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Washington, D.C.

Agenda Item 12

**SIXTH COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF THE GEF (OPS6)**  
**APPROACH PAPER**  
(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

**Recommended Council Decision**

Regarding the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF Approach Paper of the Independent Evaluation Office.

The Council, having reviewed the Document GEF/ME/C.50/07, "Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS6)-Approach Paper," approves this approach paper.

The Council requests the Evaluation Office to implement the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation and to provide the reports to the Replenishment process and to the Council according to the schedule presented.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The global landscape for environment finance has been rapidly changing. In 2014, global investments in climate finance were US\$391 billion. Approximately 38%, equivalent to US\$148 billion of global climate finance was committed by the public sector largely (88%) through development finance institutions with 32% through Multilateral Development Banks. The remaining 62%, equivalent to US\$243 billion, of all climate finance was provided by the private sector. New institutions with similar mandates to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Climate Investment Fund have become key funders of climate activities while private investors, including pension and sovereign funds, are also increasingly involved in green investments through public-private partnerships. Traditional development partners such as the World Bank and the regional development banks have continued to focus on the funding of sustainable development initiatives consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more recently, the two new multilateral development banks, the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank and the BRICS Bank provide an opportunity for mainstreaming global environmental benefits.

2. Against this backdrop, the GEF occupies a unique space in the global financing architecture. Its comparative advantage is its role in financing the major Multilateral Environmental Conventions (MEAs), including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Minamata Convention on Mercury is the most recent addition in 2013. In addition, the GEF provided funding support to countries with economies in transition to phase out ozone depleting substances under the Montreal Protocol. The Facility also funds projects in International Waters and Sustainable Forest Management that are consistent with the objectives of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF).

3. Recent policy moves by the global community including on the SDGs and the Paris Climate Negotiations (including the Aichi Targets) will certainly have roll on effects as well as provide opportunities for the GEF. The private sector is in the midst of major innovations in this space in particular in the areas of (a) natural capital assessment; b) in the demand-driven search for systems to provide accessible, high quality, reliable, credible, consistent and comparable information to be used in natural capital assessments, and c) in the rapidly developing field of creating new, commercial financial instruments to support the environment, such as impact investing, as it pertains to environment. Support to the growing world of natural capital assessment and assistance in helping to unleash capital in the “private sector” presents a unique opportunity.

4. To achieve its overall objective of enhancing global environment benefits, GEF has an expanded network of implementing partners. The network has increased from the initial three implementing agencies (UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank Group) to 18 implementing agencies today.

5. The GEF continues to utilize the “System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR)”<sup>1</sup> developed in 2009-2010 and was designed to provide predictable funding to recipient countries, contribute to country ownership, enhance country engagement and promote flexibility in programming.

6. During the 6<sup>th</sup> replenishment negotiations, in addition to the focal area strategies, there was broad support for innovative programming directions in the GEF. Replenishment participants agreed that the introduction of Integrated Approach Pilot Programs could keep the GEF on the leading edge of innovation and improve its responsiveness to regional and global issues.<sup>2</sup> The GEF-6 programming strategy includes three pilots in the Integrated Approach Pilots (IAP) program, including the Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa IAP, the Sustainable Cities IAP and the IAP on taking Deforestation out of Global Commodity Supply Chains. Common among these three pilots is that they are designed with the objective to address global environmental issues more holistically, within a much broader and more complex set of development challenges. GEF contributions to these challenges would seek to ensure that key global environmental issues were adequately considered in this broader context and to identify the most effective and innovative ways to use funds to reach a greater impact and scale.

7. The negotiations for the seventh replenishment of the GEF will be informed by an overall Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). The new terminology for what would have been the 6th Overall Performance Study (OPS6) was introduced in OPS5 with the reason that “the sheer volume of evaluative evidence in the GEF has increased dramatically and rather than a study based on interviews and expert opinion, it should now rightly be called an ‘evaluation’ based on solid evidence”. It is expected that the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF will be a working document of the next Assembly of the GEF, which will be held in 2018.

8. This approach paper is intended to form a basis for discussion in preparing the next Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF. The purpose is to guide the preparation of the inputs into the next Comprehensive Evaluation and to facilitate constructive dialogue in the GEF and among its partner agencies. This evaluation will build on the findings of OPS5, assess the implementation of the recommendations in OPS5, and assess progress on the elements of the GEF6 strategy. In addition, the report will, inter alia, take an in-depth look at the health of the expanded partnership, will address issues of efficiency (through value for money analysis), discuss socio economic benefits in addition to environmental co-benefits in projects that cut across focal areas, provide early insights into the integrated approach pilots, and report on the progress towards achieving gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment, enhancing the role of the private sector and strengthening results based management and knowledge sharing.

