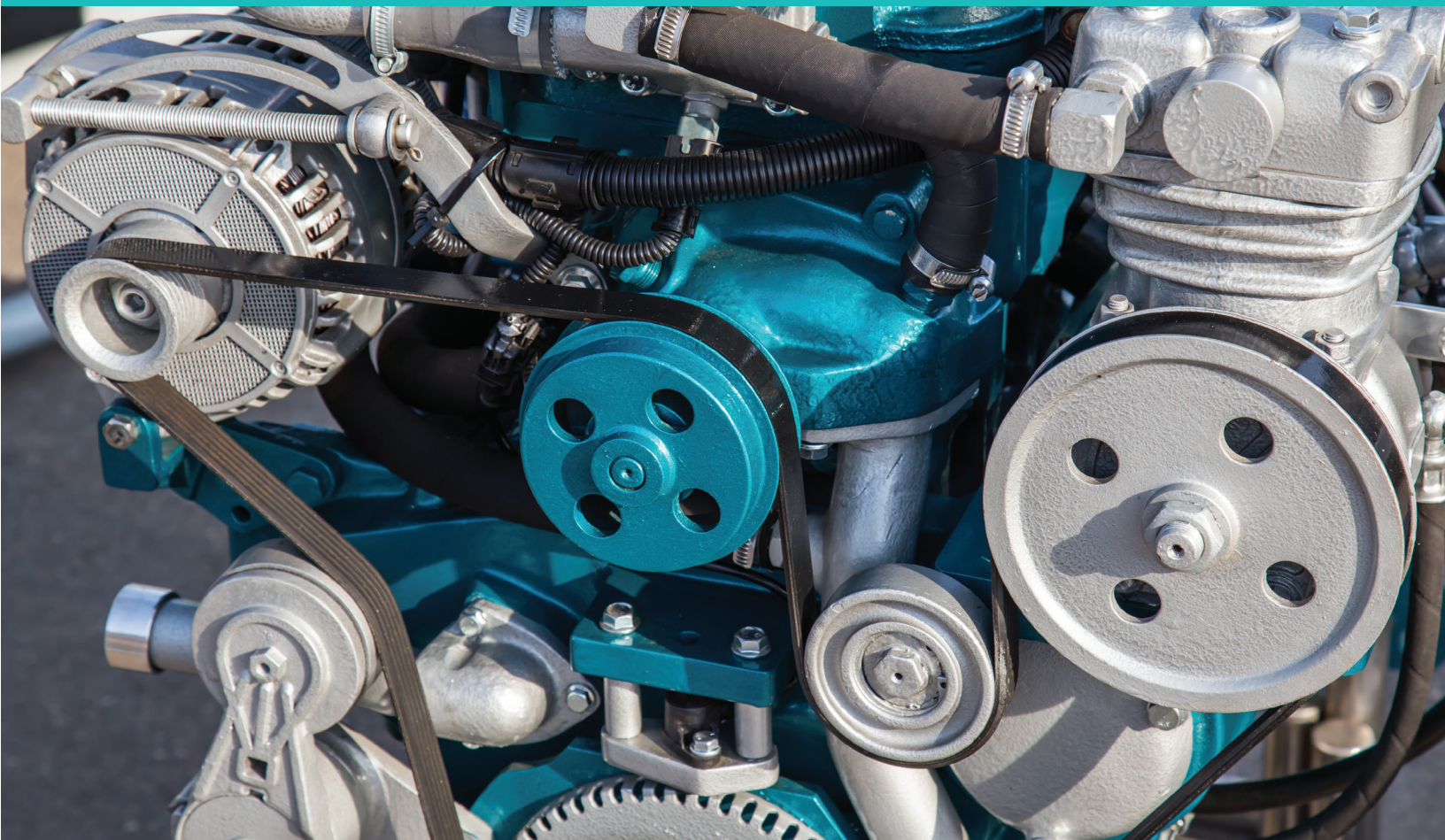




Independent  
Evaluation Office  
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

# GEF Annual Performance Report 2021



January 2023



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# Foreword

**T**he Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is pleased to present Annual Performance Report (APR) 2021. The report was presented to the GEF Council during its December 2021 meeting as an information document. It was prepared as an input to the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7), which was presented to the Council as a working document in the same meeting.

The approach paper for APR 2021 provides an outline of the intended scope and methodology of the report. The report benefited from feedback from the GEF Agencies, the GEF Secretariat, and two peer reviewers. During development of the report, several additional topics such as the GEF's results-based management system, concentration of GEF resources among Agencies, and the GEF-7 System for Transparent Allocation of Resources were included to address requests from the GEF-8 replenishment participants and other stakeholders.

APR 2021 shows that a vast majority of GEF projects are well implemented and deliver their expected outcomes. It shows that the GEF is on track to achieve the majority of the GEF-5 targets of its corporate environmental indicators.

APR 2021 provides an early account of the effect of COVID-19 on GEF projects based on real-time monitoring data. As may be expected, the report found that the vast majority of GEF projects were affected but, in most instances, the GEF Agencies took timely actions to address the challenge. The findings of APR 2021 have informed the OPS7 recommendation related to improvements in the GEF results-based management system.

I would like to thank everyone who actively supported preparation of APR 2021.



Juha I. Uitto  
Director, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

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# Acknowledgments

**A**nnual Performance Report (APR) 2021 was led by Neeraj Kumar Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer in the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). He is the lead author of APR 2021, and led the development of the evaluation approach and related instruments.

Meghan Jutras, Consultant, coordinated the terminal evaluation validation process and conducted the qualitative analysis of factors that affect project performance. She, along with Consultants Ritu Kanotra, Laura Nissley, Nayanika Singh, and Johannes J. Voordouw, prepared terminal evaluation validation reports. Christine Wörten, Consultant, and Neeraj Kumar Negi conducted the review of the GEF results-based management system. Madeleine C. McKinnon, Consultant, and Neeraj Kumar Negi conducted the review of the effect of COVID-19 on GEF projects. Sakshi Hallan, Consultant, assisted in conduct of the analyses of the trends in concentration of GEF resources among Agencies and of the effect of the GEF System for Transparent Allocation of Resources indexes on country allocations.

Preparation of APR 2021 benefited from guidance and oversight provided by Juha Uitto, Director of the

IEO; quality control was provided by Geeta Batra, IEO Chief Evaluation Officer. Preparation of APR 2021 also benefited from peer review feedback provided by Johannes Dobinger, Chief of Independent Evaluation Division at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and Anna Viggh, Senior Evaluation Officer at the GEF IEO.

The study team was supported by Evelyn Chihuguyu, IEO Program Assistant; Juan Jose Portillo, Senior Operations Officer, provided operations/administrative oversight. Kia Penso edited the report; Nita Congress designed and laid out the publication and provided editorial quality control.

The GEF's annual performance reports rely on information provided by GEF partner Agencies through terminal evaluations and terminal evaluation reviews prepared by their offices. We also acknowledge the support received from the Agencies, the GEF Secretariat, and the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel in the conduct of reviews on topics such as the effect of COVID-19 on GEF projects and the GEF results-based management system.

The GEF IEO is grateful to all of these individuals and institutions for their contributions. Final responsibility for this report remains firmly with the Office.



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# Abbreviations

APR	annual performance report	OPS	overall performance study
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	PCBs	polychlorinated biphenyls
CO <sub>2</sub> e	carbon dioxide equivalent	PIF	project identification form
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	PIR	project implementation report
FY	fiscal year	PMIS	Project Management Information System
GDP	gross domestic product	RBM	results-based management
GDPI	gross domestic product index	SIDS	small island developing states
GEF	Global Environment Facility	STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
GIS	geographic information system	UN	United Nations
ha	hectare	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
HHI	Herfindahl–Hirschman Index	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office	UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	WWF-US	World Wildlife Fund
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature		
LDC	least developed country		
MDB	multilateral development bank		
M&E	monitoring and evaluation		
Mt	metric ton		
MTR	midterm review		
OFP	operational focal point		

## GEF replenishment periods

<b>Pilot phase:</b> 1991–94	<b>GEF-5:</b> 2010–14
<b>GEF-1:</b> 1995–98	<b>GEF-6:</b> 2014–18
<b>GEF-2:</b> 1999–2002	<b>GEF-7:</b> 2018–22
<b>GEF-3:</b> 2003–06	<b>GEF-8:</b> 2022–26
<b>GEF-4:</b> 2006–10	

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# Executive summary

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) prepares an annual performance report (APR) on completed projects, the efficiency of GEF processes, and the responsiveness of GEF management to the recommendations of previous evaluations. APR 2021 presents an evaluation of the outcomes, sustainability, quality of implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of 1,806 completed GEF projects. Additionally, APR 2021 analyzes factors affecting project performance; progress toward achieving GEF-5 replenishment targets; the effect of COVID-19 on GEF projects; implementation of the GEF results-based management (RBM) system; concentration of GEF resources among Agencies; and the effect of GEF-7 System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) indexes on country allocation. APR 2021 does not include the Management Action Record (MAR), as it was separately presented to the GEF Council in June 2021.

This report is largely based on analysis of data from 1,806 completed GEF projects, which account for \$8.1 billion in GEF grants and \$39.9 billion in promised cofinancing. Included in this data set are 608 projects for which terminal evaluations were received after the closing of the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS6), referred to here as the OPS7 cohort. The OPS7 cohort accounts

for \$2.6 billion in GEF grants and \$17.0 billion in promised cofinancing. Of the OPS7 cohort, 100 terminal evaluations were received after the closing of APR 2020 and are reported on for the first time in APR 2021. The report has been prepared as an input to OPS7 and was developed in tandem with the latter.

## FINDINGS

### Performance of the GEF portfolio

**Eighty percent of completed GEF projects have satisfactory outcome ratings, including 79 percent of those from the OPS7 cohort.** Analysis of these projects reveals that there was considerable variation in outcome ratings across project categories. In general, a higher percentage of global projects are rated in the satisfactory range. Outcome ratings for projects in Africa, though still lower than other regions, have improved. Additionally, there is variation in the percentage of projects rated in the satisfactory range by GEF Agency, which is at least partly attributable to the difference in the type of projects they undertake (i.e., those portfolios with a greater representation of global projects).

**Sixty-three percent of all completed projects and 65 percent of the OPS7 cohort are rated in**

**the likely range for sustainability of outcomes at project completion.** A comparison of completed projects by replenishment period shows that sustainability improved for projects in the Africa and Asia regions while remaining steady for projects in Europe and Central Asia. Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean showed a slight drop. There was also a considerable improvement in the likelihood of sustainability of global projects.

**Of the OPS7 cohort for which environmental benefits were expected in the long term, 60 percent were assessed to be achieving environmental status change and/or stress reduction at completion, including 15 percent that were assessed to be achieving it at large scale.** Broader adoption of GEF initiatives was reported for 40 percent of the OPS7 cohort, which is lower than the 55 percent for the OPS6 cohort. However, a higher percentage of the OPS7 cohort was achieving broader adoption at a larger scale: 28 percent compared to 19 percent for the OPS6 cohort. The reason for improved performance at large scale but lower overall incidence is not well understood.

