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**COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION REPORT:  
CUBA (1992-2011)**

**(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Evaluation Scope and Methodology</b> .....	2
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	4
<b>Effectiveness, Results and Sustainability</b> .....	4
<b>Relevance</b> .....	14
<b>Efficiency</b> .....	17
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	21

## INTRODUCTION

1. At the request of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council, the GEF Evaluation Office conducts a number of CPEs every year. In fiscal year 12,<sup>1</sup> in addition to the CPE in Cuba, the GEF Evaluation Office has been conducting CPEs in Brazil, India and Sri Lanka. Furthermore, a Country Portfolio Study (CPSs) has been conducted in coordination with UNDP's Evaluation Office in Timor-Leste. CPEs aim at providing the GEF Council and the national government with an assessment of the results and performance of the GEF supported activities at country level and of how the GEF supported activities fit into the national strategies and priorities as well as within the global environmental mandate of the GEF.

2. As stated in Cuba's CPE Terms of Reference (TORs), Cuba was selected primarily based on its large and mature portfolio including several completed projects in all GEF focal areas with significant emphasis on biodiversity.

3. Based on the overall purpose of the GEF CPEs and their standard TORs, the evaluation of GEF support to Cuba had the following specific objectives:

- To evaluate independently the relevance and efficiency of the GEF support to Cuba from several points of view: national environmental frameworks and decision-making processes; the GEF mandate and the achievement of global environmental benefits; and GEF policies and procedures;
- To assess the effectiveness and results of completed projects aggregated at the focal area;
- To provide additional evaluative evidence to other evaluations conducted or sponsored by the GEF Evaluation Office; and
- To provide feedback and knowledge sharing to: (1) the GEF Council in its decision making process to allocate resources and to develop policies and strategies; (2) Cuba on its participation in, or collaboration with the GEF; and (3) the different agencies and organizations involved in the preparation and implementation of GEF funded projects and activities.

4. Since 1992, the GEF has invested about US\$44 million (with approximately US\$240 million in co-financing) through 19 national projects in Cuba (11 in biodiversity, 3 in climate change, 3 in land degradation, 1 POPs, 1 multifocal). Table 1 breaks down GEF support according to GEF Agencies and focal areas. UNDP, with 10 projects totaling about \$28 million, has been the main channel for GEF support in Cuba, followed by UNEP (8 projects totaling US\$10 million). One project is implemented jointly by UNDP, UNEP and FAO in land degradation (US\$5.7 million).

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<sup>1</sup> The GEF fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30.

**Table 1.1: GEF National Projects in Cuba by Focal Area and Funding**

Agency	Focal area	GEF amount (million US \$)	Number of projects
UNDP	Biodiversity	23	6
	Climate change	0.9	2
	Land degradation	4.3	2
	<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>28.2</i>	<i>10</i>
UNEP	Biodiversity	3.4	5
	Climate Change	6	1
	POPs	0.5	1
	Multifocal	0.2	1
	<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>10.1</i>	<i>8</i>
UNDP/UNEP/FAO	Land Degradation	6	1
	<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>1</i>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>19</b>

Source: GEF 2012

## Evaluation Scope and Methodology

5. The Cuba's GEF CPE was conducted between June 2011 and June 2012 by an evaluation team comprised of staff from the GEF Evaluation Office and a team of international consultants. Several sources of information from different levels both in and outside Cuba were used. Stakeholders consulted included national, provincial and municipal government, academia, GEF Agencies (UNDP and UNEP), the GEF Focal Point, along with GEF beneficiaries and supported institutions, associations, and local communities and authorities.

6. Triangulation was a key element at all stages. The quantitative analysis used indicators to assess the efficiency of GEF support using projects as the unit of analysis (time and cost of preparing and implementing projects, and so forth). The evaluation team used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and standardized analytical tools<sup>2</sup> and project review protocols for the CPEs and adapted these to the Cuban context. Projects were selected for field visits based on several criteria, including: 1) whether they had been completed or were near completion; 2) accessibility to project activities and sites; and 3) time/resource constraints to conduct the evaluation. Finally, two Review of Outcomes to Impact (ROtI)<sup>3</sup> studies were

<sup>2</sup> All GEF's tools and methods can be found in the web site [http://gefio.org/evaluations/all?f\[0\]=field\\_ieo\\_grouping%3A309](http://gefio.org/evaluations/all?f[0]=field_ieo_grouping%3A309)

<sup>3</sup> <http://gefio.org/documents/ops4-m02-roti-handbook>

conducted: the first one of a completed project (GEF ID 968) and the second one of the first two (GEF ID 363 and GEF ID 591) concluded phases of a program to be implemented in three phases / consecutive projects.

7. The main focus of the CPE was the 19 national projects implemented within the boundaries of Cuba<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, three regional (one under implementation and two completed), and two global projects in which Cuba participates, were reviewed; these were selected because they had significant in-country activities/components, stakeholder input and availability of information. A full assessment of the regional projects' aggregate results, relevance, and efficiency was beyond the scope of this CPE, given that only Cuba's components were assessed. Regional and global project proposals under preparation were not part of the evaluation.

8. In general, 42% of national projects were visited during the evaluation: six in the biodiversity focal area, one in the land degradation focal area, and one in climate change. The regional project visited in the field was for the international waters focal area. In addition, two GEF SGPs were visited. Of all these projects, six have been completed (GEF IDs 363, 591, 804, 986 and the two SGPs) and three are under implementation. Additionally, of all the national projects analyzed, 70% had interventions at field level.

9. The following limitations were taken into account and addressed wherever possible while conducting the evaluation:

- CPEs are challenging, as the GEF does not yet operate by establishing country programs that specify expected achievement through programmatic objectives, indicators, and targets. This constraint was already highlighted in the TORs and has remained a challenge;
- Establishing attribution of results is another area of complexity. Again, this was also foreseen in the TORs. The evaluation did not attempt to provide a direct attribution of development and even environmental results to the GEF, but assessed the contribution of GEF support to overall achievements;
- Evaluating the impacts of GEF-funded initiatives is not straightforward. For example, some projects do not possess reliable monitoring information for key indicators to measure biodiversity and climate change outcomes and impacts. Therefore, this evaluation sought to make up these difficulties by undertaking two field ROtIs. Results reported came from triangulating various sources: some have been established through meta-evaluation analysis of other evaluations; others were drawn from internal project reports and others from original evaluative research conducted through interviews and field ROtIs.

10. Stakeholder comments to the Aide-Memoir, received in writing and at the consultation workshop held on April 13, 2012, were taken into account in finalizing this report.

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<sup>4</sup> See the full project list annexed to this report.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Effectiveness, Results and Sustainability

*Conclusion 1: The GEF support has achieved important results in biodiversity (including biosafety), land degradation, climate change, international waters, and POPs*

#### Biodiversity

11. In addition to the development of biodiversity (BD) strategies, action plans and specific laws, GEF supported projects have contributed to strengthen Cuba's institutional capacity.