9. This paper begins with a brief discussion on the evolution of the GEF Overall Performance Studies (OPS), defines the key areas of focus and the evaluation questions, identifies sources of evaluative evidence and discusses methodological considerations and limitations. Based on preliminary discussions with GEF partners, with participating agencies,

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<sup>1</sup> System for Transparent Allocation of Resources <http://www.thegef.org/publications/system-transparent-allocation-resources-star>

<sup>2</sup> GEF Programming Directions, GEF Secretariat, March 2014.

<http://www.thegef.org/publications/gef-programming-strategy-adaptation-climate-change-least-developed-countries-fund>

members of the GEF Council and the GEF Secretariat, the paper has identified issues to be addressed. The approach paper then highlights the various gaps that would need to be filled through additional studies that are not currently part of the approved IEO work program.

10. In preparing this approach paper the IEO has initiated a consultative process with a variety of stakeholder groups. In addition, the draft approach paper for the Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS6) will be posted on the IEO website, with an invitation to send in comments and suggestions. GEF constituencies and partners will also be approached directly to send in their comments. A five member external review panel will advise the IEO throughout the evaluation process in addition to providing quality assurance.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Evolution of the GEF Overall Performance Studies (OPS)**

11. The first study<sup>3</sup> of the restructured GEF was requested in 1996. The study concluded that, in general, the GEF had performed effectively in creating new institutional arrangements and approaches to programming its resources in the four focal areas of its work and had been quite successful in leveraging co-financing for GEF projects with some positive impact on policies and programs in recipient countries. The study further concluded that good stakeholder involvement and participation in GEF projects was one of the key strengths in GEF operations

12. The Second Overall Performance Study (OPS2)<sup>4</sup> was designed to assess the extent to which GEF had achieved its primary objectives as specified in the 1994 restructuring and GEF policies of subsequent years. The evaluation concluded that GEF-supported projects have been able to produce significant results that address important global environmental problems<sup>5</sup>. It was clear around 2002 that the GEF had produced a wide array of project results considered important in achieving future positive environmental impacts.

13. The Third in the series of Overall Performance Studies (OPS3)<sup>6</sup>, was prepared during the period between September 2004 and June 2005. Specifically it evaluated the 1) results of GEF activities, 2) sustainability of results at the country level, 3) GEF as a catalytic institution, 4) GEF policies, institutional structure and partnerships, and 5) GEF implementation processes. OPS3 concluded that while there had been substantial progress in the GEF system with a much better informed stakeholder group as well as better functioning processes than four years before, there was need for “constructive dialogue” in defining baselines in the face of a moving target; for example, as additional species are catalogued or as abandoned stockpiles of POPs are uncovered.<sup>7</sup>

14. The effort to determine progress towards results within the GEF continued in OPS4<sup>8</sup>. The study concluded that the GEF was relevant both to the conventions and to regional and national priorities. GEF projects were assessed to be effective in producing sustainable outcomes. Seventy (70%) per cent of completed projects were expected to make progress toward global environmental benefits. However, follow-up actions from national partners

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops1>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops-period/ops-2>

<sup>5</sup> The first Decade of the GEF; Second Overall performance Study, January 25, 2002

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops-period/ops-3>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops-period/ops-3>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops-period/ops-4>

were key impact drivers that required attention. The study recommended improving the efficiency of the GEF with particular emphasis on programming, reducing the period for project identification, improving project formulation and enhancing the fee structure. It also recommended a more integrated learning and a results-based management framework that provided the basis for measurement of progress towards impact.

15. The Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF (2014) concluded that there is enough evidence to show that the GEF is achieving its objectives and has played a catalytic role in supporting countries in meeting their obligations under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and in tackling global environmental issues. As a network, OPS5 noted that the GEF continues to search for ways to function as smoothly as possible. The report argued that network interactions have been scaled back, and effective interaction was adversely affected. Delays in the project approval process which had often occurred in the past were reduced but could not yet be considered efficient. The report questioned the appropriateness of the current organizational and business model and concluded that there was a need for the GEF to reflect and find appropriate solutions in the coming replenishment period<sup>9</sup>. These issues will be specifically addressed in this evaluation.