**Cumulatively, 80 percent of completed projects are rated in the satisfactory range for quality of implementation and 81 percent for quality of execution.** Of the OPS7 cohort, 84 percent of completed projects were rated in the satisfactory range for quality of implementation and 80 percent for quality of execution. In general, implementation ratings of recent projects (GEF-4 onward) for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) are the higher range of the distribution. Projects implemented by the World Bank fall in the middle of this distribution; while projects implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, as well as those jointly implemented, make

up a lower range, based on the percentage of those rated in the satisfactory range.

**Cumulatively, 66 percent of completed projects are rated in the satisfactory range for quality of M&E design and 65 percent for quality of M&E implementation.** Of the OPS7 cohort, 77 percent and 67 percent were rated in the satisfactory range for M&E design and implementation, respectively. This is consistent with the upward trend in ratings based on replenishment period.

**Cumulatively, 123 percent of promised cofinancing materialized during implementation.** In small island developing states (SIDS), average materialization of cofinancing compares well with overall cofinancing commitments. However, in least developed countries (LDCs), average materialization of cofinancing is lower than commitments. Projects implemented by UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, and FAO were more likely to meet their cofinancing commitments than projects implemented by other Agencies.

**In terms of activity cycle efficiency, project information form (PIF) approval was faster during GEF-7 than in preceding periods.** However, more time was required for GEF-7 PIF approvals to obtain endorsement by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) compared to preceding periods. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is an important contributing factor to greater time lag in achieving CEO endorsement.

### **Progress in achieving environmental results targets of GEF-5**

**The GEF is on track to meet 7 of the GEF-5 targets for 13 of the corporate environmental results indicators.** For two indicators (agricultural/rangeland systems under sustainable land management and wider landscapes under sustainable management), it is unlikely that the GEF-5 targets will be met. For these two indicators, the corporate targets

were already higher than the aggregate targets of approved GEF-5 projects. For four of the remaining indicators, it is too early to determine the likelihood that the targets will be met.

**Target setting for the GEF-5 period was questionable.** Some targets, such as multistate cooperation for transboundary water systems and large marine ecosystems and carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions avoided, seem to be too easy to achieve. Others, such as those related to sustainable land management, seem to be too aspirational and unrealistic.

### Qualitative analysis of factors that affect performance

**A qualitative analysis of 75 purposely selected terminal evaluations from the GEF-5 and GEF-6 replenishment periods identifies several common causal links that affect project performance and the mechanisms through which these relationships work.** The analysis shows that the selection and involvement of suitable partners in project preparation, alignment of project design with needs and capacities, and active engagement of stakeholders and communities in implementation foster country ownership and enhance the likelihood of sustainability. Additionally, the involvement of key stakeholders in project design, as well as the incorporation of prior knowledge and experience, facilitates project implementation. The analysis shows that attention to M&E facilitated adaptive management in several instances.

**Unrealistic objectives, an overly broad scope, or inadequate resources may lead to delays or missed targets.** High turnover of project staff, which is common, also results in delays, limited collection and use of M&E data, and lower outcome achievements. Delays in implementation result in less attention to establishing the project baseline, less use of M&E data for project management, and low stakeholder interest. The analysis also shows

that inadequate materialization of cofinancing may lead to dropped or scaled-down activities.

### Effect of COVID-19 on GEF projects

**The COVID-19 pandemic affected 88 percent of GEF projects that were under implementation during fiscal year (FY) 2020.** A review of project implementation reports (PIRs) from 846 GEF projects under implementation in FY 2020 finds that the pandemic caused delays in implementation (69 percent of projects), suspension of activities (34 percent of projects), and cancellation of activities (9 percent). Projects that are reliant on physical site-based activities, are sensitive to cropping cycle timelines, involve sectors more exposed to the global economy, or rely on private sector investors, were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Projects in SIDS also reported slightly higher numbers of delayed activities. While activities of global projects were the least likely to be delayed or put on hold, they were more likely to be canceled (particularly workshops, conferences, and meetings). Overall, multifocal and biodiversity projects were the most affected. Land degradation and chemicals and waste projects were the least affected.

**In terms of M&E, almost a fifth of projects reported that the pandemic delayed or affected evaluation activities.** Postponing evaluations until restrictions ease may result in lower availability of key informants and loss of institutional memory. Additionally, 26 percent of projects reported some effect on staffing or project teams, including travel delays, furloughs, hiring freezes, or layoffs. Only 12 projects (1 percent) explicitly reported health impacts on project staff, likely because the pandemic was less widespread within GEF recipient countries through June 2020.

**Twenty-five percent of projects reported effects on finances and budgets including slowdown in disbursements (9 percent), materialization of cofinancing (9 percent), and increased costs**

### **associated with adapting to new ways of working.**

Seventy-four percent of projects reported adopting measures to address the effects of the pandemic, including shifting to virtual interactions (51 percent), requests for extensions (33 percent), and contingency planning (21 percent). Projects also reported several barriers outside of their control, such as technology constraints, location-specific activities, government closures, and travel restrictions.

### **Understanding how the pandemic has affected or is likely to affect project results is still emerging.**

Most project teams were optimistic that project results will be achieved, 6 percent of projects reported that results would not be achieved as planned, and 18 percent reported increased risks to sustainability.

## **Results-based management**

### **Overall, the GEF RBM system improved during the GEF-7 replenishment period.**

The review found that progress toward implementing the OPS6 recommendations has been substantial but varied. The recommendation to update the GEF RBM framework has been partially implemented. The previous GEF RBM framework was replaced by the GEF-7 results architecture, which includes new indicators, monitoring and reporting requirements, and new tools for data collection and transmission. However, the updated framework does not advance tracking of environmental degradation drivers and long-term impacts, and it does not cover the transformative and systemic changes targeted by the integrated approach programs. The recommendation to upgrade the Project Management Information System (PMIS) has been implemented through the transition to the GEF Portal. Reporting on actual project achievement is possible for GEF-4 and GEF-5 projects through manual tabulation, although such a tabulation has not yet been undertaken by the GEF Secretariat. Aside from the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT),

the focal area tracking tools have been dropped for projects approved from GEF-6 onward, which addresses the final recommendation from OPS6.

### **In general, the changes to the results architecture have made monitoring less burdensome, more transparent, and of higher quality.**

However, some core indicators are not realistic or are prone to double counting. The use of information from the RBM system for decision making is limited in part due to the long feedback loop of environmental results.

## **Concentration of GEF resources among Agencies**

### **The two rounds of expansion of the GEF partnership have increased Agency choice for recipient countries and contributed to a steady decline in the concentration of GEF resources.**

At the same time, the single most important reason for the drop in concentration of resources is the decrease in the World Bank's share of the GEF portfolio. A small drop in concentration from GEF-6 to GEF-7 is due to a drop in the UNDP share.

### **The quality of an Agency's presence, expertise, and engagement with operational focal points (OFPs) affects the OFP's preference for an Agency.**

The perceived comparative advantage of an Agency in a GEF focal area also affects OFPs' preference. Specific project features may also play a role, as well as the level of interest an Agency has in undertaking a potential GEF activity. The concentration of funds provided through STAR allocations is comparable to those provided from outside the STAR. The switch to the STAR during GEF-4 gave the OFPs greater say in the use of GEF funds. While this was advantageous for some Agencies that had strong engagement with the OFPs, it seems to have disadvantaged those that did not. Further decline in concentration of resources would require structural and procedural changes in the GEF partnership, which may involve trade-offs.

## Effect of GEF-7 STAR on country allocation

**From GEF-6 to GEF-7, 80 percent of recipient countries experienced a drop in their aggregate allocations.** The drop in the STAR envelope for the climate change focal area was the most important factor that led to an overall decrease in the allocations. For 15 percent of recipient countries, the aggregate allocations increased, primarily because of an increase in their allocation for the biodiversity focal area. The data update led to a substantial increase in resources allocated to Europe and East Central Asia. Had the GEF-6 STAR model been used without any change for GEF-7, all country groups would still have experienced a drop in their total allocations. However, the decrease would have been relatively higher for countries that do not benefit from the climate change focal area allocation floors.

**Rebalancing the floors and increasing the weight of the gross domestic product (GDP)-based index had a somewhat counterbalancing effect on**

**allocations.** On average, rebalancing area floors increased allocations for countries with large portfolios and those that were neither LDCs nor SIDS. Although some countries did gain from the increase in the floors for the biodiversity and land degradation focal areas, the support provided through the floors decreased because of a drop in floors for climate change and because more countries are eligible for the climate change floors than for the two other focal areas. Increased weight for the GDP-based index increased resources for low-income and lower-middle-income countries, LDCs, and landlocked developing countries, and Africa. Overall, the GEF-7 STAR struck a balance between mitigating the effects of a lower level of resources available for the climate change focal area and providing increased resources to LDCs and other countries with lower income.

# Introduction

The annual performance report (APR) prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) provides an overview of the performance of GEF activities and processes, key factors that may affect performance, and the quality of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. Along with these regular themes, the APR covers other topics related to the performance of GEF systems, policies, and procedures to deepen our understanding of the issues and provide information that may be useful across the GEF partnership.

APR 2021 has been prepared as an input to the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7). The approach paper for APR 2021 provides a roadmap for development of the report and benefited from feedback from the GEF Agencies, the GEF Secretariat, and two peer reviewers. During the development of APR 2021, several topics were added in response to requests from the GEF-8 Replenishment Group participants and to emerging needs for analysis for OPS7.

Following this introductory chapter, [chapter 2](#) provides an account of the performance of the GEF portfolio. It covers the performance of completed projects in terms of their outcomes, likelihood of

sustainability, implementation, project M&E, and materialization of cofinancing. It also includes an assessment of the efficiency of the GEF project cycle through the project identification form (PIF) approval and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) endorsement stages. The analysis covers 1,806 completed GEF projects that together account for \$8.1 billion in GEF funding. Special attention is given to the OPS7 cohort of 608 projects for which terminal evaluations were received after the closing of OPS6, including terminal evaluations for 100 completed projects that were received after the closing of APR 2020. The analysis on time lags in PIF approval covers PIF submissions for stand-alone full-size projects through June 2020; the analysis on the time lag in CEO endorsement covers PIF approvals for stand-alone full-size projects through October 2019.

[Chapter 3](#) presents an account of progress toward achievement of environmental results targets for GEF-5. It tracks and tabulates environmental results self-reported by the Agencies at project completion for 13 environmental results targets. OPS6 tracked targeted results for 686 full- and medium-size GEF-5 projects. Of these, 194 GEF-5 projects have been completed, and information on expected and actual achievement of the corporate

environmental results is available for 104. The achievements of these 104 projects are aggregated and compared both with their ex ante project-level targets and the corporate target for their replenishment period to assess the likelihood that the GEF-5 targets will be met.

[Chapter 4](#) presents a qualitative analysis of factors that affect project performance. The analysis is aimed at understanding factors and interconnections that affect project implementation and results, as well as understanding observed patterns within their context and identifying the mechanisms that drive these patterns. It covers terminal evaluations of a sample of 75 completed GEF projects from GEF-5 and GEF-6. The sample was drawn from 160 completed GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects for which terminal evaluations were received through calendar year 2019. The review coded and collated important factors identified by terminal evaluations that affected implementation, outcomes, and sustainability across project components, including factors in project design, implementation, finance, and M&E.

