



Global Environment Facility

GEF/C.10/6
October 3, 1997

GEF Council
November 4-6, 1997
Agenda Item 9

PROGRESS REPORT ON PREPARATION OF EVALUATION STUDIES

Recommended Council Decision

The Council reviewed the *Progress Report on the Preparation of Evaluation Studies*, document GEF/C.10/6, and welcomes receiving the preliminary findings emerging from both studies. The Council requests the evaluation team and Advisory Panel to continue its work so to complete the evaluation reports in accordance with the schedule presented in the document.

INTRODUCTION

1. At its May, 1997 meeting, the Council approved the Work Program and Budget for the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation program for FY98 (GEF/C.9/4 and GEF/C.9/9 Rev. 1). Among the activities discussed and approved were a Study of GEF's Overall Performance and a Study of GEF Project Lessons. For the Overall Performance Study, the Council encouraged the establishment of a Senior Advisory Panel.
2. Progress reports as of July 31, 1997, were prepared for both studies and sent to the Council. This document provides an updated status report on the studies, including a summary of their preliminary findings.

STUDY OF GEF'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE

3. The terms of reference for the study were finalized in early May after receipt of comments from a number of Council members and others. A core team of five international consultants, with support from four additional international consultants and 16 national consultants, were engaged by the Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator to conduct the study. The team is led by Dr. Gareth Porter of the United States. A Senior Advisory Panel of eight members was appointed. It consists of four members from developing countries and four from developed countries, and is chaired by Dr. M. S. Swaminathan of India. (The names of panel members and international consultants are listed in Annex 1 to this report.) The Panel's mandate is to review the terms of reference and the work of the study team and ascertain that the report is comprehensive in coverage and independent. The Panel met in June and commented extensively on the terms of reference and the study design. It will meet again from October 27-29 to discuss the first draft of the final report.
4. In July-August, 1997, members of the study team visited ten countries, and information about the performance of the GEF was collected in six additional countries. Interviews with country officials, implementing agency personnel, NGOs and various other stakeholders were conducted in Argentina, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, Poland, Russian Federation, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe. In addition, the team consulted relevant documents and conducted interviews with the GEF secretariat, implementing agencies, STAP, the secretariats of the climate change and biological diversity conventions, NGOs and others.

5. *Annex 1* to this report includes a summary of the preliminary findings of the study team on some of the central issues examined in the Overall Performance Study. These will be discussed in a meeting on November 3, at the time of the Council meeting and NGO consultation. Further consultations on the team's draft report will occur in November-December. The study will be completed by the end of December.

STUDY OF GEF PROJECT LESSONS

6. This study is being undertaken by the Canadian firm Resource Futures International, which was selected by the Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator after his review of proposals of ten firms from several countries. The study is based on a desk review of documents for 30 Pilot Phase projects, and a more in-depth review of approximately eleven projects, five of which--in Belize, Cameroon, Jordan, Philippines and Zimbabwe--were visited by the study team.

7. The Project Lessons Study will identify key factors that have accounted for success in GEF Pilot Phase projects. In addition, it focuses on three specific areas which are regarded as high priority by project managers and staff:

- (a) building partnerships and understanding among project implementers and local communities;
- (b) integration of project-funded activities with national policies and priorities; and
- (c) ways to involve the private sector in GEF-funded projects.

8. The study team is currently preparing a draft of its findings and conclusions, which will be shared and discussed with task managers, staff from the implementing agencies' GEF coordination units, and NGOs during October-November. *Annex 2* to this report highlights some of the team's preliminary findings on the lessons learned from the Pilot Phase projects that it examined.