12. In the biodiversity focal area, the first enabling activity resulted in the National Biodiversity Strategy (ENBio) (GEF ID 147), which introduced a change in environmental policy at government level by strengthening institutions and increasing environmental awareness in Cuba. In addition to the strategy, the BD Plan of Action was developed, focusing on the conservation of BD, and the first report of Cuba to the CBD. The ENBio is the basis of all activities related to BD conservation in Cuba and most of the GEF-funded projects are based on the ENBio strategy.

13. Another important enabling activity, the NCSA (GEF ID 2064), identified major gaps in the management of environmental resources and developed an action plan for coping with those capacity needs. The NCSA Action Plan relates only to planning and coordination at national level. The development of the NCSA and regional assessments allowed Cuba to incorporate an ecosystem approach to project results, giving the country the ability to identify and define specific needs for key ecosystems (mountain, coastal and marine ecosystems, ecosystems in watersheds basins and bays, and productive agro-ecosystems).

14. The enabling activities (GEF ID 1370, 3643, and 402) on Biosafety have contributed to this subject inclusion in the political arena, recognizing it as an issue of high national interest. In addition, these enabling activities have contributed to the institutionalization of Biosafety issues by supporting the Government of Cuba in the creation of a national institutional system to address the issue of biosafety. They supported as well the formulation of a legal framework and designed methodologies and processes to engage institutions and actors responsible for the manipulation of living organisms. With GEF support, Cuba has been able to strengthen the work of the National Biosafety Center of Cuba (CSB) and the development of an Information Exchange Center on Biosafety (CIISB). The CSB is responsible for organizing manage, implement, monitor and control the National Biosafety System and for ensuring compliance with Cuban's obligations regarding international legal instruments related to this matter. Cuba is known worldwide for its achievements in the area of biosafety.

15. The project Strengthening the Protected Areas System (SNAP) (GEF ID 968) enabled the strengthening of institutional capacity and financial sustainability of protected areas of SNAP, through the development of a Financial Sustainability Strategy for the SNAP and the proposal for the creation of the National Protected Areas Fund (FONAP), which was approved by the SNAP National Coordinating Board. It highlights the Operating and Management Plans for the selected

Protected Areas that were applied during the project and have continued to be developed for the rest of the SNAP. A methodology was also designed to measure the management effectiveness of protected areas, which has been implemented throughout the SNAP and now, according to interviews, is under review due to contextual changes that are occurring in the country. The Centro Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (CNAP, i.e. the institution belonging to the Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, in charge of the control and regulation of the SNAP) was inserted in directories and key committees, thus strengthening the structure of SNAP (which is the system comprised by all protected areas managed by different institutions but controlled by the CNAP). This project contributed with the proposal for collecting payments for environmental services that is going to be submitted to the Parliament (this proposal has received inputs from older proposals developed by the SNAP and the Sabana - Camagüey projects and is still under discussion of working teams of governmental institutions). Alternative financing, besides the national budget, has increased by five percent.

16. Likewise, the Sabana-Camagüey project (through its two completed projects and its third project under implementation, GEF ID 363, 591, 2633) has promoted the introduction of a concept on integrated coastal management that includes conservation of biological diversity objectives as a planning mechanism for regional sustainable development. Parallel to that, the project has promoted the creation of capacities for environmental planning, scientific research with a focus on conservation and decision-making, and has mainly generated cross-agency interaction processes among sectors. The project created a link between the scientific and technical sectors of academia within the administrative levels of state agencies and decision makers. These projects have generated significant global benefits such as the declaration of eight new protected areas with more than 279,000 hectares (terrestrial and marine), and making use of cleaner technologies to mitigate the impacts of tourism. It is also contributing to the recovery of some ecosystems affected, for example the Bahía de los Perros, and the regeneration of some mangrove sites, with the construction of bridges to allow water circulation and the gradual elimination of trawling with consequent recovery of fisheries, waterfowl nesting sites, sea grass beds and providing better conditions for the coral reef.

17. The project Archipelagos (GEF ID 3607) is helping to conserve priority ecosystems in marine and coastal areas (mangroves, coral reef, kelp fields - sea grass beds and wetlands), the project “Strengthening of the National Protected Areas” (GEF ID 968) reinforced the protection of rainforest eco-regions, pine forests, wetlands and dry forests.

### **Climate change**

18. In the climate change focal area, the GEF has supported Cuba in meeting its obligations to the UNFCCC, increased technical information levels necessary to develop adaption plans to the negative effects of climate change and continued the implementation of the national agenda and priorities concerning mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

19. The contribution of GEF through their enabling activities in the focal area of climate change has been important in Cuba. First of all, it has supported Cuba to meet its obligations to the UNFCCC through the development of the first and second national reports. In addition, the

activities implemented through this project helped to strengthen and extend the capacity of the country and the necessary exchange of information among national teams responsible for developing the technical studies regarding climate change. Secondly, the project facilitated the expansion of the participation of national experts in a regional context, because through this project, as an unplanned result, a regional network for climate change in the Caribbean was also established and still works today.<sup>5</sup> A global support project, CC: TRAIN (GEF ID 299) paved the way for both enabling activities and according to interviewees had a great impact in Cuba.

20. The Regional Project Phase II Enabling Capacity Building for Climate Change Adaptation (GEF ID 1060) in which scenarios were developed against future climate projections (i.e. coastal area affected by the sea level rise), provided the basis for land use planning policies, weather monitoring and prevention funded by the Cuban Government. This project responded to Cuba's high vulnerability to catastrophic events (like hurricane activity) and chronic problems (like drought, water scarcity and health effects) generated by global warming. The subject was included in the National Plan and the information provided served for other projects, as the CPP, which includes adaptation measurements such as better practices for soil protection, and promotions of varieties better adapted to drought.

21. Another climate change topic that has been supported by the GEF in Cuba is the mitigation of climate change, especially in regards to energy efficiency (GEF ID 804 *Refrigerators*) and renewable energy use (GEF ID 1361 *Isla de la Juventud*), which in parallel also offer cost saving benefits. The strong need for non-imported energy in Cuba is formalized in the Development Program on National Energy Sources and has been termed the "energy revolution" that Cuba would need to go through. This energy revolution is included in the goals of the National Environmental Strategy 2007.

22. The MSP for the production of energy efficient refrigerators (GEF ID 804) resulted in the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>, as well as the collection of ozone degrading substances through the production of energy efficient refrigerators. However, this achievement was smaller than the goal proposed in the project document (1.5 M tons of C) and the estimated in the Final Evaluation (based on the 2003 production rate, about 340,000 refrigerators were to be built until 2015 which would have represented a reduction of 1.7 M tons of CO<sub>2</sub> or 0.46 M of C in relationship to the original goal). A few years later, the manufacture of these refrigerators was suspended, as the Government decided instead to import three million energy-efficient refrigerators to replace much older models, as a quicker means to address the priority energy issue. The laboratory built to test the energy efficiency of locally manufactured refrigerators as well as of those imported, continues to operate today. This plant envisages developing energy efficient spare parts for the Government imported refrigerators. This project has also supported the country through the exchange of experiences with other countries regarding the personnel of the plant (the only one in the country) for the manufacture of energy efficient refrigerators.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.undp.org.cu/crmi/es/index.asp>



## **Land Degradation**

23. The GEF supported Cuba through the Program of Sustainable Land Use Management (GEF ID 2437, 3578, 3587) consisting of five complementary projects. Even though of these projects only the first and fifth have started and are under implementation, some results are already observable, including: a) implementation of alternative farming practices on demonstration plots, the replication of which has already started; b) diversifying or increasing feedstock for farmers with significant impacts on food security; c) results in improving the legal framework, coordination among institutions, and increase of research capacity. GEF supported the improvement of scientific capacity by equipping laboratories for obtaining applied scientific information that has been directed to support the CPP and the land certification process.

