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This report has been written by Shekhar Singh and Claudio Volonte, drawing upon the various project reviews and background papers prepared by the Program Study Team. All members of the Study Team participated at the design stage and commented on the various drafts of the report. The views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this report are those of Shekhar

Singh and Claudio Volonte and not necessarily of all the members of the Study Team or the institutions they represent.

Foreword

The GEF Council, at its meetings in December 1999 and May 2000, requested a review of GEF operations prior to the next replenishment, which begins in 2001.¹ This review, the Second Study of GEF's Overall Performance (OPS2) is to be carried out by a "fully independent team" which is expected to complete its work by the end of 2001. The OPS2 is the third major GEF-wide review to take place since the Facility was created.² Among the broad topics the OPS2 team will assess are:

- Program Results and Initial Impacts
- GEF Overall Strategies and Programmatic Impacts
- Achievements of the Objectives of GEF's Operational Policies and Programs
- Review of Modalities of GEF Support
- Follow-up of OPS1

To facilitate the work of the OPS2 team, GEF's Monitoring and Evaluation team, in cooperation with the GEF Implementing Agencies, decided to undertake program studies in the biodiversity, climate change and international waters focal areas. The role of these program studies is to provide portfolio information and inputs for the OPS2 team's considerations.

The Biodiversity Program Study was undertaken by an inter-agency team comprised of staff from the GEF Secretariat, the three GEF Implementing Agencies and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) with additional support from consultants contracted to undertake detailed studies in different parts of the portfolio as well as to consolidate all the information collected and background documents prepared.

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¹ Joint Summary of the Chairs, GEF Council Meeting, December 8-9, 1999, and GEF/C.15/11.

² The first two studies, respectively, were: *Global Environment Facility: Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase*. UNDP, UNEP and World Bank (1994) and Porter, G., R. Clemencon, W. Ofosu-Amaah and Michael Phillips, *Study of GEF's Overall Performance*. Global Environment Facility (1998).

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The Study was carried out by a team consisting of staff from the GEF Secretariat, the three GEF Implementing Agencies, the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), national governments and regional organizations, staff from GEF-funded projects and several consultants.

This report has been written by Shekhar Singh and Claudio Volonte, drawing upon the various project reviews and background papers prepared by the Program Study Team. All members of the Study Team participated at the design stage and commented on the various draft of the report. The views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this report are those of Shekhar Singh and Claudio Volonte and not necessarily of all the members of the Study Team or the institutions they represent.

We would like to thank the Governments of Argentina, Gabon, Central African Republic, Indonesia, Mauritius, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Yemen for facilitating country visits. We are particular grateful to the staff of the projects that were visited in these countries. In addition, we would like to gratefully acknowledge the inputs of Ms. Vishaish Uppal and Messrs. Raman Mehta, Arpan Sharma, Manish Rawat and Harish Kumar Sharma from the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, India.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1. This report describes the findings of a GEF Secretariat-sponsored study of the GEF Biodiversity Program. The Biodiversity Program Study (BDP Study) was conducted between September 2000 and March 2001 in collaboration with the three GEF Implementing Agencies (UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank), and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP). The main objective of the study was to assist the work of the team assigned to implement the GEF's Second Overall Performance Study (OPS2) by providing an analysis of the achievements, impacts and lessons emerging from the implementation of GEF financed projects in the biodiversity focal area since 1992. Specifically, the BDP Study had three main objectives: (1) highlight and assess achievements, initial impacts and lessons learned from the GEF biodiversity portfolio; (2) conduct an analysis of the area covered by GEF assisted projects, including a comparison with lists of global important ecosystems ("coverage"); and (3) assess mechanisms for incorporating lessons learned into more recently approved projects.

2. The study tried to answer the following questions: What have been the major achievements and impacts in terms of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources, capacity development, stakeholder participation and project sustainability? How far and how well did the projects achieve their objectives? What are the outstanding lessons/examples of best practices? What are the major implementation issues/risks/ assumptions that may jeopardize the achievement of objectives? What has been "covered" by GEF projects?

3. The BDP Study analyzed projects on the basis of their main objectives, within constraints arising during project implementation and taking into consideration the GEF guidelines at the time of project approval. The BDP Study reports on how the GEF, through the implementation of its portfolio, has been able to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

4. The report is organized around seven different sections. The first section presents the background to the total GEF biodiversity portfolio as of June 2000. The second section introduces the various methodologies used, terms of reference for the BDP Study and lists of projects reviewed and visited. The analysis and findings are divided in two categories: those related to the coverage of the GEF portfolio (Section 3) and those related to achievements, impacts and lessons learned from a qualitative point of view (Sections 4, 5 and 6). The report also includes a section on conclusions and recommendations. Finally, attached to the report are a series of technical and background annexes.

Methodology

5. According to the objectives of the program study, the GEF biodiversity portfolio (excluding projects supporting biodiversity enabling activities), as of June 30, 2000, was divided in two cohorts of projects: (1) Cohort 1: all full and mid-sized projects under implementation as of June 30, 1998 plus all completed projects ("mature portfolio," 82 projects, \$500 million) and (2) Cohort 2: all full and mid-

sized projects that started implementation or entered GEF Work Program between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 2000 (“new portfolio,” 128 projects, \$630 million).

6. The methodology of the BDP Study used two distinct but interrelated approaches: (a) quantitative analysis focusing on the coverage of the portfolio; and (b) qualitative assessment of the achievements, initial impacts and lessons learned of the GEF biodiversity projects. In addition, the study evaluated how new projects have benefited from lessons learned from past projects. The qualitative and quantitative analyses covered projects from the “mature portfolio” (Cohort 1), while the evaluation on the lessons learned feedback mechanisms mainly used the “new portfolio” (Cohort 2). The qualitative analysis of projects from Cohort 1 included eight projects that were visited by members of the BDP Study team in the following 9 countries: *Argentina, Gabon and Central African Republic (one project), Indonesia, Mauritius, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Yemen*. A selected group of projects in Cohort 2, classified under the GEF Operational Program 3 Forestry, were reviewed regarding how new projects have benefited from lessons learned and best practices from past projects. In addition, the study reviewed the mechanisms utilized in the three Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat to feed lessons learned from past projects into the design and implementation of new projects.

GEF Biodiversity Portfolio

7. Over the last 9 years, from 1991 through June 2000, the GEF has allocated approximately \$1.18 billion to cover the incremental costs for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources around the world and has leveraged about \$2 billion in co-financing. This funding is distributed among an impressive 395 full, medium and enabling activities projects in 123 developing countries and economies in transition in four types of ecosystems: arid and semi-arid, coastal and freshwater, forests and mountains. The projects support diverse activities to promote conservation, encourage sustainable use of resources, and enhance the sharing of benefits at the local, national and global levels. In addition, these projects have provided support to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its guidance in: alien and invasive species, migratory species, taxonomy, World Heritage sites and indigenous communities.

Where are the GEF projects located? What are they doing?

8. The quantitative analysis covered projects in Cohort 1 and looked at the number and hectares of protected areas, and number and areas covered by special lists of globally significant ecosystems, among other indicators. Supporting protected areas, either new or existing, has been a major focus of the GEF biodiversity portfolio. Most projects dealing with protected areas include the development of management plans and participation of stakeholders and local beneficiaries. The study estimated that about 49 projects in Cohort 1 (62%) involve protected areas as part of their objectives. These 49 projects included about 320 protected areas covering a total of about 60 million hectares and about \$350 million in funding. About 60% of the protected areas covered are part of projects in forest ecosystems.

9. It is also clear that the GEF has also covered, through its projects, many of the globally important and defined sites and species such as those selected for the World Heritage Program, WWF's Global 200 Earth's Distinctive Ecoregions, Ramsar, UNESCO MAB Reserves, Migratory Species, and IUCN lists of threatened and endangered species. More than half of the projects in Cohort 1 deal with some type of capacity development activities, through dissemination of information, training and education, including both human and institutional aspects. Similarly, more than half of the projects include research activities among their objectives, mostly applied, such as provision of information and development of databases and information systems, monitoring and evaluation, and research on or about protected areas. Policies, laws and regulations are tackled in about half of the projects in Cohort 1, including proposals for implementing plans and strategies, strengthening, support and establishing policies and laws as well as policies involving regional collaboration. Furthermore, the study estimated that about one third of the projects in Cohort 1 deal with the management of protected areas, another third with the implementation of sustainable use programs and yet another third with the participation of stakeholders as a way to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

What have been the major achievements and impacts?

10. The following paragraphs present the major findings from the BDP Study regarding the qualitative assessment. It must be recognized that projects aiming to conserve biodiversity are among the more difficult types of projects to implement. In addressing biodiversity conservation issues, they aim to achieve objectives that, while having significant long-term and global benefits, often imply loss of access to natural resources, especially for rural communities. These projects work with governments for whom biodiversity conservation is usually not a priority and incorporate scientific principles that are new, evolving, often counter intuitive and difficult to fully understand or explain to stakeholders. It must also be noted that there are no standards by which the achievements of GEF projects can be objectively assessed. Consequently, the achievements of the GEF biodiversity portfolio must be looked at in this context and within the quantitative achievements described above.

11. Stakeholder participation was comprehensive in around 30% of the projects reviewed and partial in more than 20%. For another nearly 25% it was planned but the information available did not indicate whether it took place and to what extent. For the remaining, it was either poor (9%), none (12%) or not known (4%). While documentation does not allow full evaluation of participation effectiveness, some lessons, notably with limited involvement of the private sector and weak use of traditional and indigenous knowledge, have been identified. Nevertheless, it must be noted that most of these projects are working with institutions without much previous experience in stakeholder participation.

12. A significant number of the projects assessed were capacity development projects. These addressed a variety of capacity needs at the individual, institutional and systemic levels. Furthermore, it was found that some of the most successful components of even non capacity-development projects were their capacity development aspects. Overall, the projects were able to develop individual capacities, though institutional and systemic capacities proved harder to develop. The various training programs were appropriate to the socio-economic, political and cultural reality of the country. There

was no evidence that institutional capacities would sustain after GEF funding ends, partly because it was too early to conduct an assessment.

13. A very large portion of the projects assessed had protected areas as their major focus. More than half of these projects were assessed to have fully or mostly met their objectives, even though they are invariably the most difficult and complicated types of projects to implement. Furthermore, more than half of the protected areas projects were assessed to have had comprehensive or partial stakeholder participation, some benefit sharing activities and some measures for ensuring sustainability. Nearly 50% of the projects working to establish biodiversity conservation and sustainable regimes in production landscapes outside protected areas had mostly achieved their objectives, while the other half had only partly achieved their objectives.³

14. In terms of scientific community, about 60% of projects had substantially addressed science and technology issues, or up to 80% in completed projects. Nevertheless, the recognition of traditional knowledge and appropriate involvement of social scientists were two issues that need further attention.

15. The GEF has also been focusing on issues related to land degradation. Of the projects reviewed, nearly 50% had substantially addressed land degradation issues and another 10% partially addressed this issue.

16. Overall, almost half the projects reviewed mostly achieved their objectives (including eight percent that fully achieved them). However, nearly 50% achieved their objectives only partly or minimally. There was not much difference between completed and ongoing projects (see footnote 3). In understanding these findings, it must be recognized that it is unrealistic to expect all projects to fully achieve all the objectives. Many reasons were found to constrain the full achievement of objectives, including lack of implementation capacity, unrealistic and over ambitious objectives, and shortage of time and funds.

17. For a large proportion of the GEF projects reviewed it was not possible to directly answer the question: "what impacts did they have on biodiversity?" This is mainly because projects for the most part did not systematically collect this information. Also, for most projects there was no baseline data against which the current status could be compared. About 20% of the projects seemed to be collecting baseline data, another 20% had planned to collect them (although it could not be confirmed whether they actually managed to do so). In the absence of baseline data, it was only partly possible to assess the impacts that projects were having on biodiversity. Consequently, for only 17 of the projects being assessed was information available on the impacts on biodiversity. Of these, three (two completed) reported substantial impact while the remaining 14 (eight completed) reported some or little impact. For the remaining projects, there was either no information or the question was not relevant. In some cases, the reviews concluded that it was too early to judge impacts.

³ It should be noted here that ongoing projects were assessed on the basis of their achievements in relation to the stage of implementation they were in. However, whereas for completed projects there was no scope for improving their performance, for ongoing projects there is always the possibility that they will achieve their objectives before completion.

18. However, it seems that the GEF has taken a positive step forward towards improving the lack of baseline studies. A review of a group of newer forestry projects in Cohort 2 reveals that there is almost universal adherence to the incorporation of baseline studies – biological and socio-economic – in the project documents. Frequently, these baselines were established during project preparation or are expected to be one of the first tasks for the project. Of course, it is not yet possible to determine the impacts of the projects, as most of them have just been initiated.

19. On project sustainability, another of the cross-cutting issues in the BDP Study, only about 10% of the projects reviewed substantially addressed this issue. Another 24% had partially addressed this issue and in 34% of the projects this issue was either not addressed or very poorly addressed. For the rest of the projects (30%) it was either planned to deal with the issue of sustainability, but available information did not specify it had been achieved, or there was no information. However, even for completed projects there was no system for doing a post-completion assessment to see whether the project activities, institutions and gains continued after the project implementation. Consequently, it was not possible to determine how many of the completed projects that were assessed to have addressed this issue, had done so effectively. A review of the forestry projects in Cohort 2 show that most of the projects are now addressing the issues of sustainability in their design, though this assessment is based on project proposals and not on actual project implementation.

Are projects learning from past lessons?

20. About half the projects assessed reported incorporating some lessons from past projects into their design; a third had not. However, as the findings demonstrated little difference between the achievements and impacts of completed (older) projects and the ongoing (newer) projects, there appears to be little impact of the lessons learnt. Therefore, the mechanisms for ensuring that lessons learnt are incorporated in new and ongoing projects need attention and change. The newer projects among those assessed and new forestry projects in Cohort 2 seem to be performing better in this regard.

Recommendations

21. Recommendations primarily relate to the four issues that the report has highlighted as needing attention: achievement of objectives, project impacts on biodiversity, sustainability of project activities and gains, and learning from past lessons.

Achievement of Objectives

22. Limited implementation capacities have been cited as a major cause for inadequate project achievements. Though some skills, admittedly, are best learnt by “doing,” it must be ensured that there are enough skills to ensure that individuals and institutions can start doing and therefore, learning from this. Thus, ***each project should conduct a capacity assessment exercise prior to project initiation***. The development of the requisite individual, institutional and systemic capacities must be given a central priority during GEF project implementation. Capacity benchmarks should be established, respecting the peculiarities of each situation, and achievement of these benchmarks during project implementation at agreed times should be a precondition for the subsequent phase of project activities.

23. Part of the problem with project achievements might be due to the somewhat less attention being paid in project design and implementation to livelihood and tenure issues and to underlying causes. Thus, ***all protected areas projects should include related production landscapes***. Basic requirements of local communities, for income and natural resources, if they are to be disallowed or restricted from protected areas, should be provided for by investing in and developing production landscapes linked to protected areas. Issues relating to tenure, property rights and access must also be addressed as a part of each initiative.

24. ***Project preparation should, where appropriate, include a project design workshop, involving critical stakeholders, in the country or region to get initial ideas about designing the project***. Once the project has been designed with the association of local experts and in collaboration with other stakeholders, another consultation with a wide and diverse group of stakeholders and experts needs to be organized. In this consultation, participants should be requested to focus on circumstances under which, or on reasons why, the proposed project would be difficult to implement or its objectives difficult to achieve. Such a ‘devils advocate’ feedback would contribute to a realistic assessment of project feasibility and optimality.

Impacts on Biodiversity

25. If project implementation is to be improved, projects should break away from a time-bound schedule and evolve a new way of functioning where a phase or a project is completed when the objective is properly achieved. Whereas the ultimate goals must be clearly defined and must not ordinarily be changed, the strategies, stresses and tasks must evolve dynamically with initial budgets being flexible and indicative.

26. To determine project impacts on biodiversity, and other related impacts, there has to be a far more effective and ongoing monitoring system, based on a pre-initiation baseline study. The baseline study should record the status, trends and rates of change of the existing biodiversity resources, available individual, institutional and systemic capacities and of the relevant socioeconomic and political parameters. Impact indicators and standards must be formulated prior to, and used for, the baseline study. Priorities for action, project focus and strategies must be determined on the basis of the results of the baseline study.

27. Where the available data are not adequate, the building up of a requisite database (on the various aspects mentioned above) should be among the first project activities so that monitoring of impacts can be established. Where required, control samples must also be identified to separate the impacts of the project from other impacts.

Sustainability

28. The study indicated a need to focus on securing the sustainability of project gains and activities. The study recommends several ways to improve this aspect of project design and implementation.

29. ***Funding patterns during the project must be compatible with the economic realities of the host country.*** The GEF operational strategy stresses the need to ‘finance actions that are cost effective’. It must therefore be a project objective to demonstrate and operationalize ways to meet conservation objectives within the levels of financial resources likely to be available on a sustained basis. There must be a continued movement away from “big budget,” time bound projects to long term activities involving the same or lesser amounts of money, distributed over a longer time period and in accordance with agreed qualitative benchmarks of progress.

30. For most governments to have the “political will” to conserve biodiversity, conservation must be seen to contribute to economic growth and security, or at least not detract from it. Therefore, in order to demonstrate this and to provide a scientific basis for the type and extent of conservation required, the study recommends two ***targeted research activities***: review of existing work and, where necessary, development, application and dissemination of additional methods by which biodiversity can be economically valued; and dissemination of (existing or new) credible answers to questions on the extent of biodiversity needing to be conserved and the extent of human use compatible with biodiversity conservation.

31. The issue of root causes, mainly proximate and immediate causes of biodiversity degradation, must be addressed, as required by the GEF Operational Strategy. ***The first step in any project planning or design process must be the identification of root causes that have led to the degradation or decline of biodiversity*** and have inhibited remedial or preventive measures from being applied or being successful. Barring exceptional cases, only those projects should be taken up where there is a realistic chance of tackling at least the immediate and proximate underlying causes. In some cases, such causes might be addressed with the help of national governments or other agency initiatives or policies.

32. Involvement of all stakeholders, specially NGOs and local communities, right from planning to implementation and post completion assessment, is essential. The involvement of the private sector may also have many advantages, especially in terms of financial and political sustainability. Therefore, conservation initiatives can be linked to commercial interests, often by demonstrating the commercial potential in conservation, either through direct benefit or as a result of expressed market preference by the public for “green” products and companies. Thus, ***projects should appropriately involve the private sector in project activities and support, when appropriate.***

33. To enhance the sustainability of conservation activities and to increase the impacts of projects, the GEF should strengthen its involvement with all government sectors. Special efforts should be made to involve government sectors other than the forest and environment. Similarly, GEF Implementing Agencies should also continue to encourage ***mainstreaming biodiversity issues*** within their own organizations.