[Chapter 5](#) presents a review of the effects of COVID-19 on GEF projects. The review examined project implementation reports (PIRs) for 846 GEF projects that were under implementation in fiscal year (FY) 2020 (July 2019 to June 2020). From the onset of the pandemic in late 2019, the GEF recipient countries and the GEF Agencies implemented an evolving set of measures based on the virus's progression and other contextual factors. The review assesses the overall effect of the pandemic, including the actions undertaken by recipient countries and GEF Agencies, and their effect on project implementation and results.

[Chapter 6](#) presents findings of a review of the GEF's results-based management (RBM) system. The review is focused on the corporate-level system

of core indicators and reporting on these indicators, which is managed by the GEF Secretariat. The review examines the extent to which OPS6 recommendations related to RBM have been implemented, the results of changes in the system, the appropriateness of the core indicators, and the system's contributions to knowledge management. The review complements GEF IEO evaluations and reviews addressing other dimensions related to the GEF RBM system, such as the Review of the GEF Terminal Evaluation Validation Process and Results-Based Management: Evaluations of the Agency Self-Evaluation Systems and the GEF Portal (GEF IEO 2020b, 2021).

[Chapter 7](#) presents findings of a review of the trends in concentration of GEF resources among Agencies. This review was undertaken at the request of some members of the GEF-8 Replenishment Group and assesses trends in choices available to recipient countries and levels of concentration of resources from the GEF Trust Fund. It updates analysis presented in the Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership (GEF IEO 2018a).

[Chapter 8](#) presents findings of an analysis on the effect of the GEF-7 System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) indexes on country allocation. The STAR indexes used for GEF-7 have undergone several changes, including an increase in the weight of the exponent for per capita income in the gross domestic product (GDP)-based index; change in the allocation floors, and increased flexibility in cross-focal use of resources for some recipient countries. The data for calculating country allocation were also updated. Additionally, the effect of these factors on country allocations for GEF-7 is assessed.



# Performance of the GEF portfolio

**T**his chapter discusses the performance of GEF projects in terms of their outcomes, sustainability, implementation process, monitoring and evaluation, materialization of cofinancing, and time lags in project preparation. Much of the analysis presented here is based on evidence reported in the terminal evaluations of completed GEF projects. The assessment of time lags in project preparation is based on data from project proposals.

Overall, GEF projects continue to deliver strong results and maintain an improving trend in performance. Cumulatively, 80 percent of completed GEF projects are rated in the satisfactory range for outcomes, with recent projects performing as well as—if not better than—those in the past, indicating strong and sustained performance. About two-thirds of the projects approved in GEF-4 and GEF-5 are rated in the likely range for sustainability of outcomes. While the likelihood of sustainability remains somewhat low, there is an improving trend. The vast majority of completed projects that were approved in more recent replenishment cycles have ratings in the satisfactory range for quality of implementation, quality of execution, and quality of M&E design and implementation. The analysis shows that, on average,

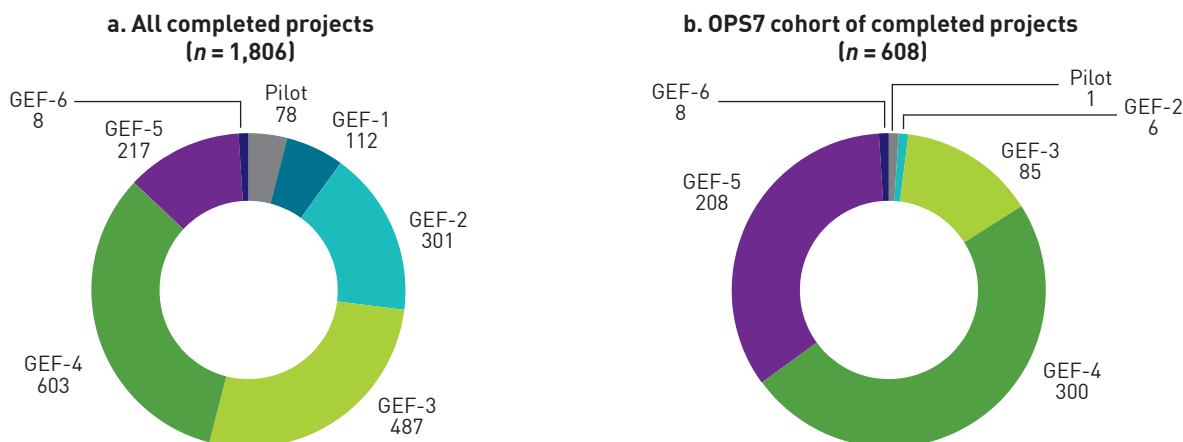
cofinancing commitments are met during project implementation. After approval, GEF-7 proposals of stand-alone full-size projects took longer to obtain CEO endorsement than in past periods. Project preparation efficiency was affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2.1 Methodology

### COMPLETED PROJECTS

Cumulatively, through September 2020, terminal evaluations for 1,806 completed projects were received by the GEF IEO ([figure 2.1](#)). This includes projects funded through the GEF Trust Fund (1,702 projects), the Least Developed Countries Fund (64 projects), the Special Climate Change Fund (31 projects), the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund (4 projects), and multiple trust funds (5 projects). These projects together account for \$8.1 billion in GEF funding and \$39.9 billion in promised cofinancing. They include the 608 projects that comprise the OPS7 cohort; the terminal evaluations for these were received after the close of OPS6. The OPS7 cohort accounts for \$2.6 billion in GEF grants and \$17.0 billion in promised cofinancing. Of the OPS7 cohort, 100 terminal evaluations were received after the close of APR 2020. The

**Figure 2.1** Distribution of projects covered in the analysis, by replenishment period of their approval



**Source:** GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

**Note:** Terminal evaluations submitted through September 2020 have been included.

performance of these 100 projects is reported for the first time in this APR.

## PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Performance ratings reported in GEF APRs are primarily based on the evidence provided in the terminal evaluations. A project's performance is rated on criteria such as outcome, likelihood of sustainability, quality of implementation, quality of execution, quality of M&E design and implementation, and quality of terminal evaluation report. Only validated performance ratings provided by either the GEF IEO or the evaluation units of a GEF Agency are considered for analysis and reporting.<sup>1</sup> Projects are rated only when sufficient information is provided to allow an assessment of performance. Observations indicated as not rated or unable to assess are excluded from analysis.

Of the projects covered, performance ratings for 937 (52 percent) are provided by the evaluation

units of the GEF Agencies and 869 (48 percent) by the GEF IEO. Although the GEF IEO and the Agency evaluation units use broadly similar criteria and approaches to rate performance, there are minor differences that make cross-Agency comparisons difficult (GEF IEO 2021).

To ensure that ratings are consistent, the GEF IEO has validated outcome ratings for an additional 323 projects that were also rated by Agency evaluation units. The difference in ratings from the two sources was not statistically significant. For example, of the 323 projects for which the GEF IEO and Agency evaluation units have provided project outcome ratings, the ratings concur for 315 instances (98 percent).<sup>2</sup> Overall, the Agency evaluation units and the GEF IEO respectively rated 85 percent and 84 percent of these projects in the satisfactory range—a net difference of 1 percent. The details of the approach and criteria used by the GEF IEO to assess performance of completed projects are provided in [annex D](#).

<sup>1</sup> The GEF IEO accepts the validated ratings provided by the evaluation units of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Environment Programme.

<sup>2</sup> Using a binary scale of satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

## PROGRESS TO IMPACT

Assessment of progress to impact examines two aspects of impact:

- Whether environmental stress reduction and/or status change due to project activities is observed on the ground and at what scale
- Whether broader adoption is taking place and at what scale.

The analysis is restricted to projects for which direct or indirect environmental results targets have been specified. Enabling activities and foundational projects that focus exclusively on market and diagnostic analysis, targeted research, and facilitating knowledge sharing are excluded.

The OPS6 cohort was previously screened and reviewed for both OPS6 and ongoing APR work. For OPS7, a stratified sample of 180 projects was drawn for screening. Of these 180 projects, 19 were not expected to provide any direct environmental or attributable indirect benefits and were thus excluded from the review. The remaining 161 projects were reviewed to assess the incidence of environmental results and broader adoption. The findings of the assessment for the OPS7 cohort are presented in the [next section](#), after correcting for differences in probability of being sampled.

## MATERIALIZATION OF COFINANCING

The analysis covers the 1,806 projects for which terminal evaluations had been received through September 2020. Though data on GEF grant and expected cofinancing are available for all projects, the data on materialization of cofinancing are available for 1,517 projects.

## EFFICIENCY OF GEF ACTIVITY CYCLE

The analysis on the efficiency of the GEF activity cycle covers proposals for full-size stand-alone

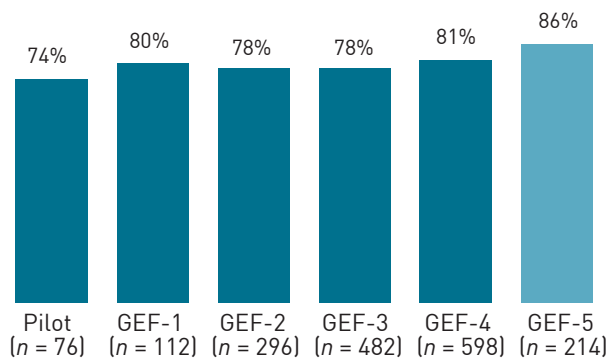
projects from GEF-4 onward. The focus is on time taken in project preparation after a PIF has been submitted to the GEF: from PIF submission to PIF approval, from PIF approval to CEO endorsement, and total time from PIF submission to CEO endorsement. Data from the GEF Portal has been used for the analysis, covering actions taken up to June 30, 2021. Time taken from PIF submission to PIF approval is tracked up to a 12-month period. As a result, PIF submissions up to June 2020 are covered in the analysis. Time taken from PIF approval to CEO endorsement is tracked for a period of 24 months against the 18-month maximum allowed by the GEF Project Cancellation Policy (GEF 2018a). This also means that only PIF approvals through June 2019 are covered in the analysis. For the combined analysis of the two steps—that is, from PIF submission to CEO endorsement—progress through a 24-month period from PIF submission is tracked. For this analysis, PIF submissions through June 2019 have been covered.

## 2.2 Findings

### OUTCOMES

The vast majority of completed GEF projects are rated in the satisfactory range for outcomes. Eighty percent of completed GEF projects ( $n = 1,786$ ), including 79 percent of those from the OPS7 cohort ( $n = 599$ ), are rated in the satisfactory range. Analysis based on replenishment period of project approval shows that the outcome of 86 percent of completed GEF-5 projects ( $n = 214$ ) was in the satisfactory range, which is higher than for the preceding replenishment periods ([figure 2.2](#)). However, a significant number of the projects from GEF-5 are still under implementation; consequently, it is likely that the percentage rated satisfactory would adjust downward, as projects that face implementation challenges are likely to be overrepresented among the remaining projects. Overall, it may be inferred that the outcome

**Figure 2.2** Projects with outcomes rated in the satisfactory range by GEF replenishment period



**Source:** GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

**Note:** The shading for GEF-5 indicates that the proportion of completed projects from this period is relatively low (< 30%); therefore, the percentage is likely to change as more projects are completed. For preceding periods the change will be marginal.

achievement performance of projects that were approved recently is as good as—if not better—than that of projects that were approved earlier.