## **International waters**

24. In the international waters focal area, the ongoing regional project of Bahia de la Habana – Havana Bay (GEF ID 614) that seeks to recover the chemical quality of the bay, is worth mentioning. This project had a pilot phase (GEF ID 614 - GEF: RLA/93/G41) implemented between 1995 and 1998, that sought to improve environmental and health conditions of four highly contaminated bays in the Caribbean: Havana, Cuba; Kingston, Jamaica; Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, and Puerto Limon, Costa Rica, that affect international waters, mainly through the dragging of contaminants by marine currents. This phase was considered successful<sup>6</sup> and as a result working guidelines for the bay's improvement were produced (i. identification of investment plans; ii. proposals for institutional strengthening; and iii. Identifications of funding sources for the investment proposals), with information produced in the Project and previous initiatives developed since 1980. Nevertheless, once this pilot phase concluded, the initiative continued with the implementation of the project. This second project (GEF ID 1443 Regional Demonstration of Initiatives for Cleaning the Bays in the Caribbean) had as goals the implementation of some demonstrative initiatives of infrastructure and to develop legal reforms to reduce the bays' pollution. Only one product is already finished "the zero emission building", and the other two are still under execution (treatment plant and extension of draining pipes), thus, so far they have not directly contributed to the bay's cleaning.

25. During the field visit, interviewed members of the Working Group of the Government for Sanitation and Conservation of the Bay of Havana (GTE-BH) and other key stakeholders mentioned that the process of cleaning the water, which started almost 15 years ago, continues and that GEF's pilot project have contributed with this process providing the guideline for the bay's cleaning and rehabilitation, (of course, acknowledging that those guidelines were enriched with information produced by the project and previous initiatives). Currently, decreased pollution on some indicators (according to PIR 2009 and data base of CIMAB) show significant improvement in the bay's environmental conditions, but even though it has reached the qualification of good in some parameters, it is still considered bad in others; thus, it is still required to continue with the cleaning process.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://iwlearn.net/iw-projects/614>

**Table 1.2: Indicators of water quality between 2000 and 2011**

Indicator	Period	Measurements	Qualification	Comments
Dissolved Oxygen	Between 2000 to 2011	3,91 to 5,8 mg/l	"good"	(5.0 mg L <sup>-1</sup> is the minimum to be considered good)
Suspended solids SS)	2000 and 2001	126 and 163 mg L <sup>-1</sup>	"bad"	100 mg L <sup>-1</sup> is the maximum value
	2010	121 mg/l		
Biological oxygen demand	2000 to 2011	Decreased from 6,21 mg/l <sup>-1</sup> to 3,48 mg/l <sup>-1</sup> )	"bad"	
Hydro carbons	2006 to 2011	Decreased from 0,21 to 0,13 mg/l <sup>-1</sup>	"bad"	Chronic pollution
Phosphorus	2000 to 2011	21 a 3,75 µmol/l <sup>-1</sup>	Eutrophic	
Nitrogen		1,43-2,34 to 8,73 µmol/l <sup>-1</sup>		
E. coli	from 2006 to 2011	Decreased from 3,2 E+6 to 1,26 in Canal de Entrada	"bad"	Ensenada de Antares still has highest discharge

Source: PIR 2009 and data base of CIMAB till 2011

26. As the above table shows, between 2000 and 2011 the dissolved oxygen levels (leading indicator of recovery) have increased (3,91 to 5,8 mg/l) (when 5.0mgL<sup>-1</sup>, is the minimum required for sea water to be considered good according to Cuban norms NC 25:1999 (ONN, 1999); the concentration of solids in suspension has been variable, if 100 mg L<sup>-1</sup> is the highest limit to consider sea water of good quality (Cuban norm 25:1999), in 2000 and 2001 the bay's concentration surpassed that limit (126 y 163), it reduced thus improved for many years but it rose again in 2010 (121 mg/l); the Oxygen Biological Demand (OBD an indicator of organic material presence) reduced from 6,21 mg/l<sup>-1</sup> to 3,48 although it is still high and is still considered bad; hydro carbons between 2006 and 2011 have been reduced (from 0,21 to 0,13mg/l<sup>-1</sup>) but its concentration is still high, therefore, considered bad and even when a reduction of discharges have been reported, this parameter reveals a chronic pollution of oil on water and sediments; phosphorus and nitrogen concentration also varied: phosphorus led to reduction (21 to 3,75 µmol/l<sup>-1</sup> with a highest peak in 2006) whereas nitrogen still shows a tendency to increase (1,43-2,34 to 8,73 µmol/l<sup>-1</sup> at three levels of depth, with a highest pick on 2009 and 2010, and it is considered eutrophic; the hygienic conditions (E. coli presence) have increased between 2006 and 2011 (counts reduce between 3,2 E+6 and 1,26 at the entrance channel), although Ensenada de Antares still has the highest discharge of water without treatment. In general, even when the water quality has not reached optimum conditions results of decontamination show the reappearance of biota, fishes and birds.

### **Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)**

27. The Enabling Activity on POPs (GEF ID 1957) achieved its objectives and the National Implementation Plan for POPs reduction was developed to meet commitments to the Stockholm Convention. The project had a strong institutional strengthening and training component, and included at least 12 workshops and three seminars for unifying concepts and methodologies among

the people involved in the project. There was also an acquisition of materials and equipment for monitoring as part of the objective of creating a network for information exchange on POPs and chemicals in general. To increase the level of awareness, workshops were organized with key decision makers in governmental institutions, campaigns were run through the media; and fact sheets on pesticides, PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and dioxins and furans were prepared.

28. In addition, the development of the National Implementation Plan for POPs served to guide the preparation of specific manuals. The project had clear catalytic effects. In January 2008, the National Implementation Plan for the Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Phase I 2008-2012 was published, which documents all national measures focused to ensure safe handling of POPs. This includes the fulfillment of commitments under the Stockholm Convention. In turn, they incorporated aspects of POPs management in the component about chemicals and hazardous wastes in the National Program to Combat Pollution of the Environment 2008-2015.

### **Ozone**

29. The aforementioned MSP project for the production of energy efficient refrigerators (GEF ID 804) also contributed to impact on the reduction in the use of substances that deplete the ozone layer. According to interviews, due to government actions approximately 130 tons of these substances have been collected. The Office of Ozone in Havana reported that this collection occurred through a government program aimed at replacing old equipment with energy efficient refrigerators (three million as part of a parallel and complementary effort to the project supported by GEF). (Even though this is a global information and does not allow to quantify GEF's contribution, taking into account the number of new refrigerators produced and the number of old units collected, it is feasible to highlight GEF's contribution to bring the subject to the political arena). The evaluators were informed that there is a plan to dispose of the ozone-depleting substances collected. However, the evaluation team could not observe substance storage facilities or incineration plants.