34. GEF and its partner institutions should have a system of independent ***post-completion assessments***, where completed projects are assessed some time after completion to judge the impacts and whether the various gains and activities have endured.

Learning from Lessons

35. Someone who is designing or implementing a project rarely needs a whole set of rigid dos and don'ts, or a list of what has worked or not worked somewhere else. What they perhaps need is a range of ideas and experiences that can be considered, probed, analyzed, modified and then used appropriately. For people to have easy and workable access to those, they need to have access to the people who have worked with these ideas and had these experiences. They also need to have the time to link up with these ideas and experiences.

36. To allow effective learning from past experience, the GEF should set up a network of biodiversity practitioners and other experts. This should be linked with ongoing and completed conservation initiatives, so that those involved in designing and implementing projects have access to a wide variety of ideas and experiences. The network should provide the opportunity to probe and discuss experiences and ideas and to determine their relevance and applicability to current and future work.

I INTRODUCTION

Objectives

1. This report describes the findings of a GEF Secretariat-sponsored study of the GEF Biodiversity Program. The Biodiversity Program Study (BDP Study) was conducted between September 2000 and March 2001 in collaboration with the three GEF Implementing Agencies (UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank), and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP). In addition, many representatives from governments and civil society from around the world provided substantial inputs that were taken into consideration for the preparation of the study. Annex 1 provides a copy of the Initiating Memorandum that guided the initial steps of the program study while the Foreword to the report provides a list of members of the BDP Study team and their roles.
2. The main objective of the study was to assist the work of the team assigned to implement the GEF's Second Overall Performance Study (OPS2)⁴ by providing an analysis of the achievements, impacts and lessons emerging from the implementation of GEF financed projects. Specifically, the BDP Study had three main objectives:
 - (a) Highlight and assess achievements, initial impacts and lessons learned from the GEF biodiversity portfolio;
 - (b) Conduct an analysis of the area covered by GEF assisted projects, including a comparison with lists of global important ecosystems ("coverage"); and
 - (c) Assess mechanisms for incorporating lessons learned into more recently approved projects.
3. The study answers the following questions:
 - (a) What, if any, have been the major achievements and impacts (intended and unintended) in terms of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources, capacity development, stakeholder participation and project sustainability?
 - (b) How far and how well did the projects achieve their objectives?
 - (c) What are the outstanding lessons/examples of best practices?

⁴ The Study of GEF's Overall Performance (OPS2) will assess GEF's operational and programmatic results to date, and on that basis discuss GEF's overall role in initiating and supporting actions to halt and or mitigate the degradation of the global environment within the areas of its responsibility. The study will be carried out from September 2000 to January 2002. Terms of reference are under preparation.

- (d) What are the major implementation issues/risks/assumptions that may jeopardize the achievement of objectives?
- (e) What has been “covered” by GEF projects?

4. The BDP Study analyzed projects on the basis of their main objectives, within constraints arising during project implementation and taking into consideration the GEF guidelines at the time of project approval. The BDP Study reports on how the GEF, through the implementation of its portfolio, has been able to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

GEF Biodiversity Portfolio

5. Over the last 9 years, from 1991 through June 2000, the GEF has allocated approximately \$1.1 billion to cover the incremental costs for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources around the world. The biodiversity portfolio of the GEF includes an impressive 395 full, medium and enabling activities projects in 123 developing countries and economies in transition (Table 1). These projects support diverse activities to promote conservation, encourage sustainable use of resources, and enhance the sharing of benefits at the local, national, and global levels. Of these projects, 185 are enabling activities and clearing house mechanisms projects, providing \$46.6 million to help countries develop their biodiversity conservation strategies and action plan and build national capacity to address biodiversity issues. About \$332 million were approved during the Pilot Phase (1991-94) while \$845 million were approved during GEF’s operational Phases (up to June 2000).

Table 1. GEF Biodiversity Portfolio (FY92 – FY00)

Type of Project	FY1992-FY1994		FY1995-FY2000		Total	
	Number	(\$ million)	Number	(\$ million)	Number	(\$million)
Full	56	322.27	97	765.95	153	1,088.22
Medium-Sized	n/a	n/a	57	43.11	57	43.11
Enabling Activities/CHM	n/a ⁵	n/a	185	46.62	185	46.62
Total	56	322.27	339	844.93	395	1,177.95

Background

6. During the Pilot Phase activities in the GEF biodiversity focal area were guided by general guidelines, not necessarily specific to biodiversity. The 1994 Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase pointed out that during that period the GEF lacked a good operational definition of biodiversity, a

⁵ GEF guidelines for funding Enabling Activities (*Operational Criteria for Enabling Activities in Biodiversity*, GEF April 1996) did not become effective until April 1996.

strategic framework to guide GEF investments in biodiversity, and effective criteria for the selection of biodiversity projects. In the meanwhile, STAP presented an “Analytical Framework on Protection of Biodiversity” in 1993. This framework was considered useful at that stage of development of the GEF. Three criteria were identified to guide portfolio development including: (i) biodiversity of global significance; (ii) innovation; and (iii) replication. However, the application of the first criteria proved contentious. It was difficult to identify which biodiversity was of global significance versus national interest and where it was located. The other two criteria were more easily operationalized. In the case

GEF Biodiversity Program support of the CBD guidance in:

Ecosystems: Bearing in mind that projects may be implemented in two or more ecosystems, the largest number of projects, and most significant GEF allocations, are in forests, with a total of 80 projects and an allocation of \$505.92 million. This is followed by projects in coastal, marine, and freshwater areas, with 59 projects and an allocation of \$227.86 million. An increasing number of projects deal with arid and semi-arid lands, including the cross-cutting issues of land degradation and desertification. GEF’s 14 mountain projects account for some \$81.21 million.

Alien and Invasive Species: \$34.5 million in direct funding to seven projects and \$35.5 million in co-financing focusing on the control and eradication of alien and invasive species.

Migratory Species: direct support to 32 GEF projects on migratory species for \$119.5 million and co-financing of \$157.4 million for projects ranging from enhancing conservation of the whole network of wetlands required by migratory waterbirds to protecting the natural habitats of migratory fish.

Taxonomy: direct funding to four projects whose major objectives focus on taxonomy for \$29.6 million and \$21.4 million of co-financing in support of the *Global Taxonomy Initiative* (to reduce taxonomic impediments and assists in building capacities within countries).

World Heritage Sites: direct funding to projects containing World Heritage Sites with natural or a mix of natural and cultural significance reaching \$274.2 million and \$475.8 million in co-financing.

Indigenous Communities: direct funding of nearly \$203 million and \$397 million in co-financing for 25 projects in which indigenous communities (over 100 different ethnic and tribal populations) are actively involved in the design and implementation of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use activities.

of replication, this was used in a limited way, and in fact, not many of Pilot Phase projects proved to be replicable. On the other hand, innovation was more widely applied and it is one of the project selection criteria.

7. In late 1995, the GEF Council approved the Operational Strategy⁶ “to guide the GEF in the preparation of country-driven initiatives in the four focal areas.” In the particular case of biodiversity, the strategy states that the GEF’s objectives in biological diversity derive from the objective of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD): “the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding.”

8. The main strategic considerations guiding GEF-financed activities to secure global biodiversity benefits are:

- (a) Integration of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity within national and, as appropriate, sub regional and regional sustainable development plans and policies;
- (b) helping to protect and sustainably manage ecosystems through targeted and cost-effective interventions;
- (c) integration of efforts to achieve global benefits in other focal areas, where feasible, and in the cross-sectoral area of land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation;
- (d) development of a portfolio that encompasses representative ecosystems of global biodiversity significance; and,
- (e) that GEF activities will be targeted and designed to help recipient countries achieve agreed biodiversity objectives in strategic and cost-effective ways.

9. In addition, the Operational Strategy sets out four Operational Programs in the biodiversity focal area. Guided by the COP of the CDB, the four OPs follow an ecosystem approach as the primary framework of action and stress the need to identify the driving forces determining the status and trends of components of biological diversity. The OPs were then further developed and in 1997 guidelines were published to provide guidance on the objective, scope, expected outcomes and outputs for each program to achieve.⁷ The four biodiversity OPs are: (1) Arid and Semi-Arid Zone Ecosystems; (2) Coastal, Marine, and Freshwater Ecosystems; (3) Forest Ecosystems; and (4) Mountain Ecosystems. In addition to providing guidance on the type of ecosystems eligible for GEF support, the OPs also make concrete delineation of the types of activities the GEF can support in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

⁶ GEF. ‘Operational Strategy.’ Global Environment Facility. 1996.

⁷ GEF. ‘GEF Operational Programs.’ Global Environment Facility. 1997.

10. Since the issuing of the OPs the GEF Secretariat has received further guidance from the CBD, mainly from the fourth and fifth Conference of the Parties (COP).⁸ These new sets of guidance led to the addition of new operational programs such as OP 12 on Integrated Ecosystem Management and OP 13 on Agrobiodiversity; and to new initiatives such as the Capacity Development Initiative (CDI). These new initiatives will not be reviewed in this program study. It further permitted the GEF Secretariat to fine tune the necessary operational procedures for use by the GEF Implementing Agencies on other issues such as taxonomy; forest biological diversity; Clearing House Mechanisms; monitoring programs and suitable indicators; issues related to Article 8(j) and its provisions; education, public awareness and communication; and alien invasive species. COP5 provided guidance to develop an initial strategy for assisting countries to prepare for the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

11. These strategic considerations provided the background and context for the BDP Study in assessing the results and initial impacts of the GEF biodiversity portfolio as well as the coverage.

The Report

12. The report is organized in seven different sections. The first section of the report presented the background to the total GEF biodiversity portfolio as of June 2000. The second section introduces the various methodologies used, terms of reference for the study and lists of projects reviewed and visited. The analysis and findings are divided in two categories: those related to the coverage of the GEF portfolio (Section 3) and those related to achievements, impacts and lessons learned from a qualitative point of view (Sections 4, 5 and 6). The report also includes a section on conclusions and recommendations. Finally, attached to the report there a series of technical and background annexes.

II METHODOLOGY

Biodiversity Program Study Cohorts

13. According to the objectives of the program study, the GEF biodiversity portfolio (excluding projects supporting biodiversity enabling activities⁹), as of June 30, 2000, was divided in two cohorts of projects:

⁸ Decision IV/13: Additional Guidance to the Financial Mechanism. In: A Programme for Change: Decisions of the Fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Bratislava, Slovakia, 4-15 May, 1998. Page 86-88. Decision V/13: Guidance to the Global Environment Facility. In: From Policy to Implementation: Decisions of the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological diversity, Nairobi, Kenya, 15-26 May, 2000. Page 60-61.

⁹ Projects supporting Biodiversity Enabling Activity were not included because they were evaluated in 1999 (see report "Interim Assessment of Biodiversity Enabling Activities, GEF Evaluation Report #2-99)

- Cohort 1: all full and mid-sized projects under implementation as of June 30, 1998 plus all completed projects (“mature portfolio,” 82 projects, \$500 million) (see Annex 2).
- Cohort 2: all full and mid-sized projects that started implementation or entered GEF Work Program between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 2000 (“new portfolio,” 128 projects, \$630 million) (see Annex 3).

Table 2. Distribution of projects in two cohorts.

	Cohort 1		Cohort 2	
	#	\$ million	#	\$ million
By Region				
Africa	25	138	38	152
Asia & Pacific	19	149	26	127
Arab States	5	28	7	28
Europe & Central Asia	9	42	10	52
Latin America & Caribbean	20	134	45	262
Global	4	11	2	8
TOTAL	82	501	128	630
By Implementing Agency				
UNEP	6	12	6	11
UNDP	35	140	49	234
World Bank	39	320	68	340
Joint	2	29	5	45
TOTAL	82	501	128	630
Phase				
Pilot	55	317	1 ¹⁰	4.8
GEF	27	183	127	626
TOTAL	82	501	128	630
Operational Programs				
1	7	30	26	125
2	19	80	40	148
3	33	221	47	285
4	7	35	7	46
Short Term	16	134	4	25
MOP	0	0	4	3
TOTAL	82	501	128	630
Status				
Completed	36	164	0	0
Active	46	337	128	630
TOTAL	82	501	128	630

Methodology

14. The methodology of the BDP Study used two distinct but interrelated approaches: (a) quantitative analysis focusing on the coverage of the portfolio; and (b) qualitative assessment of the

¹⁰ This project, Biodiversity Conservation in Southeast Zimbabwe, did not become effective until June 98 so it was not included in Cohort 1 although it is a Pilot Phase project.

achievements, initial impacts and lesson learned of the GEF biodiversity projects. In addition, the study evaluated how new projects have benefited from lessons learned from past projects. The qualitative and quantitative analyses covered projects from the “mature portfolio” (Cohort 1) while the evaluation on the lessons learned feedback mechanisms mainly used the “new portfolio” (Cohort 2). The following chapters present the results of the study according to these three types of assessments.

15. Projects were considered the unit of information and analysis of the study and are used as the building blocks for the review. As presented in the Initiating Memorandum, projects were analyzed on the basis of their main objectives taking into consideration the constraints of project implementation and the GEF guidelines at the time of project approval. The purpose of this study is not to present individual project evaluations but instead to use these evaluations to build the aggregate results of the study. Individual projects are only mentioned whenever necessary as examples or illustrations of particular points.

Quantitative analysis

16. The quantitative analysis used indicators¹¹ to measure and assess the extent of coverage (hectares, number of projects and funding) of GEF projects in Cohort 1 according to ecosystems, special lists of global important ecosystems and selected biodiversity activities, including enabling environment indicators.¹² A list of indicators and their definitions are included in Chapter 6. This analysis was undertaken as a desk review based on information available in project documents at project approval. A database was created on a project-by-project basis with information on these indicators. Chapter 3 presents the results of the quantitative assessment.

Qualitative assessment

17. The qualitative assessment, also based on an analysis of Cohort 1 projects, provided information to highlight and assess project achievements, initial impacts and lessons as well as assess mechanisms for incorporating lessons learned within the Implementing Agencies. Three steps were taken to facilitate the qualitative analysis: (1) Cohort 1 projects were classified in three groups based on a preliminary review of project objectives; (2) terms of reference were developed to analyze the three types of projects and selected cross-cutting issues; and (3) an assessment was conducted of the aggregated results of individual project reviews.

18. A review of primary objectives of Cohort 1 projects concluded that there were primarily three types of projects: (i) those that concentrate on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity

¹¹ Jenkins, M. and V. Kapos. ‘Biodiversity Indicators for Monitoring GEF Programme Implementation and Impacts.’ Draft final report. World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). 2000.

¹² Biodiversity activities included are: taxonomy; conservation trust funds; intellectual property rights; transboundary cooperation and exchange of expertise; policies, laws and regulations; research; training; education and awareness; national biodiversity action plans.

resources within protected areas and buffer zones (for example, setting up and developing new protected areas; planning and management existing protected areas; setting up mechanisms for sustainable financing protected areas, addressing sustainable use related to protected areas); (ii) those that promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity resources in production landscapes (for example, preparing sustainable management approaches such as protected areas, implementing management plans, integrating biodiversity concerns into national development plans, optimizing productivity of resources, or conserving crops in forest, coastal, game ranching, agriculture, and wetlands ecosystems); and (iii) those that promote capacity development for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity at all levels (human, institutional and systematic) within local, national, regional and global scales (for example, capacity development activities in research, inventory, evaluation, monitoring, information systems, networks and databases).¹³ These groups are not necessarily exclusive although the assumption, to the extent possible, was that each project will be allocated into only one category. Annex 3 provides the classification of Cohort 1 projects in one of these three categories.¹⁴ The distribution is as follows: (i) 41; (ii) 22; and (iii) 18 (one project could not be classified). About half of the category (ii) projects also incorporate protected areas as part of their sustainable use strategies.

19. In addition to identifying the three classes of project objectives, the study also identified two main cross-cutting issues, relevant to most GEF biodiversity projects: (a) stakeholders participation and social issues; and (b) project sustainability.

Project Selection and Review

20. Projects in Cohort 1 were grouped in three categories according to the type of review. The first category comprised 8 projects (about 10%) that were visited by members of the BDP Study team in the following 9 countries: *Argentina, Gabon and Central African Republic (one project), Indonesia, Mauritius, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Yemen* (see Table 3). The second category comprised 22 projects (about 25%) that were studied in-depth on the basis of existing documentation. The 30 projects included in these two categories were selected by using a stratified and randomized sampling methodology to maintain the representative distribution of projects in Cohort 1 according to Implementing Agencies, regions, categories of project objectives, phase (pilot phase and operational GEF), status (completed vs. active) and size (full vs. mid-size). Annex 4 presents the methodology utilized for the random selection. The remaining 52 projects (about 65%) were looked at in less detail (brief desk reviews) based on available documentation.

Table 3. List of projects that were visited by the study team.

¹³ Most of the multi-country projects in Cohort 1 are in category 3 so the terms of reference of the in-depth review for this category should make special consideration and attention to this fact.

¹⁴ The three Implementing Agencies reviewed the classification and suggested changes that were incorporated.

Countries	Project/Implementing Agency	Date of field visit
Argentina	Patagonia Coastal Zone Management Plan (UNDP)	February 26, 2001
Gabon and Central African Republic	Central Africa Region: Regional Environmental and Information Management Project (REIMP)/World Bank	January 22, 2001
Indonesia	Emergency Response Measure to Combat Fires in Indonesia and to Prevent Regional Haze in South East Asia/UNEP	January 22, 2001
Mauritius	Restoration of Highly Degraded and Threatened Native Forests/UNDP	January 29, 2001
Peru	National Trust Fund for Protected Areas/World Bank	January 8, 2001
Philippines	Conservation of Priority Protected Areas/World Bank	January 29, 2001
Sri Lanka	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants/World Bank	January 15, 2001
Yemen	Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Biodiversity of Socotra Archipelago	January 10, 2001

21. However, while looking at the available documentation on projects it became evident that projects would have to be categorized further in terms of the objectivity and comprehensiveness of the information available. Consequently, final data sets have been disaggregated as follows:

Table 4. Data sets for qualitative assessments

Category	Number of Projects		Pilot Phase	GEF
1. Projects that were visited	7	Completed	2	0
		Active	1	4
2. projects for which in-depth studies were conducted (completed and on-going)	21	Completed	8	0
		Active	7	6
3. <u>Completed</u> projects for which brief desk reviews were conducted and where <u>detailed</u> independent evaluations were available (UNDP projects)	8		8	0

Category	Number of Projects		Pilot Phase	GEF
4. <u>Completed</u> projects for which brief desk reviews were conducted and where <u>brief</u> independent evaluations were available (World Bank projects)	8		8	0
5. <u>Completed</u> projects for which brief desk reviews were conducted and which had <u>no</u> independent evaluations	4		4	0
6. <u>On-going</u> projects for which brief desk reviews were conducted and which had <u>no</u> independent evaluations	30		13	17
Total	78 ¹⁵		51	27

22. Such a classification allowed for a good understanding of the strength of evidence in support of the various findings. Therefore, the core data on which the qualitative assessment is based come from the seven projects field visited and the 21 projects for which in-depth reviews were prepared by the BDP Study team.¹⁶ The variation in the objectivity and comprehensiveness of data available to produce these reviews made it sometimes difficult to meaningfully bring out inter project and consequently, inter agency and inter regional differences and trends, if any. At the next level, there were eight completed projects that were subjected to a brief desk review but for which detailed independent evaluations were available. As will be seen from the presentations in the following chapters, there were many more questions asked of the seven projects field visited, the 21 in-depth reviews and the eight completed projects with independent evaluations than the remaining 42 in Cohort 1. The remaining 42 projects comprised those that either were completed and had brief independent evaluations, no independent evaluations, or were on going. To cull from these various reports answers to the specific questions that the qualitative assessment was concerned with involved a certain amount of subjectivity. Therefore, it is important to understand the data presented in later chapters within this context.

