

The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

To fulfill its mission as a financial mechanism for international cooperation aimed at achieving global environmental benefits, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) undertakes a broad range of innovative and pioneering initiatives. The success of these efforts must be carefully monitored and evaluated in order to:

- promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives and the contribution of GEF results to global environmental benefits; and
- promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned as a basis for decision-making on policies, strategies, program management, and projects, and to improve knowledge and performance.

In February 2006, the GEF Council approved a new monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policy which aims to explain, standardize, and institutionalize the concept, role, and use of M&E within the GEF.

Definitions

Evaluation—systematic and impartial assessment of an activity, project, program, strategy, policy, sector, focal area, or other topics aimed at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the involved partners.

Monitoring—continuous or periodic function using systematic collection of qualitative and quantitative data to keep activities on track and thereby help identify implementation issues that warrant decisions at different levels of management.

Monitoring System Characteristics and Evaluation Criteria

GEF projects and programs will adopt monitoring systems that are SMART:

- **Specific**—the system captures the essence of the desired result by clearly and directly relating to the achievement of an objective and only to that objective.

- **Measurable**—the monitoring system and indicators are unambiguously specified so that all parties agree on what is covered and there are practical ways to measure it.
- **Achievable and attributable**—the system identifies what changes are anticipated as a result of the intervention and whether the results are realistic.
- **Relevant and realistic**—the system establishes levels of performance that are likely to be achieved in a practical manner, and these reflect stakeholder expectations.
- **Time-bound, timely, trackable, and targeted**—the system allows progress to be tracked in a cost-effective manner at a desired frequency for a set period, with clear identification of the particular stakeholder group to be affected by the project or program.

In general, evaluations explore five major criteria, not all of which need to be systematically reviewed in all cases:

- **Relevance**—the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time.
- **Effectiveness**—the extent to which an objective has been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved.
- **Efficiency**—the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.
- **Results**—the positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes to and effects produced by a development intervention.
- **Sustainability**—the likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially and socially sustainable.

Principles

The following internationally recognized professional ideals guide GEF M&E initiatives.

Independence. Members of evaluation teams should be independent from both the policy-making process and the delivery and management of assistance.

Impartiality. Evaluations must give a comprehensive and balanced presentation of the strengths and weaknesses of the policy, program, project, or organizational unit being evaluated.

Transparency. Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of M&E processes.

Disclosure. M&E lessons shall be disseminated by establishing effective feedback loops to policy-makers, operational staff, beneficiaries, and the general public.

Ethical. M&E shall provide due regard for the welfare, beliefs, and customs of those involved or affected, avoiding conflict of interest.

Partnership. The GEF Evaluation Office and other GEF partners shall actively explore the possibility of joint evaluations to provide insights and feedback not necessarily feasible through a stand-alone evaluation.

Competencies and Capacities. M&E activities may require a range of technical expertise within social science or the evaluation profession.

Credibility. M&E shall be credible and based on reliable data or observations.

Utility. M&E must serve the information needs of intended users.

Minimum Requirements

The following minimum requirements shall be applied to M&E efforts at the project level.

1. Project Design. All projects will include a concrete and fully budgeted M&E plan by the time of work program entry for full-sized projects and of approval by the GEF Chief Executive Officer for medium-sized projects. This plan will contain at a minimum:

- SMART indicators for project implementation;
- SMART indicators for results;

- project baseline, with a description of the problem to be addressed and indicator data;
- identification of reviews and evaluations to be undertaken; and
- organizational set-up and budgets for M&E.

2. Application. Project monitoring and supervision will include implementation of the M&E plan:

- SMART indicators for implementation are actively used.
- SMART indicators for results are actively used.
- The baseline for the project is fully established and data compiled to review progress reviews, and evaluations are undertaken as planned.
- The organizational set-up for M&E is operational, and budgets are spent as planned.

3. Project Evaluation. Each full-sized project will be evaluated at the end of implementation:

- The evaluation will be undertaken independent of project management.
- The evaluation will apply the norms and standards of the Implementing or Executing Agency concerned.
- The evaluation will assess, at a minimum, the achievement of outputs and outcomes and provide ratings for targeted objectives and outcomes, the likelihood of sustainability of outcomes at project termination, and whether the preceding two minimum requirements regarding M&E project design and application were met.
- The evaluation report will contain, at a minimum, basic data on the evaluation (when it took place, who was involved, the key questions addressed, the methodology); basic project data, including actual GEF and other expenditures; lessons of broader applicability; and the evaluation's terms of reference.
- The report of the evaluation will be sent to the GEF Evaluation Office immediately when ready.

The GEF Evaluation Office is an independent entity reporting directly to the GEF Council, mandated to evaluate the focal area programs and priorities of the GEF.

The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (February 2006) is available on the GEF Evaluation Office website at thegef.org (in the Policies and Guidelines section). For more information, please contact the GEF Evaluation Office at gefevaluation@thegef.org.