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Strategic Country Cluster Evaluation (SCCE): Sahel and Sudan-Guinea Savanna biomes

Approach Paper

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Background

1. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was created in 1991 to serve as a financial mechanism that would ensure the achievement of global environmental benefits in the process of countries meeting their commitments to global environmental conventions. From its 4th replenishment phase (2006-2010) onwards, the GEF has been moving toward more integrated programming as a strategy to tackle the main drivers of environmental degradation and to achieve impact at scale (GEF IEO 2018a). In the programming directions for the 7th replenishment period (2018-2022), the GEF proposes to increase its investments in integrated programming (GEF 2018). Tackling the main drivers of environmental degradation through integrated programming is justified by the fact that many of these drivers extend their influence beyond national boundaries. To participate in integrated multiple country initiatives, governments need to find a balance between their national sustainable development priorities and their commitments to contribute to the global goals of the international environmental conventions they participate in. In this context, the way GEF support is operationalized at the country level is increasingly a key area of enquiry for the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the GEF.

2. The concept of Strategic Country Cluster Evaluations (SCCE) was introduced in the IEO work program for GEF-6 and subsequently approved by the Council (GEF IEO 2015). SCCEs focus on common themes across clusters of countries and/or portfolios involving a critical mass of GEF investments towards comparable or shared environmental challenges, and having gained over the years a substantial experience with GEF programming. Starting from aggregate portfolio analysis to identify trends as well as cases of positive and absent or negative change, SCCEs intend to deep-dive in those themes and unpack them through purposive evaluative inquiry. As was the case for their predecessor Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPEs),[1] SCCE design is based on the same conceptual analysis framework to enable comparing findings across geographic regions and/or portfolios. In addition to the aggregate portfolio analysis, SCCEs plan to use geospatial analysis to identify change on key environmental outcome indicators over time. Targeted field verifications will follow in specific hot spots selected based on the findings of the geospatial and portfolio analyses. The purpose of field verifications is to identify and understand the determinants of the observed change, or lack thereof.

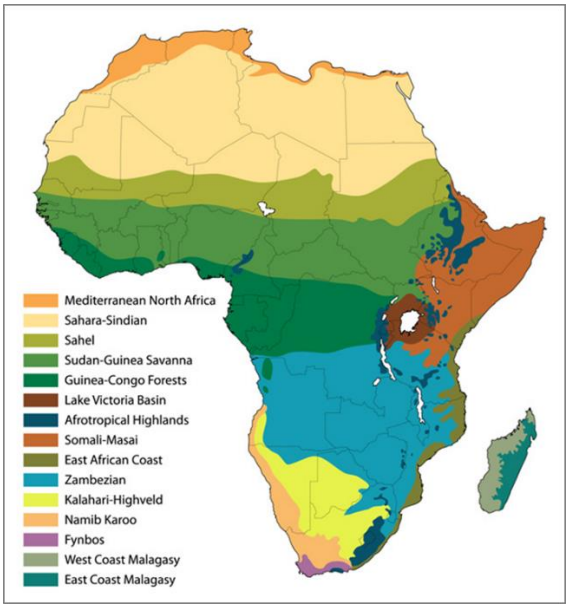
[1] From 2006 to 2016 the GEF IEO has conducted 26 country portfolio evaluations and studies, which used the country as the unit of analysis to examine the totality of GEF support across all GEF Agencies and programs. The new strategic country cluster evaluations build on this experience.

3. This SCCE covers two Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) biomes,[2] the Sahel and the Sudan-Guinea Savanna. Selection of the Sahel and the Sudan-Guinea Savanna biomes is based on the countries' comparable land-based environmental challenges. These countries also face challenges related to governance, demographics, migration, conflict and fragility, working as drivers for the environmental issues at hand. Most countries in the two biomes are LDCs, and half are fragile (World Bank 2018). The SCCE will assess some of the key issues that emerged from the main findings and conclusions of the 6th Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS6) (GEF IEO 2017a), deserving further exploration. These include the sustainability of outcomes, the relevance of GEF support to countries and their responsiveness to convention guidance. These are important issues in SSA. The SCCE will also assess gender, resilience and performance in fragile situations as cross-cutting issues. The SCCE will be conducted in parallel with two other SCCEs, one covering the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the other the Least Developed Countries (LDC). The three SCCEs will be harmonized in terms of questions, approach and process.

The Sahel and Sudan-Guinea Savanna biomes

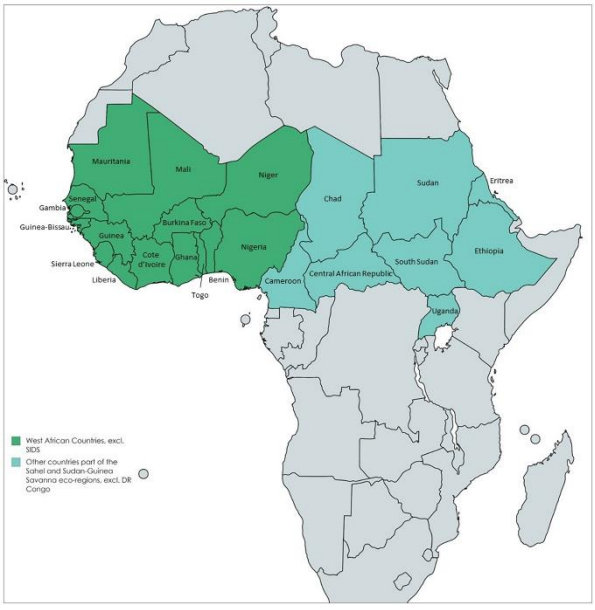
4. The Sahel and Sudan-Guinea Savanna cover a 12.2 million square kilometers' land area, stretching from the African East- to West-Coast. Countries in the two biomes include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo and Uganda. The Sahel includes parts of ten countries. The Sudan-Guinea Savanna covers large parts of 16 countries. Eight countries are part of both biomes (Maps 1 &2).

Map 1: Sub-Saharan Africa biomes



Source: Riley 2012

Map 2: Countries in the two biomes



[2] A biome is an ecological zone sharing similar habitats or vegetation types. Its uniformity is defined by the type of plant life in relation to temperature and rainfall patterns. Each biome consists of several terrestrial ecoregions (a smaller class). An ecoregion covers a realm of land/water having geographically distinctive communities, sharing the same environmental conditions and ecological dynamics (Data Basin 2010).