23. Ideally and in retrospect, the qualitative assessment should have been focused on only completed projects where the project achievements and initial impacts were clear. It would also have concentrated on field visits of those for whom no detailed independent evaluations were available. However, it was felt that as most of the finished projects were older projects, being part of the Pilot Phase, it would not be fair to assess the complete portfolio on the basis of their performance.

¹⁵ The documents for one project [26 Cote d'Ivoire] were in French and could not be translated in time to include in this draft. Another project [4 East Africa] was wrongly included in the in-depth review projects and could not be reclassified in time to be included in this draft. Two projects, Argentina Patagonia and Colombia Choco Region are not included at this point because their review were received late.

¹⁶ Unfortunately there were significant variations in the level of detail contained in the various in-depth reviews and field visits reports. Also, despite efforts to agree upon a common format, the report format used and, consequently, the issues and questions addressed, differed from review to review, sometimes drastically.

Special Terms of References

24. Special terms of references were developed to guide the reviews of the three types of projects and one the crosscutting issue: participation and social issues (Annex 5). These four special reviews were able to bring to the surface trends in achievements, initial impacts and lessons learned.

Lessons Learned

25. A selected group of projects in Cohort 2 (“new portfolio”) classified under the OP3: Forestry, were used to evaluate how new projects have benefited from lessons learned and best practices from past projects. In addition, the study reviewed the mechanisms utilized in the three Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat to feed lessons learned from past projects into the design and implementation of new ones. Further to these selected group of projects, each of the Implementing Agencies selected projects with best practices of lessons learned feedback. These projects from Cohort 2 were not assessed for achievements, since they have been under implementation for less than one year, but for design.

Sources of data

26. The qualitative and quantitative assessments were based, primarily, on desk reviews of available documentation including Project Documents, mid-term and final evaluations, reports of field visits and Implementing Agencies review missions and annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs). In addition, to document reviews, the study team conducted interviews with staff at the GEF implementing and executing agencies, participating countries and NGOs. In particular, the NGO community was contacted through Internet networks. Field visits provided the richest and most comprehensive information and therefore analysis.

27. Documentation was found to be uneven in quality, objectivity and comprehensiveness and for the most part not easily found or available at the GEF Secretariat or with the Implementing Agencies. Most of the information relevant to project implementation resides at the project sites. While some projects have been evaluated internally and externally others are only reviewed once a year as required by the GEF M&E procedures (Project Implementation Reviews, PRIs). UNDP for example, consistently evaluates all projects at two points: mid-life and completion. An independent team of consultants conducts these evaluations, although the quality of the evaluation documents varies from project to project. GEF/World Bank projects are extensively reviewed at different stages of the project cycle but mainly by internal groups (peer reviews (internal and external), STAP, Quality Assurance Group, Operations Evaluation Department). Most of the documents produced by these reviews are confidential and for internal use only although those relevant to the BDP Study were made available. UNEP conducts independent mid-term (where planned) and terminal evaluations (mandatory for all GEF funded projects). Although independent project evaluations are available for UNEP Cohort 1

projects, due to miscommunication amongst the Study Team, they were not made available in time to be used during the review process.

III QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

Introduction

28. The quantitative analysis focuses on the coverage of the portfolio, utilizing a preliminary work completed for the GEF Secretariat by the World Conservation Monitoring Center.¹⁷ A list of indicators and their definitions are presented in Table 5 below. The quantitative analysis of indicators was applied to the GEF biodiversity portfolio Cohort 1¹⁸ in relation to the number and hectares of protected areas, number and areas covered by special lists, ecosystems represented in the project sites, and special thematic issues. Annex 6 provides the numerical information used in the analysis.

Table 5. Quantitative Indicators and their definitions

Variable	Definition
Protected Area (number)	Number of protected areas as proposed in the project document; may vary from one to several ones; presented by either the exact number or by minimum/maximum
Protected Area (hectares)	Hectares of protected areas proposed in the project document; may vary from one to several ones; presented by either the exact number or by minimum/maximum
Special list (number)	Number of protected areas included in any of the following special areas: Centers for Plant diversity; Endemic Bird Areas; Critical Ecosystems; Vavilov Centers; WWF global 2000 eco-regions; World Heritage Sites; Ramsar sites; Biosphere reserves; Udvardy's biogeoreference; IUCN MPAs.
Special list (hectares)	Hectares of protected areas included in any of the following special areas: Centers for Plant diversity; Endemic Bird Areas; Critical Ecosystems; Vavilov Centers; WWF global 2000 eco-regions; World Heritage Sites; Ramsar sites; Biosphere reserves; Udvardy's biogeoreference; IUCN MPAs.
Ecosystem coverage	F = forest; RF = rainforest; DF = dry forest; W= freshwater and riparian wetlands; M= mountains; D = dry lands and savannahs; C = coastal and marine ecosystems; CR = coral reefs; CM = coastal mangroves; A = agroecosystems on farms and productive landscapes.

¹⁷ Jenkins, M. and V. Kapos, 2000. Biodiversity Indicators for Monitoring GEF Programme Implementation and Impacts (World Conservation Monitoring Centre).

¹⁸ Only 81 projects were included in this review. Belarus Biodiversity project was wrongly omitted.

Variable	Definition
Enabling Environment indicators and activities in support of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.	indigenous and local knowledge; participation of indigenous peoples (as defined in CBD); alien and invasive species; research and taxonomy; conservation trust funds and other long-term financing mechanisms; biosafety; intellectual property rights; transboundary cooperation and exchange of expertise; policies, laws and regulations; research; training; education and awareness; land tenure; NBSAPs

Financing by Operational Programs

29. The total sum of GEF financing in the selected projects (Cohort 1) is just above \$500 million, about one half of total GEF allocation for this focal area up to June 2000. Forest related projects covered under OP3 represent about half of the funding of Cohort 1 projects, \$221 million (44%). OP3 also has a substantial number of the projects in this group (33 projects). The second largest program in terms of financing is the short-term measures category (\$134 million and 16 projects). The Implementing Agencies explained that 10 of these projects are from the Pilot Phase of the GEF and thus were approved before the OPs were developed. Some of the Pilot Phase projects were retrofitted into the OPs but these 10 projects did not fit them. This and the fact that most projects deal with multi-ecosystems make the discussion from the point of view of Operational Programs somewhat artificial.

30. The third largest OP was OP2 which deals with coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems (\$80 million). The other two OPs (1: arid and semi arid ecosystems and 4: mountain ecosystems) account for about \$65 million. The breakdown according to OPs of Cohort 1 projects follows the breakdown of the GEF biodiversity portfolio. Table 6 presents the information on GEF funding and co-financing by OPs.

Table 6. Distribution of projects and funding in Cohort 1 according to OPs

Operational program	GEF Financing		Co-financing	
	US\$ million	%, of GEF	US\$ million	%
OP 1	30	6	16	3
OP 2	80	16	68	11
OP 3	220	44	434	68
OP 4	35	7	22	3
Short Term	134	27	98	15
TOTAL	500	100	638	100

31. Co-financing is defined as the funding additional to GEF and mobilized from bilateral donors and/or governments to cover the entire cost of the project. The figures presented in this section are those obtained from project documents at project approval and thus does not attempt to claim that the co-financing did actual materialize during project implementation (this information was not collected for this study but it should in later reviews). The 81 projects considered in this review reported about \$640 million in co-financing. Most projects (about 80%) claimed some leverage of co-financing at project approval while 63 projects had co-financing of less than \$10 million: most of the co-financing (78%) comes from just a few projects (11). All of these 11 projects are implemented by the World Bank (Table 7) and they are usually associated with World Bank loans or credits to the countries. Furthermore, on average the World Bank has reported about \$10 million co-financing per project, while UNDP and UNEP have reported about \$1.5 million.

Table 7. Projects with co-financing greater than \$10 million as reported in project document at project approval (in US\$ millions)

FY	Country/Implementing Agency	Project	GEF	Co-financing
1991	Brazil/World Bank	National Biodiversity Project	\$10.00	\$10.00
1997	Africa/World Bank	Regional Environment and Information Management Project (REIMP)	\$4.35	\$11.32
1991	Lao PDR/World Bank	Wildlife and Protected Areas Conservation	\$5.00	\$15.30
1991	Mexico/World Bank	Protected Areas Program	\$25.00	\$17.20
1997	Sri Lanka/World Bank	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants	\$5.42	\$20.40
1995	Indonesia/World Bank	Kerinci Seblat Integrated Conservation and Development	\$14.40	\$25.50
1997	Argentina/World Bank	Biodiversity Conservation Project	\$10.39	\$37.50
1997	Honduras/World Bank-UNDP	Honduras Biodiversity Project	\$7.30	\$41.70
1997	Indonesia/World Bank	Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Management Project	\$12,28	\$48.00
1995	India/World Bank	India Ecodevelopment	\$20.21	\$54.00
1998	South Africa/World Bank	Cape Peninsula Biodiversity Conservation Project	\$12.40	\$80.80
1997	Madagascar/World Bank – UNDP	Environment Program Support	\$21.30	\$135.20

32. Another way of looking at co-financing is to determine the ratio of GEF financial support versus the total cost of the project. According to the data provided at project approval for projects in Cohort 1 (no information was collected on co-financing mobilization during project implementation) about a quarter of projects were able to leverage more than 50% of the total cost of the project from other sources than the GEF (Table 8). The two joint projects in this cohort were able to leverage more than 85% of the total cost of the projects. More than half of the projects leveraged some co-financing to cover the total cost of the project (in only 22% of the projects in Cohort 1 the GEF had to cover the entire amount of the project cost).

Table 8. Percentage of GEF funding compared total project cost by Implementing Agency

% of GEF funding from total project cost	UNDP	UNEP	World Bank	Joint	Total projects	% of total projects
Less than 25%	0	1	5	2	8	10%
25% - 50%	6	1	5	0	12	15%
50% - 75%	9	2	13	0	24	30%
75% - less than 100%	3	1	15	0	19	23%
100%	17 ¹⁹	1	0	0	18	22%
Total Projects	35	6	38	2	81	

Protected Areas

33. The present review assumes that all the projects reporting working with and in protected areas have followed the definition of protected areas as internationally accepted. The numbers used in this analysis originates directly from the project document and other relevant materials found in the project files at the GEF Secretariat. Most of the documentations reviewed were prepared at project approval. As a first observation, the quality of the data provided in project documents regarding specific information on protected areas was limited with some exceptions. Project documents present data gaps and thus, the protected areas information had to be estimated based on rough figures. In many occasions, although the GEF project included protected areas no information on the hectares was provided.

According to Operational Programs

34. The study estimated that about 49 projects (62%) involve protected areas as part of their objectives either establishing new or working within existing ones. Most of them (30 projects) deal with less than 5 protected areas per project. Madagascar and Russian Federation are two projects with the most protected areas included, 39 and 42 respectively. The 49 projects included about 320 protected areas covering a total of about 60 million hectares. About 60% of the protected areas are part of projects working primarily in forest ecosystems following closely the GEF operational programs breakdown. Furthermore, all protected areas in Latin America are financed in forest ecosystems (OP3). However, since a large number of projects deal with several ecosystems the analysis regarding the relationship between protected areas and the OPs is not very appropriate.

¹⁹ All of these projects belong to the Pilot Phase when there was no requirement of co-financing at time of project approval.

According to regions

35. The distribution of GEF financial assistance for protected areas has been rather even between three regions: Asia & Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, about \$135 million. Furthermore, these three regions received about 84% of all funding for protected areas. The breakdown regarding financing protected areas per region is as follows:

Table 9. Distribution for protected areas by region

Region	GEF funding (million)	Number of protected areas	Hectares in protected areas (million)
Africa	\$94	84	13.6
Asia & Pacific	\$120	77	10.1 (*)
Arab States	\$9	4	4.5
Europe & Central Asia	\$35	72	11.2
Latin America & Caribbean	\$84	68	20.8
Global	\$6	15	NA
Total	\$350	320	60.2

Notes:

(*) Four protected areas did not have hectare information

NA: not available

36. The regional distribution of the 320 protected areas counted in the projects reviewed is evenly distributed among four regions: AP, Africa, LAC and ECA. Regarding hectares the distribution is somewhat less accurate given that information on protected areas hectares was missing in several of the project documents. Nevertheless, more than 1/3 of the hectares protected by the GEF are located in Latin America while less of 20% of them are located in Africa, ECA and AP. Two extremely large areas (10 million hectares each) are covered by two projects: Brazil Biodiversity Conservation and Russian Federation. Both projects cover globally crucial forest not only from the point of view of biodiversity but also from the point of view of carbon sequestration.

Special Lists

37. The special lists analyzed in this review included: Centers for Plant Diversity, Endemic Bird Areas, Critical ecosystems, Vavilov Centers, WWF Global 200 eco-regions, World Heritage Sites, Ramsar Sites, Biosphere reserves, Udvardy's biogeoreference and IUCN MBAs, and list for endangered and threatened species. This list was based on the work completed by Jenkins and Kapos (2000) for the GEF Secretariat.

38. There are several problems when analyzing the projects and areas covered under these special lists. First, new lists of globally significant ecosystems have been prepared since most of the projects in Cohort 1 were designed and approved. Second, very seldom is the area where the project is intervening is identified as belonging to one of the special lists. In most cases, the project document explains that the country is a signatory of a certain convention or international agreement but the document does not explain if or which of the project areas belong to the particular convention or agreement. There has not been a systematic requirement or follow-up by the GEF on this issue, which makes the task of identifying the areas under a particular list more difficult.

39. Out of the 81 projects reviewed 19 included specific information on 34 project areas that were included in one of the lists presented in the previous paragraph. The most common special lists found in the selected projects are CITES, Ramsar and the IUCN list of threatened and endangered species. The MAB program of UNESCO, the World Heritage list and the Convention on Migratory birds are often cited to explain the global significance of an area.

Special Studies

40. The GEF Secretariat conducted a special review of two of the Operational Programs (2 and 4) for all projects approved by the GEF up to June 30, 2000 (this group of projects combines projects in Cohorts 1 and 2).²⁰ Out of the 59 projects in OP2 a total of 52 projects (and \$211 million) cover sites of biologically global significance. All projects in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean regions are within areas of global biodiversity significance. More than half of the projects are included in the Global 200 list and Ramsar sites. About a third of the projects in this OP cover World Heritage sites of natural value and areas off significance to migratory species.

Table 10. Regional Coverage by GEF-funded Projects of Areas of International Biological Importance in coastal and freshwater ecosystems (OP2)

	Number of Projects							Percentage of all projects	GEF \$ millions
	Region								
	AFR	AP	ASME	ECA	LAC	GLO	Total	All regions	
Total projects in respective region	12	14	7	5	20	1	59	100%	228
Special lists	9	11	7	5	20	0	52	92%	211
Ramsar	3	6	4	5	11	0	29	64%	147
Montreaux	5	4	3	0	6	0	18	28%	63
Global 200	5	8	4	3	17	0	37	70%	159

²⁰ Program Status Review of Biodiversity, 2000 (Washington, DC, Global Environment Facility, 2000).

	Number of Projects							Percentage of all projects	GEF \$ millions
	Region								
	AFR	AP	ASME	ECA	LAC	GLO	Total	All regions	
World Heritage	3	2	3	1	6	0	15	31%	70
Migratory Species	0	0	4	3	10	0	17	35%	80

41. Similarly, the analysis conducted for mountains ecosystems (OP4) included projects from both Cohorts 1 and 2.²¹ Although since 1992, only 14 projects were approved under this OP the analysis revealed that an additional 55 projects in other OPs involve mountain ecosystems defined as GEF projects with project areas above 1000 meters. From these 69 projects addressing the conservation of mountain ecosystems, 59 projects cover sites in WWF's Global 200 list of the Earth's Distinctive Ecoregions. In addition, 19 of the 38 sites of natural value included in the framework of the World Heritage Convention are supported by GEF finance. In addition, 16 of the GEF funded projects of relevance to mountain ecosystems cover World Heritage sites of natural value and 4 projects cover World Heritage sites of natural and cultural value. Currently 7 of the World Heritage sites of natural or both natural and cultural value classified to mountain areas are inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger and GEF has supported actions at 5 of these sites, especially in Africa.

Table 11. Coverage by GEF-funded Projects of Areas of International Biological Importance in Mountain Ecosystems (OP4)

	Number of Projects					All regions	GEF \$ millions
	Region						
	AFR	AP	ASME	ECA	LAC		
World Heritage list (natural) ¹	5	1	0	1	9	16	125
World Heritage list (cultural) ²	1	1	0	0	2	4	39
UNESCO MAB Reserve ³	1	0	0	2	11	14	132
Global 200 List ⁴	11	16	3	7	22	59	424
Major Watersheds of the World ⁵	9	9	1	7	13	39	303
Total projects relevant to mountain ecosystems in respective region	14	17	6	9	23	69	481

(1) World Heritage List for natural values, current as of December 1999; (2) World Heritage list for cultural values, current as of December 1999; (3) UNESCO MAB Reserves, current as of January 2000; (4) WWF's Global 200: a representative approach to conserving the Earth's Distinctive Ecoregions, March 1998; (5) as defined in Watersheds of the World, a joint publication by the World Resources Institute and Worldwatch Institute, 1998.

²¹ Program Status Review of Biodiversity, 2000 (Washington, DC, Global Environment Facility, 2000).

Analysis according to ecosystems

42. As explained before, the classification of biodiversity projects among the four operational programs is not an appropriate description of the type of ecosystems where projects are operating.²² There are several observations that can be extracted when reviewing the projects from the point of view of the ecosystem in which they are intervening.

- (a) Most of the projects deal with more than one ecosystem both directly and/or indirectly (factors affecting a particular ecosystem). The relevant ecosystem is not only that included in the objective of the project but also in the design of the project. Furthermore, projects outcomes may impact other ecosystems that are not included in the objectives or design of the project.
- (b) In many instances, the projects deal with broadly defined ecosystems. For example, forest ecosystem projects have direct linkages with agricultural or coastal areas ecosystems. In the case of Laos, the project could have been described and launched under more integrated ecosystem management instead than the OP3. The same applies for most of the wetlands and coastal ecosystems projects.
- (c) None of the projects reviewed had a complete description in the project document of the ecosystems in which they are intervening. This happens even in projects that were designed after extensive inventories and assessments. In addition, very seldom project documents describe the interrelations between ecosystems at the project site level although many instances policies derived from the project may affect this precise inter-relationship.