There is considerable variation in the outcome ratings of different project categories based on region, country group, Agency, and focal area. [Figure 2.3](#) presents the percentages of projects of different categories rated in the satisfactory range based on cumulative data. In general, a higher percentage of global projects, including interregional projects, is rated in the satisfactory range. Historically a lower percentage of projects in Africa was rated in the satisfactory range for outcome. However, the outcome ratings of projects in the region show improvement; for example, 78 percent of completed projects in Africa approved from GEF-4 onward are rated in the satisfactory range for outcomes, compared to 72 percent for those approved in earlier periods.

There is considerable variation in the percentage of projects rated in the satisfactory range by Agency ([figure 2.3c](#)). At least part of the difference among Agencies is due to the difference in the types of projects they undertake. For example,

the United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP’s) portfolio has greater representation of global and regional projects, which have both traditionally higher outcome ratings and higher ratings for UNEP-implemented projects. However, there is little difference between UNEP and other Agencies in terms of the outcome ratings for national projects.

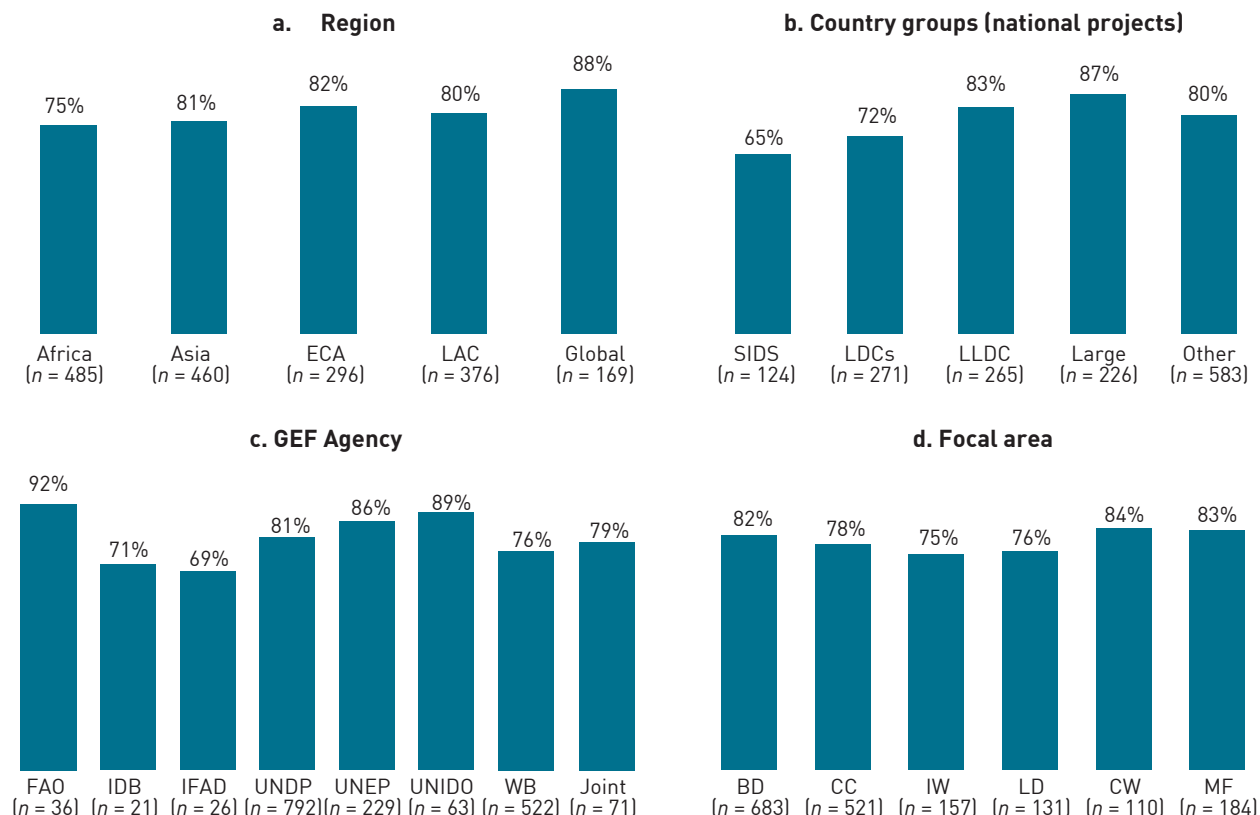
The percentage of projects rated in the satisfactory range varies from 75 percent for international waters to 84 percent for chemicals and waste—a spread of 9 percent. The spread is narrower for projects approved from GEF-4 onward (6 percent) than for those approved in GEF-3 or earlier (12 percent). This, overall, suggests convergence in outcome ratings of projects from different focal areas.

The importance of factors such as quality of project design and implementation, country context, and timely materialization of cofinancing in supporting project outcomes has been discussed in earlier overall performance studies (OPSs, now comprehensive evaluations) of the GEF (GEF IEO 2010, 2017c). Qualitative analysis of the terminal evaluations, discussed in detail in [chapter 4](#), identifies adaptive management as a key enabler of strong outcome achievements; conversely, delays, procedural constraints, and procurement challenges may negatively affect the outcome achievements of some projects.

## LIKELIHOOD OF SUSTAINABILITY

Project sustainability ratings have improved over time, although there are variations across regions. Sustainability ratings estimate the extent to which a project’s outcomes are durable and the project is likely to achieve its expected long-term impact. Sixty-three percent of all completed projects, and 65 percent of the OPS7 cohort, is rated in the likely range for likelihood of sustainability at project completion ([figure 2.4](#)). Replenishment period-based

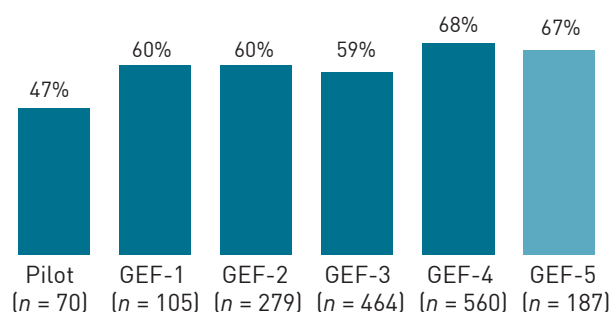
**Figure 2.3** Percentage of projects with outcomes rated in the satisfactory range by region, country group, GEF Agency, and focal area



**Source:** GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

**Note:** *Region:* ECA = Europe and Central Asia, LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; *country group:* SIDS = small island developing states, LDC = least developed country, LLDC = landlocked developing country, large = large GEF portfolio; *GEF Agency:* FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, IDB = Inter-American Development Bank, IFAD = International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNDP = United Nations Development Programme, UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme, UNIDO = United Nations Industrial Development Organization, WB = World Bank; *focal area:* BD = biodiversity, CC = climate change, IW = international waters, LD = land degradation, CW = chemicals and waste, MF = multifocal.

**Figure 2.4** Likelihood of sustainability at implementation completion- percentage rated in the likely range



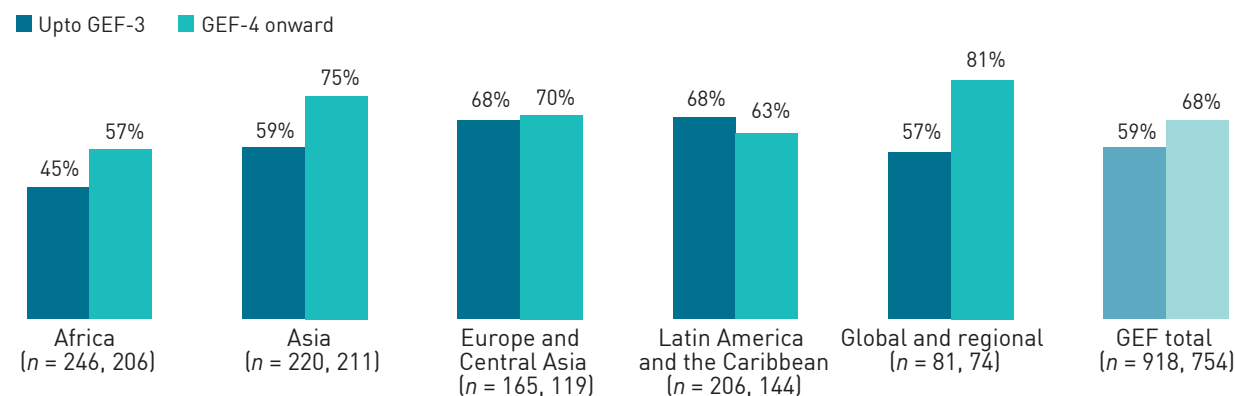
**Source:** GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

**Note:** The shading for GEF-5 indicates that the proportion of completed projects from this period is relatively low (< 30%); therefore, the percentage is likely to change as more projects are completed. For preceding periods the change will be marginal.

analysis shows an improvement in sustainability ratings, with a higher percentage of projects approved in GEF-4 and GEF-5 rated in the likely range than those approved earlier.

There are differences across regions in trends in sustainability ratings (figure 2.5). Likelihood of sustainability improved for projects in Africa and Asia, remained more or less the same for projects in Europe and Central Asia, and showed a slight drop for projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. There is remarkable improvement in the likelihood of sustainability of global (including regional) projects.

**Figure 2.5** Likelihood of sustainability by region- project approved up to GEF-3 versus those approved from GEF-4 onward



**Source:** GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

**Note:** The shading for GEF-5 indicates that the proportion of completed projects from this period is relatively low (< 30%); therefore, the percentage is likely to change as more projects are completed. For preceding periods the change will be marginal.

Stakeholder and/or beneficiary buy-in; political support, including adoption of complementary legal and regulatory measures; financial support for follow-up; and sustained efforts by the executing agency improve the likelihood of sustainability (GEF IEO 2019). There is a statistically significant correlation between materialization of cofinancing and likelihood of sustainability ratings. A comparison by region showed that projects in Africa may need more follow-up support to be sustainable than projects in other regions. The qualitative analysis of terminal evaluations discussed in [chapter 4](#) shows that selection of suitable partners, alignment of project design with existing needs and capacities, and engaging stakeholders and communities in project implementation may reduce risks to sustainability.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS CHANGE AND STRESS REDUCTION, AND BROADER ADOPTION

Most GEF activities aim at directly or indirectly reducing environmental stress emanating from human actions and/or improving environmental status; however, the full extent to which these environmental benefits are achieved becomes

evident only in the long term. Some projects nonetheless may be expected to achieve some of their environmental benefits at implementation completion. Of the OPS7 cohort for which such benefits are expected in the long term, 60 percent were reported to be achieving environmental status change and/or stress reduction at completion; 15 percent were reported to be achieving it at a large scale ([table 2.1](#)).

Broader adoption takes place when non-GEF actors adopt, expand, and build on GEF-funded initiatives; it may take place during a program/project's implementation or afterward (GEF IEO 2014a). Broader adoption was reported for 40 percent of the projects of the OPS7 cohort at completion, which is lower than the 55 percent reported for the OPS6 cohort. However, a higher percentage of the OPS7 cohort was achieving broader adoption at a large scale. One of the reasons for this difference is that a significantly higher proportion of GEF projects in recent years has targeted upstream issues and addressed systemic issues. This facilitates broader adoption at a large scale but, at the same time, involves greater time lags before such adoption takes place. The issue needs to be studied more before concrete inferences can be drawn.

