

Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS-7): Results Based Management

Draft Concept Note

Background

The Global Environment Facility's (GEF's) approach to results-based management (RBM) has evolved. Emphasis has shifted from tracking a wide range of indicators through tracking tools during the GEF-4 to GEF-6 period, to the present approach of focusing on a smaller set of core indicators. The instruments that are used for reporting the portfolio results and performance have also changed – Annual Portfolio Monitoring Report (APMR) has been replaced by the GEF Monitoring Report (GMR), which gives greater attention to strategic issues, and to reporting against targets and benchmarks (GEF 2019). GEF has also introduced a corporate scorecard to provide a summary of performance on key indicators at regular intervals. Further, at the start of GEF-7, GEF has shifted from its Project Management Information System (PMIS) to the GEF Portal.

The responsibilities for monitoring the GEF portfolio has shifted. During the GEF-1 (1994–98), after the GEF was restructured, a monitoring and evaluation unit was established in the GEF Secretariat in 1996. The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was made independent in 2003. With adoption of The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy of 2006, the monitoring function was transferred to the GEF Secretariat, which is now responsible for coordinating the monitoring activities, including RBM, across the GEF partnership.

GEF's results architecture is based on information provided by the Agencies through project documents, project implementation reports (PIRs), tracking tools, mid term reviews and terminal evaluations. The data on results and performance of the projects and programs is aggregated for reporting. Of these instruments, a tracking tool for protected areas was introduced for the first time during the GEF-3 (2002–06) period. During the GEF-4 period (2006-10) tracking tools for other focal areas were also introduced. From GEF-5 (2010–14) onwards GEF also started tracking a set of core results and performance indicators. Given that tracking tools were perceived to be onerous, these have been dropped in GEF-7 although projects approved in GEF-5 or earlier are still expected to continue using tracking tools. The projects approved from GEF-6 onwards are now expected to track performance on GEF-7 core indicators and their sub-indicators.

The GEF portal – including its earlier incarnation as PMIS – provides a platform to store, manage and retrieve data on GEF projects and program. This includes data related to project appraisal, implementation, performance and results, that may be aggregated. Quality of PMIS data and its accessibility have been longstanding concerns that have been reported in several evaluations. During GEF-7, GEF shifted to a new platform – the GEF Portal – to manage data on its activities and make it

accessible to a wide range of GEF partners and other stakeholders. The roll out of the Portal is still ongoing and it is yet to achieve its full functionality.

The GEF Secretariat reports to the Council and other stakeholders formally through several modalities. The GMR (including its predecessor the APMR) provides a summary of the progress and performance of the active portfolio of GEF projects. The GEF Corporate Scorecard, introduced during the GEF-6 period, tracks performance on core indicators, resource utilization, co-financing, stakeholder engagement, activity cycle efficiency, country support, gender, and communications related indicators. In addition, the GEF website, reports to the conventions, reports to the replenishment group, and other progress reports to the GEF Council, are other modalities through which reporting is done.

The GEF Council and Replenishment Group has shown interest in reporting of the results and performance of the GEF activities. It has also sought feedback on the GEF RBM system and on ways to improve it further. This review is being undertaken as an input to the OPS-7, which will inform the discussions of the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations. The review will examine the extent to which the OPS-6 recommendations related to RBM have been implemented and the extent to which the new GEF Portal is meeting the expectations of the GEF Partnership.

Coverage in Past Evaluations

Given the importance of RBM, GEF IEO has covered RBM in several evaluations and reviews. The Fourth Overall Performance Study (OPS-4) concluded that the tracking tools and environmental results indicators were not fully integrated in the GEF strategies and policies. Therefore, it recommended that the GEF should outline the steps needed for integration of the environmental results indicators into the RBM framework and implement those steps.

OPS-5 found that the GEF RBM system was overly complex and burdensome for the Agencies and recommended simplification of the tracking tools. Annual Performance Report (APR) 2015, assessed the extent to which OPS-5 recommendations related to focal area tracking tools had been addressed. The assessment found that the tracking tools for GEF-6 had been streamlined and were better aligned with the focal area results framework indicators. However, it noted, that the tracking tools for biodiversity and multifocal area projects remained complex and include too many indicators. APR 2015 also found gaps in compliance with the tracking tools requirements at several levels.

The Review of Results-Based Management in the GEF (2017), conducted for OPS-6, found that although RBM provides support for reporting, accountability and communications, it has played a limited role in evidence-based decision making and learning. It assessed PMIS's performance to be inadequate in meeting the increasing needs of the GEF partnership. The review called for an update of the RBM framework, an upgrade of the PMIS, and for addressing the shortcomings of the focal area tracking tools.