Analysis enabling environment indicators and activities in support of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use

43. The objectives and implementation plans (components) of all projects in Cohort 1 were reviewed to estimate the extent in which projects have reported on the enabling environment indicators.²³ In addition, the same projects were reviewed from the point of view of their interventions against a list of activities that support biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

²² The World Bank has already started to develop a systematic approach to review all projects according to ecosystems. A first draft of this shows that most of the forest projects under OP3 also support activities in mountain (OP4) and coastal/freshwater areas (OP2). In addition, all projects approved under OP4 also deal with forest ecosystems (OP3). The analysis presents a few examples from the Pilot Phase World Bank GEF projects that work in all four operational programs: Bolivia Biodiversity Conservation, Indonesia Biodiversity Collection, Peru National Trust Fund for Protected Areas, Brazil National Biodiversity Project, and Mexico Protected Areas Program.

²³ These indicators of enabling environment are based on the work conducted by UNEP-WCMC. Not all indicators were possible to be considered at this point.

44. Enabling environment indicators are presented in Table 12. More than half of the projects in Cohort 1 deal with some type of capacity development activities, through dissemination of information, training and education, including both human and institutional. This indicator was the most common among the objectives in the projects reviewed. Nevertheless, none of the projects presented an assessment of training needs and gaps in skills or knowledge in order to determine the educational objectives of a project. Similarly, more than half of projects include research activities among their objectives, mostly applied, such as provision of information and development of databases and information systems, monitoring and evaluation, research on or about PAs, determining priority sites and setting conservation priorities. Policies, laws and regulations are tackled in about half of the projects in Cohort 1. These activities include proposals in implementing plans and strategies, strengthening, support and establishing of policies and laws as well as policies among regional collaboration. There does not seem to be a difference in the percentage of projects classified under each of these three indicators between Pilot Phase and GEF projects.

45. About a third of the projects in Cohort 1 deal with the management of PAs. Another third considers implementation of sustainable use programs. And yet, another third considers participation of stakeholders in the project design and implementation (projects can be allocated to one or more categories). There seems to be a slight increase in the percentage of projects dealing with management of PAs and sustainable use from the Pilot Phase to the GEF phase. About a quarter of the projects have objectives and components dealing with databases and information systems and financing mechanisms. A more substantial percentage of projects in the GEF phase are working with databases and information systems than in the Pilot Phase. Very few projects (less than 10% of Cohort 1) have in their project objectives or components activities involving the private sector, demonstration sites and social impact analysis or use traditional knowledge.

Table 12. Number of projects covering enabling environment indicators and selected activities in support of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use

Enabling Environment Indicators	OP1	OP2	OP3	OP4	Short Term	Pilot Phase	% of Pilot Phase	GEF	% of GEF	Total	% of Total
Capacity development (individual and institutional)	4	12	22	4	5	31	56	16	59	47	57
Policies, laws and regulations	2	11	17	3	6	25	45	14	52	39	48
Research	2	11	20	4	9	30	55	16	59	46	56
Land tenure	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total in Cohort 1	7	19	33	7	16	55		27		82	
NA: no information was collected for this indicator											
Activities in support of	OP1	OP2	OP3	OP4	Short	Pilot	% of	GEF	% of	Total	% of

biodiversity conservation and sustainable use					Term	Phase	Pilot Phase		GEF		Total
Management of PAs	2	4	13	4	3	15	27	11	41	26	32
Participation of stakeholders	2	4	11	2	6	17	31	8	30	25	30
Implementation of sustainable use programs	2	7	10	1	4	14	25	10	37	24	29
Databases and information	1	5	10	1	3	10	18	10	37	20	24
Financing mechanisms	0	3	8	2	5	14	25	4	15	18	22
Demonstration character	1	1	3	1	2	4	7	4	15	8	10
Social impacts analysis/ traditional knowledge	0	2	3	1	0	1	2	5	19	6	7
Private sector involvement	0	1	1	0	2	3	5	1	4	4	5
Total in Cohort 1	7	19	33	7	16	55		27		82	

Conclusions

46. It is clear that the documents available for reviews for most of these projects did not include the type of information that it is necessary to analyze the proposed indicators for coverage as presented in Table 5. Trying to collect this information *a posteriori* could involve a major undertaking. In addition, most of the information provided in this section was not checked against the actual implementation of the projects but instead it represents what the projects proposed at the time of GEF Council approval.

47. Even if the information provided in this chapter is not complete it is evident that the GEF biodiversity portfolio has covered a lot of ground. Furthermore, it is also evident that the GEF has provided and leveraged a substantial amount of funding for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use around the world. Supporting capacity development activities, research initiatives, policies and laws development, protected areas establishment and management, and sustainable use programs have been the major focus of the GEF biodiversity portfolio. It is also clear that the GEF has become a major supported of some of the globally important and defined lists such as World Heritage, CITES, Ramsar and IUCN list of threatened and endangered species.

48. The system of presenting the GEF biodiversity portfolio according to the OPs is misleading when trying to estimate the coverage of the ecosystem where the projects are intervening. In fact, this should be taken one step further to recognize that GEF projects rarely focus on a single ecosystem but they do act and impact broader landscapes, including the production landscape. This has been recognized as a problem in previous reviews of biodiversity projects.

49. It is therefore clear that if the indicators suggested in Table 5 (or any others) will be used in the future to describe and analyze the GEF biodiversity portfolio the required project documentation should include the presentation of the selected indicators.

IV ACHIEVEMENTS

Introduction

50. Project achievements were measured in relation to project objectives. Also measured were the achievements in selected cross cutting issues relevant to the GEF biodiversity focal area. The goal of each GEF project in this focal area is the ‘conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of its components’. Stakeholder participation, sustainability, benefit sharing, addressing some underlying causes, being sensitive to social and economic issues, are some of the cross-cutting issues.

51. Consequently, for the purpose of this study and in keeping with the terms of reference, the achievements in relation to the explicitly stated project specific objectives are assessed in this section. The achievements in relation to cross cutting issues are being assessed in the next section, along with the assessment of initial impacts.

52. In looking at the explicitly stated, project specific, objectives, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

- (a) How far have project objectives been achieved?
- (b) Were the stated objectives realistic? If not, why not?
- (c) Were the objectives changed subsequent to project approval?

53. In addition, it sought to look separately at the achievement of capacity development (CD), protected area (PA), production landscapes (PL) and regional and global projects. Annex 7 provides the numerical information used for the analysis. The findings are given below.

Findings

Achievement of Project Objectives in General

54. Of the 78²⁴ projects assessed, ten percent were assessed to have achieved their objectives fully, about 40% were assessed to have mostly achieved their objectives while another 40% were assessed to have only partly achieved their objectives.²⁵ Less than ten percent were assessed to have either not achieved their objectives at all (one project) or achieved them minimally.²⁶

²⁴ In Sections IV, V, VI and VI, some issues are assessed for all the 78 projects while others are assessed for a sub-set of 36 projects. Annex 7 indicates the sources of information utilized for specific issues. The rationale for using two different data sets is the availability of information, as described in table 2 of Section II.

²⁵ Projects were assessed as follows: fully (project has or is expected to achieve or exceed all its main objectives); mostly (project is expected to achieve most of its major objectives or mostly achieve all objectives); partly (project is

55. Out of the 78 projects reviewed, 33 were completed projects. Of these, again about ten percent only minimally achieved their objectives, nearly ten percent mostly achieved their objectives and the remaining eighty percent were among the mostly and partly category. However, in the case of completed projects, those that mostly achieved their objectives (15 out of 32) were more than those that partly achieved their objectives (12 out of 32). It should be noted here that ongoing projects were assessed on the basis of their achievements in relation to the stage of implementation they were in. However, whereas for completed projects there was no scope for improving their performance, for ongoing projects there is always the possibility that they will achieve their objectives before completion.

56. In understanding these findings, it must be recognized that it is unrealistic to expect all projects to achieve all the objectives fully. In fact, such a situation might even lead to the justifiable criticism that perhaps the projects were being under designed or were not ambitious enough.

57. Also, it must be recognized that projects aiming to conserve biodiversity are perhaps the most difficult types of projects to implement. In addressing biodiversity conservation issues, they aim to achieve objectives that, while having significant long term and global benefits, often imply loss of access to natural resources, especially for rural communities. They work with governments for whom biodiversity conservation is usually not a priority and incorporate scientific principles that are new, evolving, often counter intuitive and difficult to fully understand or explain to the various stakeholders. If they have to honestly achieve their objectives they often need to curb the harvesting and use of natural resources, to divert land away from more commercially productive uses to conservation and 'sustainable' use and, consequently, inhibit or significantly change patterns of short-term commercial and economic growth in societies struggling to economically 'catch up' with the North. In return, they promise a small amount of 'incremental' funds, nebulous option value in the distant future and relatively modest alternate commercial opportunities. This is very often, though fortunately not always, the 'ground truth.'

58. It must also be noted that there are no standards by which the achievements of GEF projects can be objectively assessed. Perhaps it would have been useful to compare their achievement against those of other agencies implementing similar projects. However, this was outside the study's terms of reference.

59. Consequently, the achievements of the GEF biodiversity portfolio must be looked at in this context. Nevertheless, it is important to analyze those immediate factors that might inhibit improvements in the levels of achievements.

not expected to achieve most of its major objectives); and minimally (project is not expected to achieve any of its major objectives).

²⁶ Percentages provided in this chapter are based on the number of actual responses and do not include those projects for which there was no information or for which the issue was not relevant.

60. There are many reasons that constraint the full achievement of objectives. Perhaps the most important reason given was the lack of implementation capacity. A study of the documents and discussions with experts in the implementing agencies and elsewhere, suggest that the lack of a capacity assessment exercise (individual, institutional or systemic) prior to project implementation is perhaps one of the major reasons why projects run into major implementation problems. Projects often start without a clear understanding of existing capacities. There is, consequently, no realistic plan to develop the capacities required to implement any phase of the project before that phase is formally initiated. Projects often do not have the time that is required to develop capacities. As the existence of requisite capacities is not postulated as a precondition for project implementation, nor is each phase sanctioned for initiation only after the required capacities are demonstrably in position, there is pressure to get on with the project even if the wherewithal to do so is lacking.

61. Another important reason is that, very often, project objectives are unrealistic and over ambitious. Can one realistically expect a GEF project, in three to five years, to achieve what countries have not been able to achieve in fifty years? An effort was made to extract information about the realisticness of project objectives. More than three fourths of the projects assessed seemed to have had unrealistic or over ambitious objectives. The proportion was similar in completed and ongoing projects.

62. In many cases the team members conducting the review (field or desk reviews) reported that the project objectives were over ambitious (3 out of the 5 examples below are from the Pilot Phase):

- (a) The project had too many objectives, apparently trying to please too many actors. [Wildlands Protection and Management, Congo/Pilot Phase].
- (b) The Project was over ambitious and unrealistic. [Socotra Archipelago, Yemen/GEF]
- (c) The project design seems to include too many activities within limited capacity for implementing them. [Sarstun-Motagua Region, Guatemala/GEF].
- (d) The project tried to do too much in too short a time period. [Biodiversity Conservation, Nepal/Pilot Phase].
- (e) The original objective of preparing a “comprehensive Biodiversity Map and Management Plan for Lake Malawi / Nyasa” was clearly overoptimistic given the constraints of the project design (emphasis on one country and inattention to intersectoral policy and institutional issues) and was sensibly reduced in scope during project implementation. [Lake Malawi/Nyasa Conservation, Malawi/Pilot Phase].

63. This has also been observed earlier about GEF projects. Michael Wells, commenting on pilot phase projects, made a similar point in 1994²⁷, suggesting that in order to secure project approval

²⁷ Wells, Michael, ‘The Global Environment Facility and Prospects for Biodiversity Conservation’, *International Environmental Affairs*, 6(1): 69 –97, 1994, p 78

claims of effectiveness are inflated, risks are ignored and complexities oversimplified. Six years later, a draft report titled *Bank Performance in Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use*²⁸, makes a similar point.

64. A possible way out of being stuck with impossible objectives is to have the flexibility to review and change them as the project progresses. This flexibility was exercised in many of the projects under review. Various projects ended with objectives different to those with which they started. In nearly half of the projects reviewed, objectives were changed after project initiation. Most of the changes were in the form of the objectives being scaled down. In some cases they were made more appropriate or clearer.

65. Another important reasons that reportedly constrained project implementation was the difficulty in coordinating with stakeholders, especially with local and national governments and with local communities. Though, in general, the projects reviewed were successful in involving stakeholders, there were instances where the inability to address the proximate and immediate causes of biodiversity loss, especially in terms of providing alternative livelihoods, created a problem. There was also sometimes the challenge of motivating the local people to participate in project activities.

66. Other major factors that seemed to have inhibited full achievement of project objectives include

67. Shortage of time (More than three fourths of the projects assessed and almost all the completed projects assessed)

(a) Shortage of funds (More than half the projects assessed and two thirds of the completed projects)

68. Factors that have been occasionally quoted in the various reviews as being responsible for inhibiting project achievements include poor action plans and inappropriate sequencing of activities, lack of flexibility in project design, poor initial assessment of the social, political and economic situation, confusion caused by differing agendas of multiple donors, poor technical supervision, and time consuming and tedious administrative processes (for a more exhaustive list, see section on lessons learnt in section 6).

69. Another problem some projects had was that neither the objectives, nor the indicators of success, were clear. There were objectives that sought to ‘develop capacity’, ‘strengthen’, ‘improve’, ‘optimize’, ‘foster’, etc. However, there were no standards or levels indicated. How did one decide if enough ‘development’, ‘improvement’, ‘strengthening’ etc. had taken place?

²⁸ World Bank, OED, July 2000

70. Political instability and just plain bad luck have also featured as factors disrupting project progress. In a few cases factors beyond the control or foresight of project planners, like wars or natural calamities, have inhibited project progress.

Capacity Development Projects

71. A significant number of the projects assessed were CD projects. These addressed a variety of capacity needs at the individual, institutional and systemic levels. Of the 18 CD projects that were assessed, two were judged to have achieved their objectives fully and two minimally. Of the remaining 14, about half had achieved most of the objectives while another half had achieved part of the objectives (see Annex 7 for further breakdown).

72. Some of the most successful components of even non CD projects were the CD aspects of these projects. Writing about the Patagonian Coastal Zone project in Argentina, a team member said that the project successfully advanced scientific knowledge, especially about a group of marine animals important to the region. Other successful components of the project included advances in environmental education and capacity building. Similarly, for the Integrated Biodiversity Protection project in Sarstun-Motagua Region, Guatemala, it was said that major achievements have been reported in elementary education by introducing environmental education, biodiversity protection and sustainable development concepts in the schools curriculums. In addition, the project has prepared and distributed educational materials. The success of this component has been related to the active participation of an Ministry of Education.

73. While reviewing the Biodiversity Collections Project of Indonesia, the team member suggested that the botany and zoology collections, developed as a part of the project, together with their qualified staff should now be recognized as significant centers for taxonomy and biodiversity research. Similarly, for the Sri Lanka Wild Life Conservation and Protected Area Management Project the review states that: without fail, the project fully achieved the project objectives (and in some cases exceeded target indicators).

74. For another project (Biodiversity Protection, Slovak Republic), it was reported that the project appears to have been most successful in building capacity for the manipulation of geographically based biodiversity information through the acquisition of GIS equipment and the provision of associated training.

75. A study of a sample of seven CD projects (from among those field visited and looked at in depth) suggested that the greatest achievements were at the individual level, followed by the institutional and systemic levels. This sample study also suggested that CD projects were successful in motivating individuals to participate in CD activities, that the training programs were invariably appropriate to the socio-economic, political and cultural reality of the country as well as supportive to the other objectives of biodiversity conservation.

76. There also seemed to be no problem in ensuring that trained personnel found suitable employment, especially as a large majority of trained personnel were already government employees. Unfortunately, information available in documents did not indicate whether or not these government employees were or continued to be in positions where they could use the newly acquired skills²⁹. Furthermore, it was uncertain whether resources would be available to continue to upgrade the newly acquired skills.

77. Regarding institutional CD, the sample study revealed that reorienting the goals and mandates of institutions or introducing new management structures to facilitate achieving an institution's mandate was not so easy and was often dependent on the personalities of the individual's involved who were in senior management positions. However, the development of new management/ strategic plans prepared for specific institutions constituted CD at the institutional level although it may still remain "on the shelf" until the political will exists to implement the proposed changes. On the other hand, capacity constraints to the effective achievement of the institutional goals and objectives had been properly identified and the process beginning to remove those constraints has been set in place. Improved performance was evident within the institutions in most cases; however, it was too early to measure true long-term performance for projects that have only recently terminated. In many cases, because the baseline was minimal at project start-up, the simple introduction of increased computing capacities, application of GIS in PA planning etc. resulted in a marked improvement in performance.

78. In the few instances where new institutions were established or substantial funding was provided for their functioning, sustainability was an issue that was considered very seriously by project proponents. Various strategies have been designed, however there was no evidence yet of either the feasibility or sustainability of these approaches to sustaining the institutions as it is still too early to assess this.

79. Of systems, the results are mixed, as very often systemic constraints are harder to attack by targeted conservation interventions and often involve actors outside of the realm of the project itself. In all cases the system was strengthened to deal with conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity but again the degree of strengthening varied widely from project to project, as did the impact each project had on the "developed capacity in terms of its endurance and evolution".

80. Sustaining capacity after project termination through continuing training/education etc. was not an issue that many projects examined and most project designs failed to take this into consideration as part of the sustainability considerations. Invariably, this would require an ongoing source of support either from the government or donor's or from some form of income generation but none of these approaches were fully assessed, discussed and/or agreed in the projects evaluated. CD appeared to work best with those beneficiaries who had identified the need to improve their own individual and institutional capacities as a prerequisite to improving their ability to do their job, increase their incomes,

²⁹ At least in one of the field visited projects the training imparted was assessed to be inappropriate, given the level of officers attending the training program(UNEP Forest Fires).

improve their quality of life etc. regardless of whether they were part of Government, NGOs, community groups, students etc. These beneficiaries were the most enthusiastic participants and stood to benefit directly from these kinds of interventions.

81. Similarly, there was the issue of sustainability of the skills developed. Would the skills developed in individuals be used, maintained, upgraded and further disseminated? For, after all, very few skills are like riding a bicycle, which once learned is never forgotten. Most skills are lost if not regularly used. Besides, bicycles have hardly changed in the last fifty years and the skill to ride them does not need to be updated. However, most other methods and technologies are evolving and changing. If the related skills are not upgraded, they soon become useless. But, is this an unreasonable expectation from a GEF project? The factors that, for example, motivate individuals to upgrade skills (personal factors, economic incentives, interest in learning, etc.) are usually outside the scope of a GEF project. However, without creating the institutional and systemic capacities for replicating, upgrading and optimally utilizing the other capacities developed, the sustainability of CD inputs over even the medium term would be questionable.