ANNEX 1

PROGRESS REPORT STUDY OF GEF'S OVERALL PERFORMANCE OCTOBER 3, 1997

THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING THE STUDY

1. At its meetings in October, 1996, and May, 1997, the Council requested the Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator to undertake a study of GEF's Overall Performance and commented on its design and implementation. The results of the study are to be made available to the GEF Assembly in 1998.
2. The study is being carried out by a core team of five international consultants with support from four additional international consultants and 16 national consultants, led by Dr. Gareth Porter of the United States. An Expert Advisory Panel of eight members, chaired by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan of India, has been formed to review the work of the study team and assure that the report is comprehensive in coverage and independent.
3. By the end of September, 1997, the team had consulted relevant documents and conducted interviews with the GEF secretariat, the implementing agencies, STAP, the secretariats of the climate change and biological diversity conventions, and NGOs. In July and August, members of the study team visited ten countries, and information about the performance of the GEF was collected in six additional countries. Interviews with country officials, implementing agency personnel, NGOs and various other stakeholders were conducted in Argentina, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Philippines, Poland, Russian Federation, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.
4. A first draft of the team's report will be reviewed by the Senior Advisory Panel in late October. The team's preliminary findings will also be discussed with interested Council members and NGO representatives on November 3, at the time of the GEF Council meeting and NGO consultation.

Institutional Roles and Relations

Comparative advantages of implementing agencies

5. The original understanding among the three implementing agencies regarding the comparative advantage of each within the GEF is guiding the roles of the IA's only very loosely, as the World Bank and UNDP both undertake investment projects and technical assistance. The actual comparative advantage of each may lie more in their respective strengths in working with partner governments on policy issues than in differing technical competencies. It is still unclear what niche UNEP occupies in the GEF partnership, but one of its comparative strengths may lie in its traditional role in international waters.

Secretariat relations with implementing agencies regarding project review

6. The role of the GEF secretariat in the review of projects for approval in the work program is an issue between the secretariat and the implementing agencies. The shift in 1996 from the GEFOP to bilateral consultations is regarded by all concerned as an improvement in terms of efficiency as well as improved relations among the implementing agencies themselves. But it has given greater responsibility to the secretariat for making comments on projects, and the implementing agencies -- especially the World Bank -- are critical of the secretariat approach to the bilateral review of work programs, which they feel goes beyond eligibility and strategic fit with Operational Programs. The team is in the process of evaluating the issue of how far the secretariat's role in project review should go, including its review of incremental cost calculations.

Mainstreaming of the global environment by the implementing agencies

7. The study team defines "mainstreaming" as integrating global environmental objectives and the GEF's Operational Strategy into the regular operations of the implementing agencies. It has devised a series of criteria appropriate to each of the three implementing agencies. For example, the World Bank's mainstreaming is judged on the basis of its co-financing of GEF projects and of World Bank loans associated with GEF projects; on how well it has integrated the global environment into its economic and sector work, its Country Assistance Strategies, and its lending portfolio as a whole, and on whether it has begun to do programming on the basis of global environmental objectives as well as on country-based strategies. UNDP's mainstreaming is also judged on the basis of its co-financing and its association of projects from its regular program with GEF projects, and also on whether it has increased attention to global environmental problems--especially climate and biodiversity--in its portfolio of regular

projects and in its Country Cooperation Frameworks. Defining mainstreaming in the case of UNEP obviously presents different conceptual problems.

Mobilization of Resources

8. The study team has developed a taxonomy of GEF leveraging of financial resources that includes co-financing of GEF projects, association of implementing agency projects with GEF projects, and leveraging by stimulating replication or similar investments in the same sector. With regard to financing for projects associated with a GEF project, the team is analyzing the question of the extent to which such association generates additional global benefits. The team is in the process of collecting the available data to document the accomplishments of the GEF in regard to each of these aspects of resource leveraging. It will also document how important GEF funding is in the four focal areas relative to funding by other bilateral and multilateral donors, not only quantitatively but qualitatively, i.e., whether other donors are funding the same types of projects or programs as the GEF. Given rapidly growing private sector investment in developing countries generally, the study team is undertaking a special examination of GEF's leveraging of private sector financing.

Knowledge of GEF in Recipient Countries

9. The study team found in its country visits that the level of understanding of the GEF was generally still quite low. Beyond the small group of government officials involved in GEF projects, there is not much awareness of the GEF, much less understanding of how it functions, even in government circles. The team determined that this lack of knowledge can be attributed to several factors, including the fact that most projects are identified with the implementing agencies and not the GEF, lack of clarity about who is responsible for marketing the GEF within the countries, the lack of an effective and differentiated strategy for outreach to different GEF constituencies, and the low priority often given to global environmental issues in recipient countries.