### **The Context for the 7th Replenishment**

16. The 7<sup>th</sup> replenishment of the GEF takes place in an international context that continues to be difficult to predict and navigate. Several global megatrends, including a 2 billion global population increase by 2050, accompanied by a rapid increase in the global middle class by 3 billion in the next two decades, rapidly growing income and wealth inequality both within countries and between them, marginalization, agrarian stress, and unprecedented levels of youth unemployment, will continue to increase pressure on resources in the coming decades. These trends will require the world to meet a doubling in demand for food, energy, human habitat, transportation, and others that create direct pressures on the global environment.<sup>10</sup> In short, the global environment continues on a downward trend and the global economic and political environment continues to be unstable. Wars in the Middle East have dislodged large numbers of people placing tremendous migration pressures on countries particularly within the European Union. These pressures are straining national budgets in countries which have barely emerged from the financial crises of 2008. Further, the international environmental architecture of conventions, funds, programs and donors continues to show increasing fragmentation, making it more difficult to coordinate and harmonize funding for the implementation of environmental activities globally. The earlier UNFCCC COP Agreement to establish the Green Climate Fund and the GEF's role in supporting the transitional committee and establishing the interim secretariat, as well as the recent Climate Change agreements, are likely to further affect the balance of funding within the international environmental architecture.

17. In this context, the 7<sup>th</sup> replenishment will need a good perspective on the international landscape, solid evidence on the actual achievements, results and performance of the GEF—both in focal areas as well as in multi focal projects, early insights into the evidence from the design of the new integrated pilots and associated child projects. In addition, evidence on the progress on the GEF2020 strategy with respect to the mainstreaming of cross cutting issues including gender, private sector and civil society, resilience; improving operational efficiencies

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops-period/ops-5>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.thegef.org/documents/gef-6-programming-directions>

and results management will also be important. Key evaluation parameters such as impact, country ownership, performance, and the catalytic role of the GEF which were investigated in earlier OPSs are now a part of the regular work program of the IEO<sup>11</sup>. To that extent, the Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF will have the benefit of using existing accumulated evaluation evidence emerging for the period 2014-2017. A key component of the Comprehensive Evaluation will include a meta-analysis of completed evaluations undertaken not only by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF but also by other independent evaluation offices of GEF agencies. The aim will be to distil evidence from aggregate data to provide additional insights into the role the GEF has played and could potentially play within governments and in the GEF agencies in supporting the environmental agenda and mainstreaming environmental issues into the development agenda. This meta-analysis will be complemented by several in-depth studies to address the various institutional and governance issues as highlighted in Tables 1 and 2.

## **OBJECTIVES AND AUDIENCE FOR THE SIXTH COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION**

18. The overall purpose of the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF is to provide solid evaluative evidence to inform the negotiations for the seventh replenishment of the GEF. Following the objectives of the previous overall performance studies, the objective is to assess the extent to which the GEF is achieving its objectives as laid down in the GEF Instrument and reviews by the Assembly, as developed and adopted by the GEF Council in operational policies and programs for GEF financed activities, and to identify potential improvements going forward. In addition, this evaluation will also assess the relevance of the GEF objectives in this changing external landscape. The audience for the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation comprises replenishment participants, the GEF Council, the GEF Assembly, members of the GEF and external stakeholders. Relevant findings will be presented to stakeholders and parties in the GEF, including the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies, STAP, the GEF CSO network, and project proponents ranging from different Civil Society groups that includes private and public sector entities as well as the academic community, through existing channels such as the Extended Constituency Workshops and GEF CSO network meetings. In addition the evaluation will be distributed to the MEA secretariats and their conferences of the parties.

19. The Independent Evaluation Offices' four-year work program and budget which presents the strategy, programming and other work for the GEF6 period was discussed and approved by the GEF Council in June 2015. The work program was designed to provide evaluative evidence on the major strategies approved in the Sixth Replenishment of the GEF. As such, all evaluations that address trends in performance, achievements, results and impacts have been approved in the work program and will feed into the comprehensive evaluation; additional studies that address specific questions and issues relevant for the replenishment process will be carried out over the next fiscal year and are presented here for discussion and Council approval.

## **APPROACH TO PREPARING THE COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION**

### **Issues, questions and scope**

20. The Comprehensive Evaluation will deal with two related themes: (1) institutional, governance, strategy and programming issues and (2) the performance and impact of the GEF.

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<sup>11</sup>OPS5 draft approach paper, March 2015. <http://www.gefio.org/documents/ops5-approach-paper>

With respect to performance and impact, the Comprehensive Evaluation will assess the performance of the GEF as synthesized from evaluations conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office and its partner organizations over the period from 2014 to 2017.