82. A related issue is whether GEF sponsored institutional CD activities influenced similar developments in other institutions. The data suggest that this did not happen. However, is this a fair expectation as rarely does this kind of spontaneous uptake happen unless a donor is available to support the institutional strengthening activities required? But, if this is so, then we have already admitted that there is no sustainability to the institutional CD initiatives. Unless we can use project funds to develop models that are appropriate to the social, political and economic reality of the host country or region, and unless we can make the government and other stake holders feel a sense of ownership towards such a model, there seems little point in persisting with it. And, the replication of models developed in the GEF project is the best indicator that they are locally appropriate and owned (imitation being the highest form of flattery). In addition, the GEF Operational Strategy states that 'A diverse portfolio will ... finance actions that ... catalyze complementary actions and have a multiplier effect.

Protected Area Projects

83. A very large proportion of the projects assessed (40 out of 78) were PA projects. Some of the PA projects were assessed to be very successful, even though they are invariably the most difficult and complicated types of projects. Resistance to CD and PL projects is rare especially because the former seek to enhance skills and abilities and the latter aim at enhancing natural resources production and their availability to local populations and other stakeholders. However, PA projects often become the objects of hostility from a variety of stakeholders, including local communities, for such projects more often than not need to restrict access to natural resources. Therefore, the challenges associated with PA projects are perhaps the greatest.

84. Nevertheless, current strategies of *in situ* biodiversity conservation are heavily biased in favor of PAs, as is obvious by the proportion of PA projects among the projects being reviewed. If well

designed and managed, PAs have perhaps a greater likelihood of being repositories of biodiversity (especially large mammals and ecosystems) than almost any other type of conservation strategy.

85. The fact that, in many of the countries where the GEF is active, the last remaining patches of wilderness are found only within PAs makes their protection very critical and very difficult. Rising human populations, economic aspirations and political awareness, has made the task of establishing and sustaining PAs almost an impossible one. It is in this context that achievements of PA projects must be assessed.

86. More than half the PA projects were assessed to have fully or mostly met their objectives. Similarly, more than half of them were assessed to have had comprehensive or partial stakeholder participation, some benefit sharing activities and some measures for ensuring sustainability. However, only a fifth of the PA projects were assessed to have been “owned” by stakeholders.

87. The Philippines Conservation of Priority Protected Areas project presents a good example of impressive achievements at the local level within a complex environment (see box below).

Supporting Local Management of Biodiversity in the Philippines

Overlooking agricultural fields flush with ripening sugar cane, the sloping forests of Mt. Kanla-on, the highest peak in the central Philippines, stand as a promising reminder of society's dependence on natural systems and the services they provide. Considered a sacred mountain by local indigenous groups, the Mt. Kanla-on volcano and natural park is one of the few remaining forested areas of Negros Island, home to the headwaters of three major rivers – the Bago, Nahalin and Binalbagan – and serves as the watershed for nearly 160,000 hectares of land. Its forests provide habitat for an impressive diversity of flora and fauna, including large numbers of species found nowhere else on earth, such as the Negros fruit dove and the Visayan hornbill. But just as important as its role in providing clean water and sheltering unusual life, Mt. Kanla-on is also serving as a case study in the benefits and challenges of ensuring effective local management of natural resources. The mountain is one of ten sites taking part in a \$20 million GEF effort begun in 1994 through the *Conservation of Priority Protected Areas System Project (CPPAP)*, implemented by the World Bank in partnership with the Philippine government and a consortium of non-governmental organizations (NIPA).

Taking advantage of changes in the Philippines' environmental laws, the project's objective is to promote partnerships between NGOs and government agencies for the management of protected areas through the use of Protected Area Management Boards (PAMBs). Since the law allowing PAMBs is relatively new, the GEF project was, in essence, an experiment in participatory management of protected areas. With GEF support, however, a PAMB was established representing local and national governments, local communities, indigenous groups, and NGOs.

Despite these diverse backgrounds, the PAMB for Mt. Kanla-on has been effective in reducing threats to the park and in finding cooperative solutions to unexpected problems. PAMB members typically hold senior positions in their agencies or organizations, allowing them to speak credibly on issues of concern to the park. In addition, GEF funding helped provide training to fill in the knowledge gaps PAMB members had about the park and its management, allowing everyone to function on an equal footing.

Since its creation, the Mt. Kanla-on PAMB has negotiated agreements with local governments to broaden its financial base and implement community development activities, supported sustainable eco-tourism activities focused primarily on Filipino nationals, and undertaken regeneration efforts on degraded land within the natural park boundaries. Local communities have formed "green brigades" which have had a direct impact in reducing the number of illegal activities within park boundaries and on reinvigorating restoration efforts. The importance of protecting the natural park and the services it provides has not been lost on local authorities. "The integration of Mount Kanla-on Natural Park into the land-use and short and long term development plans of local government units highlights the appreciation and support these institutions have for the initiatives we are undertaking," says Errol Gatumbato, Protected Area Superintendent of GEF's efforts in Mt. Kanla-on. Effective, cooperative local management, however, is no panacea to the threats facing Mt. Kanla-on and other parks. Often times, threats arise which are beyond the scope of a PAMB or other agency to easily address. On-going debates over the proposed siting of a new geothermal power plant, for instance, have challenged the structure and authority of the Mt. Kanla-on PAMB and the protected area system as a whole. On the other hand, concerns about the impact of mountaineering on the volcano led park managers to strike a balance between the wishes of commercial users and local spiritual leaders, both of whom stand to lose from further degradation.

These events highlight the challenges facing natural parks like Mt. Kanla-on, but they also reveal that support for local governance, by ensuring a voice for those most affected by and dependent on natural resources, can be a powerful force for effective management.

"While it is not easy to bring together sometimes conflicting interests," Mr. Gatumbato continues, "it is important that the PAMB be guided by basic principles of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, and that it establish its own guidelines of operations to effectively carry out its mandate."

Production Landscape Projects

88. The establishment of biodiversity conservation and sustainable regimes in production landscapes outside protected areas is clearly a strategy for the future. It is only when production of natural resources can be enhanced and sustainably managed outside protected areas that pressures on protected areas can be reduced and a political and economic space created for their continuation. Recent thinking in the GEF also stresses this shift in strategy and highlights the advantages such a strategy will have in achieving a wider and more varied coverage of biodiversity and for various other pragmatic, scientific and technical reasons.³⁰ Also, if local communities, urban consumers and industry are to be provided the natural resources they need and if national economies are to grow equitably and sustainably, land and water resources must be managed sustainably and for enhanced productivity.

89. Most countries of the South do not have the luxury of putting under the PA system adequate representative ecosystems and habitats of all endangered species. Besides, isolated PAs cannot always harbor genetically viable populations of species. Also, in most countries of the South, information regarding the status and distribution of species is patchy. Even if PAs can be set up to protect the known species, many other unrecorded species survive in unprotected areas.

90. However, to manage a production landscape in a manner such that biodiversity is conserved and its components sustainably used, is not an easy task, both in its science and in its economic, social and administrative parameters. The CBD says “Sustainable use means the use of components of biological diversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long term decline of biological diversity, thereby inhibiting its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations (p 5, CBD). Despite this, the term ‘sustainable use’ is often understood by those not involved in biodiversity conservation to mean the perpetual availability of a species or a resource that is required for consumption or sale. However, even the sustainable harvesting of species and resources might have adverse impacts on other elements of biodiversity that are not ‘resources’ and therefore are not noticed.

91. It is also not always easy to determine what levels of extraction and human use are compatible with biodiversity conservation. Whereas in PAs, especially in the core zones, all human use can be prohibited because of the precautionary principle, this is not feasible in production landscapes. Therefore, carrying capacity studies need to be carried out for different species and ecosystems. However, these are expensive, time consuming and technically not easy. Besides, it is not enough to carry out such studies, the findings have to be shared and accepted by the various stakeholders, if they are to respect them.

³⁰ Please see forthcoming ‘GEF’s Strategy for Achieving “Sustained Benefits in Biodiversity Conservation” (draft; 2000) for elaboration of this point.

92. Also, policy and legal support for the conservation of production landscapes is usually much weaker than that of PAs. Consequently, much greater efforts have to be made to establish stakeholder participation, a sense of ownership and a benefit-sharing regime, if conservation is to be effective.

93. Of the 20 PL projects assessed, about half had mostly and the other half, partly, achieved their objectives. None had been assessed to have fully achieved its objectives and only one had achieved the objectives minimally (see Annex 7 for further breakdown analysis).

94. There were many notable successes. For example, the Patagonian Coastal Zone Project, Argentina, was assessed to be outstanding in its (i) support of a local NGO specific to the peripheral area where the project operates, (ii) efficient use of budget for training and environmental education, and (iii) management plan based upon technical and scientific work (note: not social science or policy) of high quality. Similarly, the Coastal Wetlands Management Project, Ghana, in general promoted awareness among the stakeholders that the five coastal wetland ecosystems should be managed for global, national, and local needs. The Environment Program, Madagascar has had a major impact in the areas of policy formulation and institution building to address, construct, and implement conservation agendas. Some government institutions were also strengthened.

95. In the Medicinal Plants Project, Sri Lanka, the assessment was that at all sites awareness about medicinal plants has increased. Awareness is increasing about their uses, their decline and need to conserve them, and about their cultivation. Villagers mentioned that they are learning about some medicinal plants they did not know about before. Women repeatedly mentioned their interest in knowing more about medicinal plants. They also mentioned that the project is allowing them to get more involved in resources management.

Regional Projects

96. Biodiversity does not respect national boundaries, nor do the impacts of its loss. Factors that degrade biodiversity can also emanate from across national borders. Demand for endangered species and their parts, from markets across the world, can deplete and decimate populations in countries far removed from such markets. Consumption of natural resources in one set of countries can fuel the conversion of wilderness areas into plantations and wastelands in another. Air and water pollutants can travel across national boundaries and destroy biological resources in neighboring and far off lands. Consequently, regional and global projects perhaps have greater relevance in the environmental sector than in many other sectors.

97. However, the vast geographical range over which biodiversity sometimes has to be conserved makes the task of managing regional projects very difficult. Added to that is the need to coordinate with different national governments, deal with different ecological, political and economic systems, and different cultures, and even operate in different languages. Sometimes competing national agendas have to be reconciled and cooperation sought between countries that might have many existing and deep-

rooted political and economic differences. It is within these constraints that the performance of regional (and Global) projects needs to be assessed.

98. Of the 78 projects reviewed, 14 were regional or Global projects. Of these, two were field visited and three were studied in depth. In both the field visited projects it was thought that the objective of regional cooperation was well achieved, though the African project was still in its early phase. Similarly, in two of the three projects studied in depth, the experience of regional cooperation and the efficacy as a regional project was assessed to be satisfactory. For the third, there was inadequate information.

99. Some other projects that were not classified as regional projects but where activities covered more than one country included the Lake Malawi Project, the Romania and Ukraine Danube Delta Projects and the Slovak Republic Biodiversity Protection Project. All of these were studied in depth. For the Danube Delta Projects, which were run as separate country projects, the perception was that they would have been better off as one combined project.

V INITIAL IMPACTS

Introduction

100. The fundamental questions that must be asked of the GEF biodiversity portfolio are: how much biodiversity did it conserve, how important was this biodiversity, how well and sustainably did it conserve it, and with what social and financial costs and benefits. We propose, in this chapter, to try and answer some of these questions.

101. In order to find answers to these broader questions, we set about trying to answer the following more specific questions.

- (a) How successful were projects in conserving biodiversity and/or ensuring its sustainable use?
- (b) How successful were the projects in involving various stakeholders in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the project?
- (c) How effectively were science and technology issues incorporated into project design and implementation?
- (d) How extensively and effectively were the underlying causes of biodiversity loss addressed?
- (e) How far and in what ways are the activities/benefits of the project sustainable?

- (f) Have the projects addressed land degradation issues?

102. Our findings are given below. Annex 7 provides the numerical information used for the analysis.

Findings

Impacts on Biodiversity³¹

103. For a large proportion of the GEF projects it was not possible to directly answer the question ‘what impacts did they have on biodiversity?’³² because this information was not available. This was partly because project assessments focus, as they should, on determining how far project objectives have been achieved. However, in the projects assessed, objectives were mostly output or task oriented rather than impact oriented. The fact that GEF projects, by and large, do not systematically collect data on their impacts on biodiversity was one of the surprising findings of this study.

104. Efforts to assess project achievements in terms of actual impacts were further frustrated because, for most projects there was no baseline data against which the current status could be compared. About half the projects reviewed did not collect baseline data. Only about 20% had collected varying degrees of baseline information and another 20% had planned to do so but it was not known whether they had or not. There were also no clear field indicators on how project impacts should be measured and how they can be separated from impacts of factors and activities not related to the project.

105. However, it seems that the GEF has taken a positive step forward towards improving the lack of baseline studies. The review of a group of new OP3 Cohort 2 projects reveal that there is almost universal adherence to the incorporation of baseline studies – biological and socio-economic – in these project documents. Often times, these baselines were established during project preparation (PDF-stage) or are expected to be one of the first tasks for the project once approved. The socio-economic studies, moreover, frequently examine a broad range of issues, from land ownership patterns to logging levels and differentiation in responsibilities between genders, to cite just a few examples. Of course, it is not yet possible to determine the impacts of these Cohort 2 projects, since most of them have only recently started implementation.

106. Despite the paucity of baseline information and of impact indicators in the reviewed Cohort 1 projects, the study team made an effort, based on information collected from project documents and on

³¹ GEF projects obviously have impacts other than those on biodiversity. However, for the purpose of this study, we have restricted ourselves to assessing impacts on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, as this is the mandate of the GEF.

³² By ‘impacts of the project’ we mean the changes that have occurred, due to the project, to biodiversity in terms of its conservation and sustainable use.

field visits, to assess what impacts projects had had on biodiversity. Of the 17³³ projects that had information on impacts on biodiversity, only three were considered to have had a substantial impact. Of these, two were completed projects and one was an ongoing project. The remaining 14 were assessed to have some or little impact³⁴. Of these, eight were completed projects and the remaining six were ongoing projects. For the remaining projects there was either no information or the question was not relevant. In some cases, the reviewers had indicated that it was too early to judge impacts.

107. A further analysis of the data shows that of the seven projects field visited, one (ongoing) was assessed to have had a substantial impact on biodiversity, five (three ongoing) were assessed to have had some or little impact and for one (ongoing) it was thought to be too early to assess impacts. Similarly, of the 21 projects for which in-depth reviews were done, one (completed) was assessed to have had a substantial impact, five (two completed) were thought to have had some or little impact on biodiversity. 15 (eight completed) did not have enough information to make a judgment.³⁵

108. It must again be mentioned that these findings should be understood in the larger context, described in detail in Section IV, regarding the difficulties in implementing biodiversity projects and our inability to compare GEF project performance against the performance of other agencies.

109. There is also the question whether project period is adequate to measure impacts on biodiversity. Whereas in a few cases this might be so, some impacts should start becoming obvious well before project completion.

110. One type of project for which impacts may take some time to become obvious are CD projects, although their objectives can be far more impact oriented. For example, if individuals are being trained and institutions and systems strengthened in order to perform certain functions, then the performance of those functions must be the test of project success. Project objectives and, consequently, indicators of success, must not focus only on the holding of training programs or the provision of equipment and resources. Also, change in attitudes could be another indicator of success, where it was a part of project objectives. In some cases proxy indicators might have to be used to capture some of these impacts.

111. Among the projects that reported direct benefits to biodiversity were the ‘Coastal Wetlands Management Project’ in Ghana. The impacts on biodiversity included ‘the increase of population of migratory birds in three locations which will benefit global community’ and ‘reduction of mangrove destruction for fuelwood, as well as reduction of encroachment on the sites.’ For the ‘Integrated

³³ These 17 projects are from the 36 sub-cohort that include projects that had in-depth reviews, field visits or independent evaluations. See Annex 7 for further breakdown.

³⁴ Impacts were classified into substantial, and some or little. This terminology was extracted by the authors from the open-ended responses to the questions in the in-depth reviews.

³⁵ Percentages provided in this chapter are based on the number of actual responses and do not include those projects that had no information; unless otherwise specified.

Biodiversity Protection Project' in Guatemala it was reported that 'anecdotal information from local residents seems to indicate that the rate of loss in forestry coverage has been reduced in areas under protection.'

112. The lack of information related to impact appears to be an indicator of the preoccupation of GEF projects reviewed with activities and tasks. The fact that the projects reviewed almost always had task oriented and not impact-oriented objectives and, consequently, had no impact oriented indicators and no time-bound benchmarks for monitoring their progress throughout the project life, is an issue that needs to be addressed.

113. Given the mandate of the GEF, it would appear more desirable to replace general objectives like 'strengthen capacity', 'develop ability', etc., with very specific, impact oriented, objectives. Impact oriented objectives could be to 'raise the population of x species', 'increase the density of y forest', 'regenerate z area', 'reduce harvesting of a resource', 'increase productivity of b resource' or 'reduce grazing' etc. Further, for each of these objectives, targets could be specified 'increase by how much in what time frame,' 'regenerate to what level in what time frame', 'reduce to what number in what time frame' or 'increase productivity to what level in what time frame'. Then the output or task-oriented objectives could be seen as the means for achieving these impacts.

114. The need to have impact oriented objectives and indicators is obvious when one looks at some of the projects reviewed. For example, the Sri Lanka 'Wildlife Conservation and Protection Project' was assessed as a very successful project in terms of achievement of its objectives. It was one of the few projects where objectives were reportedly not only fully achieved but 'in some cases exceeded target indicators'. However, for the same project, the report goes on to say that 'in spite of the illustrious achievements of the project listed above the project has not yet had the full desired impact. That is, the capacity of Department of Wildlife Conservation to manage PAs and wildlife has been greatly improved and strengthened as a result of the project but management of PAs has not significantly improved as a result. Many of the most important problems pertaining to PA management still exist and although a strategy has been formulated by the project and adopted by the government of Sri Lanka to conserve elephants, management of wild elephant populations and the resolution of conflicts between elephants and people has not significantly improved.'

115. Similarly, the report on Congo's 'Wildlands Protection and Management Project' states that: 'The bottom line is that biodiversity in one of the biologically richest countries in the planet is very much under substantive threat and project achievements did little to advance its conservation'. The final evaluation report for the 'Sustainable Development and Management of Biologically Diverse Coastal Resources' in Belize (1993-98), states that 'The threats to the unusually high quality and rich biodiversity of the Belize coastal ecosystems were already clear in 1993 and have increased in the subsequent five years' (p 7). It must, however, be noted that the impact that projects might have had in inhibiting the rate of deterioration could not be captured from the available information.