**Table 2.1** Incidence of environmental stress reduction and/or status change at project completion

Status at project completion	OPS6 (n = 568)	OPS7 (n = 161)
<b>Environmental status change/stress reduction</b>		
Yes	56	60
At large scale	10	15
Significant at local scale	24	23
Limited at local scale	22	23
No	44	40
None or insignificant	31	20
Unable to assess	13	20
<b>Broader adoption</b>		
Yes	55	40
At large scale	19	28
At local scale	36	12
No	45	60
Plans present but not yet implemented, or not taking place	43	55
Unable to assess	2	5

**Note:** Figures are probability adjusted for the OPS7 cohort. All projects of the OPS6 cohort were reviewed. Data for the OPS6 cohort incorporate the sample of 415 projects reported on in OPS6. In the interim, the OPS6 cohort sample was extended to cover the entire cohort.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION

GEF Agencies are responsible for project preparation and implementation. They play a critical role in activities such as project identification and preparation, startup of activities, supervision, application of GEF policies and procedures, and M&E. An Agency should address project implementation-related challenges in a timely and adaptive manner. Executing agencies work under the supervision of the respective GEF Agency and are responsible for execution of project activities on the ground.

Cumulatively, 80 percent of completed projects are rated in the satisfactory range for quality of project implementation. Eighty-one percent of completed projects are rated in the satisfactory range for

quality of project execution. For the OPS7 cohort, 84 percent were rated in the satisfactory range for quality of implementation and 80 percent for quality of execution.

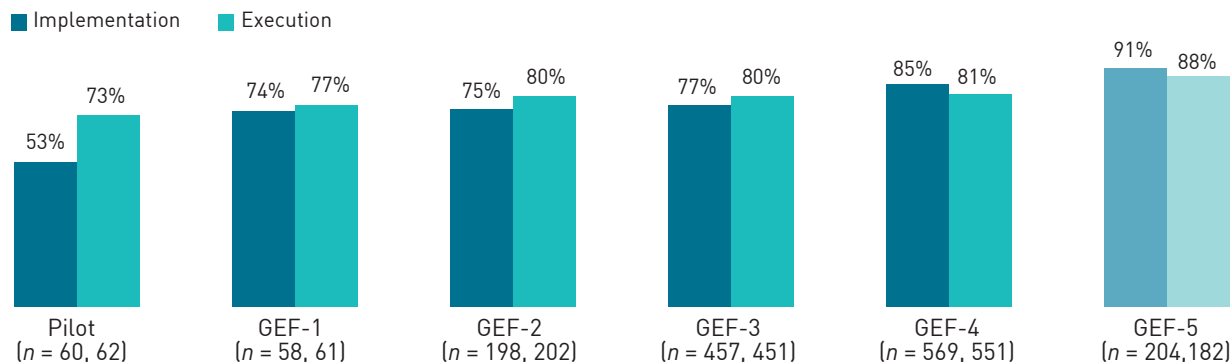
Figure 2.6 presents trends across the replenishment periods in which projects were approved. There has been sustained improvement in implementation ratings. The implementation ratings for GEF-4 projects are significantly higher than those for the preceding periods. Although the implementation ratings for completed projects from the GEF-5 period are even higher, these are likely to adjust downward as more projects approved during GEF-5 are completed. Execution ratings have also inched upward, although the magnitude of the change is smaller.

Based on the implementation ratings of recent projects (approved from GEF-4 onward), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) stand out as Agencies with a high percentage of projects rated in the satisfactory range for implementation (figure 2.7). World Bank-implemented projects are in the middle of this distribution. A lower percentage of those projects implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), as well as those that are jointly implemented, are rated in the satisfactory range.

## PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Project M&E plays an important role in assessing a project's progress in implementing its activities and the results of these activities. For example, cumulative data show a strong positive correlation of 0.59 between quality of M&E implementation ratings and project implementation ratings on a six-point scale. GEF Agencies are expected to prepare project M&E plans that specify

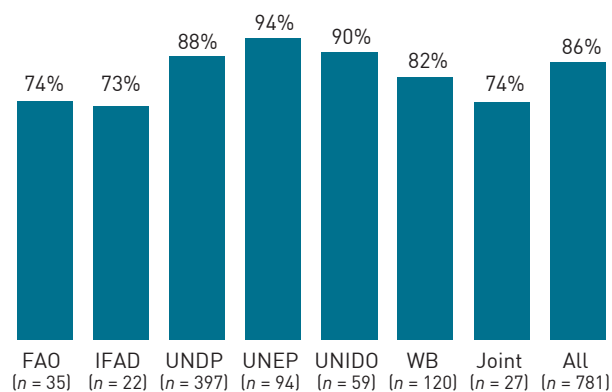
**Figure 2.6** Quality of implementation and execution- projects rated in the satisfactory range



**Source:** GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

**Note:** The shading for GEF-5 indicates that the proportion of completed projects from this period is relatively low (< 30%); therefore, the percentage is likely to change as more projects are completed. For preceding periods the change will be marginal.

**Figure 2.7** Percentage of projects rated in the satisfactory range for implementation from GEF-4 onward



**Source:** GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

**Note:** UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme, WB = World Bank. All = projects by all Agencies.

process and results indicators and targeted level of performance; as well as arrangements for data collection, including responsibilities, frequency, reporting procedures, and budget. During project implementation, Agencies put M&E plans into action—and, where required, may update or modify them. The GEF IEO rates quality of M&E design and implementation.

Cumulatively, 66 percent of projects were rated in the satisfactory range for quality of project M&E design and 65 percent for quality of M&E implementation. Of the OPS7 cohort, 77 percent and 67 percent were rated in the satisfactory range for M&E design and implementation, respectively. This is consistent with the trend analysis based on replenishment periods ([figure 2.8](#)).

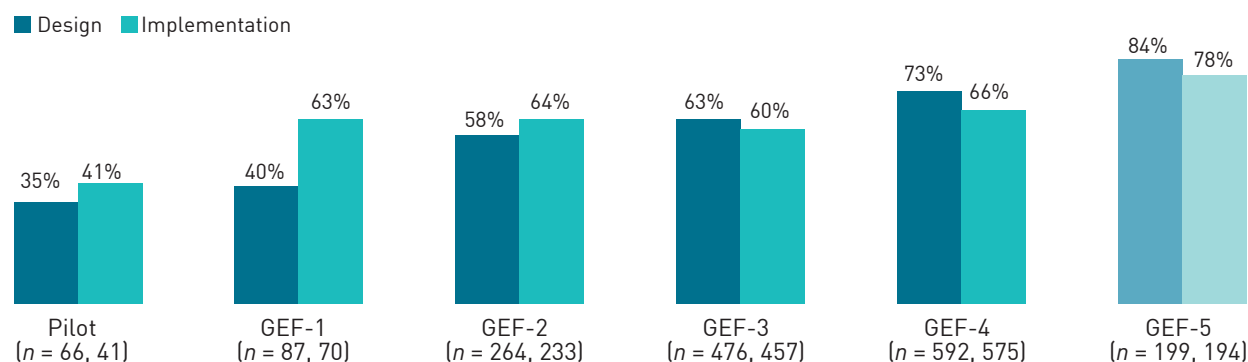
## MATERIALIZATION OF COFINANCING

Generally, GEF-financed activities also receive cofinancing from other partners. Use of cofinancing helps the GEF ensure its support is used to meet the incremental costs of generating global environmental benefits; to increase the scale of activities supported and benefits generated; and to ensure that other partners have stakes in the implementation of, and follow-up to, the project. Tracking the extent to which cofinancing commitments materialize during implementation is important in assessing the extent to which GEF partners are meeting their commitments.

Cumulatively, on average, 123 percent of promised cofinancing materialized during implementation. For 66 percent of projects, at least 90 percent materialized; and for 16 percent, less than half



**Figure 2.8** Quality of M&E design and implementation- percentage rated in the satisfactory range



**Source:** GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

**Note:** The shading for GEF-5 indicates that the proportion of completed projects from this period is relatively low (< 30%); therefore, the percentage is likely to change as more projects are completed. For preceding periods the change will be marginal.

**Table 2.2** Materialization of cofinancing

Period	No. of projects for which full data are reported	Cofinancing per \$ of GEF grant		Cofinancing materialization ratio	% of projects with materialized cofinancing	
		Promised	Materialized		≥ 90	< 50
Pilot phase	59	6.80	6.54	0.96	67	16
GEF-1	93	2.86	2.34	0.82	55	17
GEF-2	253	4.91	5.83	1.19	71	11
GEF-3	412	4.64	5.69	1.23	68	16
GEF-4	519	6.75	9.92	1.47	63	19
GEF-5	175	6.30	6.53	1.04	68	17
GEF-6	6	5.17	5.24	1.01	67	0
OPS6 cohort	476	5.82	7.78	1.34	66	16
OPS7 cohort	514	7.02	8.47	1.21	60	22
All projects	1,517	5.33	6.57	1.23	66	16

**Source:** GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

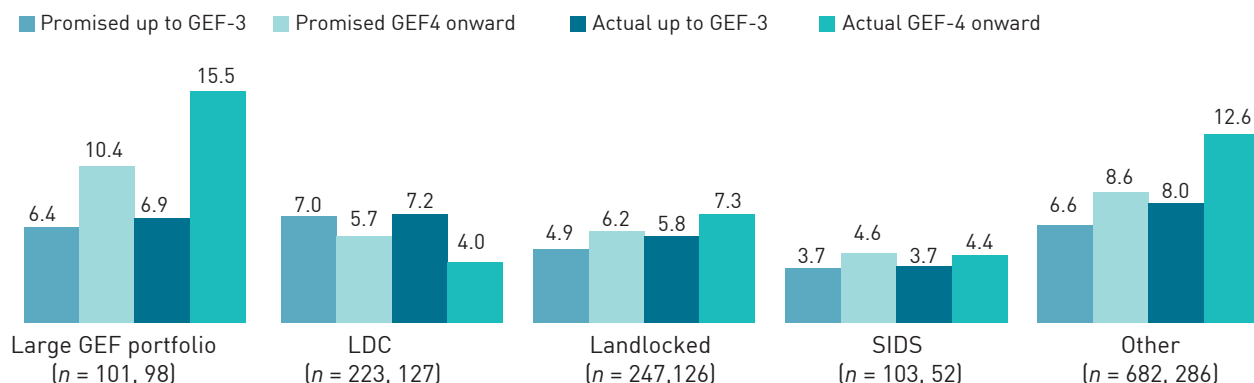
(table 2.2). The performance of the OPS7 cohort is broadly in the same range as the average—although for a slightly higher percentage, less than half of promised cofinancing materialized.

There are differences across recipient country groups in materialization of cofinancing (figure 2.9). In small island developing states (SIDS), average materialization of cofinancing compares well with cofinancing commitments. In least developed countries (LDCs), average materialization is somewhat lower than commitments, indicating the

financial challenges likely in LDCs. Other country groups, including landlocked countries and countries with large GEF portfolios, generally generate higher cofinancing commitments as well as higher materialization per dollar of cofinancing commitment on average.