21. The work program has been constructed appropriately to assess the key strategic priorities in the GEF-6 programming directions. The overall approach of the IEO program is consistent with issues explored in the Fourth and Fifth Overall Performance Studies and addresses issues such as impact, drivers of environmental degradation and innovation through its impact evaluations. Results at the country level will be assessed through country portfolio evaluations and performance of the GEF partnership in terms of relevance, efficiency and effectiveness will be assessed through the Annual Performance. This body of work will form the basis for evaluating the GEF-6 Strategic priorities and other issues associated with the effective functioning of the GEF.

22. In addition, evaluations being currently implemented, including multiple benefits in the GEF that evaluates the impacts of multi focal projects, the evaluation of the programmatic approaches and the integrated approach pilots will provide evidence on GEF programming strategies. The current work program of the IEO does not sufficiently address the relevance of GEF to the guidance of the conventions, institutional and governance issues. Additional work on the role of the GEF and its comparative advantage in a changing environment finance landscape, the health of the expanded partnership, institutional issues, overall governance, and individual focal area studies that will address the relevance of the GEF to the conventions, will be conducted. Besides the evaluation work of the GEF Trust Fund, evaluations of the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) constitute part of the body of work that would contribute to the Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF.

23. Several technical reports and an overall synthesis report will be prepared to inform the seventh replenishment process. The synthesis report will provide analyses of trends in performance and impact of the GEF, and evidence from the evaluations and sub-studies commissioned by the IEO and its partner agencies. The reports will be timed to support the first and last meetings of the GEF Council's replenishment exercise with the draft report being submitted to the June 2017 meeting.

### **Institutional, Governance and Program Issues**

24. In its review of OPS5 the expert review panel identified issues that were either not adequately covered or which required additional follow-up in the subsequent evaluation of the GEF.<sup>12</sup> These issues relate, inter alia, to the alignment of the results management system in the GEF to support adaptive management, the disproportionate share of GEF funding flowing to Climate Change at the expense of other MEAs, the extent to which gender and the evaluation of its effectiveness has been mainstreamed in GEF's work since the development of the gender policy, further analysis of emerging multi-focal area projects and their impact, and the extent of GEF's global relevance in the face of huge subsidies by governments to support environmentally damaging activities and the consequent accelerating environmental degradation.

25. In preparing this approach paper, members from GEF agencies, the Secretariat and CSO network members were interviewed for their views on institutional and governance issues

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<sup>12</sup><http://www.gefio.org/documents/ops5-comments-senior-independent-evaluation-advisors>

that they considered important for this evaluation. Most common among the issues raised are the following: a) The expansion of GEF partnership agencies (scope and number), incentives and project cycle and program modalities to collaborate and the role for Operational Focal Points; b) the knowledge management role of the GEF; c) the policy on private sector engagement; d) the potential for synergies between the GEF and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) at the country level; e) the integration of GEF funded activities into agency programs at the country level; and f) the impacts of the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR).

26. Based on the inputs from stakeholders, themes that will be addressed include:

### Relevance and the Global Contribution of the GEF

- (a) Global relevance, GEF 6 Strategy and the focus on integrated program approaches
- (b) Focal area strategy Results and relevance to Conventions
- (c) Governance of the GEF, donor performance and resource mobilization
- (d) Health of the expanded partnership
- (e) Attention to cross cutting policies including gender
- (f) Engagement with the private sector
- (g) Attention to Civil Society Organizations and Indigenous People
- (h) Resource allocation (STAR)
- (i) Results Based Management
- (j) Knowledge Management

27. The themes will be addressed through independent evaluations and sub-studies while drawing on literature reviews, interviews, analysis of existing data and meta analysis of existing evaluations. Synergies are expected between many of the on-going evaluations and sub-studies to be commissioned for the Comprehensive Evaluation. The matrix in Table 1 below details the key questions related to the themes above, identifies potential sources of information, and the scope and limitations of the studies.

**Table 1: Relevance and the Global Contribution of the GEF**

Key Issue	Evaluation Question	Sources of Evidence	Scope & Limitations
Global relevance of the GEF	To what extent is the GEF relevant globally and how could its global relevance be enhanced? What would be the comparative advantage of the GEF in the changing landscape?	Environmental/scientific literature, patterns of government spending, interviews with governments and international development agencies, and research institutions.	Broad review of existing literature and interviews. Relevance will be assessed in terms of both alignment with the global context (including the SDGs) and needs, GEF's mandate, strategic focus of the core areas