5. Despite experiencing strong economic growth in recent years, most countries in the Sahel and Sudan-Guinea Savanna are still low-income countries. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is US$ 1,396.[3] The 604 million population has growth expectations that are in line with those of the LDCs, i.e. a doubling of population between 2010 and 2050. Over 60 percent of the population lives in rural areas. While the population density is relatively low at 49 people per square kilometer, the average urban growth rate is close to four percent per year. Urban spaces are characterized by extremes of prosperous centers and poor, informal settlements. Many governments in these regions struggle to provide basic social services, especially access to water and sanitation (UN DESA 2014). Other challenges relate to achieving food and energy security and managing environmental risks.

6. A large portion of the two biomes is characterized by arid and semi-arid climates with strong climatic variations and irregular rainfalls. Forty-one percent of the land area is marked as agricultural land, of which about 12 percent is designated arable land. About 12 percent is classified as forest area, and about 13 percent is designated terrestrial protected area. Rain-fed subsistence agriculture is the main source of household livelihoods in many parts of the African drylands, especially the Sahel (Kumssa and Jones 2010). The drylands, grasslands and savannahs in the two biomes experience high spatial and temporal variability in rainfall, resulting in dramatic differences in plant growth, habitats and human livelihoods (UNEP 2007).

Environmental challenges in the two biomes

7. Countries in Africa's Sahel and Savanna face complex environmental challenges, the most common of which are deforestation, land degradation, desertification, and biodiversity loss (Table 1). These challenges are compounded by the pressing socio-economic needs of a rapidly growing population. Degradation of agricultural lands coupled with the high variability of rainfall poses obstacles to the food security and poverty reduction efforts in the region (UN 2013).

8. A significant part of the Sahel is classified as desert and the remaining part is highly vulnerable to desertification. This vulnerability is prone to increase with prolonged droughts and an increasing human pressure on water and land resources. Biomass burning, a common practice to all African savannas, is among the contributing factors. Controlled fires are used in the two biomes to manage grasslands and savannahs for livestock production and wildlife, control pests, clear dying vegetation, and convert wild lands to cropland (Trollope and Trollope 2004). Poor agricultural practices are the primary human cause for desertification in the two biomes due to their role in deforestation, soil erosion, and pollution.

9. The two biomes also face issues of pressure on water availability, accessibility and demand. In these predominantly arid and semi-arid lands, water consumption for agriculture highly exploits both surface and groundwater resources. Combined with climate variability and drought, this adds further pressure on the already limited water resources in the biomes. Because of decreased rainfall and increased water usage, the extent of Lake Chad decreased by 95 per cent over roughly 35 years (UNEP 2008). Lake Chad and the Nile river basin provide most of the available freshwater resource coming from transboundary watercourses. Groundwater in West Africa is difficult to access and is only about one percent of the water used. Fuelwood and charcoal demand for household energy consumption puts

[3] At constant 2010 US$.

pressure on forests and poses an additional threat to biodiversity. The balance between environment and development needs becomes central to sustainability, sustainable development, and livelihoods (Biggs et al. 2015).

10. The Sahel and Soudan-Guinea Savanna face important threats to biodiversity loss. Hosting two of Africa's eight biodiversity hotspots - the Guinean Forests of West Africa and the "W" biosphere reserve - these areas act as a buffer against advancing desertification. Human induced activity such as agricultural expansion, uncontrolled fires, and poaching poses a threat to the biodiversity and wildlife in these hotspots. Species are also threatened by logging, mining, and hunting. Increasing household demand for fuelwood and charcoal puts further pressure of forest resources, threatening biodiversity. Marine and coastal biodiversity is under stress due to overharvesting and unstainable fishing in the coastal areas of West Africa (USAID 2013).

Table 1: Main environmental challenges in the 23 countries

Benin	• Deforestation • Desertification • Threats to Biodiversity	Liberia	• Deforestation and Rubber Plantations • Threats to Biodiversity • Water Pollution
Burkina Faso	• Water Scarcity • Land Degradation and Desertification • Deforestation	Mali	• Desertification and Drought • Water Availability and Pollution • Threats to Biodiversity
Cameroon	• Land Degradation and Deforestation • Over-harvesting of Biological Resources • Degradation of Coastal & Marine Ecosystems	Mauritania	• Desertification and Deforestation • Iron Mining • Fisheries and Coastal Ecosystems
Central African Republic	• Subsistence and Commercial Poaching • Deforestation and Land Degradation • Diamond Mining and Pollution	Niger	• Desertification and Deforestation • Threats to Wildlife • Environmental Consequences of Mining
Chad	• Drought • Desertification and Land Degradation • Access to Water and Sanitation	Nigeria	• Desertification • Deforestation and Threats to Biodiversity • Oil Pollution
Eritrea	• Water Stress • Land Availability and Degradation • Deforestation and Threats to Biodiversity	Senegal	• Urban Pollution • Deforestation • Coastal Wetlands & Fisheries Over-exploitation
Ethiopia	• Water Availability & Access to a Safe Source • Livestock, Soil Erosion & Land Degradation • Threats to Biodiversity and Endemism	Sierra Leone	• Deforestation • Land Degradation • Overfishing
Gambia	• Drought and Agricultural Productivity • Threats to Forest and Wetland Ecosystems • Overfishing and Coastal Erosion	South Sudan	• Soil Erosion and Land Degradation • Poaching and the Ivory Trade • Forests and Fisheries
Ghana	• Deforestation • Land Degradation and Coastal Erosion • Overfishing & Reduced Water in Lake Volta	Sudan	• Soil Erosion and Land Degradation • Poaching and the Ivory Trade • Forests and Fisheries
Guinea	• Deforestation and Refugees • Overfishing & Destruction of Mangroves • Land Degradation	Togo	• Land Degradation and Deforestation • Threats to Aquatic Ecosystems • Threats to Biodiversity
Guinea-Bissau	• Deforestation • Cashew Farming and Soil Erosion • Threats to the Bijagos Biosphere Reserve	Uganda	• Land Degradation and Deforestation • Habitat Degradation & Threats to Biodiversity • Water Availability and Pollution
Ivory Coast	• Deforestation • Threats to Biodiversity • Threats to Coastal Ecosystems		

Source: UNEP 2008

11. Faced with severe environmental challenges, most countries in the two biomes have become party to the main international and regional environmental agreements. The convention to combat

desertification (UNCCD), the convention on biological diversity (CBD) and the Stockholm convention have been ratified by all the 23 countries in the two biomes, except for South Sudan, having still not ratified the climate change convention (UNFCCC) and the Stockholm convention. Most countries are also party to the newly established Minamata convention. Some countries joined other region-specific environmental agreements, such as the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Abidjan Convention for the Cooperation in the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Atlantic Coast of the West, Central and Southern Africa Region (Table 2).