### **GEF Small Grants Program**

30. The evaluation team concurs with the conclusions reached by the GEF SGP study conducted in Cuba in 2006 stating that overall, GEF SGP projects in Cuba have been highly satisfactory and have contributed to achieving their intended results. Both GEF SGP projects visited in Cuba have produced clear results in terms of increasing soil fertility through reduced salinity and improved livelihoods for the target populations. For example, the Dolores Community Project shows a decrease in the mechanism of salt diffusion effect by discontinuing logging of mangroves that protected the coast, and the restoration of 32 hectares of mangrove species and patabán. Areas have been replanted with coconut in 25 existing hectares of fruit trees and 32 hectares reforested with mangroves and patabán. In a second sampling carried out after two years of implementing conservation practices and improvement, soil analysis, according to results of the Provincial Laboratory of Soil MINAG in Villa Clara, show a trend toward decreasing salinity level, primarily in three depths sampled ranges (from 0 to 20, 20 to 40 and 40 to 60 centimeters) with respect to sampling conducted in 2008 and taken as baseline.

31. Similarly, the SGP complement each other, especially in terms of technical information, advisory, experiences and qualified staff exchange. There are synergies between SGP and Full size projects; for example the SGP gets information and guidance from the CPP as the director of the CPP is also member of the board of the SGP, and according to information obtained more than 50% of SGP have activities on land degradation. Similarly, learning experiences on sustainable land management coming from SGP, like in Matanzas, have provided feedback to the CPP. In South-South cooperation, experiences and results from two SGP have received international recognition and willingness to replicate them abroad. For example, the expert in charge of an SGP that developed a model for raising *Jothropa* was hired by Brazil and the expert in charge of a SGP on biodiversity that developed a model for raining sponges was hired by Nicaragua and later by Mexico.

### **Multifocal**

32. Only one project in Cuba is classified as multifocal: the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA). However, being it an enabling activity aiming at identifying the need for capacity – as such it is not a multifocal intervention. However, several national projects in the portfolio are in fact multifocal in nature.

33. Overall, implementation of activities supported by GEF in Cuba is facilitated by the way Cuba works towards achievement of long-term results that are part of a country level program, as well as national policies. The programmatic implementation of various projects with particular themes has the potential to achieving greater results (i.e. projects Sabana-Camagüey, Biosafety Invasive Species, and CPP). These program designs are built with several additional projects one after another, feeding on the information from previous projects. This effect is enhance because, overall, the project GEF's country portfolio has an ecosystem approach (favoring those considered a priority) and include adaptation to CC considerations supported by the country's territorial and economic planning. Additionally, it is enhanced thanks to Cuba's coordination and synergy practice among different projects when executed simultaneously.

### ***Conclusion 2: Results of GEF support to Cuba built on lessons from previous projects thanks to continuity of policies, institutions, staff and people involved in implementation.***

34. Lessons learned from earlier projects have served for subsequent projects, thanks to the programmatic approach applied by the Government of Cuba. This is explained by the existence of processes in place for this to happen. Examples where this has happened include: i) the Archipelagos project (GEF ID 3607) which incorporates lessons learned from the Strengthening Protected Area Systems project (GEF ID 968) and the Sabana-Camagüey project (GEF IDs 363-591-2633); ii) the Agricultural Biodiversity and Biosphere Reserves project (GEF ID 4158) are based on previous experience developed by an international NGO; iii) the two SGP projects visited included information and best practices in design that were obtained as a result of projects previously undertaken by other externally financed projects; and iv) similarly, the results of SGP projects have been replicated in other areas and will form the basis for future projects supported by other donors.

35. Both project document reviews and interviews confirmed that the transfer of information through scheduled workshops and publications on projects has happened. The majority of the projects have a strong outreach and awareness-raising campaigns on environmental issues, including initiatives or channels such as editing publications and manuals, national, regional and local workshops, public relations campaigns and broadcast media mass communication, creation of specialized websites. In biosafety, GEF projects supported the setup of regional networks to transfer information on the subject; additionally, GEF supported the establishment of a biosafety master degree that is now offered at the regional level. The CC TRAIN program was the basis for enabling activities on climate change in Cuba. The SNAP project (GEF ID 968) helped in producing: 1) a Manual Signaling in Protected Areas; 2) a Handbook for Protected Area Managers and Decision-Makers, which also includes the basic legislation for protected areas management; and 3) a Manual for Measuring the Effectiveness of Protected Areas Management in the SNAP. Similarly, the GEF ID 1957 has generated a National Implementation Plan of POPs campaigns through media and fact sheets on pesticides, PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and dioxins and furans, as well as a large number of inventories and manuals that are on the web. These include, among others, a Working Methodology for the National Inventory of Pesticides (COP), Working Methods for National PCB Inventory released in 2004, the National Inventory of Sources and Releases of Dioxins and Furans released in February 2006, the National Inventory of Pesticides (POPs) published in April 2006, the National Inventory of Polychlorinated Biphenyls published in May 2006, the Guide for the Management of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) published in March 2006, the Guidelines for the Management of Pesticides (POPs) published in May 2006 and the National Profile on Chemicals Management published in March 2006.

36. In Cuba learning is a structural and systematic part of each and every project. There are processes of interaction and exchange of information among the project coordinators at national level and with some projects abroad. Transfer of information from the national to the provincial and local levels happens regularly and vice versa among governmental staff in charge of projects, i.e. in the Land Degradation, in the Sabana-Camagüey and in the Strengthening Protected Areas projects. Examples of knowledge transfer initiatives from national to global scales and vice versa include: 1) GEF ID 968 - Making internship of five specialists from national parks and Guanahacabibes Viñales in different parks of Argentina to specialize in mitigation and coping with other threats such as natural and technological disasters; 2) GEF ID 614 - developed two regional workshops with the participation of National Coordinators, GEF, UNDP and government representatives; and 3) the Sabana-Camagüey and EEI projects established agreements with universities and granted fellowships for Masters Degrees that induced information production and exchange.

***Conclusion 3: GEF projects have indirectly supported South-South cooperation. This has been made possible by the high priority given by the government of Cuba for such cooperation.***

37. GEF projects do not include a direct commitment for South-South cooperation. The only project that mentions South-South cooperation is the Agricultural Biodiversity Conservation and Man and Biosphere Reserves in Cuba (Bridging Managed and Natural Landscapes, of which the

PPG has been recently approved). This project aims to disseminate global benefits generated by the project relevant to other tropical island biomes through UNESCO/Man and the Biosphere's South-South cooperation program. Only recently, in 2010, the COP to the CBD urges the GEF “to provide financial support to the implementation of the Multi-Year Plan of Action and requests the GEF to consider establishing a South-South biodiversity cooperation trust fund”.

