policies, procedures, needs assessments and related topics
- Improved financial tracking, monitoring and reporting on GEF projects
- Mainstreaming of global environmental priorities in national planning frameworks

- More and/or improved GEF project proposals
5. Briefly describe any concrete examples of the improvements identified above.
6. Rate the extent to which adequate guidance was provided on submitting the national work plans
- Very High: 4
 - High: 3
 - Medium: 2
 - Low: 1
 - N/A
7. Were national work plans approved in an effective and timely manner?
- Always
 - Most of the time
 - Sometimes
 - Hardly Ever
 - Don't Know
8. Was CSP Direct Support Funding disbursed in a timely manner?
- Always
 - Most of the time
 - Sometimes
 - Hardly Ever
 - Don't Know

Module 2: Constituency Meetings

9. Have you participated in a GEF Constituency Meeting?
- Yes
 - No
10. If "yes", how often have you participated in GEF Constituency Meetings?
- Once
 - Twice
 - Three times or more
11. Please rate the usefulness of the Constituency Meeting(s) in providing information on GEF matters and developing consensus on policy positions among member countries

- Very High: 4
- High: 3
- Medium: 2
- Low: 1
- N/A

12. Do you have any suggestions for improving CSP support for Constituency Meetings?

Module 3: Familiarization Seminars

13. Have you participated in a Familiarization Seminar held at the GEF Secretariat in Washington, D.C.? If your answer is "no", proceed to Section 6.

- Yes
- No

14. If you answered "Yes" please rate the usefulness of the Familiarization Seminar in introducing you to GEF partners, policies, and procedures.

- Very High: 4
- High: 3
- Medium: 2
- Low: 1
- N/A

15. Do you have any suggestions for improving CSP support for Familiarization Seminars?

Component 2: Knowledge Facility Website for Focal Points

16. On average, how often have you visited the CSP KF website? If your answer is "never", proceed to Section 7.

- At least once a month
- 2-3 months
- Every 4-6 months
- Every 7-9 months
- Every 10-12 months
- Less than once a year
- Never

17. Rate the usefulness of the following KF services to your needs:
(Very High: 4, High: 3, Medium: 3, Low: 1)

- Information on GEF structure, policies, and procedures

- Knowledge materials on national GEF coordination, environmental mainstreaming, tracking national portfolios, etc.
- Information on Sub-Regional Workshops
- Information on National Dialogues
- Country pages
- Constituency pages
- Regional pages
- Events calendar
- Discussion forum
- Advanced search mechanism
- Partnership links

19. Rate the extent to which the KF has contributed to the following:
(Very High: 4, High: 3, Medium: 3, Low: 1)

- Improved FP understanding of GEF policies and procedures
- Strengthened capacities to develop, coordinate and monitor GEF projects
- Networking/consultations with FPs from other countries

20. Do you have any suggestions for improving the CSP KF website?

Component 3: Targeted capacity building activities to support GEF focal points in carrying out their activities based on expressed needs.

21. Have you participated in a CSP Sub-Regional Workshop? If your answer is "no", proceed to Section 8.

- Yes
- No

22. If you answered "Yes", how often you have participated in CSP Sub-Regional Workshops?

- Once only
- Twice
- Three times or more

23. Rate the degree to which contributed to the following:
the Sub-Regional Workshops have:
(Very High: 4, High: 3, Medium: 3, Low: 1)

- Improved understanding of GEF policies and procedures
- More and/or improved project proposals for GEF support
- Improved coordination with GEF Secretariat during the project design and approval process
- Improved interaction with/feedback to the GEF Evaluation Office

- Improved coordination with GEF partner agencies during the project design and approval process
- Exposure to successful projects and “best practices”
- Learning through peer-to-peer exchange with other Focal Points

IV. General Questions on the Programme

24. Rate the extent to which you are applying the capacities acquired at the Sub-Regional Workshops.

Very High: 4

High: 3

Medium: 2

Low: 1

N/A

25. Should the Sub-Regional Workshops be expanded to include other participants in addition to GEF Focal Points?

Yes

No

26. Do you have any suggestions for improving the design and/or delivery of future Sub-Regional Workshops?

27. Rate the extent to which the CSP has strengthened national capacities to:
(Very High: 4, High: 3, Medium: 3, Low: 1)

- Apply GEF policies and procedures
- Communicate effectively with GEF and partner agencies
- Contribute to the design of new GEF policies and procedures
- Articulate national priorities for GEF support
- Expand and/or improve national stakeholder coordination
- Design GEF projects
- Monitor the performance of GEF projects