Table 2: Countries' ratification of international environmental agreements

	UNFCCC	*UNCCD*	*CBD*	*Stockholm*	*Rotterdam*	*Basel*	*Minamata*	*CILSS*	*Abidjan*
Benin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Burkina Faso	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Cameroon	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Central African Republic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
Chad	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Eritrea	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	N/A
Ethiopia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
Gambia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ghana	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Guinea	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guinea-Bissau	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ivory Coast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Liberia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Mali	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Mauritania	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Niger	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Nigeria	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Senegal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sierra Leone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
South Sudan	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	N/A	N/A
Sudan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Togo	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A

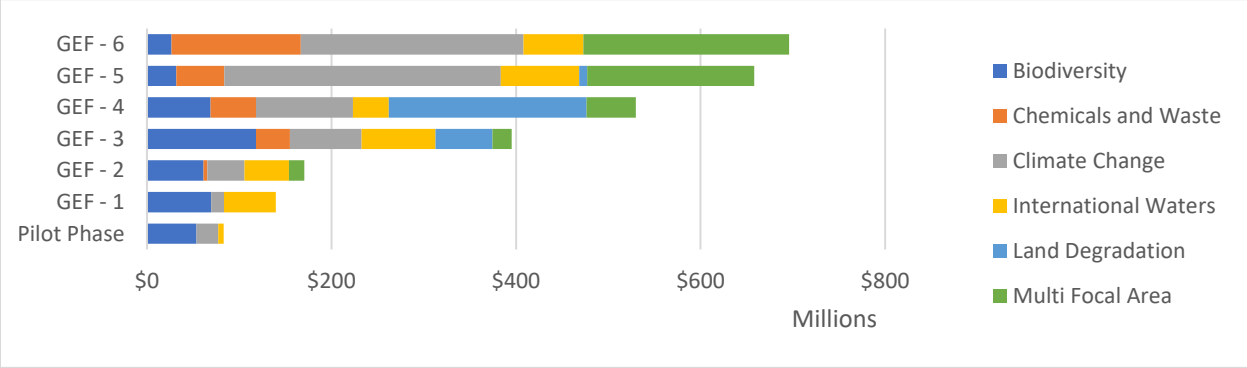
Source: convention websites

12. To comply with convention obligations, several countries in the two biomes have developed sound national environmental policy and legal frameworks. These frameworks are often not enforced either due to lack of funding, limited technical capacity, and/or political will in terms of different government priorities. According to UNEP, "Although some [African] countries have incorporated the MEAs into national policies and framework laws, few have succeeded in achieving the enforcement of policies and laws" (UNEP 2006, p.501).

GEF support in the two biomes

13. Overall, since its pilot phase to date[4] the GEF has invested $2.67 billion in grants accompanied by $17.7 billion in co-financing through 783 national and regional interventions that are relevant to the countries in the two biomes (Figure 1). The 23 countries are also part of 84 global projects and programs totaling $683.3 million, among which the Small Grants Programme (SGP). Countries' participation in the SGP started in GEF-4 and continues to this day. A total of $209 million funding for the global SGP has been provided twice in each replenishment phase from GEF-4 to GEF-6.

Figure 1: Focal Area grants by GEF phase in the two biomes



Note: this figure excludes global interventions

14. As seen in Figure 1, in GEF-5 climate change became by far the highest share of the GEF portfolio. Most climate change interventions fall under the adaptation category. Land degradation projects started in GEF-3 with the establishment of the land degradation focal area. These projects increased from 16 percent in GEF-3 to 40 percent of the total in GEF-4 and decreased in GEF-5. As in the case of the GEF overall, multifocal area projects in this portfolio started growing during GEF-4, a trend that is still observable today. GEF-6 sees a substantial increase in the chemicals and waste investment.

15. Table 3 presents the breakdown of projects by GEF support modality since GEF-4 (2006) to date, including both national and relevant regional interventions. Most child projects[5] are full-size, which add to the high number of standalone full-size projects. This is by large the most used support modality in the 23 countries during the last three GEF replenishment periods.

Table 3: Projects and funding by support modality (GEF-4 – GEF-6)

Support modality	Number of Projects/Programs	GEF Grant Amount (US$)
Parent Program	14	-
Child Project	120	678,187,691
Enabling Activity	65	29,533,577
Full-size Project	198	1,074,895,899
Medium-size Project	69	83,897,483
Grand Total	**466**	**1,866,514,650**

[4] The cut-off date for this analysis is 31 January 2018.

[5] GEF programming through programmatic approaches is delivered through a variable number of 'child projects' that form part of a parent program and are designed to contribute to the overall program objective.

16. Climate change and multifocal support takes up most of the portfolio in the GEF-4 – GEF-6 period in terms of both the number of projects and funding (Figure 2 and 3). The climate change adaptation portfolio makes up 81 percent of all the climate change focal area support in the two biomes. The remaining 19 percent is dedicated to mitigation. Funding for climate change adaptation comes exclusively from the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), while most of the funding for mitigation interventions originates from the GEF trust fund.

Figure 2: Projects by Focal Area (GEF-4 – GEF-6)