38. However, GEF supported projects in Cuba indirectly resulted in the transfer of information and knowledge among Latin America countries. Initially, such activities were not defined as South-South cooperation, but in fact they materialized as opportunities for such cooperation. For example, in the project document of the renewable energy of Isla de la Juventud project (GEF ID 1361) includes activities and budget for results exchange and replication on the other Caribbean islands. A natural tendency toward this type of activity between countries with similarities or common interest can be noted, which occurred without formal incentives within the programming of projects. For example, the enabling activity on climate change in Cuba had an unanticipated result, i.e. technology transfer (development and use of methodologies for inventories and vulnerability and risk) and cooperation with other countries in LA Region, including the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

***Conclusion 4: The sustainability of results in Cuba is ensured through the programmatic approach of the Government to support subsequent projects funded by it, GEF and other donors.***

39. The programmatic nature of the projects in Cuba presents the basis for financial sustainability for the continuation of the results obtained through projects. The funding from the Government of Cuba has been supporting the achievement of the results of projects supported by GEF (FSP, MSP, SGP) and other donors that serve to continue further efforts in these areas. For example, the projects supported by GEF and other partners mainstream the environmental awareness through the various Cuban administrative departments in charge of natural resource management.

40. The commitment to financial sustainability of the activities supported by GEF and other donors, and in particular, the implementation of environmental strategies in Cuba is demonstrated by the creation of the National Environmental Fund (NEF). The Fund managed by the “Junta Multisectorial”, chaired by CITMA, the Ministry of Economy and Planning, the Ministry of Finance and Prices, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment, and its Secretary is in the Environmental Directorate. The Fund was established in 1999 and the first call for proposals occurred in 2000. The NEF’s role is to provide incremental funding for environment activities where other funding sources do not exist. Projects financed by the fund are local, community-based and include a high environmental educational component. This fund co-finances GEF SGP projects based on the signature of an agreement between GEF SGP and the government. Execution of the fund is done by the Environment Agency (AMA) through regional disbursement offices once project execution is approved by the Junta Multisectorial. Information provided to the team during the second mission shows that the number of approved projects and funds allocated vary. For example, the first call of the fund in 2000 approved 16 projects with a value of 1.125 million

Cuban pesos, while in the second call there were 101 projects and a total of 7.93 million Cuban pesos were approved. In 2010, the 18 approved projects were totaling 2.658 million Cuban pesos. The operation of the NEF is constrained by the economic context (no access to banks, etc.) and it is an extinguishable fund as it depends entirely on government fiscal allocation.

41. GEF supported projects in Cuba include high levels of co-financing from government sources, including, project personnel salaries responsible for project implementation. In addition to increase project financial sustainability, co-financing contributes to institutional sustainability.

42. Actions taken to induce financial sustainability of the completed Strengthening Protected Areas System project (GEF ID 968) are the promotion of new job opportunities for local communities (due to the new infrastructure built for visitors in protected areas), the establishment of a working group to prepare a proposal to be submitted to the Parliament to include payment for environmental services, and the provision of additional funds for the SNAP. Alternative financing that the national budget has increased by five percent due to the development of Financial Sustainability Strategy for the SNAP and the proposal for the creation of the National Fund of AP (FONAP). Likewise, the GEF has helped to consolidate Havana Bay and Strengthening Protected Areas System projects (GEF ID 614 and ID 968) through the continuation of mitigation activities directed to system level.

43. The Sabana-Camagüey final evaluation and the interviews conducted during field visits show that alternative economic activities still require generating information on financial compensation alternatives for the groups that bear the costs of the environmental measures introduced, including the economic benefits that some groups would perceive. This is important for sustainability because if it is possible to demonstrate the advantages of achieving global benefits that also have influence on the local benefits (e.g., health, improving food security, higher income) it is more likely that social acceptance of activities will occur.

44. Elements of environmental sustainability are noticed in the design of at least three projects in the portfolio. The project GEF ID 614 developed an Integrated Plan of Action that includes investments for the rehabilitation of the bay for periods of 5, 10 and 15 years. In addition to that, CITMA prepared a plan of Inter-Agency Management for the Havana Bay and a program to improve the technical and scientific capacities in institutions related to environmental studies. The GEF Strengthening PA Systems (GEF ID 968) included the development of strategies to increase local participation in tourism to reduce pressures on natural resources in protected areas and the Archipelagos project (GEF ID 3607) also included this activity in its design. In the case of the Strengthening PA Systems project, this line of work continued after the project was completed.

45. Effectiveness and sustainability of the projects have been enhanced because activities promoted the interaction of the scientific staff of universities with the Government's decision-making levels. In this sense, decision-making has been strengthened with technical guidance of scientist and for being supported by the available scientific information and in turn the projects have driven a higher-effectiveness financing inputs for the development of applied research required by the project . An additional advantage of the interaction, according to scientists, is that knowing the information gaps required by the government, research centers could focus better their

efforts; therefore, GEF interventions have also contributed to improve processes for more efficient research efforts, making a difference when comparing with previous practices of unidirectional decisions that were not always effective.

46. For example, before the inception of the Sabana-Camagüey project, academic and administrative level institutions worked independently. With the project proposed generation of multisectoral results, technical groups were created to work on different topics. Scientists were integrated at the highest level on each of these topics, allowing the identification of technical solutions to environmental problems requiring the involvement of several disciplines. Furthermore, the same GEF funds supported the creation of scientific capacity by funding equipment and training and logistic means for the heightening of important scientific information that has improved decision-making. Perhaps this is one of the key aspects that have given greater strength to expect improved technical quality of the results.

47. Subsequently, the Sabana-Camagüey project management approach has been adopted by other projects such as the Land degradation program (CPP), the Biosafety and Invasive Species projects, which also created technical working groups.

48. Additionally, projects under implementation have good sustainability possibilities. For example, in the Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity in Biosphere Reserves project (GEF 4158) implemented by the Institute of Fundamental Research in Tropical Agriculture (INIFAT) together with the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) and the international NGO Biodiversity International, aims at identifying, testing, improving and disseminating knowledge and practices of in situ conservation of agricultural plots near the Biosphere Reserves Sierra del Rosario (SRBR) and the Cuchillas del Toa biosphere reserve. The models tested in this project will be integrated into an agricultural extension program applied to small farmers' parcels next to other protected areas of the SNAP.

## **Relevance**

***Conclusion 5: GEF support has been relevant to the establishment of environmental priorities and strategies, the International Environmental Conventions (CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD and the Stockholm Convention) and to the GEF mandate and strategies.***

49. GEF support to Cuba has been relevant to the focal areas of biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters and POP. The evaluation team concurs with the positive judgments contained in the final evaluations of the Cuban portfolio projects: Sabana-Camagüey, Biosafety, Efficient Refrigerators, and Strengthening of SNAP on their relevance to the GEF mandate and strategies. In a way, some of these projects are ahead of such strategies. The project Sabana- Camagüey (approved in 1991) is one of the GEF flagship projects in Cuba, as it emerged as a model for a programmatic long term intervention and ecosystem approach. Another example is the Strengthening the Protected Area System project (approved in 2002), which started working at the system level before the GEF strategy was developed.