116. The GEF Implementing Agencies have started using, from July 1997, a log frame approach to project design and monitoring. It is claimed that this would improve the capacity to assess impacts. However, a sample of the PIR 2000 reports looked at suggested that though there was a question about impacts, it clarified that by impacts what was meant was 'progress towards achievement of development objectives'. As most of the projects reviewed had 'development' objectives that were output and task oriented, this question did not yield any significant information about actual impacts.

117. In their PIR Performance Report 2000, the UNDP/GEF mentions that projects are now retrofitting indicators that would enable assessment of impacts. Also, some of the newer projects are already using satellite imagery to monitor vegetation changes. This is a welcome development and should be noted by other IAs.

Why Global Biodiversity Impact is Difficult to Define: The Case of Yemen

Biological diversity, as defined by the World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC), refers to the "number, variety, and variability of living organisms that comprise the hierarchy of biological organization." In ecosystem diversity, "the relative abundance and variety of species is measured by size, trophic levels, and taxonomic groups." According to the CBD, countries can measure biodiversity in terms of "number of endemic species and number of species near-extinction" but recognizes that "different weights may be applied to assessing ecosystem diversity and there is no single index used for ranking area diversity."

Take the case of the *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity of Socotra Archipelago* project in Yemen. Prior to its implementation, information on the area's biodiversity was largely anecdotal – historical accounts and photographs brought back by voyagers. Within two years of implementation, the project completed an inventory of 90% of the area. About 30 % of plants are endemic (out of 900 plant species, 300 are endemic) compared to 17% endemism throughout the Arabian region. Of these, 7 species are listed in the IUCN's Red Data Book, including globally unique species such as the Dragon Blood Tree (*Dracaena cinnabari*) and Cucumber tree (*Denfrosicyos socotrana*), which are two taxonomically isolated Paleo-African and Paleo-Indo-Malesian plant relics dating back to the Pleistocene era. The Cucumber tree is the only known living species in the cucumber family in a semi-arid environment. Another species, the *Punica protopunica*, is a wild relative of the commercial crop pomegranate and is believed to be significant progenitor species. Some 80% of corals have been inventoried, representing 30 genera representative of the Indian Ocean species, including massive foliose corals (e.g., *Porites spp*, *Montipora spp*, *Favites spp*, *Platygyra spp*, *Goniopora spp*, etc). Three of the 4 sea turtles have breeding grounds in the archipelago. Dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) and other cetaceans migrate and inhabit nearby waters, including the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*). Overall, the project has achieved 200% of its target inventory of previously known species, all of which are contained in over 400 written reports submitted by the project's various scientific teams.

Yet, in the end, the *Final Evaluation* of the project concluded that "the project was over-designed and had too many detailed activities." The evaluation continued: "provided that it (*Zoning Plan*) will be strictly implemented, the objective of the project will have been achieved fully and its impact will have been extremely positive. The chances that this will happen are considered substantial" (p. 5). This is based on actual outcomes: over 10,000 people, 29 schools, 171 teachers trained in conservation management; more than 31 national experts involved in scientific studies; tree plant nurseries established in 3 sites; and ecotourism strategy and *Zoning Plan* completed

Stakeholder Participation

118. The importance of involving stakeholders at all stages of the project cannot be overstated. Stakeholder involvement, especially the involvement of local communities where relevant, is a precondition for achieving many of the project objectives. In planning for and designing projects, stakeholder participation can help ensure that the sites selected are optimal both from the point of view of biodiversity and in terms of feasibility of management, conservation, and protection and help foster a sense of ownership towards the project. Indigenous and local knowledge can be incorporated in project design, making it richer and more appropriate. Furthermore, the GEF Operational Strategy states that ‘Participation of affected stakeholders, including indigenous peoples, is of central importance, especially in the case of communities that reside inside protected areas and their immediate surroundings’.

119. Of the 78 projects assessed, stakeholder participation was comprehensive in around 30% of the projects and partial in 20%. In about one fourth of the projects it had been planned but it was not confirmed whether it actually occurred. For about 20% of the projects it was assessed to be poor or missing and for the remaining five percent there was no information.

120. If one looks at only completed projects, over a third of the projects had comprehensive stakeholder participation and less than a third had partial. In addition, about ten percent had planned for participation but it was not known if it actually occurred, and the remaining twenty to twenty five percent had either poor or no participation.

121. Some of the issues that were assessed to require further attention included the involvement of the private sector, of repositories of traditional and indigenous knowledge, of social scientists and of universities and institutions in projects where these were appropriate. Another weakness that has been pointed out is that stakeholder involvement, except of the government, is relatively poor in the planning and design phase of the project.

122. Nevertheless, one must note that most of these projects are working with institutions without much previous experience in stakeholder participation. Whereas participatory models of planning and implementation are relatively more prevalent in various other sectors, like health, education and agriculture, in the area of biodiversity conservation they have been rare.

123. Also, many of the strategies that the GEF is increasingly adopting, especially those that link up conservation with development, fall between two traditional stools of perceptions. At one extreme is the so-called “pure conservationist” who believes that scarce conservation resources should be directed solely towards controlling those who have been ‘illegally’ using the forests and other wilderness areas and not diverted for supporting income generation activities or for the provision of alternatives for these people. At the other side are supporters of tribal and indigenous people and of rural agricultural and pastoral communities, who are against the exclusion of people from protected areas and view local users as the real ‘owners’ and ‘protectors’ of these areas and oppose any efforts to restrict their access

or find 'alternatives' for them. Projects get attacked from both the extremes while support for the middle path, which is perhaps the most rational, is still weak.

Special Studies

124. Two special studies were commissioned as part of the present study to look at stakeholder participation in more detail. The first looked at a subset of 30 projects from among those being assessed.³⁶ The observations are classified into four major findings relevant to project design and implementation: (a) importance of understanding the behavior of stakeholders in relation to the ecosystem; (b) recognition of the values of indigenous knowledge in designing project activities; (c) expansion of inputs from the science and technology communities, especially in-country resources; and (d) application of good practices in “learning through doing” approaches. The other study looked at 37 forest ecosystem projects from Cohort 2 in relationship to the issue of stakeholder participation.

125. In general, the 30 projects in Cohort 1 which had an in-depth review made use of one or more forms of information dissemination and stakeholder consultation, consistent with the GEF’s Public Involvement Policy. Multiple stakeholders are involved, although the participation of the private sector is very limited. Similarly, there is a need to expand inputs from academic and research institutions, especially on a more systematic basis.

126. Participation of civil society, especially at the local level, is described in some projects but there is no consistency regarding documentation. Although projects are relatively mature compared to the rest of the portfolio, the evidence is insufficient for an assessment of how, and to what extent, stakeholder participation has improved project effectiveness. However, there are numerous examples of good practice approaches emerging from lessons during the earlier phase as well as from other projects and programs.

127. Although the 30 projects were relatively mature compared to the rest of the portfolio, there was insufficient documentation to assess the effectiveness of stakeholder participation, in particular, with respect to achieving the project’s objectives. Further, the nature of stakeholder participation varied by project and by country, and even within a project, by site. The one global project and 3 regional projects, by their very nature, required less participation at the local level. All the projects engaged in information dissemination and consultations.

128. The impact of project interventions on stakeholder behavior varied by type of stakeholder and role in the project. For example, the NGO executing agencies in the Philippines Protected Areas and Argentina Patagonia projects encouraged more broad based participation of local groups compared to projects that were nationally executed by a government agency. However, there is little documentation to conclude that one execution modality was more effective in promoting stakeholder participation than another. In fact, it was not clear whether there was any advantage to strengthening participation if the project was managed by a professional international agency, such as the U.N. Office of Project Services (UNOPS), in the case of Yemen.

³⁶ Special Study on Participation and Social Issues (GEF Secretariat, Biodiversity Program Study, 2001)

Table 13. Factors Affecting Stakeholder behavior

Stakeholder Group	Role in Project	Factors Affecting Stakeholder Behavior	Examples
Donors	co-financing technical and advisory	level of funding; M&E requirements; type of agency (e.g., philanthropic foundations tend to require less M&E compared to bilaterals)	donors represented in project steering or advisory committees
Other UN and international agencies	execution or co-execution technical and advisory	type of agency (e.g., services such as UNOPS or research such as IPGRI); interest in projects (whether project integrated into agency main programs)	UNOPS execution in Yemen project; WCMC mandate to monitor biodiversity consistent with Global project
National Government	national coordination/GEF focal point execution or co-execution policy and decision making technical and advisory	political system, government set-up for coordination; degree of government commitment to project (whether project integrated into agency main programs); agency capacity: technical/staffing	Environment Protection Council in Yemen coordinates and endorses all GEF-funded projects; Philippines project as basis for protected areas legislation; institution building components (Sri Lanka, Mozambique, Nepal, Ghana)
Local Government	execution or co-execution outreach policy and decision making technical and advisory	degree of decentralization and devolution of authority; size/area/coverage; diversity of communities; capacity: technical/staffing	Inter-provincial coastal committees formed in Argentina Patagonia; PAMBs (Philippines); CFUGs and GUGs (Nepal); VSMCs (Ghana); JMCs (Mozambique) ³⁷
Science and Technology institutions and experts	technical and advisory	nature and degree of scientific requirements of project; availability of local experts; budget allocated to S&T; extent of difficulty of S&T issues/problems to be investigated	Global GBA required full-scale S&T inputs; Yemen started with almost zero S&T information; Central Africa information oriented S&T; Sri Lanka medicinal plants required S&T integrated with indigenous knowledge;
International NGOs	execution or co-execution technical and advisory	budget allocated for contracts; vested interests of NGOs; advocacy roles; extent of partnerships with local groups; NGO project experiences	CARE and other NGOs tend to focus on community social services; IUCN integrates policy reforms into activities (e.g., Panama); WWF special interest in trust funds (e.g., Bhutan)

³⁷ PAMBs = protected area management boards; CFUGs and GUGs = community forestry user groups; grazing user groups; VSMC = village site management committees; JMC = joint management committees

Stakeholder Group	Role in Project	Factors Affecting Stakeholder Behavior	Examples
National NGOs	execution or co-execution technical and advisory	budget allocated for contracts; vested interests of NGOs advocacy roles; size of NGO (membership); relation with government; community organizing experience; presence of partnerships with international groups	consortium of national NGOs executing Philippines project; advocacy for legislative reforms (Argentina, Philippines, Yemen); expertise in community organizing (Ghana, Sri Lanka); partnerships (Congo, Nepal, Mauritius)
Private Sector	co-financing technical and advisory	level of co-financing; vested interests; relation with government	Ghana and Egypt projects; private sector cooperation with government to reduce coastal pollution;
Local Groups	co-management outreach beneficiary	budget allocated for community based activities; population size and composition; nature of livelihood dependency on resource; extent of population diversity; presence of indigenous groups; tenurial arrangements	Local decision making mechanisms in Argentina, Colombia, Nepal, Sri Lanka; more complex arrangements in Ghana and Philippines due to larger and more diverse populations

129. The other study looked at 37 new forest-ecosystem projects from Cohort 2. Among these, the vast majority of projects included components addressing stakeholder participation. These usually include community workshops that predated final project design (in the PDF-B stage, for instance), a role for local stakeholders on management boards or oversight committees, and disbursement of project funds through on-the-ground NGOs or communities.

130. The term “stakeholder”, however, was used in these projects as a catchall phrase, and stakeholder participation in general was difficult to gauge, based on a review of project documents. In the Congo project, for example, there is mention of consultation with local stakeholders, but no clear sense of whether a significant number of the country’s 360 different ethnic groups have been engaged or empowered in the process, or even informed about its existence. Available documentation did not provide answers to questions like “Who was spoken to?” “What was their role?” Further, desk reviews are poor instruments for assessing the effectiveness of stakeholder participation in terms of their contribution to achieving the project’s objectives

Science and Technology

131. Of the projects reviewed, about 60% had substantially addressed S&T issues, about 15% had partially addressed them, another 15% had minimally done so and for the rest there was no information. For completed projects, nearly 80% had substantially addressed these issues while the remaining 20% had either partially or minimally addressed these issues. Some of the weaknesses that emerged from

project reviews included poor recognition of traditional knowledge and inadequate involvement of social scientists.

Special Study

132. A special study was undertaken to look at how projects effectively involved S&T institutions. The case studies of the Philippines³⁸ and Yemen specifically addressed this issue and concluded that while there are sufficient scientific inputs, especially from international scientists, expanding the number of local scientists remains one of the more challenging aspects of project execution. In both case study areas, there was evidence of successful north-south cooperation among scientific institutions.

133. The environmental education and awareness components of both projects are extensive (see box below for further descriptions regarding Yemen). The reviews describe involvement of scientific institutions. The nature of involvement varies by project. For example, some regional projects made use of international NGO contracts for scientific analysis (e.g., IUCN in the regional Africa REIMP project). The East Africa project contracted the Missouri Botanical Gardens, but also made sure that north-south cooperation was done with the University of Dar-es-Salaam and Makerere University.

134. The regional project in the Amazon had counterpart national universities to do the technical surveys and analyses. The Argentina Patagonia project contracted over 10 university institutions to do various technical studies and the Argentina Biodiversity project contracted another 8 universities. On the other hand, the projects in Congo (University of Kyoto), Nepal (Johns Hopkins University), Romania (Universities of Massachusetts and Georgia), and Yemen (Royal Botanical Gardens, Birdlife International, Seckenberg Research Institute) made use of international research institutions. The reviews were unable to compare the quality and effectiveness of local versus international science and technology inputs.

135. There are some examples of how traditional ecological knowledge has been integrated into the project's activities, but this is limited to consulting and documenting. There is little evidence of such knowledge being used in project execution or in *in-situ* conservation or sustainable use programs. The Global Biodiversity Assessment (GBA) project completed a separate volume on indigenous knowledge and ethics. This volume, *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, contained over 50 statements provided by indigenous community leaders and organizations. However, to date, there is scant evidence that such knowledge is being applied in projects.

136. Even in projects with indigenous populations, the reviews note the lack of documentation of traditional knowledge and practices. The exception is the Yemen project where the Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) was contracted to produce a report on the ethnobotany of globally significant species.

137. A description of indigenous practices is contained in the village development reports in the Ghana project, which were also based on the findings of the socio-economic surveys done by social scientists from the University of Ghana-Legon. The World Bank published a summary of the social

³⁸ STAP Selective Review of Philippines: "Conservation of Priority Protected Areas Project" (Maria Managhas, Porfirio Alino, Madhav Gadgil).

assessment results of the Ghana, India, and Ecuador projects.³⁹ The findings indicate the significance of indigenous management of biological resources and their high correlation with land tenure security. However, the social assessment fell short of documenting the ethnobotanical terms and indigenous resource management practices.

138. One way of making use of indigenous knowledge, although indirect, was through representation of indigenous groups in the project's management structures. For example, the Embera Wounaan, Agro Dariens, and Embera Indians are represented in the Panama project's Steering Committee and Technical Unit. In the Mozambique project, integration is achieved through the formulation of Community Action Plans, which includes community pilot activities. In the Philippines Conservation of Priority Protected Areas project, the indigenous groups are represented in the Protected Areas Management Boards. The use of the small sub-projects (grants) mechanisms, which are given to local groups in the Slovak project, led to development of indigenous cooperative arrangements (e.g., collectivization of sheep keeping to reduce grassland degradation).

Underlying, Proximate and Intermediate Causes of Biodiversity Loss

139. The GEF Operational Strategy⁴⁰ states that "Addressing all underlying causes of biodiversity loss is beyond the GEF's mandate and ability... Within the context of operational programs, GEF-financed activities will include:

- (a) Identification and analysis of major causes (proximate, intermediate and ultimate) of biodiversity loss, activities to build awareness of these causes, and assessment of feasible actions to address them.
- (b) Introduction of innovative measures including economic incentives, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity."

140. It goes on to say that "A diverse portfolio will finance programs and projects that address the underlying causes of global environmental deterioration, such as economic policy, legal and social issues, institutional weaknesses and information barriers."

141. It, therefore, seems important that projects appropriately identify and assess underlying causes and, as appropriate, address them. Also, in order to ensure that the cost of conservation is not disproportionately and unfairly imposed upon the weakest and poorest segments of the society (they are often also those most dependent for their survival on wilderness areas), it is important to develop a system by which substantial benefits of conservation can flow to them. These might be direct benefits in the form of increased tourist revenues, returns for valuable and sustainably harvested plants and animals,

³⁹ The India and Ecuador projects are not included in the sample of 30 projects in this Study.

⁴⁰ The Operational Strategy was published in 1996, after the pilot phase was over although most of Pilot Phase projects started implementation after that date.

or royalties for commercially useful indigenous knowledge. Indirectly, improved water regimes, higher productivity of fish and other essential natural resources or the general improvement on the environment can also benefit the local people.

142. Often it is also essential to ensure that the government and the commercial and industrial sectors also see some advantage in conservation. Apart from being a boost to social and economic well being at the local level, the option value of biodiversity and the economic benefits of conservation can also sometimes be factors that win over support for the project.

143. For the projects reviewed, information was gathered on whether benefit-sharing issues were addressed, on whether project ownership was established and on whether social and cultural issues were addressed. These could give some indication on how successfully the projects were attempting to tackle some of the more proximate underlying causes of biodiversity conservation. The other underlying causes that are not so proximate, like weak or inappropriate institutions, poor or ineffective policies and laws, poor investments, etc., were looked at as part of the institutional and systemic capacity building efforts.

144. A little less than 20% of the projects for which this issue was relevant and information available, had substantially addressed benefit-sharing issues. About 30% had partially addressed these issues. The remaining projects had either poorly addressed the issue (less than 10%), planned to address the issue but it could not be confirmed whether they had managed to do so (less than 10%) or had not addressed the issue at all (about 40%).The proportion was similar if one looked at only the completed projects.

145. Over 30% of projects reviewed (and having information) were assessed to have been substantially, and a little over 20% to have been partly, 'owned' by stakeholders. For the remaining, 25% were assessed to have had a poor ownership record and less than 20% to have had none. The performance of completed projects was marginally better.

146. A little under 30% of the projects having information were assessed to have substantially addressed social and cultural issues. Another nearly 25% had partially addressed it, another 25% had poorly addressed it and the remaining 20% had not addressed it at all. There were no significant differences between completed and ongoing projects, except that all the projects assessed to have poorly addressed the issue were completed projects..

Sustainability

147. The GEF Operational Strategy states that “ The focus of GEF activities will concern long- term measures. Such measures, if they are to be part of a long term solution, will have to be environmentally and socially sustainable and not merely benign forms of current, but unsustainable, activities. Furthermore, the measures will need to be financially sustainable. Individual projects are financially sustainable if their design includes a means of ensuring a stable long-term source of funding for recurrent costs. Programs are financially sustainable if the initial GEF support reduces financial risk, overcomes

transaction barriers, or builds markets to an extent that lowers future costs for measures of the same type.”