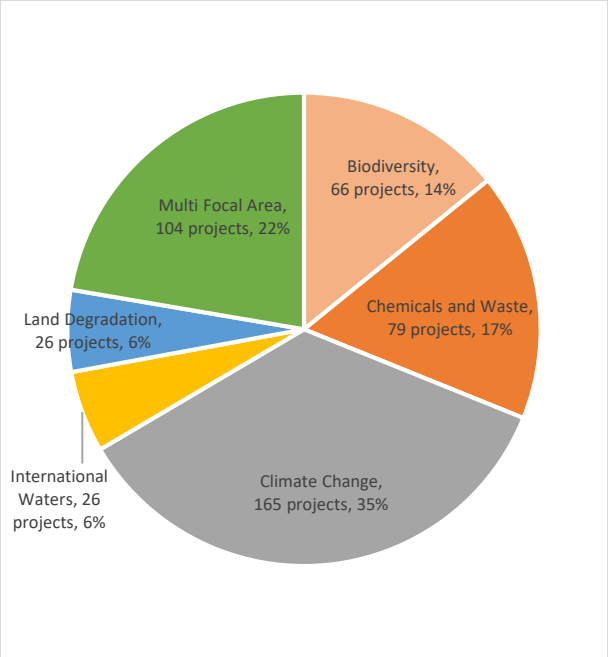
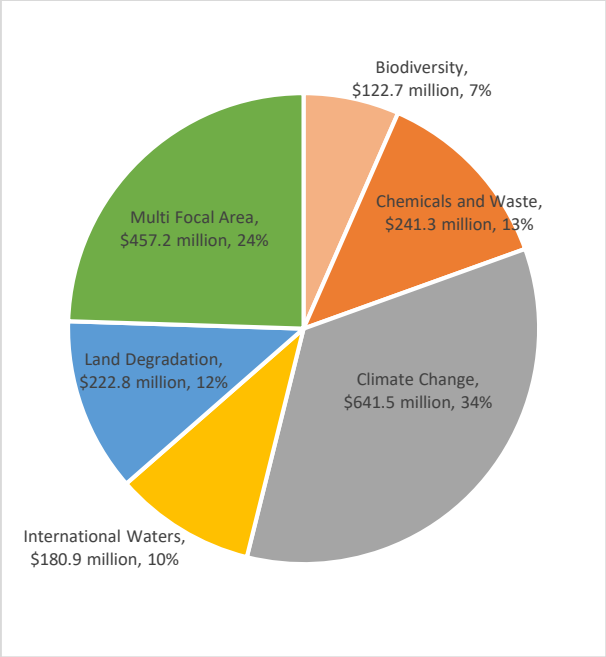
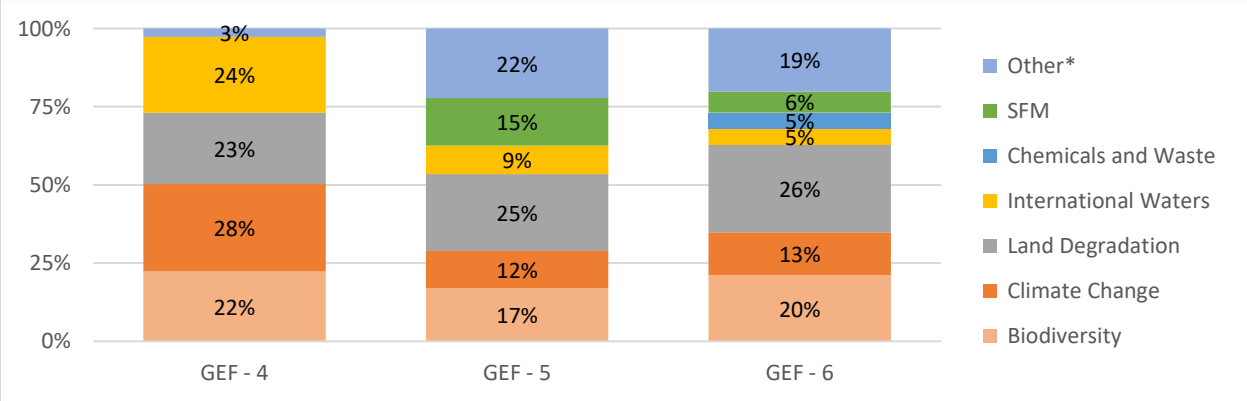


Figure 3: Grants by Focal Area (GEF-4 – GEF-6)



17. Funding for multifocal projects, amounting at $457.2 million, originates from several sources. Overall in the GEF, multifocal projects show an increasing share of the land degradation component (GEF IEO 2017b). In the two biomes, the main share originates from the funds earmarked to the traditional GEF focal areas of biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters and chemicals and waste. Contrary to the GEF overall portfolio trends, in the two biomes portfolio the land degradation share in multifocal funding maintained comparable levels from GEF-4 to GEF-6 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Multifocal Area support by funding component (GEF-4 – GEF-6)



*This category includes funding for the Integrated Approach Pilots (IAPs), LDCF, SCCF, and funding for multifocal projects not disaggregated by focal area.

18. In GEF-4, when the programmatic approach modality was formally introduced, programs constituted about 75 percent of total programming in the two biomes. Funding for programs decreased substantially, to 23 percent in GEF-5 and 20 percent in GEF-6 (Table 4). Overall, programs are becoming larger in size and move towards multifocal interventions.

Table 4: Programmatic versus non-programmatic support by GEF phase (GEF-4 – GEF-6)

Replenishment Phase	Programmatic support			Non-programmatic support through Full- and Medium-sized Projects, and Enabling Activities		Totals	
	# Programs	*# Child Projects*	*US$*	*#*	*US$*	*#*	*US$*
GEF - 4	7	77	384,490,477	47	128,278,859	131	512,769,336
GEF - 5	5	21	152,401,510	147	505,277,526	173	657,679,036
GEF - 6	2	22	141,295,704	138	554,770,574	162	696,066,278

19. Thirty-three percent of GEF support in the two biomes is constituted by projects or programs under implementation, the majority of which are GEF-5 interventions. Most of the projects completed in the last three replenishment periods belong to GEF-4, while most of GEF-6 interventions have yet to start implementation (Table 5). Completed interventions include the TerrAfrica program, a strategic investment program for sustainable land management. The program, with a GEF grant investment of over US $150 million and over US $ 1 billion in co-finance, included 36 child projects in 29 countries.

Table 5: Project status by GEF phase (GEF-4 – GEF-6)

Project Status	GEF - 4		GEF - 5		GEF - 6		Totals	
	#	*US$*	*#*	*US$*	*#*	*US$*	*#*	*US$*
Pending Approval	-	-	-	-	46	169,007,369	46	169,007,369
PIF/PPG Approval/Clearance	-	-	-	-	15	27,460,109	15	27,460,109
Council Approved	7	124,073,091	6	27,923,935	44	286,495,739	57	438,492,765
CEO Approved / Endorsed	1	915,000	55	235,842,014	39	173,527,195	95	410,284,209
Under Implementation	60	209,257,037	92	362,754,384	17	38,575,866	169	610,587,287
Completed / Closed	63	178,524,208	20	31,158,703	1	1,000,000	84	210,682,911
Total	**131**	**512,769,336**	**173**	**657,679,036**	**162**	**696,066,278**	**466**	**1,866,514,650**

Available Evaluative Evidence

20. Evidence from evaluations conducted by IEO helps identifying issues to be covered by this evaluation. OPS6 found that while the GEF has a strong track record in delivering overall good project performance, likely sustainability of outcomes remains the greatest challenge. Country context, quality of implementation, and quality of execution influence project sustainability ratings. As is the case of projects funded by multilateral development banks, GEF projects in Africa have comparatively lower ratings for outcomes and sustainability than in other regions. Limited institutional capacity has been identified as the greatest issue to be addressed. OPS6 also found that one of the conditions for transformational change to occur is the establishment of mechanisms for future financial sustainability through the market, government budgets, or both. Another possible approach is to move from projects

to long-term programs. The Integrated Approach Pilots (IAPs) initiative, a programmatic approach introduced in GEF-6, has been designed for long-term sustainability (GEF IEO 2017c). These OPS6 findings stimulated GEF-7 Replenishment Group discussions on sustainability, highlighting the need to further unpack the factors enabling or hindering the sustainability of outcomes.