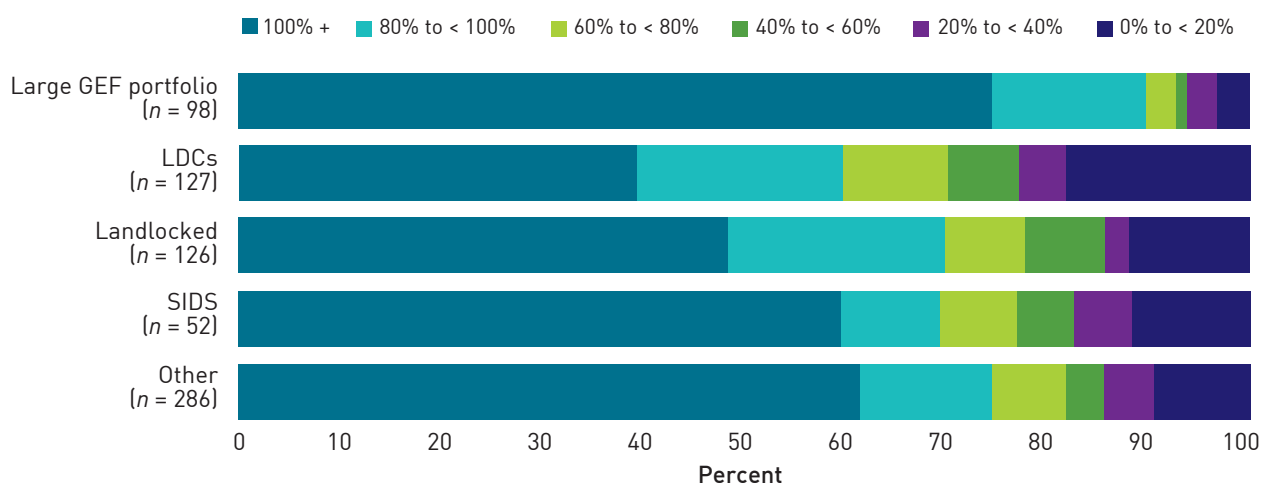
Figure 2.10 presents the distribution of completed projects in terms of level of actual cofinancing vis-à-vis promised cofinancing across different country groups. Note that for LDCs, challenges in materialization of cofinancing are not only evident

**Figure 2.9 Trends in promised and materialized cofinancing per dollar of GEF grant across country groups (ratio)**



Source: GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

**Figure 2.10 Distribution of projects by level of materialization of cofinancing from GEF-4 onward**

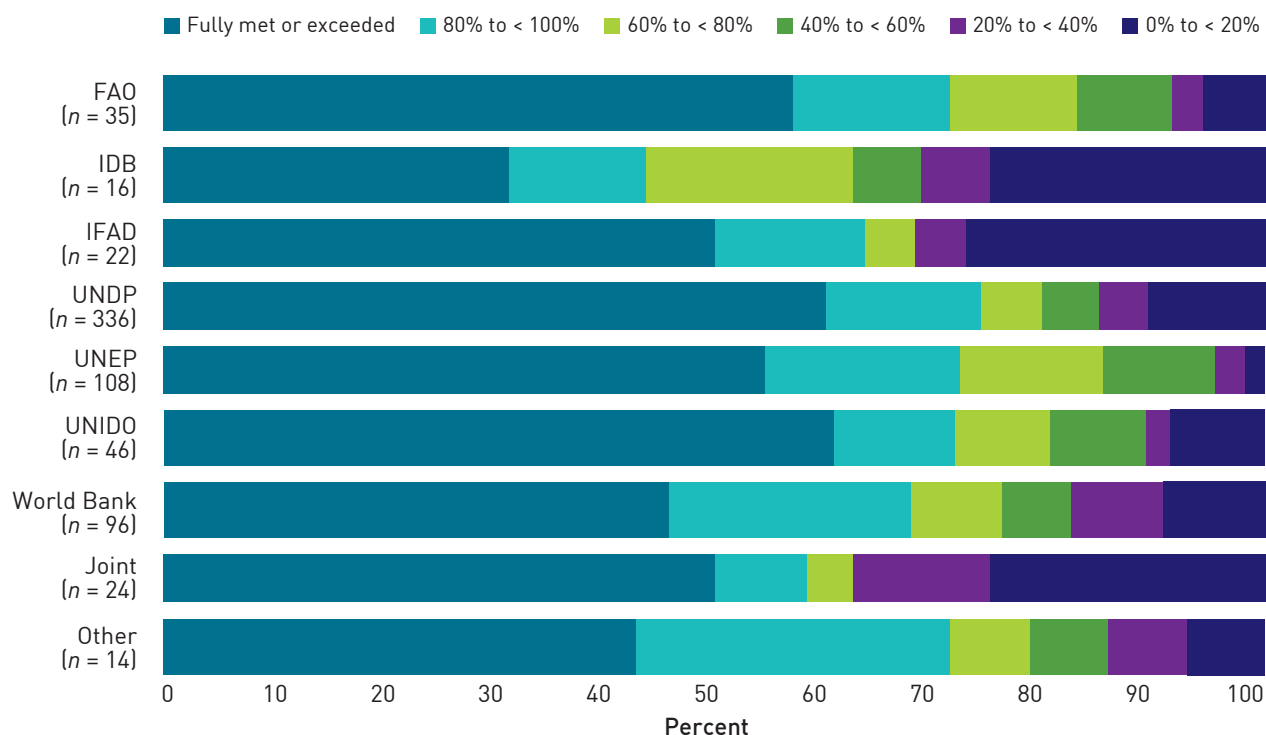


Source: GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

when averaged across the portfolio (figure 2.9), but also in terms of the percentage of projects that fall substantially short in realizing their cofinancing commitments at the start of project implementation. Four out of 10 projects in LDCs approved from GEF-4 onward fell at least 20 percent short in realizing the cofinancing committed at project start, compared to only 1 out of 10 projects in countries with large GEF portfolios (i.e., Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and the Russian Federation).

Figure 2.11 presents the distribution of projects based on materialization of cofinancing by GEF Agency. Projects implemented by UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, and FAO are more likely to meet their cofinancing commitments (80 percent or more). In contrast, projects implemented by the Inter-American Development Bank or IFAD and jointly implemented projects seem to face challenges in realizing their cofinancing commitments; one out of four projects implemented by these Agencies realized 20 percent or less of expected cofinancing.

**Figure 2.11** Distribution of completed projects (approved GEF-4 onward) based on the level of materialization of cofinancing



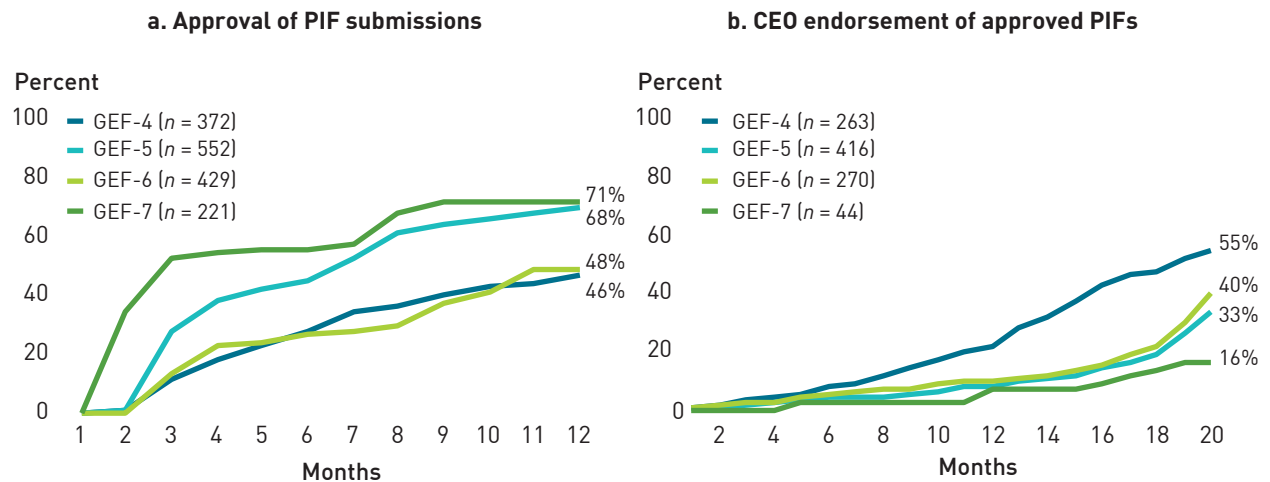
Source: GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

## ACTIVITY CYCLE EFFICIENCY

GEF Portal data on full-size stand-alone project proposals show that approvals for GEF-7 PIF submissions were achieved at a faster rate than during preceding replenishment periods (figure 2.12). During GEF-6, fluctuations in the international currency market (i.e., appreciation of the dollar) led to a shortfall in the GEF replenishment because several major donors had made commitments in other currencies. The GEF addressed this shortfall by prioritizing funding for LDCs and SIDS and by managing the level of approvals to align with the resources available. This strategy resulted in slow approval of PIFs during GEF-6 (GEF IEO 2018b). During GEF-7, PIF approval was quicker than in preceding periods. It appears that, overall, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has not affected the efficiency of this stage of the cycle.

As to the stage from PIF approval to CEO endorsement, more time was required than in previous periods for GEF-7 PIF approvals to obtain CEO endorsement. At the end of 18 months, only 14 percent of the approved GEF-7 PIFs had been endorsed by the CEO, compared to 22 percent of GEF-6 PIF approvals. In December 2018, the GEF Council approved the new Project Cancellation Policy, under which a project must be endorsed by the GEF CEO within 18 months of PIF approval. On June 1, 2020, taking note of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the GEF CEO relaxed this standard by 6 additional months, for a total of 24 months from PIF approval to CEO endorsement. Of the GEF-7 proposals that received PIF approval at least 24 months prior, 30 percent had received CEO endorsement within 24 months of approval. Thus, preparation of detailed proposals for CEO endorsement is delayed over and above the relaxation

**Figure 2.12** Months needed for stand-alone full-size project proposals to reach next approval stage, by replenishment period



Source: GEF IEO terminal evaluation review data set.

provided by the CEO. For comparison, 63 percent of GEF-6 projects received CEO endorsement within 24 months of PIF approval. It is likely that the PIF approval to CEO endorsement stage was affected by the pandemic, because detailed project

preparation requires stakeholder consultations, surveys, and the use of consultants. In comparison, PIF preparation may not require the kinds of activities that were restricted by the pandemic.

# Progress in achieving GEF-5 environmental results targets

**G**EF programming directions documents have included corporate environmental results targets since GEF-3 (GEF 2002). Since 2016, the GEF Secretariat has provided regular updates on progress toward achieving the corporate results of the ongoing replenishment period. The GEF IEO's efforts to assess progress in meeting corporate results targets started in 2013, when it presented its analysis on progress on the GEF-5 targets at the GEF-6 replenishment meetings. However, this reporting has been based on the aggregation of targets presented in the proposals of the approved projects and not on actual results on the ground. Moreover, reporting on actual achievement of environmental targets for a replenishment period has not yet been undertaken.

The analysis presented in this chapter addresses this information gap. It focuses on the achievement of GEF-5 targets because only eight GEF-6 projects, and none of the GEF-7 projects, had been completed as of September 2020. The analysis is based on self-reported data by the GEF Agencies for 194 GEF-5 projects for which terminal evaluations had been submitted through September 2020. The analysis shows that the GEF is on track to meet the GEF-5 targets for 7 of the 13 corporate environmental results indicators. For the remainder, data

are either insufficient (four indicators) or the targets are unlikely to be met (two indicators).