The GEF-7 is under implementation and it is imperative to take stock of the progress made in implementing the OPS-6 recommendations and address other emerging issues and concerns. GEF IEO has already started an Evaluation of Agency Self Evaluation Systems, which, among other things, addresses the role and performance of Agencies in supporting the GEF RBM system. It addresses systemic issues that may affect quality of information provided by the Agencies on results and

performance. This review of RBM will focus more on the systems that have been established and managed by the GEF Secretariat at the corporate level. The review will focus less on addressing the role of RBM in the GEF partnership, given that this was covered in detail in The Review of Results-Based Management in the GEF (2017) and little change may be expected on this topic in the interim.

Key Questions

The review will seek to answer following questions:

1. To what extent have OPS-6 recommendations related to GEF RBM system been implemented?

The review will determine the extent to which OPS-6 recommendations have been implemented. The focus will be on OPS-6 recommendations such as the update of the RBM framework, an upgrade of the PMIS, and to address the shortcomings of the focal area tracking tools. The review will assess the extent to which these measures have been implemented.

2. To what extent have the changes in the results architecture been effective?

The review will assess the extent to which changes in the GEF RBM framework make it less burdensome, improve the quality, timeliness and utilization of information. Some of the measures recommended in OPS-6 aim at these objectives. The review will assess the arrangements that the GEF Secretariat has put in place to ensure compliance, improve management, and increase utilization of the information from the RBM system.

3. To what extent does the new GEF Portal meets the expectations of the GEF partnership?

The review will assess the performance of the GEF portal with that of PMIS and compare the extent the portal meets the expectations of the GEF partnership including the GEF Secretariat, the Agencies, GEF IEO, the Council, and Operational Focal Points. The review will assess how the developers and administrators of the Portal have struck a balance among the competing needs and demands from the different user groups. The review will document lessons that may be learnt from the experience of the Portal's roll out. It will identify the factors that have affected the functionality of the Portal.

To what extent does the RBM system contribute to sound knowledge management?

The review will assess the extent to which the GEF RBM framework is consistent with its knowledge management framework. The focus will be on how information gathered through RBM is being processed, synthesized, shared and utilized. The review will determine the extent to which each RBM related information stream is being used. For example, how is the data from the mid-term reviews of GEF projects being used? Is GEF able to aggregate results of individual programs?

Methodological Approach

The review of RBM will draw from several sources of information. These include: a desk review of the GEF publications including Council documents, replenishment documents, GEF IEO evaluations and related intermediary products and datasets. The GEF documents relevant to RBM will provide

information on the expectations from the RBM and the framework adopted to deliver on those expectations.

Key informant interviews will be a major source of information on how GEF RBM policies, processes, and institutional arrangements are implemented. GEF Secretariat staff that has experience in RBM related issues, such as its RBM team, program managers, and coordinators, will be an important source of information on rationale for the design of RBM architecture and the GEF portal. They will provide information on how the RBM architecture is being implemented, and how information from the system is used for corporate decision making, reporting and designing new interventions. Interviews of Agency staff will be useful in understanding how the changes in the results architecture and GEF portal have affected their role in the system, how these changes affect compliance with the GEF reporting requirements, and quality and use of information. GEF Operational Focal Points and CSO Network Members will be the other key informants that will be interviewed.

Questions relevant to gathering perspectives of GEF Secretariat, OFPs, Agency staff, and CSO Network members on RBM related issues will be integrated in an online stakeholder survey for OPS-7. This would be done to avoid respondent fatigue as the same set of respondents may need to answer questions relevant to other topics being covered by OPS-7. The review will also seek to compare RBM related arrangements in GEF with those in other organizations. These include comparable network organizations and also international organizations that support projects focused on addressing environmental concerns.

Review team

The review will be conducted by a team that will comprise of senior and junior evaluators. The team will receive feedback from a peer reviewer.

Activity calendar and budget

The review will start in March 2020 and end in April 2021 (Table 1).

Table 1: Calendar of Activities

| Activity | Duration | Milestone |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Preparation of approach paper | March to April 2020 | End by April 30 th 2020 |
| Review of source literature | May to August 2020 | End by August 31 st 2020 |
| Conduct of interviews | September to December 2020 | December 20 th 2020 |
| Online survey | November to December 2020 | December 20 th 2020 |
| Analysis | January to February 2021 | February 28 th 2021 |
| Draft review report | March 2021 | March 31 st 2021 |
| Final report of the review | April 2021 | April 30 th 2021 |