21. OPS6 also reports that GEF focal area objectives are strongly aligned with country priorities, and that the expansion of the GEF partnership to 18 Agencies has increased GEF relevance in countries through greater choice and focal area coverage. However, it has not always been the case. For example, past evaluations identified a disconnect between GEF support and countries' demands for land degradation support (GEF IEO 2009b). The Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS5) concluded that the land degradation focal area drew more resources than expected, exceeding its original allocation under GEF-5 (GEF IEO 2014). Part of this gap was later fulfilled through multifocal support. As for the expansion of the partnership, it was intended to increase choice, access, and availability for numerous underserved countries, especially LDCs and SIDS, based on Agency comparative advantage. For sure, the expansion has increased competition among the GEF Agencies, a positive development. However, whether the expanded partnership translates in more relevant support to developing countries' needs and priorities is still to be demonstrated. Importantly, OPS6 did not provide an in-depth assessment of responsiveness to the conventions from a country perspective. This is especially relevant to the current and foreseen GEF transitioning toward more integrated multi-country programming in GEF-7 and beyond.

22. Other evaluations besides OPS6 provide evidence on the issues at hand. The Joint GEF/UNDP Evaluation of the SGP (GEF IEO 2015) found that the small grants outcome sustainability ratings are comparable to those for other GEF projects. The SGP has always given significant attention to community level benefits and livelihoods. This attention has yielded positive results. In addition, SGP results on the ground in terms of promoting gender equality and contributing to gender empowerment are evident. No evidence or perception of a trade-off between the SGP's gender and global environmental objectives was found. To note, from 2008 to 2010 the SGP increased its focus in SIDS, LDCs and countries in fragile or conflict-affected situations.

23. A sizeable amount of funding in the 23 country portfolios (27 percent) originates from LDCF resources. According to the LDCF program evaluation (GEF IEO 2016a), the main area of potential concern for the LDCF portfolio is the financial sustainability of project activities beyond the scope of project-related funding. Added to that is the need to integrate climate change adaptation with national policies and programs (institutional sustainability), and the need for country ownership to ensure sustainability (sociopolitical sustainability). On gender, the performance of the LDCF portfolio has improved considerably in response to enhanced requirements from the GEF, though there seems to be confusion as to what it means to be "gender mainstreamed".

24. Evaluative evidence collected by IEO from 2008 to 2014 through country-level evaluations in the two biomes has confirmed that long-term sustainability of outcomes remains a challenge. In 2008, the IEO found that the results of GEF support to Cameroon were at risk because of weak financial, institutional, and socioeconomic sustainability. The Cameroon CPE recommended the GEF to further support trust funds as an approach to improving the financial sustainability of protected areas (GEF IEO 2009a). Some positive results were also reported though. The GEF portfolio in Benin developed local structures for co-managing natural resources and their related benefits, resulting in positive

socioeconomic sustainability. At the time of that CPE, several years after the projects ended, the GEF-supported village-based co-management structures were still playing a central role in the success and sustainability of agreed efforts through these initiatives (GEF IEO 2008). More recently, reporting on GEF portfolios in Eritrea, Sierra Leone and Tanzania consolidated in the seventh Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report (ACPER) (GEF IEO 2014) concludes that the likelihood of sustainability is mixed. It has been most successful when pursued through the fostering of institutional and individual capacity development and the promotion of livelihood activities through community-based approaches (e.g., the SGP). The ACPER confirmed that the most successful efforts have been those aimed at developing local capacities as well as linking local community benefits to improved environmental management.

Purpose, Objectives and Audience

25. The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess some of the main issues emerged from OPS6 main findings and conclusions, which deserve further exploration. The overarching objectives are twofold:

(i) To provide a deeper understanding of the determinants of the sustainability of the outcomes of GEF support in the two biomes; and

(ii) To assess the relevance and performance of the GEF towards the two biomes' main environmental challenges from the countries' perspective.

Gender, resilience, and GEF operations in fragile situations will be assessed as cross-cutting issues. Any other important issues emerging from country visits will also be considered.

26. The primary audience of this SCCE is the GEF Council, who expressed concerns regarding the weak sustainability of GEF support in SSA, an issue to address in the context of GEF-7 and beyond. The evaluation will also provide evidence that could be used to inform the GEF Secretariat's appraisal of project proposals coming from the two biomes' countries, and inform the broader constituency of GEF Agencies and to GEF member countries as well as non-governmental partners engaged in project and program design.

Scope, Issues and Questions

27. The Sahel and Sudan-Guinea Savanna biomes, characterized by comparable land-based environmental challenges, delineate the geographic scope of the evaluation. Portfolio-wise, the SCCE includes enabling activities, projects, and programs in the 23 countries that are part of the two biomes. All the global and those regional interventions that are set up as umbrella arrangements for administrative convenience are excluded from the evaluation scope. SGP interventions in the two biomes will be covered, as the SGP constitutes for many of those countries an important modality of GEF support.

28. The analysis will focus on Biodiversity, Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation, the latter specifically focusing on carbon sequestration from forestry and other land management practices. It will also cover Land Degradation, International Waters (only for freshwater interventions), POPs/Chemicals

(particularly the stockpiles/elimination of pesticides projects), and the multifocal interventions composed of biodiversity, climate change adaptation and land degradation.

29. For most evaluation components, the SCCE will cover the period from GEF-4 (started in 2006) to GEF-6. The sustainability analysis, including both the TE/TERs portfolio and geospatial analysis components, will focus on national and regional interventions that have been completed between 2007 and 2014, to provide sufficient time after completion, allowing to observe the sustainability of outcomes for these completed projects in the long term.

30. Based on the evaluation purpose and objectives, as well as on the scope defined in the preceding paragraphs, this SCCE will seek to answer the following five key questions (KQs):

KQ1) *What are the key factors influencing sustainability of outcomes in the two biomes?*

31. OPS6 has confirmed once more the limited sustainability of outcomes from completed projects, with likelihood of sustainability rated at 63 percent. This average is not unique to the GEF. Members of the GEF-7 Replenishment Group expressed an interest in having a deeper understanding of the factors contributing as well as the factors hindering the sustainability of outcomes. While OPS6 points at limited institutional and financial sustainability as hindering factors, it does not discuss other possible factors. Sustainability of outcomes will be assessed in more depth, with the aim of understanding what are the most important hindering as well as the main contributing factors at play in the two biomes, beyond the institutional and financial ones.