			of intervention, appropriateness of approaches used, geographical scope, and delivery of GEB.
GEF 6 Strategy	To what extent is the GEF6 strategy achieving its objectives? What does the early evidence suggest on the integrated approaches?	GEF6 Programming Directions, Evaluations of Focal Area strategies, Strategic country level and cluster evaluations, Formative evaluation of programmatic approaches	This will draw on the focal area studies, the private sector study, the multiple benefits evaluation, the programmatic approaches evaluation and the process evaluation of integrated approaches.
Continuing relevance and effectiveness of the current GEF Business Model and Health of the Partnership	To what extent is the current GEF business model effective and still relevant? Does the current business model optimize the capabilities within the GEF partnership?	Strategy documents, Interviews with partner agencies, governments, Council members, working papers, council deliberations, results of multi-focal area projects, sub study will look at trends in network and partnership relations and link these with developments in the GEF.	Current focal area studies, Multiple benefits evaluation, the study of the expansion of the GEF partnership, interviews with stakeholders and partners. An update to OPS5 on the role of STAP.
Funding Structure of the GEF	To what extent has the disproportionate share of funding flowing to climate change in recent years been addressed in order to create balance in GEF allocations to the focal areas? Have the issues related to the substantial donor areas been addressed? What are the implications of the interlinkages between the MEAs for GEF financing? How has the STAR allocation mechanism deepened country ownership?	Examination of the funding structure and resource allocation. Interviews with stakeholders and a study of donor disbursements to the Trust Fund.	General review of the funding structure of the GEF. Update on the review of the STAR allocation in the context of the expansion of the partnership and the integrated approaches.
Governance of the GEF	Extent to which the governance of the GEF continues to follow good practices.	A study will look at OPS5 conclusions and update them.	Findings to draw on a governance study and any other relevant issues identified in the

			paper on the Health of the Partnership.
Focal Area Strategies and Results	Are the Focal Area Theories of Change realistic? Do they align meaningfully with the objective of supporting integrated solutions?	Focal area strategy evaluations, evaluations of GEF's results framework	Project level evaluations in focal areas will provide some evidence and additional analysis will be undertaken. Focal area studies are being undertaken to address alignment with conventions.
Multiple Benefits of GEF Support	To what extent has GEF support generated multiple benefits?	Evaluation of multiple Benefits of GEF Support	Multiple Benefits evaluation, focal area studies.
Programmatic Approaches	What has been GEF's experience with programmatic approaches? How effective have these approaches been in different contexts and what has been their contribution to global environmental benefits? What is the early evidence on the Integrated Approaches programs (IAPs)?	Evaluation of programmatic approaches, the IAPs, Working Paper clarifying programmatic approaches	Issues related to process effectiveness and efficiency , Integrated approaches and value for money as well as contribution to global environmental benefit will be explored The evaluation of programmatic approaches will assess whether and how GEF support delivered under the modality has delivered the expected results in terms of global environmental benefits while addressing the main drivers of global environmental change. Comparison of programs vs stand alone projects will be explored.
Results Based Management (RBM)	To what extent is the RBM system in a position to capture the impacts of GEF interventions? To what extent does this system support adaptive management?	An evaluation of GEF's results framework, RBM system and tracking tools.	Technical paper to cover strategic management, governance and operational activities.
Gender Mainstreaming	To what extent have gender issues and evaluation of its effectiveness been	Meta-Analysis Sub-studies on Gender for OPS5 , Gender Policy of the GEF,	The sub-study on gender in OPS5 can provide a starting point in undertaking this

	mainstreamed into GEF's work since the development of its gender policy?	Project and country program evaluations	study. This will be updated with a technical review. All ongoing evaluations will address gender.
Role of the Private Sector	To what extent has the GEF played a catalytic role in mobilizing private sector financing in address GEBS? How has the GEF engaged the private sector to identify opportunities and leverage them effectively? How is the Non Grant Instrument performing?	A more in-depth look at the involvement of the private sector at the project level and in the integrated programs	The portfolio analysis and a technical paper will provide solid indications of trends and performance, drawing on other international examples.
Role of Civil Society Organizations and Indigenous peoples participation	What has been the role of civil society organizations in GEF's work? To what extent has the use of traditional knowledge been promoted in and by GEF activities?	A more in-depth look at the involvement of civil society organizations at the project level –a sub-study will link this to the findings in the focal area strategy evaluations as well as Strategic Country Level and Cluster Evaluations (SCCCEs)	The portfolio analysis and the sub-study together with the CSO Network evaluation will provide indications of trends and achievements.
Knowledge Management	Is the GEF performing as a major data and information provider and are there any systemic issues to be addressed? What is the extent to which Knowledge Management has been effectively managed and shared across the partnership?	An in-depth review of the KM strategy and the effectiveness of the implementation of the strategy	Desk study plus field evidence and interviews with stakeholders, evidence from all ongoing evaluations.