GEF Procedures for Project Preparation, Approval and Disbursement

10. Project cycle procedures can raise transaction costs and discourage participation by governments and non-government actors. Based on its country visits and studies and on interviews with implementing agencies, the study team has identified three main issues relating to the way in which the GEF handles various stages of the project cycle: the length of time for projects to go from concept to implementation; the clarity and justifiability of GEF eligibility requirements; and the usefulness of the incremental cost requirement. The team found that the main causes of the long delays before project approval lie in differences between governments and implementing agencies and complications (such as the absence of clear operational guidance before the Operational Programs were developed) that have prevented a clear decision by the implementing agencies on project proposals. The time required for project review and

comment by the secretariat and the Council accounts for only about 4 months out of an average process of 24 months. However, the team found general support among the GEF family of institutions for dropping the second review of projects by the Council. The team is still analyzing the issue of the incremental cost requirement in GEF project cycle procedures.

Post-Project Sustainability of GEF-Supported Projects

11. The study team found that the projects with the greatest likelihood of sustainability beyond GEF funding are those involving support for near-commercial activities. In the climate area, these are projects whose sustainability can be judged in terms of whether or not they are replicated. The sustainability of more innovative or risky projects, such as those falling within Operational Program #7 (reducing the long-term costs of low greenhouse gas-emitting energy technologies) may be measured on the basis of the project's ability to reduce costs and achieve steep learning curves and thus attract other funders. The degree of government and community commitment to the project are probably good indicators of the likely sustainability of biodiversity projects. The team found in some cases that projects could not be expected to become sustainable without a significantly longer duration. The team is analyzing data gathered from country visits and other case studies on the likely sustainability of GEF projects.

Stakeholder Participation in GEF-Supported Projects

12. In its country visits, the study team found evidence that implementing agencies are taking steps to ensure stakeholder participation is a feature of all GEF projects, as recommended in the Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase. These efforts often contribute to long delays in project preparation. The team also found that the issue is often extremely complex, because of multiple issues, players and socio-economic driving forces, and some operational problems have not been satisfactorily resolved. The team found that GEF biodiversity projects usually need and have stronger stakeholder participation than climate projects. The team is continuing to evaluate a sample of projects in all focal areas in terms of the effectiveness of provisions for stakeholder participation.

Country-Drivenness and Ownership of GEF-Supported Projects

13. The study team found that country-drivenness is related to but distinct from the respective roles of governments and implementing agencies in project conception and development. Implementing agencies are often the initiators of project proposals, and they usually play the main role in developing proposals which are eventually advanced for GEF CEO/Council approval. The dominant role of implementing agencies is particularly clear in the case of incremental cost calculations. Project proponents in the countries visited told the team that in virtually every case these were done by

international consultants hired by the implementing agency. The team found evidence that global and regional projects present particularly difficult problems with country-drivenness, requiring additional efforts by implementing agencies to ensure country ownership. The team encountered cases where a GEF project driven primarily by an implementing agency is ultimately given strong support by the recipient government because it meets country needs.

GEF Project Influence on Country Environmental Programs and Policies

14. The team has identified several ways in which GEF projects have had a discernible impact on the policies affecting the global environment in some countries. The team will document instances involving, for example, how GEF has contributed to the development of a strategy or plan of action; induced increased investment by government in an activity important to the global environment; prompted government to give a global environmental issue higher priority; and contributed to establishment of a new mechanism for intragovernmental policy coordination. The team will attempt to assess how common these types of impacts on policy and programs have been.

GEF's Cooperation with the Conventions

15. The GEF's cooperation with the conventions involves three central issues: the responsiveness of the GEF to the guidance coming from the convention Conferences of the Parties; the adequacy of the guidance from the conventions, and the contribution of GEF-funded enabling activities to the fulfillment by countries of their reporting and other obligations under the conventions. The study team has found that the GEF secretariat has responded to the convention guidance with appropriate changes in Operational Programs and procedures, although the secretariat and implementing agencies have not always been able to agree on how to respond, as in the case of agrobiodiversity. Guidance from the Convention on Biological Diversity has been too broad and lacking in priorities, and has sometimes strayed from biodiversity conservation and sustainable management, as in the case of biosafety. The study team is still analyzing enabling activities and their contribution to fulfillment of government obligations under the conventions.