KQ2) *In what way, if any, does the environment and socio-economic development/livelihoods nexus (or lack thereof) help explain the sustainability of outcomes in the two biomes?*

32. The environment vs. socio-economic development/livelihoods nexus, a concept that is central to sustainable development, is too often neglected in development interventions, both by donors and developing countries alike. Efforts to integrate socio-economic development with environment conservation/sustainable use both at national and local levels depend on the interest of country governments. Many governments in the two biomes believe it is difficult to achieve both at the same time, considering that rather than a nexus, major trade-offs exist between environment and socio-economic/livelihoods objectives. Country differences exist on: (i) reliance on natural resources, (ii) susceptibility to natural disasters, (iii) the poor's dependence on the environment, and (iv) the governments' economic development and other priorities. The analysis of the nexus (or absence thereof) linkages to the identified factors of weak sustainability will be contextualized in the environmental and socioeconomic outcomes related to the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which the GEF contributes in the two biomes (GEF 2015).

KQ3) *To what extent has GEF support been relevant to the main environmental challenges the countries face in the two biomes, and are there any gaps?*

33. Integrated programming provides flexibility in the set of interventions to be implemented, which allows the national environmental priorities to be achieved alongside those of the GEF and the national socioeconomic development priorities. In the two biomes, a large part of the portfolio is composed of multifocal projects and programmatic approaches. The analysis will focus on these and other factors influencing the relevance of GEF support to the two biomes departing from the specific environmental challenges they face (described in Table 1), and reviewing the countries' access to and

use of GEF finance windows, support modalities and intervention typologies they have available to tackle these issues. In short, the analysis will assess how country environmental priorities translate into GEF programming in the two biomes.

34. The analysis will also look at the relevance of GEF services offered to countries. OPS6 confirmed that the range of expertise and targeted financial support the GEF offers to countries has greatly increased recently with the expansion of the GEF partnership to the current 18 Agencies. It remains to be seen whether and how this opportunity is being captured by the small recipient and/or least developed countries. The expansion is relatively recent and needs time to produce the expected increased relevance of GEF support to developing countries and small economies. This specific part of the analysis will build on the findings of the evaluation of the expansion of the GEF partnership (GEF IEO 2016b) and apply a formative approach because the expansion is relatively recent.

KQ4) *To what extent have gender and resilience been taken into consideration in GEF programming in the two biomes?*

35. Gender mainstreaming will be a key component in GEF-7 due to the approval of a new policy on gender equality. Furthermore, gender analysis is increasingly a cross-cutting area of enquiry in all IEO's evaluations. While it is too early to see the effectiveness of the new GEF policy on gender equality (GEF 2017), it is still possible to critically assess the performance on gender and women's empowerment in the two biomes based on the available data. Gender will be analyzed through both desk review, portfolio analysis and case studies. The latter will review if gender performance on paper also translates into real women's empowerment on the ground.

36. Resilience is a key aspect in the geographic region covered by this evaluation, as demonstrated by the large and growing number of adaptation interventions in the two biomes. In the absence of a GEF definition of resilience, two resilience considerations will be used. First, the analysis will look at how resilience is considered, being either as: (i) risk management, (ii) a co-benefit, or (iii) integrated into a multiple benefits framework (STAP 2014). Secondly, the analysis will look at the core component of the resilience concept in resilience-focused projects, identifying whether resilience is viewed: (i) in a static system/engineering sense, (ii) as incremental change, or (iii) as transformational change (Béné et al. 2012, 2017).

KQ5) *To what extent has GEF support performed in the 13 fragile countries in the two biomes, and how have the results obtained from completed GEF projects and programs been affected in those situations that have become fragile?*

37. The GEF does not have a definition of fragility in an operational context nor does it have a policy or special procedure for working in fragile states. The GEF's work on fragility is supported primarily through SIDS and LDCs (AusAid 2012). As seen, the SGP is one of the tools the GEF uses to provide support to fragile countries. OPS6 reported that compared to GEF-5 funding, support for fragile states increased from 8 to 10 percent, but did not provide an assessment of the performance and results of such support. This evaluation will use the World Bank's harmonized list of fragile situations. The analysis will aim at identifying the most common factors having affected the performance and results of GEF support in fragile contexts.

Evaluation Design, Quality Assurance and Limitations

38. The evaluation questions will be answered through a mixed-methods approach encompassing both quantitative and qualitative analytical tools. An evaluation matrix composed of the five key questions, relevant indicators, sources of information and methods is presented in Annex 1. Synergies with the other two SCCEs will be sought by coordinated data gathering, analysis, and cross-fertilization. As part of the evaluation design, a scoping mission has been conducted to Senegal to probe the main questions and evaluation approach. Senegal was selected as it is composed by ecoregions that are representative of both biomes.

39. The IEO has recently completed a study on the sustainability of GEF project benefits in the latest APR (GEF IEO 2018b). The study analyzes IEO datasets on TEs and Progress to Impact (P2I) ratings to assess correlations among sustainability, outcomes, implementation, broader adoption, project design features, country characteristics and other variables. The analysis takes stock of projects for which field verifications were conducted by IEO at least two years after project completion. This study provides the aggregate findings that –together with the portfolio level geospatial analysis– will inform the design of the case studies for this evaluation. The results of the IEO sustainability study on factors driving sustainability will be explored in depth in a limited yet as representative as possible set of case studies. The plan is to conduct six case studies, identified based on the results of the portfolio and the geospatial analyses and given the need to cover projects as well as program sites. To select them, the aggregate analysis will help identifying hot spots of sustained (or absent) environmental change to which the GEF contributed in the two biomes.

40. In addition to standard evaluation components such as documentation review, portfolio analyses and interviews, this SCCE will pilot dyadic interviews (Box 1). This is a qualitative interviewing technique based on the creation of a conversation between two stakeholders sharing either a preexisting relationship or a common interest, knowledge and participation experience (Morgan et al. 2016). Dyadic interviews will be applied to pairs of child and standalone national project managers from similar countries in the two biomes to inquire about evidence or examples of positive, negative and absent long term environmental change and the related underlying factors in each example.

Box 1: Dyadic Interviews

The dyadic interview format allows each pair of participants to build on each other's comments through a process of sharing and comparing. By sharing their points of view, the participants expand their coverage of the evaluation topic. By comparing their points of view, the participants differentiate their thoughts about the same evaluation topic. Compared to individual interviews, dyadic interviews bring a high level of engagement in the interview itself. Compared to focus groups, dyadic interviews enable deeper and more informative storytelling while being much easier to moderate.

41. Desk review techniques (through document review protocols) will be used for answering the relevance as well as the cross-cutting questions on gender, resilience and fragility. The resilience analysis will use the methodologies developed by STAP and by Béné et al., mentioned earlier. A quality-at-entry approach will be applied to formative analyses, as for example the relevance to the countries of the expanded network of GEF Agencies, due to its recent introduction. The case study phase will benefit

from the overall portfolio level analyses and desk review results, from which to deep dive into the factors emerged more frequently.