## 3.1 Methodology

The GEF-5 programming document provides the corporate result targets for several indicators of GEF performance (GEF 2010). Of these, the GEF IEO has tracked 13 that correspond to the environmental results of GEF activities. The programming document predicts that, on average, projects will achieve 80 percent of their targeted results. Enabling activities and projects that are foundational (i.e., projects that conduct targeted research and diagnostic analyses) may not be expected to provide attributable environmental results within a project's implementation time frame.

The analysis presented here is based on self-reported results for 104 completed GEF-5 projects. The analysis of progress in achieving the environmental results targets of the GEF-5 presented in OPS6 aggregated the targets presented in the project proposals of 686 projects. Of these, 194 projects have been completed. The project documents, terminal evaluations, and tracking tools for these projects were reviewed to gather data on their self-reported achievement of environmental

results. The figures provided in the terminal evaluations and tracking tools were taken at face value. Although the data were screened to make sure that they were in the units corresponding to the targets, the figures were not validated further.

Of the 194 projects, 53 did not identify targets in the project documents. Of the 141 projects for which environmental targets were provided, for 37 projects Agencies either did not provide data on actual achievement (34 projects) or the data were inaccessible due to format and language (3 projects). The actual results data for the remaining 104 projects were tabulated. Of the 141 projects for which targets were provided, several projects provided targets for multiple indicators. In all, 180 targets were provided in the project documents, and data on actual achievement were reported for 144 targets. Thus, data on actual achievement were provided in 80 percent of instances where it was expected.

## 3.2 Findings

The data show that the GEF is on track to meet the GEF-5 targets for 7 of the 13 results indicators presented in [table 3.1](#). For others, it is either still too early to make such a determination (four indicators) or targets are unlikely to be met (two indicators).

The GEF is on track to meet its GEF-5 target of 500 metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e) avoidance. Against this target, the GEF-5 project proposals together committed to 2,886 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e avoidance. The 22 projects for which data on ex ante targets and achievement at project completion are available are estimated to have achieved 340 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e avoidance compared to their aggregate target of 248 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e. Similarly, against the corporate results target of 23,000 Mt of disposal/decontamination of PCBs and related wastes, the approved projects collectively aimed at delivering disposal of

38,860 Mt. The three projects that aimed to contribute to this target collectively met it.

Other indicators for which targets are likely to be achieved are new renewable energy capacity installed; demonstration of three to four innovative technologies for climate change mitigation; CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions avoided from land use, land-use change, and forestry; multistate cooperation for transboundary water systems; and multistate cooperation for large marine ecosystems. For these indicators, the aggregate of project-level targets and achievement so far gives confidence that the GEF is on track to achieve these targets.

The GEF is unlikely to meet the GEF-5 targets for agricultural/rangeland systems under sustainable land management and wider landscapes under sustainable management. The corporate targets for these indicators were already higher than the aggregate of the relevant targets of approved GEF-5 projects. The data for projects already completed show that achievements are also below the targets.

For the remaining four indicators, the picture will become clearer as more projects are completed. For example, the aggregate of project-level targets for the environmentally safe disposal of obsolete pesticides, including persistent organic pollutants indicator is slightly higher than the corporate target. However, none of the projects completed so far were expected to contribute to achievement of this target. As projects that address this target are completed, a clearer picture will emerge.

Because the GEF Portal does not track the achievement of corporate results for projects approved before GEF-6, tracking progress to achievement of results for GEF-5 will need to continue as a separate exercise. In the next four years, as most of the projects from GEF-5 are completed, it will be possible to present a fuller picture of actual achievements for the period. The portal does allow for tracking results from GEF-6 onward; therefore,

**Table 3.1 GEF-5 target achievement**

Indicator of environmental results	GEF-5 target	Total of targets in proposals	Completed projects				Likelihood of meeting target
			% provide ex ante target	% provide data on actual result	Aggregate target <sup>a</sup>	Achieved at completion <sup>a</sup>	
Effective conservation and management of protected areas	170 mil. ha	165.33 mil. ha	33	32	61.18 mil. ha	39.52 mil. ha	Too early to assess
Sustainable use and management of biodiversity in land and seascapes	60 mil. ha	60.18 mil. ha	28	21	8.35 mil. ha	6.97 mil. ha	Too early to assess
Environmentally safe disposal of obsolete pesticides including POPs	10,000 tons	11,146 tons	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Too early to assess
Disposal/ decontamination of PCBs and related wastes	23,000 tons	38,860 tons	3	3	1,357 tons	1,516 tons	On track
CO <sub>2</sub> e emissions avoided	500 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> e	2,886 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> e	26	22	247.99 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> e	339.59 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> e	On track
Climate change mitigation: demonstration of 3–4 innovative technologies <sup>b</sup>	10–15 countries	26 countries	16	12	17 countries	54 countries	On track (achieved)
New renewable energy capacity installed	500 MW	1,430 MW	7	6	39.60 MW	33.73 MW	On track
CO <sub>2</sub> e emissions avoided from land use, land-use change, and forestry	315–675 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> e	549 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> e	9	9	36.03 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> e	33.92 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> e	On track
Multistate cooperation for transboundary water systems	6–7 systems	10 systems	5	3	3 systems	3 systems	On track
Multistate cooperation for LMEs	5–6 LMEs	11 LMEs	6	4	4 LMEs	4 LMEs	On track
Agricultural/rangeland systems under sustainable land management	100 mil. ha	7.59 mil. ha	17	13	3.35 mil. ha	1.61 mil. ha	Unlikely to be met
Forest landscapes under sustainable forest management	0.20 mil. ha	1.07 mil. ha	8	6	0.21 mil. ha	0.12 mil. ha	Too early to assess
Wider landscapes under sustainable management	175 mil. ha	78.16 mil. ha	22	13	3.25 mil. ha	2.94 mil. ha	Unlikely to be met

**Sources:** replenishment targets from GEF-5 Programming Directions for targets; aggregate of targets in project proposals from OPS6 performance and progress to impact; data on actual achievements from terminal evaluations and tracking tools for completed GEF-5 projects.

**Note:** n.a. = not applicable; LME = large marine ecosystems; MW = megawatt; POPs = persistent organic pollutants.

a. Aggregate target for projects that provide achievement data (including no achievement) at implementation completion.

b. Targets given in terms of number of countries where innovative technologies have been demonstrated; while more technologies than targeted have been demonstrated, it is difficult to present a precise count.

a separate exercise to tabulate results may not be needed for the GEF-6 and GEF-7 periods.

Progress thus far also raises the question of target setting for the GEF-5 period. For some, such as multistate cooperation for transboundary water systems and large marine ecosystems and CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions avoided, the aggregate of project-level targets easily exceeded the corporate targets. Others, such as those related to sustainable land management, seem too aspirational and

unrealistic. Both extremes of target setting—too easy or too difficult—may not be desirable, because they reduce the incentives for efficient use of GEF resources. Target setting for GEF-6 and GEF-7 was recalibrated based on experience, and targets for these periods seem to strike a better balance between ambition and pragmatism.



# Qualitative analysis of factors affecting performance

Qualitative analysis is useful in helping to understand the factors, relationships, and mechanisms that drive patterns observed in data. APRs have traditionally drawn more from quantitative analysis, although some have included qualitative analyses in the narrative. For example, APR 2008 includes a qualitative analysis of the factors associated with lower outcome achievements (GEF IEO 2009). Similarly, APR 2014 includes a qualitative analysis of the lessons reported in the terminal evaluations. However, those efforts were narrowly targeted (GEF IEO 2015).

This chapter presents the findings of a more comprehensive qualitative analysis of the factors, relationships, and mechanisms affecting project performance. This analysis shows that the selection and involvement of suitable partners in project preparation, alignment of project design with needs and capacities, and active engagement of stakeholders and communities in implementation foster country ownership and enhance the likelihood of sustainability. It also shows that the involvement of key stakeholders in project design and the incorporation of lessons facilitate project implementation. Further, it shows that delays may result in less attention to the establishment of the project baseline, less time for learning and improving

based on project M&E, and low stakeholder interest. Additionally, inadequate materialization of cofinancing may lead to project delays and dropped or scaled-down activities. The analysis also shows that attention to project M&E may facilitate adaptive management.

## 4.1 Methodology

The objective of the review was to deepen the understanding of the factors and interconnections that affect project implementation and results, understand observed patterns within their context, and identify the mechanisms that drive these patterns. The review synthesized information provided in the terminal evaluation reports of completed GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects. The experiences from these projects are likely to be more relevant to present-day projects than from projects approved in preceding periods.

This review covers a representative sample of GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects for which terminal evaluations had been submitted through 2019. Terminal evaluations for 161 projects—156 for GEF-5 and 5 for GEF-6—had been submitted. Seventy-five terminal evaluations (47 percent) were covered in the qualitative analysis. A list of the 75 terminal

evaluations covered in this analysis is presented in [annex C](#).

Analyses on project outcomes (GEF IEO 2015) and sustainability (GEF IEO 2019) presented in previous APRs were examined to identify factors likely to be relevant for this qualitative review. The GEF IEO's terminal evaluation review form provided a useful framework for classifying project outcomes. A blended deductive and inductive approach was applied to build on prior findings to identify new factors as they emerged, and to develop and modify the coding scheme. NVivo qualitative analysis software was used for analyzing and coding terminal evaluations to identify links between certain project characteristics or experiences (factors) and performance.

Ninety-four factors and 38 linkages (relationships or pathways between factors) that can affect project outcomes and the sustainability of results were identified. Factors include variables related to the materialization of cofinancing, community participation in project design and implementation, risk assessment or management, the use of M&E data for learning and improvement, and country ownership, among others. Some factors were reported more frequently than others;<sup>1</sup> some factors affect performance positively, while others affect it negatively; and some factors are linked to one another. The analysis explored these linkages to assess how one factor causes another. For example, several terminal evaluations report issues related to continuity (low turnover) in project staff or administration, which was often found to facilitate effective coordination of, and engagement with, stakeholders and institutions. Given that this pattern was

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter, the following descriptors are used to indicate a numerical range of terminal evaluations coded: "a few" (2–4), "some" or "several" (5–10), "a number" (11–20), "many" (about one-third to one-half of all terminal evaluations), and "the majority" or "most" (at least over half of all terminal evaluations).

observed in several projects, a linkage emerged: continuity in project staff or administration facilitates effective coordination among partners, stakeholders, or institutions.

The analysis reviewed purposively selected GEF-5 and GEF-6 projects. Projects approved in preceding periods may have somewhat different variables at play or similar variables with somewhat different results. Moreover, most projects from the GEF-5 and GEF-6 period are still under implementation. Those covered in this review represent the projects that, on average, were approved earlier in the replenishment period, of shorter duration, and likely to have been completed on schedule.<sup>2</sup> Coding and analysis were limited to the assessment and language provided in the terminal evaluation. While this qualitative review aimed to identify definitive linkages between factors, expected outcomes, and sustainability, many terminal evaluations did not provide explicit statements as such. This review did not make assumptions or interpretations beyond what was explicitly discussed in the terminal evaluations.