Follow-up to the Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase

16. Based on its preliminary survey of their responses, the study team has found that the GEF secretariat and Council have taken action on nearly every recommendation in the Pilot Phase evaluation. The main responses have been the instrument negotiated as a result of GEF restructuring and the preparation and publication of a series of documents dealing with the Operational Strategy, the Operational Programs, project cycle, and incremental cost calculations, among other topics. Some recommendations have been implemented only partially, such as the one concerning monitoring and evaluation. One of the major recommendations that has

been weakly implemented is the one calling for mainstreaming of the GEF in the implementing agencies' regular operations.

Other Issues

17. The study team is in the process of defining issues, data and methodologies for analyzing a number of other issues within its terms of reference, including strategies for programming in the different focal areas, institutional issues, and questions related to the GEF project cycle.

SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE STUDY REPORT

18. The study team plans to complete its work on the report on the following schedule:

December 1: circulation of the draft report to GEF secretariat, Implementing agencies, NGO focal points, and others for comments.

December 15: Deadline for comments

December 31, 1997: Final draft completed

January, 1998: Translation into French and Spanish, and publication in three languages for distribution at the GEF Assembly.

19. Additional information of the Study of GEF's Overall Performance, including the study team's Inception Report (which includes the final Terms of Reference for the Study) and the minutes of the June 27 Expert Advisory Panel meeting, can be found on the GEF World Wide Web site (www.worldbank.org/html/gef), or from the GEF Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, Jarle Harstad, at (202) 458-4619 or, by email, at jharstad@worldbank.org.

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ANNEX 2
PROGRESS REPORT
STUDY OF GEF PROJECT LESSONS
OCTOBER 3, 1997

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

1. The first cross-cutting study of project experience conducted by the GEF's Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator is the Study of Project Lessons. The objective of this study is to assess experience to date under projects approved during GEF's Pilot Phase¹ to determine what factors most often account for the success of (or problems with) these activities. The study is being conducted by Resource Futures International.

STATUS

2. In 1995 and 1996, GEF's implementing agencies and the secretariat conducted Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) of all projects that had been active for at least one year. These reviews identified lessons that were emerging from the early implementation of GEF Pilot Phase activities. Building on information from the PIRs, the first phase of the study, which was completed in late June, involved document review and interviews with task managers, implementing agency GEF coordination units, NGO representatives and others. The team found that many of the lessons emerging from GEF project experience were similar to those from development programs more generally. This finding, coupled with a strong desire by implementing agencies for more detailed analysis of key features specifically related to the GEF, led the study team to highlight three specific lessons which stand out from the experience to date and which were identified as high priority by project managers and staff:

- (a) For community-based biodiversity and other projects to succeed, considerable effort and/or time must be devoted to building partnerships and understanding among project implementers and communities.
- (b) Careful integration of project interventions with national policies and priorities is needed to help ensure that links between project efforts and global environmental benefits can be effectively made and sustained.
- (c) Innovative approaches are often needed to help ensure effective private sector involvement in all stages of project development and implementation.

The second phase of the study focused on these three lessons.

¹ A lessons-learned study drawing on more recently approved GEF projects was considered premature at this time.

3. In August and September, the study team visited GEF-funded projects in Belize, Cameroon, Jordan, Philippines, and Zimbabwe. Team members discussed implementation experience and the learning process with project staff, local NGO representatives, government agencies and others. In addition, evaluations and other materials describing lessons learned from another six Pilot Phase projects--including ones in Argentina, Bolivia, India, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, and Slovakia which are already well documented--were reviewed and incorporated into the team's analyses.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

4. The RFI team is currently preparing the study report. While subject to further refinement based on consultations on the draft report, the following are among the study's preliminary findings.

Overall success factors:

5. The quality of project design, by itself, was not a reliable predictor of success. Successful projects had the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and take advantage of feedback on performance. On the other hand, faulty designs--e.g., ones that were too ambitious and beyond the capacity of project management units, or ones that were too restrictive and consequently incapable of attracting private sector investment--often doomed projects to failure from the outset.

