



Global Environment Facility

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DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRY STRATEGIES FOR GEF PROGRAMMING

1. At the Council meeting in June 2007, the GEF Evaluation Office presented its Country Portfolio Review for the Philippines (GEF/ME/C.31.4). The review noted that, although all the reviewed GEF projects in the Philippines country portfolio actually support the GEF's mission to produce and sustain global environmental benefits, the linkage between projects and GEF's overall objectives was not clearly documented in the individual project proposals. The review suggested that the overall impact on the global environment would have benefited from a more consciously coordinated effort among the projects in the country portfolio. The Evaluation Office proposed that the GEF should develop country specific programming strategies to better assist countries that receive significant GEF funding.

2. Council Members found that this proposal needed a thorough consideration of the added value that GEF programming strategies for individual countries would provide, in view of the already existing country strategies produced by the GEF agencies and other donor organizations as well as existing national strategy documents. Council Members emphasized the importance of country ownership and country drivenness in the development of national priorities. The Council requested "the Secretariat to prepare for Council consideration in November 2007 a proposal for development of country assistance strategies leading to better coordination and programming at the country level".

3. In response, the Secretariat undertook a desk review of: (1) a range of programming strategy instruments which are current requirements for countries to receive multilateral and bilateral funding; (2) a range of countries' own national programming strategies; and (3) current GEF instruments and programs which serve to support development of country strategies.

4. GEF Agencies have systematic institutional processes for the development of programming strategies at the country level. For example, the World Bank Country Assistance Strategies (CASs), UNDP's Country Strategy Notes, UNEP's Country Profiles, the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and Common Country Assessment (CCA), and IFAD's country strategic opportunities papers, offer countries the opportunity to adequately develop country programming strategies that reflect their needs. Similarly, bilateral donor organizations as well as international NGOs have developed strategy documents at the country level. These donor strategies all build on and refer to existing national strategies and policies, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), national sustainable development strategies, national environmental action plans (NEAPs), etc.

5. Multilateral and bilateral donor country strategies typically include the environment as a cross-cutting issue of fundamental importance to the country's development path. For example, the World Bank CASs focus on poverty reduction but include a section on the external environment and its effects on the country's economic performance. Usually, such an analytical approach will emphasize local environmental issues, such as sanitation, soil erosion, solid waste management, urban air pollution and other environmental problems that have a direct impact on the local economy and health.

6. The preparation of an additional country strategy for GEF programming may provide an opportunity to highlight the global environmental issues that affect livelihoods and to emphasize

those environmental issues that cannot be managed by an individual country alone and where the GEF can play a role as a facilitator and broker for transboundary collaboration.

7. To be effective, a country strategy for GEF programming must be a tool for countries to take better advantage of the opportunities the system has to offer. As such, it requires the leadership and initiative of the country in question and cannot become an additional burden for already busy administrators nor can it be a condition for accessing GEF resources.

8. Insofar as countries believe this to be useful, a GEF-related strategy should be prepared through a participatory and consultative process that would help raise the awareness on global environmental issues among stakeholders and decision makers and help place these issues more prominently on the national sustainable development agenda. The preparation of country strategies for GEF programming could also enable better coordination between GEF agencies at the country level and an early identification of possibilities for collaboration and co-financing.

9. As an example, the implementation of the Resource Allocation Framework for the biodiversity and climate change focal areas in GEF-4 has given countries a strong role in the programming of GEF resources, and several countries have identified and submitted their national priorities for projects under GEF-4. It has also helped countries to decide on their priorities in a more substantive manner.

10. It is therefore the view of the GEF Secretariat that this activity can only be country driven, must be initiated and coordinated by national institutions on the basis of the needs identified by each country, and should take place when a country believes it to be a useful tool in the achievement of its national priorities.

11. In this context, it is worth noting that the GEF already offers a series of tools that can help national institutions in their quest to ensure better coordination of their efforts to achieve sustainability and generate global environmental benefits.

- (a) Country Support Program (CSP): This tool aims to support Focal Points in strengthening stakeholder involvement, creating institutional memory for the GEF at the national level and increasing country coordination and ownership for GEF activities. It provides financing for, inter alia, in country activities based on annual work plans.
- (b) National Capacity Self-Assessments (NCSA): The primary objective of NCSAs is to identify country level priorities and needs for capacity building to address global environmental issues with the aim of catalyzing domestic and/or externally assisted action to meet those needs in a coordinated and planned manner.
- (c) National Dialogue Initiative (NDI): This resource is aimed at strengthening country ownership and involvement in GEF co-financed activities through a multiple stakeholder dialogue process. National policy level consultations are organized as a collaborative process including Focal Points, the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies.

- (d) GEF Familiarization Seminars: These seminars seek to deepen the knowledge of Focal Points about GEF strategies, programs, policies and procedures. They contribute to the broader activity of programming insofar as they allow Focal Points to better understand the organization and thus program on the basis of such knowledge.
 - (e) Sub-regional Workshops: Also part of the Country Support Program, this tool allows for sub-regional information exchange and training workshops. It aims to support Focal Points to carry out their activities based on their expressed needs and provides an opportunity for very useful exchanges of national experiences among countries.
12. Given the richness of the strategies being developed with different agencies in countries, the GEF is glad to provide tools to support these efforts for a greater inclusion of global environmental benefits in the process.