50. Several action plans, strategies and specific environmental laws have been conceived and formulated with the support of the GEF. For example, biosafety projects have contemplated the proposal of laws. Similarly, the SNAP project (GEF ID 968) and the Sabana Camagüey (GEF ID 2633) projects developed draft proposals to establish a system of payment for environmental services that have served as inputs for the working group that is currently preparing the final proposal to be submitted to the Parliament. The Havana Bay (GEF ID 614) project elaborated a proposal on rules and regulations on the use and protection of the Bay. Specifically on biosafety, through GEF support new regulations were developed to supplement Decree-Law 190/99 on biosafety. Regulations for biosafety Authorizations, regulations for facilities that handle biological agents in large and small scales and that could affect humans, animals and plants were also developed. Likewise, the draft revised Resolution 42/99 in the classification of biological agents as risk groups and a regulation on Rules for Accounting and Control of Biological Materials, Equipment and Technology applied to them was also approved. Finally, the project supported the development of a final draft regulation on environment, biosafety and radiation safety inspection and three new legal instruments (R 103/02, R112/03 and R2/04). Cuba is now working at implementing an inspection system and previously developed tools necessary for such system.

51. The GEF also helped Cuba in fulfilling obligations vis-à-vis the international conventions, by strengthening national capacities to implement these conventions and contributing to the development of environmental action plans and strategies. For example, through the NCSA (GEF ID 2064) the country conducted a self-assessment of national capacities for global environmental management in relation to the conventions CBD, UNCCD, and UNFCCC. The National Implementation Plan for POPs (GEF ID 1957) contributed to the drafting of a plan for the reduction of POPs. Meanwhile, the first biodiversity enabling activity (GEF ID 147) was successful in obtaining the following outcomes: 1) the development of the ENBio; 2) the development of the Action Plan for the Conservation of BD; and 3) developing the first report of Cuba to the CBD.

52. Some projects supported by GEF in Cuba have contributed explicitly to the objectives of regional conventions ratified by the country. For example, the GEF ID 614 supports the mandate of the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) and in particular the Protocol to the Convention Concerning Pollution from Sources and Terrestrial Activities (LBS).

***Conclusion 6: The Government of Cuba has strong ownership of GEF supported projects.***

53. All GEF-supported projects are integrated into the matrix of the government's decision making. The GEF Focal Point, the various environmental agencies (CITMA), and other ministries (MINAG, MININT and MINCEX) in addition to academia, are all involved in the design and implementation of GEF supported projects. For example, the government led project activities for the formulation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (GEF ID 147). The government has shown high commitment to continue GEF initiatives. For example: the project of the Bay of Havana (GEF IS 1254) was designed from the results of the GEF regional pilot project (GEF 614) supported by the Planning and Management of Heavily Contaminated Bays and Coastal Areas in the Wider Caribbean. Once a pilot phase was completed application of its

recommendations was incorporated in a follow up regional operation. However, Cuba is the only country that has continued implementing the regional project. The Government has also demonstrated its commitment with the follow up of the first project results through the development of policies, strategies and programs to reduce the impacts of pollution.

54. The Cuban government's commitment and ownership of GEF projects can be seen in the 1:5 co-financing ratio of national projects, that is, for every US dollar provided by the GEF, the Government has contributed with five US dollars.

55. The project Archipelago follows the SNAP plan for 2003-2008. Cuba co-finances and actively participates in this project through CITMA and the National Center for Protected Areas (CNAP), among others. The Government, with the support of German cooperation funds, one NGO and other institutions, designs the proposed agricultural biodiversity and biosphere reserves project from research results obtained since 1992. Both the CPP program and the agricultural biodiversity and biospheres project are a national priority given that droughts affect food security. Furthermore, according to interviews conducted, the beneficiaries of the interventions in the field have accepted the project with enthusiasm.

56. The Government through GEF supported projects in Biosafety (GEF ID 3643, 1370 and 402) established the National Centre for Biotechnology, which provides a legal and institutional framework to biological technology, a national priority. Likewise the government created an action plan on biosafety, which is already being implemented. A national biosafety committee has been created, and biosafety has been included in universities curriculum.

57. Ownership is also demonstrated by the significant synergy that exists between several projects supported by GEF in Cuba, which is in line with the government's approach aiming at maximizing externally funded investments. Agencies (including those belonging to other ministries, not just CITMA) responsible for implementing GEF-supported projects in Cuba hold joint meetings on internal aspects, but also on issues specific to GEF projects. There are also advisory councils that achieve synergies between projects. All this is enhanced by the physical proximity of these agencies and frequent personal interaction that keep the staff working on projects. For example, the Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity in Biosphere Reserves (GEF ID 4158) have close coordination with the Southern Cuban Archipelago project (GEF ID 3607), and the Sabana-Camagüey projects (ID 363, ID 591, ID 2633) as well as the Invasive Species project (GEF ID 3955), and this interaction is evident at central and local levels. Benefits of inter-ministerial and inter-agency consultation processes highly surpass the problems of delays they cause to some projects. Although it could be argued that the process of internal consultation among ministries has caused some delays in some projects' implementation, the benefit of these consultations in improved coordination outweighs any possible delay.

## Efficiency

***Conclusion 7: The approval process for MSPs and FSPs is on average shorter in Cuba than in other LAC countries where CPEs have been conducted. Project preparation costs are lower when compared to the overall GEF portfolio.***

58. The GEF project cycle differs according to the modality of projects. The average time from the entrance of the proposal to the pipeline to when the project begins implementation in Cuba for FSP and MSP is 29 and 22 months respectively. Other LAC countries where CPEs were conducted tend to present longer project cycles (OECS countries show 54 and 46 months respectively, Nicaragua 42 and 17, Brazil 43 and 25 and Costa Rica 50 and 40). The average cycle time of the Cuban EAs has been above average (18 months) when compared to other countries in LAC (13 months). This average is influenced by an earlier operation (the Cuba NCSA), which took 85 months to transit from pipeline to CEO endorsement partly because it included the implementation of a PDF A.

59. The perception on the time required for project approval varies among actors depending on the GEF phase, some actors believe the process has been fast (EEI project approved in FMA-5). While the perception of other actors in Cuba (similarly to other member countries), involved in projects approvals in the early phase of GEF-4 was that there were delays. For example, there is consensus that the proposed Phase III of the Sabana-Camagüey project took too long to be approved and to start because of changes that occurred during the early phase of GEF - 4 in the GEF, combined with the lack of clear guidance, staff turnover in the GEF Secretariat and consequent loss of institutional memory on GEF/Cuba relationships. The portfolio analysis shows that this project took two years from Council approval to start of implementation. This issue has been dealt with in OPS4, which concludes that problems in the approval processes for new projects in the years prior to 2007 were caused by insufficient funding. This study also mentions that even solid project ideas had to wait up to six years to be approved when the approval was done in a first-come-first-serve basis and when funds were available. This challenge was enhanced as the GEF trust fund diminished in GEF-3. The average times for the approval of GEF projects in Cuba in the different phases of the GEF did not increase on average during GEF-4, although they did during GEF -3. The portfolio analysis also shows that the average FSP project preparation cost in Cuba (3.17%) is lower when compared to the overall portfolio of the GEF (3.97%).