6. Successful projects were managed more closely to where activities were actually carried out. This allowed them to take advantage of, and react quickly to, local feedback. However, for local management to be effective, it had to be combined with a conscious effort to strengthen local institutions.

7. The quality of project managers was a key factor of success. Successful projects had managers who were able to deal effectively and simultaneously with a multitude of technical, social, political and financial issues; who kept a clear vision of their objective and were persistent in their efforts to reach it; and who actively listened to local feedback and sought information on experiences beyond their own projects.

8. Project activities need to be based on sound science, but this is not sufficient for success. Successful projects had to handle effectively a variety of personnel, political and other management issues. They also built and continually sought to maintain support for project activities and objectives from a broad range of stakeholders--including communities, various levels of government, and key private sector institutions.

Lessons related to building partnerships:

9. Successful projects addressed community priorities. But material benefits and incentives must be provided in a way that provides catalytic support for local development and engenders long-term partnerships, not dependency. The style of a project's initial interactions with a community can shape its subsequent ability to handle the issue of dependency.

10. As well as providing tangible support for community priorities, projects often need to help communities expand their menu of development alternatives and options through education programs. Unlike public awareness programs, which are appropriate when a basic conservation philosophy already exists, education programs are often lengthy and may not be able to achieve their effect in time in places where threats to biodiversity (such as clear-cutting of forests or mine development) can proceed rapidly.

11. The character and skills of people leading the project in the community are critical for gaining and keeping the trust and respect of the community. Successful projects have provided support to help project staff understand, work with, and develop partnerships with local communities.

12. An effective way of promoting dialogue with communities is by involving them in monitoring the biophysical and socioeconomic results of the project.

Lessons related to the integration of project activities with national policies and priorities:

13. GEF projects cannot ignore politics and how political events, such as elections, affect the pace and extent of policy change that is possible. Projects that do not become integrated with national policies have trouble securing long-term commitment and financial support from governments.

14. How a project is structured makes a difference. The management/administrative structures of projects can help or hinder integration with national policies.

15. Support of senior politicians and government officials is essential. The involvement of well-connected people in project activities is also an ingredient for success. However, policy-level links and support are not enough; buy-in of middle managers who will implement these policies is needed.

16. Successful projects went beyond consultation with government officials regarding project activities. They actively involved them in project design and implementation. Projects that are designed by or for just some of the stakeholders,

even if “country-driven”, often lack long-term support from government. Support by all stakeholders is more likely to ensure sustained government involvement.

Lessons related to private sector involvement:

17. Private sector involvement takes three broad forms in GEF projects: as providers of services, as stakeholders, and as investors.

18. Use of a private sector project delivery mode can help sustain activities beyond the life of the project. However, private companies involved need to learn to operate under real market conditions. Successful projects balanced their efforts at attracting private sector involvement through financial mechanisms such as better than market loans, and distorting the marketplace in a way that makes it non-sustainable without the project. Furthermore, successful projects played a key role in raising awareness of the marketplace in order to improve market opportunities for companies that are often young, unsophisticated enterprises.

19. In addition to direct project activities, some GEF projects increased the quantity and quality of private sector services by helping set and enforce industry performance standards.

20. Successful projects provided fora or vehicles for private sector participation as stakeholders. But even when these fora existed, participation did not occur automatically; it needed to be actively encouraged, not only by the project, but also by government. In successful projects, the perception of the private sector was changed from the entity that causes pollution, to a stakeholder on an equal footing with others that can provide solutions to global environmental problems.

SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT LESSONS STUDY

21. The draft report will be discussed with implementing agencies (including task managers and GEF coordination offices), NGO representatives, and others during October and November, and will be finalized by the end of December. A dissemination strategy for the products of the study will be developed during these reviews.

Further information about the Project Lessons study can be obtained from Scott E. Smith, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, GEF secretariat, telephone (202) 473-1618, fax (202) 522-3420, or email - ssmith6@worldbank.org; or from Joan Freeman, Resource Futures International, 1 Nicholas Street, Suite 406, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 7B7, telephone (613) 241-1001, fax (613) 241-4758, or email - rfi@dragon.achilles.net.