148. Of the projects reviewed, a little over ten percent of the projects seemed to have taken steps to assure sustainability in a substantial manner, another 24% had partially provided for it, and about 15 to 20% had planned to provide for it but it was not clear if they had actually done so. Nearly 30% seemed to have not addressed sustainability issues and for about ten percent there was no information.

149. For completed projects, about 15% had taken steps in a substantial manner, about 30% had partially provided for it and about 50% had not addressed this issue at all. However, as there are no assessments available post facto, perhaps two or three years after project completion, no assessment can be made on whether the 45% of the completed projects that had taken substantial or partial steps had actually succeeded.

Special Study

150. It must be noted that a special study done to look at the more recently initiated Cohort 2 forestry projects reports that the vast majority of projects reviewed incorporated measures to promote sustainability in the project once GEF support ends. Projects that incorporated issues of sustainability well often utilized conservation trust funds or other similar vehicles. In other cases, partner organizations – usually NGOs – had a longer-term commitment to the project and/or the region, helping ensure stability and sustainability. Again, the assessment of Cohort 2 projects was based on project proposals and not on actual project implementation.

Land Degradation

151. The GEF has also been focusing on issues related to land degradation⁴¹. The GEF Operational Strategy says that “The GEF will fund activities addressing land degradation issues as they relate to biodiversity issues that

- (a) Protect biodiversity and promote sustainable use in arid, semi-arid and Mediterranean type ecosystems.
- (b) Prevent deforestation and promote sustainable use and sustainable management of forest areas in order to conserve their biodiversity.”

⁴¹ Land degradation is defined by the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) as “reduction or loss, in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, of biological or economic productivity and complexity of rainfed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest, and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns such as: soil erosion caused by wind and/or water; deterioration of physical, chemical and biological or economic properties of soil; and long-term loss of natural vegetation.” Given this definition, it is unlikely that there would be many biodiversity projects that do not directly or indirectly contribute to the combating of land degradation.

152. Consequently, an effort was made to see how many of the projects under review addressed land degradation issues.

153. Of the projects reviewed, nearly half had substantially addressed land degradation issues and another nearly 20% had partially or minimally addressed them. 10% had not addressed the issue and for the remaining the issue was either not relevant or no information was available. Among completed projects, the proportions were similar.

154. A recent Land Degradation Linkage Study⁴² basically agrees with these findings. It reports that 56% of the biodiversity projects reviewed had “strong” land degradation components (p 8). However, it also makes the point that as most of the biodiversity projects in the land degradation portfolio are located in and around protected areas they are, therefore, by design, not located in areas with severe land degradation. It also concludes that almost all biodiversity projects have some indirect link with land degradation issues.

VI MECHANISMS FOR LEARNING FROM LESSONS

Introduction

155. The BDP Study assessed the mechanisms for incorporating lessons learnt into more recently approved projects. In order to do this, the study:

- (a) Requested the three IAs to describe the formal and informal mechanisms that exist in the IA for ensuring that lessons learnt from past projects are incorporated into the design and implementation of new/other projects.
- (b) Requested the three IAs to assess some of the new projects that they think are ‘best practice’ in terms of incorporating lessons learnt.
- (c) Highlighted lessons learnt from projects under review.
- (d) Assessed how far lessons from other projects were incorporated in the design and implementation of the projects under review.
- (e) Assessed how far lessons from other projects were incorporated in the design and implementation of a selected group of projects from Cohort 2.

⁴² Leonard Berry and Jennifer Olson, *GEF Land Degradation Linkage Study*, 2000, Mimeo

Findings

Mechanisms existing in IAs

156. The three IAs were asked to provide information on the formal and informal processes that exist in the IA for ensuring that lessons learnt from past or ongoing projects are incorporated into the design and implementation of new/other projects? Their responses are given below. The responses are not only applicable to the biodiversity focal area but to all GEF projects.

UNDP

157. GEF projects incorporate lessons learned at two stages: during project preparation and during project implementation. During project preparation, the project design team incorporates lessons distilled from GEF projects from independent mid-term and terminal evaluations; corporate M&E studies and “Lessons Notes”; PIR ; Task Force Meetings; electronic and personal networks⁴³ and from non-GEF projects from meetings with stakeholders; Logical Framework Approach workshops; and literature review. The mechanisms for incorporating lessons include: Project Review Criteria used by GEFSEC to approve or not project proposals which requires to describe how projects design has incorporated lessons; presentations made by project managers to project developers and regional managers; and Task Force meetings. A considerable amount of information is generated from different sources on lessons learned. However, the challenge is to make it available to final users when they need it. UNDP has already developed a “reference unit” where information on lessons and best practices is stored, updated regularly, and made available on the UNDP-GEF website. UNDP is at the moment working to make all the information easily available to users.

158. During project implementation, the sources of lessons are basically the same as during project preparation. As far as mechanisms for incorporation of lessons, the most important are: Tripartite Review Meetings (annual meetings at the highest policy level (Government, UNDP, Project Management) to review implementation, discuss progress and make strategic recommendations for improvement); mid-term independent evaluations; and Project Steering Committees.

UNEP

159. From a corporate standpoint, the annual PIR provides the framework for the mechanism to incorporate lessons learnt into the on-going or new projects. The independent mid-term (where planned) and terminal evaluation (compulsory for all UNEP projects) of each GEF project is followed by an agreed management plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation including those, if any, related to future project design.

⁴³ UNDP has set up electronic discussion networks where participants can ask questions and exchange experiences, lessons and best practices

160. Before projects are submitted to the GEF for review, an internal UNEP review is carried out to incorporate institution-wide experience in project design and implementation. To cite one possible example, the Communications and Public Information office might suggest changes in an information dissemination strategy within a GEF project. This incorporation of experiences occurs with UNEP's Divisions and its Regional Offices as well. All UNEP GEF Projects are sent for internal review to all UNEP Divisional Heads to ensure synergy and complementarity with the work of the various Divisions within UNEP.⁴⁴ Such reviews draw on experiences of each Division in implementing projects in particular countries and/or regions and in particular fields of technical assistance. Since many UNEP projects are multi-country projects the experiences of programs such as the Regional Seas Program and networking such as INFOTERRA, are drawn on extensively in design of institutional and administrative arrangements for project execution at the national and regional level.

161. UNEP task managers are assigned supervision responsibilities for projects of a similar nature, which allows task managers to develop an individual body of expertise in certain types of project design and implementation. They then are able to ensure that projects are designed and implemented that take into account experiences from similar past and on-going activities. In the case of larger projects or whole portfolio areas (such as Land degradation for example), a technical team composed of expertise spread throughout UNEP is mobilized by the Co-ordination Office to support the design and implementation of a project as occurred in the case of the UNEP/GEF biosafety project, the PLEC and Mauritania and Senegal Land Degradation projects.

World Bank

162. The World Bank has a formal review process which includes several steps for quality control, including peer review. Through this process, each project requires the formal review by 2 or more specialists (from within or outside the institution). In addition, there are regional quality assurance groups that provide clearance to projects before they can be entered into the pipeline ("PCD" stage) or cleared for appraisal ("PAD" stage). Every project document is also required to include a section on lessons learned and staff tap into a World Bank database of Implementation Completion Reports (ICRs) to access this information. Sector Managers, GEF Coordinators, and GEF Thematic Specialists review and comment on all documents to add knowledge - particularly the more current lessons learned. Bank managers provide formal clearance to project preparation only after all reviewers are satisfied that lessons learned have been properly taken into account in the design of new operations.

⁴⁴ These are the Divisions of Early Warning and Assessment, Environmental Conventions; Policy Development and Law; Regional Co-operation; Industry and Environment.

Best Practices of lessons learned into project design

UNDP

163. UNDP provided an assessment of seven projects that they considered among the best examples of recent projects that had integrated lessons learnt. Some of the elements that were included in the design of these new projects reportedly as a result of lessons learnt feedback from past projects included:

- (a) Conduct of a household survey to identify and document traditional knowledge relevant to project design (Egypt).
- (b) Discussion of proposed project design with communities/ other stakeholders before finalizing it (Egypt, Vietnam, Belize).
- (c) Incorporation of activities empowerment/advocacy activities for local communities as a part of the project (Philippines).
- (d) Addressing issues relating to security of tenure for populations living in and around PAs (Philippines).
- (e) Extension of project period in order to accommodate community based conservation activities/ capacity development activities (Philippines, Pakistan, Venezuela).
- (f) Clarifying project objectives and strategies to implementing agencies/ other stakeholders (Philippines, Vietnam, Venezuela).
- (g) Making the passing of a critical bill by the government a pre-requisite to phase 2 (Philippines).
- (h) Focus on root causes and benefit sharing/ provision of alternate livelihoods (Vietnam).
- (i) Investigation of long term funding options (Vietnam, Belize)).
- (j) Taking into consideration existing social, economic and ecological conditions while designing project activities (Pakistan).
- (k) Involving communities in monitoring and evaluation activities (Pakistan, Belize, Venezuela).

UNEP

164. UNEP provided three examples of projects in which designs benefited from lessons learned in the past. A rich portfolio of Medium-Sized Projects dealing with best practices for biodiversity conservation⁴⁵ has assisted UNEP to better design a new MSP: Promoting Best Practices for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Arid and Semi-Arid Zones. The lesson here is that strengthening regional and national organizations known as centers of excellence in the thematic focus of the project both builds capacity of the centers and catalyzes dissemination and application of the best practices. During the process of preparing the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment project, UNEP drew on past project design experiences of similar initiatives (GEF-supported: Global Biodiversity Assessment, Global International Waters Assessment and non-GEF-supported: IPCC process). The formula for success in the design of the MA project revolved around three key themes: leadership (i.e., chief executives of UNDP, UNEP, World Bank and World Resources Institute); participation, and demonstration (steering committee with broad representation, convention secretariats, regional consultations, reaching decisions by consensus). Finally, based on past experiences with the design of Targeted Research Projects, the following issues received special attention during the project design phase of the Indicator Model for Dryland Ecosystems project: site selection (agreement was reached during PDF A on project sites); and the application, outreach and dissemination of results (national decision makers will be involved at all stages of the project).

World Bank

165. The World Bank provided information on a few cases where the GEF funded project generated lessons for other projects in the same or other countries. For example, the new World Bank China Natural Forest Protection project benefited from the lessons and best practices (restructuring of forest industries) of the GEF China Nature Reserves. The experience of the Lake Victoria project on eradication of water hyacinth (invasive alien species) through biocontrol was applicable to the World Bank irrigation and HEP projects in Africa, currently worth \$6.1 billion. The lessons learned from the IDA-funded project, India Joint Forest Management, were incorporated into the India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP).

Compilation of Lessons Learnt From Projects Under Review

Project Design Lessons

166. The most commonly cited lesson, emerging from reviews of Cohort 1 and 2 projects, was that objectives and budgets should be realistic. Another common lesson was that project duration was usually too short to effectively involve stakeholders, properly develop capacity and generally achieve

⁴⁵ Development of Best Practices and Dissemination of Lessons Learned for dealing with the Global Problem of Alien Species that Threaten Biological Diversity; Review of Experiences in Ecotourism and Development of Guidelines and Best Practices through analysis of lessons learned, among others.

many of the important project objectives. Many projects seem to have suffered because project activities were not properly sequenced, strategies and action plans were unclear or inadequate and projects were too rigid in their design, without adequate flexibility to respond to field realities. Lack of clarity about long term (post project) objectives, an unwillingness to learn from past lessons, and uncertainty about continued funding, after project termination, were other constraints that were cited.

Institutional coordination

167. An important lesson was that if the project office and staff is not integrated physically and administratively with the national implementing agency, then there can be serious coordination and ownership problems. Some very sane advice that came out of one of the project reviews was: ‘Never design a project that removes accountability and responsibility of ownership from the institutions that need to carry on the project activities/ initiatives on their own after external financial support is over.’

168. In some cases the administrative processes of the donors, the implementing agency or the national counterpart were seen as inappropriate for project implementation. It was thought that these processes should be understood and analyzed during the planning phase so that they can be taken into consideration while designing the project and its time frame.

Stakeholder Participation

169. Many projects cited the effective involvement of stakeholders as a positive feature of projects. There are some lessons from projects, including the need for adequate involvement of key stakeholders at the planning and monitoring levels, which have been cited as one of the major weaknesses in project design and implementation. Additionally, there was a perception that we need to recognize that communities and societies are heterogeneous and use this heterogeneity to strengthen project design and implementation. Another lesson is to improve integration of local and indigenous knowledge. Third, projects need to involve the private sector in project implementation beyond current levels.

170. Lessons on sustaining stakeholders’ interest in the project include translating and presenting project benefits in a manner that is understood and appreciated by local communities, thereby motivating them to support the project. This can be done by raising awareness of the benefits of biodiversity conservation, improving the sharing and dissemination of information, ensuring that local people’s needs were addressed, especially in relation to land tenure. Some projects highlighted the importance of addressing gender issues. In this regard, local participation could be encouraged more realistically in small (mini) projects rather than in large-size ones.

Technical Issues

171. The ability to design and implement effective sustainable use practices in fragile habitats was thrown up as a challenge for all field projects, especially production landscape projects. A lesson learnt was that it was often critical to develop income generation and livelihood activities that were not land or

natural resource based. There was an added warning from a project, that unrealistic sustainability strategies can actually compromise sustainability!

172. An interesting lesson that emanated from at least three projects was the value and cost effectiveness of allowing and enabling ecosystems to regenerate on their own by protecting them, rather than try and restore them. An amusing back of the envelope calculation based on one of these projects suggests that GEF has spent between \$35,000 (6 ha) and \$350,000 (0.6 ha) per hectare on conservation efforts focusing on restoration, compared to between \$5-15/hectare for most protected area projects of non-degraded habitats. Documented figures on restoration costs would provide useful input into the debate on costs and benefits of a) alien species control and b) protection of intact habitats.

173. Another lesson learnt was that there needs to be strong linkages with national scientific and technical institutions. Research should be issued base and its findings should be capable of being translated into action quickly. Also, there was a mention of the dangers in not balancing social and natural science inputs. It was especially pointed out that there must be a monitoring of selected socio-economic parameters relevant to the project, and not just of the biological parameters.

174. A fundamental lesson from Pilot Phase and Cohort 1 projects was that project implementation and ownership was seriously compromised where the stakeholders did not properly understand what biodiversity conservation meant and implied, especially in relation to production and commercial forestry. There was also the sound advice that high technology solutions are not always the most effective or appropriate.

Regional Projects

175. For projects that attempted to address ecosystems that spread across the boundaries of two or more nations, experience showed that it was better to have integrated management cutting across political boundaries. It was also thought that the success of such projects required that responsibility was equitably shared between participating countries. However, each country should be allowed to progress at its own pace.

Emergency response projects

176. Findings from the single emergency response project reviewed in Cohort 1 (Indonesia Emergency Forest Fires) suggest that the process of approving and monitoring emergency response projects is not appropriate. Before such a project is approved, it must be determined whether it would be in time to respond to the emergency. Also, as such projects are usually approved at very short notice with little or no scrutiny of the project document, a special monitoring and evaluation system is required to make 'mid stream' corrections and, once the emergency is over, to review the future status of the project. There is also the question whether GEF as an institution is best suited to respond to environmental emergencies.

Incorporation of Lessons in Projects Under Review

177. The 78 projects reviewed as a part of this study were also assessed from the point of view of lessons incorporated. In assessing these projects, an effort was made to determine whether the project document implied or explicitly stated that a specific element of the project design was an outcome of a specific lesson learnt. An effort was also made to determine whether the project document stated that a specific element of the project design was an effort to replicate successes achieved, or overcome problems seen, in other projects. Lessons learnt were understood to include examples of failed strategies that were avoided in subsequent project design and implementation, or were used but with critical changes that promised success. They could also include the replication of successful strategies and elements. The summary of our findings are given in Annex 7. Of the projects assessed, less than 30% indicated that they had fully and a similar number that they had partially incorporated earlier lessons. Over 40% had not incorporated them at all. The performance of completed projects was relatively poorer.

Incorporation of Lessons in Cohort 2 Projects

178. Project documents were looked at for 37 Cohort 2 projects, all of which were forest ecosystem (OP3) projects. For the most part, project documents do refer to “lessons learned”, either from previous GEF, Implementing Agency, or partner efforts in the country or elsewhere. Positive cross-institutional learning appears to be taking place in this respect. In both Peru and Guatemala, for instance, biodiversity projects are taking place based on Conservation International’s previous experiences in the region, not on any specific GEF project. Many of these projects, furthermore, specifically mention what lessons were learned, such as the need for multi-stakeholder management boards overseeing protected areas (*Paraguay*), or the best means of developing participatory processes with indigenous communities (*Peru*). In some projects, the list of projects referenced as a source of lessons learned is quite extensive.

179. In addition to specific project lessons, a number of project documents refer to reports or reviews published by the GEF, World Bank, or others as evidence of lessons learned. The GEF *Review of Conservation Trust Funds* is one common example.

180. Despite this finding, however, in a number of cases the “lessons learned” section is vague; in a few, it is missing completely. Some documents (*Cote d’Ivoire National Protected Areas Management* and *Philippines Sustainable Management of Mt. Isarog Territories*) state that the project is based on previous GEF efforts, but list few if any details on which aspects or lessons are incorporated. In other cases, the specific examples listed are generally too vague to be of relevance. In the *Georgia: Conservation of Forest Ecosystems* project, for example, the documents state that “projects should be initiated by a preparatory phase that focuses on certain capacity building activities” but fail to give more detail. In the *Panama Atlantic Biological Corridor* project, the documents say that projects should “involve local populations in design,” among other general statements.

181. It should be noted, however, that in a few projects, lessons learned may not be relevant. There are probably few precedents for re-starting projects in the Congo, for example, following a lull in hostilities. Or in re-entering Belarus following the collapse of communism and Soviet rule.

182. As a large number of projects highlight, coordination with similar, on-going efforts may provide as much value as lessons learned from previous efforts. There is no reason, for example, why the implementers of the *Uganda Kibale Wild Coffee* project did not mention the experience of similar efforts currently taking place in Central America.

VII CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

183. The GEF has provided and leveraged a substantial amount of funding for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use around the world (\$1.18 billion of direct financing and about \$2 billion in leveraged co-financing). Supporting protected areas, either new or existing, has been a major focus of the GEF biodiversity portfolio. It is also clear that the GEF has also covered, through its projects, some of the globally important and defined sites and species such as those focused on by the World Heritage Program, CITES, Ramsar and the IUCN list of threatened and endangered species.

184. . Nearly 30% of the projects reviewed were assessed to have had comprehensive stakeholders participation. More than 20% were assessed to have had partial participation. Another nearly twenty five percent had planned for it but it could not be confirmed whether they had managed to do so because of lack of information. The findings for the completed projects were similar.

185. Overall, the projects were able to develop individual capacities. Institutional and systemic capacities proved harder to develop. The various training programs were appropriate to the socio-economic, political and cultural reality of the country. There was no evidence that institutional capacities would sustain, partly because it was too early to assess this.