### Program Performance and Impact

28. The evaluation of program performance and outcomes/impacts will consider the following key themes:

- (a) Outcome and Sustainability Ratings for completed GEF Projects as emerging from the 2013-2017 period.
- (b) Ratings on progress towards impact of completed GEF projects for the period 2013-2017

- (c) Trends in the catalytic role of the GEF as characterized by projects that focus on demonstration, scale up or investment
- (d) Trends in country ownership and driven-ness and GEF's role in contributing to policy and regulatory improvements in countries.
- (e) An understanding of the longer term impact of the GEF based on evidence from impact evaluations
- (f) Trends in performance issues including quality at entry, co-financing, supervision
- (g) Trends in implementation and achievement of the focal areas of the GEF.

29. Providing answers to these questions will involve undertaking a meta-analysis of GEF evaluations and additional data gathering and analysis as required. A meta-analysis is essentially a systematic synthesis of evaluation studies that provides information to facilitate examination of patterns, trends and relationships with the aim of providing a greater understanding and importance of program characteristics, outcome domains and methods. Cumulative synthesis of evaluations adds to knowledge in the field, trends become apparent, and their potential contribution to decision making clearer.

30. While meta-analyses are not necessarily easy to conduct because the evaluations are derived from difference sources with dissimilar methods, data quality and reliability making comparisons difficult, evaluations undertaken by the IEO are less likely to face the same difficulties. These evaluations use similar approaches and methods making data aggregation and comparison much easier.

31. A major exercise was undertaken during OPS5 to assemble, clean-up and validate a database of GEF interventions through exchanges with the GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies, and the Trustee. The OPS5 database will serve as a starting point for conducting the meta-analysis for the 6th Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF. These updates will produce two lists of projects. A list of 1) completed and 2) on-going projects after OPS5 closed. These databases will be used to conduct a meta-analysis of trends in GEF support in terms of modalities, focal areas, countries and regions covered and in terms of performance (results and impact) for closed projects. Table 2 below presents a matrix of issues to be considered in the meta-analysis. It includes key evaluation questions, sources of evaluative evidence, and scope and limitations.

Table 2: Program Performance and Impact

Key issues	Evaluation questions	Sources of Evidence	Scope and limitations
Continuing relevance of the GEF to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA)	How relevant is the GEF to the guidance of the conventions, as emerging from the evaluations in the period 2013-2017? What are the implications of the focus on integrated approaches?	Terminal evaluations of projects Country Portfolio Evaluations, Thematic and impact Evaluations.	Issues related to relevance will be synthesized from Focal area strategy Evaluations, project level evaluations and the Programmatic/Integrated approaches evaluations.
Project Level Accomplishments	What are the outcome and performance ratings on outcomes and sustainability of completed GEF projects, for which terminal evaluations are available (2013-2017); to what extent have the ratings improved?	Terminal evaluations of projects, Country Portfolio Evaluations, Impact evaluations, Annual Performance Reports (APR), available benchmarks from other agencies such as IEG.	Terminal evaluations are quality assured and follow roughly the same guidelines. Trends can be Established from 2004. High level of coverage and Confidence; validations will be performed to ensure consistency.
Progress toward impact of completed GEF projects	To what extent are the ratings on progress toward impact of completed GEF projects for the period 2013-2017 better or worse than the full cohort of OPS4 and OPS5 completed projects? What are some of the factors responsible for the observed trends?	Terminal Evaluations of projects with review of outcomes to impact through. Strategic Country Level and Cluster Evaluations (SCCCEs) and Impact Evaluations, APRs.	Terminal evaluations of completed projects are likely to have wider coverage. Strategic Country Level and Cluster Evaluations, programmatic and multiple benefits evaluations will contribute.
Catalytic role of the GEF	What trends are discernible on the catalytic role of the GEF as characterized by foundation, demonstration and/or investment projects?	Country program, Thematic and Impact Evaluations. Demonstration, Foundation and Investment portfolio analysis, APR.	Scope and coverage will be broader than OPS5. Terminal evaluations, focal area studies, Multiple Benefits and programmatic approaches will provide insights.
Focal Area Achievements	What are current trends in the implementation and performance of focal area support of the GEF as synthesized from thematic, country portfolio and impact evaluations.	Focal area strategies Meta- analysis, based on Strategic Country Level and Cluster Evaluations (SCCCEs), thematic and impact evaluations, as well as terminal evaluations.	The Focal area strategies are more current than evidence that may emerge from some project level evaluations since some projects pre-date the focal area strategies.
Country Ownership and	What trends are evident	Project terminal	Evidence will be derived