***Conclusion 8: Overall, institutional arrangements for the design and implementation of GEF supported projects in Cuba are efficient.***

60. The evidence gathered shows that there is a strong interaction between actors from different national institutions, resulting from Cuba's programmatic approach that applies to all externally funded projects. Part of the design of projects includes the involvement of other project coordinators and information from other projects (as discussed above). This involvement is maintained during its implementation and in some specific projects even after their completion. Besides the existence of working groups (e.g., Working Group on Climate Change, Working Group Government Sanitation and Conservation of the Bay of Havana, GTE-BH) on various

environmental issues in Cuba there is strong participation by higher levels of the government. For example, the constitution and functioning of these working groups are approved by law. In Cuba, technical working groups on various issues include academia and specifically high caliber scientists. Sabana-Camagüey and Biosafety final evaluations, as well as evidence collected on ongoing project such as the CPP, the Biosafety and the Conservation of Agricultural Biodiversity in Biosphere Reserves projects demonstrate the importance of the interaction between the scientific community and the administrative and decision making institutions. According to reports, the SGP development is strongly supported by the interaction of communities with research institutions, governmental agencies (for example staff from Sabana-Camagüey) or NGOs. The academia develops research within and with the communities, and in turn sometimes receives from the communities and NGOs (whose members are governmental staff that provide ad hoc time to work in specific subjects). SGP are selected among different proposals presented by research institutions or NGOs in agreement with communities. In front of the high technical quality of the institutions, GEF contribution has been important providing guidance and supporting logistic means that have facilitated inter-institutional coordination, essential for the multifocal and programmatic approach of project design and implementation.

61. Unlike many other countries where CPEs were conducted, there are few institutional changes in Cuba's administration, resulting in a high institutional knowledge base for project design and implementation. Additionally, there is the practice of educating second level staff that eventually takes over execution. For example, the current focal point worked very closely with the previous GEF Focal Point before taking up his position. The continuation of institutional memory in the implementation of GEF support is further reinforced because the project coordinators are governmental staff (some are directors of high level) and because they work with governmental advisers who support them and could eventually replace them. Only one of the projects reviewed shows a high turnover of project coordinators (4) (Isla de la Juventud project), which impacted its implementation, according to the mid-term evaluation. Project coordinators that at the same time have directive positions at government and academia provide the institutional support to projects.

62. Working relationships between the government agencies with GEF agencies are positive. For example, all respondents who were asked about the relationship with UNDP mentioned that the agency is very supportive. The GEF Focal Point and the national agencies have close work relations with UNDP. However, the evaluation team observed that in many of the projects supported by the GEF, government agencies are not self-sufficient to write/design new GEF proposals. In general, the agencies need external support to articulate "the language of the GEF in their proposals and to make them coherent with its mandate. Likewise, there are limitations on access to technical information and equipment for information management and exchange, and virtual communication among actors. These limitations, though often overcome by the different actors, create difficulties especially during project implementation.

63. While there have been changes in the strategies of the GEF during the period covered by this evaluation, these mostly are not perceived by respondents as an element affecting the efficiency of the GEF project cycle in Cuba, even when these changes were combined with the factors mentioned previously (lack of clear guidance and GEF Secretariat staff turnover).

***Conclusion 9: Project level monitoring and evaluation occurs for adaptive management and compilation of monitoring information. However, access to monitoring data for decision-making presents challenges.***

64. GEF projects have complied GEF's M&E requirements to carry out midterm and final evaluations. Equally, evolution of the Logic Framework (LF) utilization in project design concurs with requested GEF's changes. For example the first Sabana Camagüey project have a description of activities to implement but not a LF as we know it, whereas, the second project includes a LF with descriptive indicators and the third project includes quantitative indicators. Other examples is the Havana Bay Project (GEF ID 614), whose design did not include a LF but it was recommended by the mid-term review for planning and monitoring improvement that, according to the coordinators, were adopted appropriately. On the other hand, recently designed projects as the *Archipiélagos* (GEF ID 3607) have a detailed following and monitoring plan with indicators, sources of information and M&E responsibilities' designation. Changes in the project logical framework have not been observed, with exception of Isla de la Juventud Project and II phase Adaptation to CC regional Project (GEF 1060). There are also small scale adjustments in the Sabana-Camagüey project (GEF ID 591) whose final evaluation states that the annual meetings allowed the project to make changes to certain aspects of the project activities and the project acted on several recommendations from the mid-term review.

65. Project follow up has been influenced by the institutional framework and internal processes. The GEF's Focal Point has a close follow up of projects including financial management, there is a close performance follow up within the governmental structure and there is a robust territorial and economic planning within the government. In addition, different institutions in charge of specific environmental areas perform the monitoring of selected environmental indicators such as water quality, or within ecosystems, the follow up of the coral reef or the mangroves health.

66. Some GEF projects have contributed with planning and establishment of permanent monitoring points. For example, for the Havana Bay project (GEF 164); other projects have contributed with materials and equipment for monitoring as in the Enabling Activity (EA) COPs (GEF 1957) for the implementation of a network for information Exchange on COPs and chemicals in general, or in the Sabana Camagüey (GEF ID 591) for the establishment of laboratories (although not all laboratories are currently robust) and monitoring points for water quality and in the CPP for soil analysis.

67. In addition, the regional Project *Phase II Capacity Development for Adaptation to CC (Central América, México y Cuba)*, contributed with capacity building to key actors, development of guidelines to confront drought and, according to interviews, to develop scenarios with projections of water sea level for 2050 and 2100, which has been a platform to include the subject in the territorial planning, and meteorological monitoring for prevention that has been funded by the Cuban government and other GEF's initiatives related to soil degradation and ecosystem management. On the other hand, some projects generated important information such as the endemic flora and fauna monitoring in the keys, as part of the Sabana Camagüey that did

not become permanent after the Project conclusion. In other areas like Bio security (BS), the government has presented a GEF proposal that includes buying equipment for a laboratory.

68. According to available midterm or final evaluations, the use of information gathered within the governmental monitoring process and during project implementation is evident. For example, the Sabana-Camagüey (GEF 591, state that the development of impact indicators to provide feedback to the process of the project was outstanding and a lot of good information was collected and used internally as well as for other projects.

69. The evidence collected indicates existence of difficulties on information management (obtained during monitoring and project implementation) because it is kept in several institutions with additional inconvenient of information exchange among involved institutions. This impacts the projects. For example, the final evaluation of the Sabana-Camagüey (GEF ID 591) states that the information generated is not easily accessible by all institutions participating in the project that need it to take decisions. In part this is because there are technical limitations due to a lack of an integrated digital informatics system, economical limitations due to the cost of design and hardware of such system and limited or inexistence of Internet access and due to internal processes to access information. These limitations, although made up by different actors, produce difficulties on project implementation and virtual communication among actors as well as in the integration of information of different projects.

70. According to interviewees there is an incipient proposal for the establishment of an integrated information system at national level to collect, analyze and share environmental information. Interviewed stakeholders also recognized that the design of such system should analyze not only the technical and logistic constraints embedded in the development of such a system but the economic difficulties because of its high price it cannot be funded only by one project.