42. Portfolio level geospatial analysis will be used for KQs 1 and 2. It will benefit from the geocoding and related geospatial analysis being conducted for an evaluation of the GEF support to Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). This analysis will focus on projects which outcomes are observable geospatially. These include projects in the following focal areas: land degradation, climate change adaptation, forests and biodiversity. Multifocal projects and regional programs composed of two or more of these focal areas will also be included in this analysis. Change of local environmental conditions will be measured using indicators such as: (i) forest area as a proportion of the total land area; and (ii) Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) as a proxy indicator to examine the long-term spatial and temporal patterns of land productivity measured as vegetation density, among others. Socio-economic indicators will be part of this analysis, and other indicators may be identified in coordination with the SFM evaluation.

43. Triangulation of the information and qualitative as well as quantitative data collected will be conducted at completion of the data analysis and gathering phase to determine trends and identify the main findings, lessons and conclusions. Different stakeholders will be consulted during the process to test preliminary findings.

44. In line with IEO's quality assurance practice, two quality assurance measures have been set up for this evaluation. The first is a Reference Group, composed of representatives from the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies, and STAP. The Reference Group will: (i) provide feedback and comments on the approach paper, the preliminary findings and the evaluation report; (ii) help ensuring evaluation relevance to ongoing as well as future operations; 3) help identifying and establishing contact with the appropriate individuals for interviews/focus groups; and 4) facilitate access to information. On June 6, 2018 the Reference Group met for the first time to discuss jointly the draft approach papers of the three SCCEs. The feedback from that meeting was incorporated in this approach paper.

45. The second quality assurance measure is an external Peer Reviewer, identified either from GEF Agency Evaluation Offices or from other recognized evaluation institutions, with experience in country-level and/or environmental evaluation. Her/his role is to advise throughout the evaluation process on: (i) the soundness of evaluation design, scope, questions, methods and process described in the approach paper; and (ii) implementation of the methodology and implications of methodological limitations in the formulation of the conclusions and recommendations in the draft and final reports. The IEO invited Dr. Michael Spilsbury, Director of UNEP's Evaluation Office, who kindly accepted. On August 1st, 2018, Dr. Spilsbury provided a few insightful inputs contributing to sharpen the evaluation design and approach. These inputs have been incorporated in this approach paper.

46. Two limitations can be identified at this stage: (i) the unreliability of PMIS data on programs as it is not regularly updated, especially on status; and (ii) limited number of field visits that will be possible to conduct in the timeframe allowed for this evaluation. The first limitation has been addressed by cross-checking PMIS portfolio information with the management information systems of GEF Agencies as a priority before undertaking any analysis. This process was completed in July 2018. The second limitation will be mitigated by conducting field missions to countries jointly with those that will be conducted in the SIDS and LDCs SCCEs as well as other evaluations either conducted by IEO or by the

evaluation units of GEF Agencies, to increase field coverage. The team will report on how these as well as other emerging limitations will be dealt with during the evaluation data gathering and analysis phase.

Process, Deliverables and Dissemination

47. The SCCE is being conducted between March 2018 and December 2019. The evaluation is conducted in two phases: I) aggregate analysis (portfolio, geospatial, quality at entry, other); and II) field verifications (case studies). Geospatial analysis will be conducted in October 2018, once the projects datasets geolocation task will be completed. Field verifications for the six case studies will start in December 2018, once the results of the aggregate portfolio and geospatial analyses will be available. An initial work plan is presented here below. The work plan will be revised and fine-tuned as part of further preparations (Table 6).

Table 6: Timetable

Year	2018										2019											
Task **Month**	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*Jun*	*Jul*	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*Jun*	*Jul*	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*
Approach Paper																						
Background information & portfolio data gathering	x	x	x	x																		
Approach Paper discussed with the reference group				x																		
Mission to Senegal to probe the evaluation design				x																		
Finalizing the approach paper						x																
Data gathering and analysis																						
Desk review/Portfolio analysis (PRT design and filling)							x	x	x													
Geospatial analysis								x	x													
Quality at entry and other analyses								x	x													
Six country case studies										x	x	x	x	x								
Triangulation brainstorming															X							
Gap filling															X	x						
Report writing																						
Draft report																x	x	x				
Due diligence (gathering feedback and comments)																			x			
Final report																				x	x	
Presentation to Council in the SAER																						x
Dissemination and outreach																						->

48. Regular stakeholder interaction will be sought to enhance the evaluation process. This will include consultation and outreach while the evaluation is under way, and dissemination and outreach once the study is complete. During evaluation preparation, the team will solicit feedback and comments from stakeholders to improve the evaluation's accuracy and relevance. An added benefit is stimulating interest in the evaluation results. The principles of transparency and participation will guide this process. Such stakeholder interaction will contribute important information and qualitative data to supplement data, interviews, case studies, and other research.

49. The main findings, conclusions and recommendations will be included in the IEO Semi Annual Evaluation Report (SAER) that will be presented to Council at the fall meeting in December 2019. The full report will be uploaded as a Council information document. It will be distributed to the Council members, GEF Secretariat, STAP, GEF country focal points and GEF Agency staff. A graphically edited version will be published as open access on the Office's website. A detailed dissemination plan will be

prepared and implemented, which will include distribution of the above-mentioned outputs in the main evaluation networks through existing IEO mailing lists as well as mailing lists of audience and stakeholders that will be developed during the conduct of the evaluation. The plan will also consider concrete opportunities to present the evaluation through webinars as well as at evaluation conferences.

Resources

50. The SCCE is being conducted by a team led by a Senior Evaluation Officer from the IEO with oversight from the Chief Evaluation Officer and the Director of the IEO. The team benefits from coordination and interaction with the IEO's staff managing the other two SCCEs, and will be supported by IEO evaluation analysts. Short term consultants will be selected to help with desk reviews and portfolio analyses. National or regional consultants will be selected for field verifications to benefit from the extensive knowledge of context and issues at hand in the case study countries. The required skills mix includes practical, policy, and/or academic expertise in key GEF focal areas of the projects and programs under analysis, evaluation experience and knowledge of external information sources that are relevant to GEF activities in the case study countries.