Driven-ness and GEF's contribution to changes in country policy and regulations	from the country portfolio evaluations in regards to ownership and country driven- ness.	evaluations, thematic evaluations and impact evaluations, Strategic Country Level and Cluster Evaluations (SCCCEs) – country selection to be determined.	from planned Strategic Country Level and Cluster Evaluations (SCCCEs), project level terminal evaluations and relevant evaluations from partner agencies evaluation offices.
Addressing Drivers of Global Environmental Change	To what extent and in what forms has GEF support addressed drivers of environmental degradation (these would include positive and negative drivers). What is the role of the GEF in policy matters such as UNFCC and the SDGs?	Impact evaluations Strategic Country Level and Cluster Evaluations (SCCCEs).	Evaluation of cluster of GEF projects at country, regional or global levels. Evaluation of Programmatic approaches and Multiple Benefits, and the Integrated Approaches evaluation will provide evidence on the extent to which GEF Portfolios are addressing drivers of Global Change.
GEF Performance	Extent to which performance in the GEF has improved, especially on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project cycle</li> <li>- Co-funding</li> <li>- Management costs and fees</li> <li>- Quality at entry</li> <li>- Supervision</li> <li>- LDCF-SCCF</li> </ul> What are the challenges in addressing these?	Portfolio analysis, SCCCEs, terminal evaluations.  Annual Performance Reports (APRs).  LDCF/SCCF Annual Evaluation Reports  Governance, Health of the Partnership studies.	Changes in trends will be discerned from the portfolio analysis, Health of the Partnership and Governance of the GEF, focal area studies, and Programmatic and Multiple Benefits evaluations.

## METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

32. This Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF is essentially a synthesis of many evaluations and studies designed to produce findings and recommendations that will inform the 7th Replenishment exercise. To that extent, there will be considerable variability in the methods to be used for the cohort of evaluations and studies that make up the comprehensive evaluation. These will be detailed for each evaluation in the approach papers/ inception reports as the case may be. In general, however, the specific methods used to collect data; methods of analysis and the validation of findings are standard methods that will be applied and will follow international best practice. They include: literature and document reviews; portfolio analysis; structured and semi-structured interviews; surveys; the use of GIS and remote sensing methods; rapid impact evaluations; stakeholder consultations and analysis;

country and field visits; statistical analysis; qualitative analysis; data triangulation and case studies.

33. IEO's Generic Theory of change<sup>13</sup> (TOC) represents, for all intents and purposes, a conceptual framework of GEF investment and not a framework for understanding the causal pathways between GEF support and global environmental benefits. The Generic Theory of Change is still relevant for developing the Comprehensive Evaluation. The TOC will provide the general framework for organizing and classifying data and to carry out comparative analysis of data derived from different sources. For specific evaluations, however, theories of change may be developed along with detailed evaluation matrices consistent with international best practice.

34. The full portfolio of GEF projects and activities will be analysed. Evidence on progress toward impact will be gathered from completed projects from July 2013 to January 2017. The process of measuring results through attribution which, by definition, makes causal claims is difficult and in many cases impractical. Given the fact that GEF supported interventions are implemented through partnerships among several institutions, impacts in the GEF are often determined through analysis of what GEF-supported interventions have "contributed" to, without distinguishing the results of activities supported by GEF funding alone from the activities of co-financiers.

35. Credible claims of "contribution" can be made if 1) the intervention is logically and feasibly designed to directly or indirectly result in the desired benefits as outlined in a theory of change, 2) the intervention is implemented as designed, 3) the immediate results occur as expected in the causal chain, and 4) other rival explanations for the results have either been considered and rejected, or their relative role in making a difference to an observed result has been adequately recognized.<sup>14</sup> Whenever possible, the analysis will attempt to determine the added value of GEF's contributions in light of the roles played by other actors at different times and locations. In the programmatic and multiple benefits evaluations, attempts will be made to address the counterfactual to understand what things would have been like without GEF involvement.