***Conclusion 10: The economic and geographic context in Cuba negatively affects the implementation and results achieved by GEF supported projects.***

71. The context in which the GEF-supported projects are designed and implemented is complex. The impact of the Special Period,<sup>7</sup> the embargo and the recent global economic crisis affects the design and implementation of GEF supported projects in Cuba. The meteorological events and the current process changes of sectorial and territorial focus affects the effectiveness of environmental management. Furthermore, geographic aspects, including being a SIDS, its location near the canal of the Bahamas (source of regional pollution) and being on the path of hurricanes add to the above-mentioned challenges. While some of these contextual elements have been mitigated or have been present for some time and are considered and handled within the design and implementation of projects, their combined effect has undoubtedly affected and affects GEF and other donors-supported projects. On the other hand, it is also that economical limitations caused by the above processes, have also induced to a greater efficiency in the use of funds and possibly have

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<sup>7</sup> The disappearance of the USSR, as the main trade and economic partner, led Cuba to adjust to a new world system and to insert itself into the global economy. The decade of the nineties, during which these adjustments began, constituted a period of difficulties and hardship for the population. It is referred to as the "Período Especial" or Special Period.

influenced on the importance given to the programmatic approach of implementation and coordination among projects that support each other.

72. Cuba is affected by the occurrence of extreme weather events such as hurricanes. The hurricanes that hit the island in 2008 (during the execution of Havana Bay project and the project in the Isla de la Juventud) affected infrastructure and, therefore, increased the demand for basic building materials and labor necessary for construction stipulated in the project. Those inputs were used to meet the population's basic needs (housing, hospitals, and schools) competing with GEF's infrastructure. The effects of hurricanes coupled with the global economic crisis were the main causes cited in both projects that caused delays in implementation.

73. The National System of Protected Areas project (GEF ID 968) faced delays in its implementation because the contribution committed by the French Fund for Global Environment Facility (FFEM) entered later than expected, due to administrative difficulties for the international transfer of funds between the European Union (EU) and the Government of Cuba. This led to a choice of implementing to cover, at least partially, some of the most important activities that were supposed to be funded by FFEM, with government funding, that were reimbursed later when FFEM funds were available. Two other projects show a similar situation, where the difficulties and lengths of funding disbursements affect negatively implementation (the Refrigerators and the Sabana-Camagüey completed projects). According to the final evaluations of these two projects, delays and difficulties occurred in the identification and selection of equipment suppliers, procurement and payments. Delays and difficulties also occurred when Cuban technicians had to travel to attend international events.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To the GEF Council

***Recommendation 1: The GEF should put more efforts into mainstreaming adaptation in project design and implementation in all focal areas, and provide additional support and guidance to countries in the design and implementation of multifocal projects that include adaptation.***

74. Several national projects in the portfolio are in fact multifocal in nature. Overall, implementation of activities supported by GEF in Cuba is facilitated by the way Cuba works towards achievement of long-term results that are part of a country level program, as well as national policies. The programmatic implementation of various projects with particular themes has the potential to achieve larger results. These program designs are built with several additional projects one after another, feeding on the information from previous projects. Most projects demonstrate cumulative effects on the issue of climate change adaptation. For example, one project recognizes that climate change will likely affect marine and coastal ecosystems over time. Another one seeks to cushion the effects of climate change on communities near the biosphere reserves by transferring management practices of agricultural biodiversity to increase their ability to adapt to change. However, only one project in Cuba is classified as multifocal: the National Capacity Self-

Assessment. This is an enabling activity aiming at identifying the need for multifocal capacity – as such it is not a multifocal intervention.

75. Important next steps would be: 1) to more systematically include adaptation aspects in the design and implementation of projects and programs. Similarly to the findings and recommendations included in the Nicaragua CPE, and considering the GEF Trust Funds has as main focus and mandate support in mitigation of climate change, the GEF should make additional efforts to include the adaptation theme in its portfolio. One way for this could be to support joint work with regional projects working with GEF Agencies and adaptation projects in the Caribbean; and also the GEF should provide additional support and guidance to countries designing and implementing multifocal projects and programs given that multifocal projects require a high-degree of coordination and they are very complex to design and to submit to the GEF for approval, in addition to high administration costs.

***Recommendation 2: In countries with particular contexts like Cuba, the GEF should be more pragmatic concerning administrative procedures, and build institutional memory on how to address these situations.***

76. The context in which the GEF-supported projects are designed and implemented is complex in Cuba. While some of these contextual elements have been mitigated or have been present for some time and are considered and handled within the design and implementation of projects, their combined effect has undoubtedly affected and affects GEF and other donors-supported projects. The GEF should make an effort in understanding where particular contexts exist and proactively respond through planned procurement steps and specific guidance. This may include further streamlining administrative procedures to facilitate efficient project and program management.

77. For example, the impacts of the Special Period, the embargo and the recent global economic crisis have affected the design and implementation of GEF supported projects in Cuba. Delays and difficulties occur in the identification of equipment suppliers, procurement and payments. Delays and difficulties also occur when Cuban technicians must travel away to attend and participate in international events. Furthermore, geographic aspects and extreme weather events add to the above-mentioned challenges.

***Recommendation 3: The GEF should strengthen South–South cooperation in project and program design and implementation in all focal areas, especially through regional projects and programs.***

78. GEF projects do not include a direct commitment to South-South cooperation. In general, GEF supported projects in Cuba indirectly resulted in the transfer of information and knowledge among Latin American countries. Therefore, particular efforts should be made to mainstream South – South cooperation in project and program design and implementation in not only biodiversity but also the other GEF focal areas. This mainstreaming could be specially done through global and regional projects and programs.



79. Initially, South–South cooperation activities were not defined as such, but they materialized as opportunities arose for this cooperation to take place. A natural tendency toward this type of activity between countries with similarities or common interest can be noted, which occurred without formal incentives within the programming of projects. For example, the enabling activity on climate change in Cuba had a non-anticipated result, i.e. technology transfer (development and use of methodologies for inventories and vulnerability and risk) and cooperation with other countries in Latin America.

80. The COP to the CBD urges the GEF “to provide financial support to the implementation of the Multi-Year Plan of Action and requests the GEF to consider establishing a South-South biodiversity cooperation trust fund”.<sup>8</sup>

### **To the Government of Cuba**

***Recommendation 4: Develop an information management strategy to strengthen knowledge sharing from GEF projects and programs at the national level and to better achieve global environmental benefits.***

81. The use of information from monitoring is evident; however, in Cuba, monitoring information is housed in several institutions. This impacts projects, since in general there is no single institution home to all environmental monitoring data for a particular project. Information generated is not easily accessible by all institutions participating in the project and need the information to make decisions. Exchange of information is done for specific issues and informally. In part this is because there are logistic and technical limitations (limited or not access to internet) on access to technical information as the equipment for information management and exchange is lacking. The GoC could increase environment and sustainable development management by developing an information management strategy to address main aspects such as the establishment of an inter-institutional information system, the objective and management of the system, and establishing roles and responsibilities for the different institutions implementing projects.

82. According to interviewees there is a proposal for the establishment of an integrated information system at the national level to collect, analyze and share environmental information. Interviewed stakeholders also recognized the constraints embedded in the development of such a system among others for the high cost of the design; nevertheless the government and projects should consider this as a worthwhile objective for the near future.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-10/official/cop-10-18-add1-rev1-en.pdf>