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Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix

Key Questions	Indicators/basic data/what to look for	Sources of information	Methodology
KQ1) *What are the key factors influencing sustainability of outcomes in the two biomes?*	- Aggregate effectiveness and outcome ratings - Aggregate ratings of sustainability of project outcomes - Aggregate financial, socio-political, institutional, and environmental risks to sustainability ratings	- APR data, including any other available TEs/TERs of projects completed between 2007 and 2014 - APR 2017 Study on the sustainability of GEF project benefits	- Portfolio analysis - Desk review
	- Aggregate progress to impact (P2I) and broader adoption mechanisms (sustaining, replication, scaling-up, mainstreaming and market change) in place	- TEs/TERs of projects completed between 2007 and 2014	- Broader Adoption/P2I desk analysis - Document review protocol
		- IEO & GEF Agencies' evaluations	- Desk review
	- Evidence/examples of positive, negative and absent change based on the above mechanisms, and identification of main underlying factors in each example, including: (i) stakeholders involved at design; (ii) private sector involvement post-completion; (iii) existence of institutions functioning after completion; (iv) evidence of private sector co-financing; (v) other.	- Central stakeholders	- Interviews
		- Country stakeholder - Available country data	- Dyadic interviews (*with pairs of child and standalone project managers from similar countries in the biomes*) - Field observations in six case studies *(case studies will be conducted in synergy with the LDC and SIDS SCCEs)*
	- Aggregate geospatial data on: (i) forest area as a proportion of the total land area; (ii) NDVI; and (iii) socio-economic indicators; among others. - Links between immediate outcomes and GEBs (expressed as geospatial data) - Hot spots of positive, negative and no change based on the above mechanisms, and identification of main underlying factors in each example	- GIS/Remote Sensing databases - TEs/TERs of projects completed between 2007 and 2014 that can be and/or have already been geocoded - Country stakeholders - Available country data	- Aggregated geospatial analysis aimed at identifying hot spots and no change - Field observations in six country case studies *(geocoding and analysis of environmental and socio-economic parameters to be done in conjunction with SFM evaluation)*
KQ2) *In what way, if any, does the environment and socio-economic development/ livelihoods nexus (or lack thereof) help explain the observed sustainability in the two biomes?*	- Aggregate geospatial data on: (i) forest area as a proportion of the total land area; (ii) NDVI; and (iii) socio-economic indicators; among others.	- GIS/Remote Sensing databases; completed projects between 2007 and 2014 that can be and/or have already been geocoded	- Aggregated geospatial analysis aimed at identifying hot spots and no change
	- Aggregate financial and environmental risks to sustainability ratings	- APR data, including any other available TEs/TERs of projects completed between 2007 and 2014	- Portfolio analysis
	- Aggregate countries' differences in: (i) reliance on natural resources, (ii) susceptibility to natural disasters, (iii) poor's dependence on the environment, and (iv) governments' economic development & other priorities	- TEs/TERs of projects completed between 2007 and 2014	- Document review protocol
	- Existence of regulatory framework enabling private sector to address environmental issues - Evidence of access to private sector funding after project completion	- TEs/TERs of projects completed between 2007 and 2014 - IEO's country-level evaluations (Cameroon, Benin, Eritrea and Sierra Leone)	- Document review protocol - Desk review
		- Country stakeholders - Available country data	- Field observations in six country studies
	- Perceptions on the existence of a nexus or a trade-off between environment and socioeconomic development	- Country stakeholders - Available country data	- Field observations in six country studies
KQ3) *To what extent has GEF support been relevant to the main environmental*	- Existence of national operational strategies related to GEF focal areas	- Documentation from completed and ongoing enabling activities	- Document review protocol
		- Country stakeholders	- Interviews - Field observations in six country studies

Key Questions	Indicators/basic data/what to look for	Sources of information	Methodology
challenges the countries face in the two biomes, and are there any gaps?	- Alignment of GEF support with national environmental priorities and budgets, and with other donors' support to the environmental sector in the countries	- Available country data (laws/policies, strategies and budgets; documentation from other donors)	
	- Evolution of STAR and non-STAR focal areas allocations and utilization - Evolution of GEF support by modality	- Portfolio data from PMIS, Agency verified	- Portfolio analysis
	- Variety of the services available to countries from the 11 GEF Agencies working in the two biomes	- Portfolio data from PMIS, Agency verified - Project documentation	- Formative quality-at-entry analysis either by biomes or by groupings of countries according to common criteria/features (*building on the findings of the evaluation of the expansion of the GEF partnership*)
	- Actual and planned use of the services available to countries from the 11 GEF Agencies working in the two biomes	- Country stakeholders - Available country data	- Field observations in six country studies
	- Perceptions on incentives and disincentives to embark in GEF integrated programs and/or multifocal projects	- Country stakeholders - Available country data	- Interviews - Field observations in six country studies
KQ4) *To what extent have gender and resilience been taken into consideration in GEF programming in the two biomes?*	- Existence of gender analysis - Existence of sex disaggregated / gender sensitive data (i.e. share of men & women involved in project design; share of men & women targeted as direct beneficiaries; share of men & women in lead project mgmt. roles)	- Portfolio data from PMIS, Agency verified - Project documentation - OPS5 and 6 data on gender (also covering APR data from TEs/TERs of projects completed since GEF-4 to GEF-6)	- Portfolio analysis - Document review protocol
	- Gender ratings	- GEFSEC Annual Monitoring Report data and corporate scorecard on gender	- Portfolio analysis
	- Evidence of women's inclusion and women's empowerment - Linkages between country gender plans, policies, strategies and project strategies and plans on gender	- Country stakeholders - Available country data	- Field observations in six country studies
	- Existence of resilience considerations	- Project documentation from PMIS, Agency verified	- Document review protocol
	- Resilience as 1) risk management, 2) as a co-benefit, or 3) as integrated into a multiple benefits framework	- APR data from TEs/TERs of projects completed since GEF-4 to GEF-6 - Portfolio data from PMIS, Agency verified	- STAP methodology
	- Resilience as 1) in a static system/engineering sense, 2) resilience as incremental change, or 3) resilience as transformational change	- APR data from TEs/TERs of projects completed since GEF-4 to GEF-6 - Portfolio data from PMIS, Agency verified	- Béné et al. methodology
KQ5) *To what extent has GEF support performed in the 13 fragile countries in the two biomes, and how have the results obtained from completed GEF projects and programs been affected in those situations that have become fragile?*	- Aggregate effectiveness, outcome and sustainability ratings, and their variation over time in the fragile countries - Fragility data and indicators of project countries	- World Bank list of fragile situations from FY06 to FY18 - TEs/TERs of projects completed between 2007 and 2014 in fragile countries	- Portfolio trend analysis - Comparative rating analysis between different cohorts of fragile situations (always fragile, become fragile, not fragile anymore, etc.)
	- Main features and dynamics on environmental change caused by fragility	- Relevant existing literature	- Literature review
	- Perceptions on the most important factors having influenced the variations in those fragile countries having shown the largest change in performance	- Central stakeholders - Country stakeholders - Available country data	- Interviews - Case studies selected on an opportunistic basis (if feasible)