36. The process of identifying the impact pathways and specifying the impact drivers and assumptions for modelling progress toward impact – the outcome-to-impact pathway developed in OPS5 will be applied. This method, beyond providing ratings based on a project's specific context, identifies the specific areas of GEF contribution towards the achievement of impacts or of intermediate states.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES**

### **Stakeholder consultations**

37. The Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF is being conducted between October 2016<sup>15</sup> and October 2017, with several of the technical papers and evaluations submitted to Council in June 2017.<sup>16</sup> It will be an in-depth evaluation using a participatory approach characterized by regular stakeholder consultation and involvement throughout the evaluation process. This

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<sup>13</sup> See annex 1 –Generic Theory of Change of the Global Environment Facility support

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.gefio.org/documents/ops5-td02-impact-gef>

<sup>15</sup> Some of the contributing evaluations to the Comprehensive evaluation such as the evaluation of Programmatic approaches had been initiated in October 2015.

<sup>16</sup> The Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF will become a working document of the Sixth Assembly of the GEF, which will be held in 2018

will involve consultation and outreach during the preparation of this approach paper, during the conduct of the evaluation and the dissemination and outreach to key stakeholders. Sub-regional meetings of GEF focal points and Extended Constituency Workshops are an important means by which the Independent Evaluation Office will interact with key stakeholders.

**Quality Assurance**

38. Five external quality assurance advisors from the developed, the newly emerging group of (BRICS) countries, and the developing nations have been appointed. The external review panel comprises of the following experts: Ms. Holly Dublin, Ms. Sunita Narain, Mr. Hans Bruyninckx, Mr. Osvaldo Feinstein, Mr. Kazuhiko Takemoto. These recognized international development professionals in the fields of environment, development and evaluation would provide quality assurance through all stages of preparing the comprehensive evaluation. They will provide guidance throughout the evaluation process—including the conceptualization of the evaluation, the interpretation of findings and the framing of recommendations. Another key component of the quality assurance process is the review for individual evaluations and sub-studies. Reference Groups and peer reviewers will provide quality feedback and inputs into the independent evaluations.

**DELIVERABLES**

39. The Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF will produce several independent evaluations and sub-studies to be presented to the June 2016-June 2017 GEF Council meetings. The main report will provide a clear understanding of the performance of the GEF including current results and impact as synthesized from evaluations conducted by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office and its partner organizations. The main report will also synthesize findings and recommendations on issues related to governance, program and institutional development from the independent evaluations and sub-studies. The individual evaluations and sub-studies that contribute, in a significant way, to the Comprehensive Evaluation will be presented to the Council and published as technical documents and be uploaded to the IEO website. The draft report will be timed to inform the 7<sup>th</sup> Replenishment exercise with the final report being delivered in December 2017. Besides the GEF Council and Replenishment participants, the reports will be distributed widely to GEF partners, stakeholders and Civil Society and be uploaded to the IEO website.

**SCHEDULE AND BUDGET**

40. The independent evaluations or technical reports should be completed and made available by June 2017 and the synthesis report by December 2017. Below is the tentative schedule for the comprehensive evaluation.

Task	Year
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	2016	2017
Approach Paper	June	
Preparation of Meta-Analysis		March
Preparation of sub-studies and other evaluations (Technical Reports)	July-December	June
Delivery of OPS6 Progress Report		June
Delivery of Synthesis Report		December

### **Budget**

41. The Council has approved the 4 year Budget and Plan for the IEO. This Comprehensive evaluation will be adequately resourced through this approved budget. This evaluation will draw on the individual evaluations approved as part of the work program. The separate studies that are undertaken as part of this evaluation will be budgeted for once the approach paper is approved. A tentative budget estimate for the extra studies for this evaluation is approximately \$0.7 million.

## ANNEX I: REFERENCES

1. OPS5, Fifth Overall Performance Study of GEF, The GEF Portfolio, OPS5 Technical Document #1 March 2013
2. Terms of Reference and Budget for the Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF
3. OPS5 Annex: Comments of the Senior Independent Evaluation Advisors.
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6. Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF. Final report: At the Crossroads for Higher Impact, Summary, GEF 2014. <http://www.gefio.org/ops/ops-5>
7. Four-Year Work Program and Budget of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office May 2015.
8. Audit Trail of Comments on the Draft Approach Paper, GEF IEO, May 9 2012.  
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9. Fourth Overall Performance Study of the GEF(OPS4): Progress Toward Impact, April 2010.  
<http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops-period/ops-4>
10. Third Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS3): Progressing Toward Environmental Results, June 2005. <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops-period/ops-3>
11. Second Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS2): The First Decade of the GEF, January 2002. <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops-period/ops-2>
12. First Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS1): Study of GEF's Overall Performance, <http://www.gefio.org/evaluations/ops1> s
13. GEF-6 PROGRAMMING DIRECTIONS  
<http://www.thegef.org/documents/gef-6-programming-directions>

## ANNEX II: THE GEF THEORY OF CHANGE