186. Nearly two thirds of the projects reviewed were assessed to have substantially integrated science and technology concerns into project design and implementation. The proportion of completed projects that were assessed to have substantially integrated science and technology concerns were even higher (15 out of 19). However, there were weak social science inputs and inputs of traditional and indigenous knowledge.

187. Nearly half of the projects substantially addressed land degradation issues and another ten percent partially addressed this issue.

188. Almost half the projects reviewed mostly achieved their objectives (including eight percent that fully achieved them). However, nearly 50% achieved their objectives only partly or minimally.⁴⁶ There was not much difference between completed and ongoing projects (completed projects: 17 out of 32 mostly or fully; 15 out of 32 partly or minimally). Some of the factors inhibiting project achievements included the lack of implementation capacity, unrealistic and over ambitious objectives, and shortage of time and funds.⁴⁷

189. Most of the projects could not be assessed for their impacts on biodiversity because they were not monitoring their impacts on biodiversity and were, consequently, not collecting impact data. Less than 20% of the projects seemed to be collecting baseline data. Another 20% had planned to collect them, but it could not be confirmed whether they actually managed to do so. In the absence of baseline data it was only partly possible to assess the impacts that projects were having on biodiversity. Consequently, for only seventeen of the projects being assessed was information available on the impacts they were having on biodiversity. Of these, three (two completed) reported substantial impact while the remaining fourteen (eight completed) reported some or little impact.

190. However, the newer forestry projects in Cohort 2, that were looked at as a part of a special study, are almost universally proposing to undertake baseline studies.

191. Only about ten percent of the projects reviewed had substantially addressed the issue of sustainability. Another 20% had partly addressed this issue. In nearly 30% of the projects this issue was either not addressed or very poorly addressed. However, there is no system of doing a post completion assessment to see whether the project activities, institutions and gains have survived the project. Consequently, it was not possible to determine how many of the completed projects that were assessed to have addressed this issue, had done so effectively. A review of the forestry projects in Cohort 2 shows that most of the projects are now addressing the issues of sustainability in their design. However, only time will tell how successfully through post completion assessments.

192. About half the projects assessed reported incorporating some lessons from past projects into their design. A third had not. However, given the findings that there was hardly any difference between the achievements and impacts of completed (older) projects and the ongoing (newer) projects, there appears to be little impact of lessons learnt. The mechanisms for ensuring that lessons learnt are incorporated in new and ongoing projects need attention and change. However, the newer projects among those assessed and new forestry projects in Cohort 2 seem to be performing better in this regard.

⁴⁶ These findings should be understood in the larger context, described in detail in Section IV, regarding the difficulties in implementing biodiversity projects and the inability to compare GEF project performance against the performance of other agencies.

⁴⁷ It should be noted here that ongoing projects were assessed on the basis of their achievements in relation to the stage of implementation they were in. However, whereas for completed projects there was no scope for improving

Analysis and Recommendations⁴⁸

193. Analysis and recommendations primarily relate to the four issues that the report has highlighted as needing attention. These are: achievement of objectives, project impacts on biodiversity, sustainability of project activities and gains, and learning from past lessons. Specific recommendations are given as bullet points.

Achievement of Objectives

194. Limited implementation capacities have been cited as a major cause for inadequate project achievements. Though some skills, admittedly, are best learnt by ‘doing’, it must be ensured that there are enough skills to get to the point where individuals and institutions can actually start doing and therefore learning from this. This is not a new recommendation and has been made before in various reports related to GEF.

Each project should conduct a capacity assessment exercise prior to project initiation. The development of the requisite individual, institutional and systemic capacities must be given a central priority during GEF project implementation. Capacity benchmarks should be established, respecting the peculiarities of each situation, and achievement of these benchmarks during project implementation at agreed times should be seen as a precondition for the subsequent phase of project activities.

195. Part of the problem with project achievements might be due to the somewhat less attention being paid in project design and implementation to livelihood and tenure issues, and to underlying causes. It is important for projects to give adequate stress to these, especially by ensuring that projects have the capacity to both conserve and ensure the availability of basic resources to local communities. The GEF Operational Strategy says that ‘Activities will seek to incorporate protected areas into larger landscapes and seascapes’.

All PA projects should include related production landscapes. Basic requirements of local communities, for income and natural resources, if they are to be disallowed or restricted from protected areas, should be provided for by investing in and developing production landscapes linked to PAs. Issues relating to tenure, property rights and access must also be addressed as a part of each initiative

their performance, for ongoing projects there is always the possibility that they will achieve their objectives before completion.

⁴⁸ Our analysis and recommendations do not highlight or isolate the role of any particular agency, the GEF Secretariat or national governments. They should be understood to refer to all of these, as appropriate.

196. Though the involvement of stakeholders has been reported from many GEF projects in this review, the involvement of all the various stakeholders, especially women and indigenous communities, where appropriate, in all aspects of project design is desirable.

Project preparation should, where appropriate, include a project design workshop, involving critical stakeholders, in the country or region to get initial ideas about designing the project⁴⁹. Once the project has been designed with the association of local experts and in collaboration with other stakeholders, another consultation with a wide and diverse group of stakeholders and experts needs to be organized. In this consultation, participants should be requested to focus on circumstances under which, or on reasons why, the proposed project and its objectives are difficult to achieve. Such a ‘devils advocate’ feedback would contribute to a realistic assessment of project feasibility and optimality.

197. Stakeholder participation can be made even stronger by:

- (a) Ensuring that social and cultural factors are studied and concerns reflected in project design.
- (b) Creating the sorts of institutional structures that facilitate, promote and document stakeholder participation in project implementation
- (c) Focusing on science and technology inputs, especially indigenous knowledge and social sciences
- (d) Formulating clear and effective indicators for assessing nature, level and effectiveness of stakeholder participation.

Impacts on Biodiversity

198. Though the lack of time has been cited, and with justification, as a major constraint to achieving discernible impacts on the ground, the problem is not only the amount of time available but the stress on meeting quantitative, temporal, targets rather than qualitative standards. Project design flexibility is essential if projects have to achieve their objectives in complex and ever changing conditions. This might seem, on the face of it, impractical, but realistic models of project planning and monitoring can be developed that use only impact indicators⁵⁰. A project (perhaps renamed an initiative) would not be described as being half done because three of six years have elapsed, but because half the qualitative

⁴⁹ The Cohort 2 study referred to earlier suggests that this is increasingly happening in the newer projects.

⁵⁰ A good beginning to designing impact indicators for biodiversity has been made by the WCMC in the draft final report (nd) titled ‘Biodiversity Indicators for Monitoring GEF Programme Implementation and Impacts’. A similar exercise needs to be done for socio-economic and capacity indicators.

objectives have been achieved (or have been half achieved). This inherent flexibility is essential if the GEF has to have a significant impact on biodiversity⁵¹. The GEF Operations Strategy says “The GEF will maintain sufficient flexibility to respond to changing circumstances...” For the GEF to do this, its projects must also have such flexibility. Fortunately, tried and tested models of designing and managing initiatives with flexible strategies, timelines and budgets are available.

If project implementation has to be improved, projects should break away from a time bound schedule and evolve a new way of functioning where a phase or a project is completed when the objective is properly achieved. Whereas the ultimate goals must be clearly defined and must not ordinarily be changed, the strategies, stresses and tasks must evolve dynamically. Initial budgets must certainly be flexible and indicative.

In order to determine project impacts on biodiversity, and other related impacts, there has to be a far more effective and ongoing monitoring system, invariably based on a pre-initiation baseline study. This baseline study should record the status, trends and rates of change of the existing biodiversity resources, available individual, institutional and systemic capacities and of the relevant socioeconomic and political parameters. Impact indicators and standards must be formulated prior to, and used for, the baseline study. Priorities for action, project focus and strategies must be determined on the basis of the results of this baseline study.

Where the available data are not adequate for this to happen, the building up of a requisite data-base (on the various aspects mentioned above) should be among the first project activities so that monitoring of impacts can be established. Where required, control samples must also be identified to separate the impacts of the project from other impacts.

Sustainability

199. The study has indicated a need to focus more on securing the sustainability of project gains and activities. Of course, if there is a shift from time bound projects to more flexible initiatives, then the ability of the conservation initiative to sustain itself and move forward would become a necessary condition for the withdrawal of external support. Where it was considered unlikely that an initiative would ever reach this stage, either continued external support would have to be arranged, perhaps through trust funds (if what was at stake justified this), or the initiative would have to be abandoned. But even with time bound projects, much more can and needs to be done to secure greater sustainability.

⁵¹ A similar but somewhat limited recommendation is made in the GEF Project Performance Report 1999 (p vii).

200. In many of the projects reviewed, sustainability was said to have been achieved if a second phase of the project had been approved or if some post project funding had been secured from some other donor. However, this is only postponing the question till the additional support runs out. In some other cases it was thought that sustainability was the responsibility of national governments and GEF should not be saddled with it. This is like agreeing to push some ones stalled car for a specified distance and then walking away, even if it does not start.. Of course, one can justify it by saying that finally it is the driver's responsibility but, at the end of the day, we have not helped the driver to get moving and wasted our own effort. It makes much more sense to push the car till it finally starts (is internally propelled!), or till it is clear to all concerned that it is not going to start and, therefore, one should either abandon it or call a tow truck (depending on the value of the car).

Financial Sustainability

201. While projects are operational, the amount of funds that flow in are so great that the ability to achieve objectives frugally is either lost or never developed. Once project funding is over, the levels of funding realistically possible through internal sources seem inadequate. It is preferable to establish a frugal financial culture, even if it means that everything that should be done cannot be done, then to set up a system that can only work if vast amounts of money are available, otherwise not work at all.

Funding patterns during the project must be compatible with the economic realities of the host country. The GEF operational strategy stresses the need to 'finance actions that are cost effective'. It must therefore be a project objective, perhaps even a project obligation, to demonstrate and operationalize ways to meet conservation objectives within the levels of financial resources likely to be available on a sustained basis.

There must be a continued movement away from big budget, time bound projects to long term activities involving the same or lesser amounts of money, distributed over a longer time period and in accordance with agreed qualitative benchmarks .

Political Sustainability

202. Continued support of the 'system', especially the government and local communities, can be ensured only if project objectives and strategies have been internalized and 'owned'. This is a common recommendation in many assessments and reports. Various factors have been identified as being essential for achieving this sense of ownership. These include: political will, awareness and understanding, individual and institutional capacity, adequate policy and legal framework, patterns of resource use, adequacy and diversity of financial resources, the international context and the availability of sound science and reliable information.⁵²

203. These are all important. However, perhaps for most governments to have the 'political will' to conserve biodiversity, its conservation must be seen to contribute to their major preoccupation which is usually economic growth and security. At the very least, it must not seem to detract from it. Unfortunately, most often the community of conservationists is not able to meet with this critical requirement. The immediate or even medium term economic benefits of biodiversity conservation are not well established and the opportunity cost of its conservation usually high. The GEF Operational Strategy specifies that 'A diverse portfolio will finance programs and projects that address the underlying causes of global deterioration, such as economic policy, legal and social issues, institutional

⁵² GEF Project Performance Report 1999 (p 30-31); Smith, Scott & Alejandra Martin, 'Achieving sustainability of Biodiversity Conservation: Report of a GEF Thematic Review ', GEF, 2000 (p 5-11)

weaknesses and information barriers.’ It goes on to say that ‘Few useful quantifiable norms of cost effectiveness exist for biodiversity activities; in their absence, information will be provided to assess the nature and significance of the costs involved in relation to the expected biodiversity benefits’.

The effort to review existing work and, where necessary, to develop, apply and disseminate additional methods by which biodiversity can be economically valued must, therefore, be a priority for ‘targeted research.’

204. Even if governments can be shown the value of conserving biodiversity, the next set of critical questions they need answers to are: how much biodiversity needs to be conserved, how much and what type of human use is compatible with biodiversity conservation and how much area needs to be reserved for biodiversity conservation.

To find and disseminate (existing or new) credible answers to questions regarding the extent of biodiversity that needs to be conserved and the extent of human use that is compatible with biodiversity conservation must also be priorities for ‘targeted research.’

Root Causes

205. Sustainability without the support of stakeholders, especially the local communities, is impossible. For local communities, the issues that are usually important are those of survival, of livelihoods and of meeting their social and economic aspirations. To address these, biodiversity conservation initiatives, especially PA and PL focused ones, have to address benefit sharing and livelihood security issues. The GEF Operational Strategy also lays down that activities will include ‘developing demonstration projects linked to alternative livelihoods for local and indigenous communities’

206. In fact, the larger issues relating to proximate and immediate root causes must also be considered appropriately by projects and initiatives. A very small percentage of the projects reviewed had actually attempted to address root causes. There appeared to be a perception that this was not part of the GEF mandate. However, the GEF Operational Strategy says that “A diverse portfolio will..... finance programs and projects that address the underlying causes of global environmental deterioration...”. There appears little point in investing time, effort and money on regenerating biodiversity resources if the factors that led to their degradation in the first place are all in position waiting to strike at the first opportunity

207. But how far must projects seek root causes? If the ultimate root cause for biodiversity degradation is the poverty of the nation, the unchecked growth of human population, rampant corruption or anarchy and war, can the GEF solve these problems? Obviously not. However, where it is evident that biodiversity cannot be conserved unless these fundamental national issues are first addressed, is it wise to persist with a GEF project?

208. Sometimes, the root cause is local dependence on the natural resources. An effective benefit sharing system, along with the development of livelihood alternatives, can go a long way in solving the problem. In other cases the problem is related to issues of ownership, control and access. These can also very often be tackled locally. As an acknowledgement of this fact, the integrated conservation and development (ICD) or ecodevelopment approach was adopted some years back by various NGOs and donors in order to promote conservation of protected areas and other wilderness sites. The GEF Operational Strategy, in more than one place, focuses attention on ICDPs. There are, of course, linkages with the larger world, but these linkages are often weak at least in a short to medium time frame and much can be achieved even through a time bound project to turn things around.

The issues of root causes must be addressed, as required by the GEF Operational Strategy. The first step in any project planning or design process must be the identification of causes that have led to the degradation or decline of biodiversity in the first place and have prevented remedial or preventive measures from being applied or being successful. Barring exceptional cases, only those projects should be taken up where there is a realistic chance of tackling at least the immediate and proximate underlying causes, either through the project or, concurrent to the project, through national government initiatives or through additional initiatives of implementing agencies or other external agencies.

Involvement of the Private Sector

209. Involvement of the private sector can have many advantages. Especially in terms of financial and political sustainability. The GEF Operational Strategy states that ‘The GEF will leverage additional financing through collaboration with the private sector’. Conservation initiatives can be linked to commercial interests, often by demonstrating the commercial potential in conservation, either through direct benefits or as a result of expressed market preference by the public for ‘green’ products and companies⁵³. Once commercial interests recognize this, they can become effective and powerful political allies to the conservation movement.

Projects should appropriately involve the private sector in project activities and support, when appropriate.

Mainstreaming Biodiversity Concerns

210. The impacts on biodiversity come from various sources. Apart from protecting areas from destruction or degradation, by working within these areas and with departments of the government responsible for biodiversity conservation, concurrently there is a need to reach out to other sectors of

⁵³ For a listing of Innovative Financial Instruments and Approaches, see Smith and Martin, op cit, (p 16)

the government. Most often, pressures on biodiversity are a result of activities (or inactivity) of one or more of the departments of energy, agriculture, water resources and irrigation, rural development, animal husbandry, fisheries, planning and finance. They are also usually the ones least aware of biodiversity issues. Much greater systemic value could be achieved by 'greening' these departments then by focusing totally on the forest, wildlife and environment departments.

To enhance the sustainability of conservation activities and to increase the impacts of projects, the GEF should strengthen its involvement with departments other than the forest and environment department. Similarly, GEF IAs should also consider further mainstreaming biodiversity issues within their own organizations.

Post-completion Assessments

211. The findings of the study indicate that though some projects planned to be sustainable, no information is available about whether they actually were. This is because there is no system of collecting post-project completion data.

GEF and its partner institutions should have a system of independent post-completion assessments, where completed projects are assessed some time after completion to judge the impacts and whether the various gains and activities have endured.

Learning from Lessons

212. The task of learning from past lessons is a complex one. It is not always clear what one should learn, from what and in what way. In a general sense, each project, each site and even within a project each distinct location are unique. Therefore, what might have worked well in one place is not necessarily going to work well in another. Of course, if one knew all the relevant factors in both situations, then perhaps one could make a reasonable judgment about whether a lesson was relevant or not. But, most often, it is difficult to have such complete information.

213. Too much stress on 'learning from past lessons' can also divert attention from the necessity to treat each situation and location as unique and plan for it accordingly. In field based, biodiversity conservation projects the stress should be much more on site specific micro level planning rather than on the replicability of generalized models and strategies.

214. What needs, then, to be learned from past experience are the general principles that over time have proved themselves to be widely, though not necessarily universally, applicable and relevant. Such principles evolve over time and are not usually evident on the basis of a single experience or of multiple experiences in a short period of time. The belief that it is difficult to ordinarily design, plan for, implement, monitor, evaluate and sustain most projects unless there is meaningful, comprehensive and

appropriate stakeholder participation is one such principle. The recognition that unless people have the option to both conserve biodiversity and meet their economic needs and aspirations, their choice would usually not be in favor of conservation, is another such principle. The need to link biodiversity conservation with the predominant preoccupation of governments and societies of countries of the South, that of economic growth and security, and to ensure that conservation values become internalized and 'owned' by societies and individuals rather than be imperatives from outside, are two other such principles. But these are lessons that have been learnt over the years and gradually. They are lessons valid for today, though there have been times and there still might be others, where they become irrelevant.

215. The past can also inform us about very local and specific experiences of things that work and things that don't. Of experiences that are context specific and, yet, universalisable, for they emanate from those fundamental characteristics that all societies and individuals share. They need to be interpreted for each context, but in essence remain the same. These are lessons that are difficult to include in manuals and databases, and yet they are important to capture and communicate. And, over time, if they surface and are captured often enough, they evolve into those general principles that have been validated often and in diverse settings.

216. Someone who is designing or implementing a project rarely needs a whole set of rigid dos and don'ts, or a list of what has worked or not worked somewhere else. What they perhaps need is a range of ideas and experiences that can be considered, probed, analyzed, modified and then used appropriately. For people to have easy and workable access to those, they need to have access to the people who have worked these ideas and had these experiences. They also need to have the time to link up with these ideas and experiences.

To allow effective learning from past experience, the GEF should set up a network of biodiversity practitioners and other experts, and link with ongoing and completed conservation initiatives, so that those involved in designing and implementing projects have access to a wide variety of ideas and experiences, The network should provide GEF project designers and implementers the opportunity to probe and discuss these experiences and ideas and to determine their relevance and applicability to their own work. Existing institutions and rosters should be reviewed and strengthened, where required, to contribute to this objective.