## 4.2 Findings

### OUTCOMES

The analysis shows that adaptive management is a key enabler of outcome achievements for several projects. Most terminal evaluations note instances of adaptive management, and a few explain its ripple effects. For example, Improving Clean Bus Operations and Management in China (GEF ID 5627), implemented by the Asian Development Bank, dropped its small grants scheme aimed at development of management tools. The companies had already established systems and were reluctant to share their financial data for integration

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<sup>2</sup> As such, almost all of the projects included in this review are GEF-5 projects.

with bus performance data. Instead, the project developed and shared a tool with the companies for calculating greenhouse gas emissions and the cost of bus ownership. It also fitted 100 buses with equipment to monitor passenger use for better bus scheduling and passenger service. These adaptive measures helped the project contribute to its objective of maximizing energy efficiency and greenhouse gas abatement from clean buses more effectively.

Several projects did not achieve the expected level of outcomes or had negative unintended outcomes. These were typically due to a combination of implementation issues such as delays, procedural constraints, or procurement challenges. For example, the IFAD-implemented Promoting Value Chain Approach to Adaptation in Agriculture in Ghana (GEF ID 4368) aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by introducing innovative and more efficient gasifiers and biogas plants but was beset by delays and procurement challenges that rendered it unable to meet its objectives. The automated system for disseminating weather-related information to farmers established by the UNDP-implemented project Scaling Up Adaptation in Zimbabwe with a Focus on Rural Livelihoods (GEF ID 4960) was not functional due to the limited capacities of the Meteorological Services Department and the lack of ability of the Agricultural Technical and Extension Services to operate the equipment.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Most terminal evaluations discuss factors affecting sustainability. For example, selection and involvement of appropriate partners in project design, alignment of project design with existing needs and capacities, and effective engagement of stakeholders and communities in project implementation are factors reported to enhance sustainability and country ownership simultaneously.

About a third of terminal evaluations highlight strong engagement, commitment, or shared vision of partners or communities in project design. The experiences converge around two themes, where wider engagement (1) facilitates effective coordination during project implementation, and (2) encourages commitment to and ownership of project outcomes. For example, the terminal evaluation for the UNDP-implemented Renewable Energy for the City of Marrakech's Bus Rapid Transit System (GEF ID 9567) reports that the project's participatory and inclusive approach of mobilizing and involving stakeholders from inception ensured optimal ownership, stakeholders were able to express their commitment to project objectives and results, and the participatory approach was maintained throughout implementation.

Although several terminal evaluations indicate that the project design aligned well with country needs and capacities, only a few identified the effects of a well-planned design on project implementation. In those instances, the project design's alignment facilitated country ownership and enhanced likelihood of long-term sustainability. For example, the UNDP-implemented project Harmonization of Information Management for Improved Knowledge and Monitoring of the Global Environment in Georgia (GEF ID 5467) assessed beneficiaries' needs, designed the project to respond to national priorities, and set realistic objectives that were adapted to the local context. These measures ensured ownership by beneficiaries and increased the likelihood of long-term sustainability of project achievements.

Most terminal evaluations highlight effective partner, stakeholder, or institutional engagement and coordination during project implementation. However, only a few terminal evaluations detail the positive effects of this coordination—that it enables country ownership. For example, the terminal evaluation for the UNDP-implemented project Capacity Building for the Strategic Planning and Management of Natural Resources in Belize (GEF ID 5048)

finds that its partnership approach was critical to its success, because it brought key players together to discuss progress, challenges, and solutions, while preventing overlap across the project's interventions. This approach facilitated capacity development for key entities and reduced risks to benefit continuation.

About one-third of terminal evaluations indicate a high degree of community participation in project implementation. Some note the direct benefits of this active engagement, including strong ownership of project results and a commitment to sustain these results beyond the project's end. Indeed, a high level of community participation in project implementation was the only factor directly identified as fostering this ongoing engagement. For example, the terminal evaluation of the UNDP-implemented Building a Multiple-Use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in Iran (GEF ID 4470) reports that the project had good engagement with local communities, having taken the time to build trust and understand the local culture. In turn, these communities demonstrated a strong sense of ownership, advocating for the protection of forests and assuming responsibility to prevent illegal tree felling and land clearing. The terminal evaluation for the Scaling Up Adaptation in Zimbabwe with a Focus on Rural Livelihoods notes that involving project beneficiaries in decision making promoted ownership of the initiatives. At one site, beneficiaries had taken on the responsibility of maintaining the canal system that delivered their water and indicated that they would continue to do so because they grasped the importance of local action on issues that affected their livelihoods.

For the majority of projects, terminal evaluations report that strong government support is crucial for the sustainability of project outcomes. For example, having been made aware of the dangers posed by lead in paint through the regional UNEP-implemented Lead Paint Elimination Project

in Africa (GEF ID 5633), the office of the president in one country gave orders to its ministry of industry to lead a committee to address the issue, which resulted in appropriate legislation. In the Cleantech Programme for Small and Medium Enterprises in South Africa implemented by UNIDO (GEF ID 5515), several government entities joined as cofinancing partners, became members of the project steering committee, and actively guided and secured the sustainability of their investment's impact.

## PROJECT PREPARATION AND DESIGN

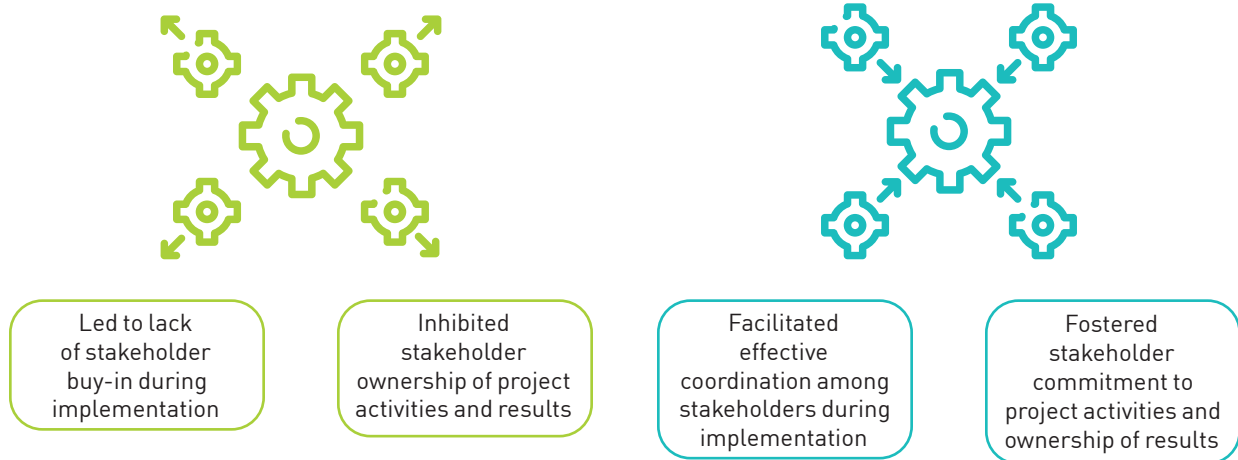
Engagement of key stakeholders in project preparation facilitates effective coordination during implementation and encourages ownership. Many terminal evaluations highlight the strong engagement, commitment, or shared vision of partners or communities in project design. High stakeholder engagement in project design led to more effective coordination during implementation, as well as greater commitment to and ownership of project outcomes (figure 4.1). For example, the terminal evaluation of the UNDP-implemented initiative Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area Landscape (GEF ID 4653) notes that broad stakeholder engagement across various administrative levels in project design improved cross-sectoral collaboration and enhanced engagement throughout the project. The UNDP-implemented Addressing the Risks of Climate-induced Disasters through Enhanced National and Local Capacity (GEF ID 4976) actively engaged stakeholders in project design, decision making, planning, implementing, and monitoring, which resulted in greater confidence and ownership among stakeholders.

In contrast, failure to engage key stakeholders seems to inhibit support and ownership during implementation. The UNDP-implemented Sustainable Land and Forest Management Project in the Greater Caucasus Landscape (GEF ID 4332)

**Figure 4.1** Effect of lack of involvement of key stakeholders in project preparation and design

**LACK** of engagement, commitment, or shared vision of partners or communities in project design

**STRONG** engagement, commitment, or shared vision of partners or communities in project design



had limited buy-in from government counterparts in Azerbaijan because their involvement was not sought for formulating key issues for the project and their reservations about the project approach were not addressed. Similarly, the UNEP-implemented global project Assisting LDCs with Country-Driven Processes to Advance National Adaptation Plans (GEF ID 5320) had low ownership because participating countries had little influence on the project design and partners were not mobilized to assist.

Only a few terminal evaluations directly discuss the consequences of the misalignment of partner or stakeholder needs or capacities with project design. Where consequences are reported, the lack of alignment led to delays or the need for projects to scale back their approach or drop activities. For example, with little experience in integrating climate change adaptation measures in the local sector to build on, as well as a lack of understanding of the vulnerabilities in the project area, the World Bank-implemented Adaptation of Nicaragua's Water Supplies to Climate Change project (GEF ID 4492) resulted in lengthy delays because additional technical studies were necessary. The Improving Clean Bus Operations and Management

in China project designed an activity around monitoring fuel consumption to encourage clean busing, but had to drop this activity upon learning that bus companies already had their own established monitoring systems and were unwilling to share their bus performance data.

Overall, the design of projects that incorporate prior knowledge and experience is reported to be of higher quality. About half of the terminal evaluations note that prior knowledge and experience (e.g., learning from related projects) was incorporated into project design. Only a few evaluations highlight the direct benefits of incorporating this knowledge—namely, that it improves readiness and quality at project start. The terminal evaluation of the UNDP-implemented project Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Wetland Protected Area System in Hainan, China (GEF ID 4811) clearly articulates this advantage:

significant effort was made during the project design to incorporate lessons from previous and other relevant projects, which has been a significant positive factor in ensuring that the project design is sensible, logical and practical, and which has assisted greatly in the successful implementation of the Project. (Raaymakers and Yue 2018, 45)

Unrealistic objectives, an overly broad scope, or inadequate resources also lead to delays or missed targets. About one-third of terminal evaluations report that the project was designed with unrealistic objectives or an overly broad scope. A few terminal evaluations discuss the consequences of these flaws. The Sustainable Land and Forest Management in the Greater Caucasus project experienced a delay of nearly a year between project inception and the start of activities because key stakeholders felt the scope was too broad and were hesitant to endorse the project. The Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in Iran project achieved only 14 percent of its target of area covered by community-based forest management plans, because the target was unrealistic, given the sector and the regional context. About a third of terminal evaluations indicate that time, effort, or resources were underestimated in project design, with the most common consequence being a delay in project implementation.

## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Many factors related to project implementation affect outcomes and sustainability, including delays, continuity of or turnover in project administration, stakeholder coordination, capacities of the project implementation team, and community participation.

### Delays

Nearly all projects experienced delays that affected implementation. This is the most common theme noted in terminal evaluations (figure 4.2). Many factors caused project delays, and these delays had ripple effects on implementation. Nearly half of the terminal evaluations identify issues with project implementation—including challenges with procurement, technology, and logistics—that resulted in delays. Ineffective partner or stakeholder coordination is also noted in several terminal evaluations.

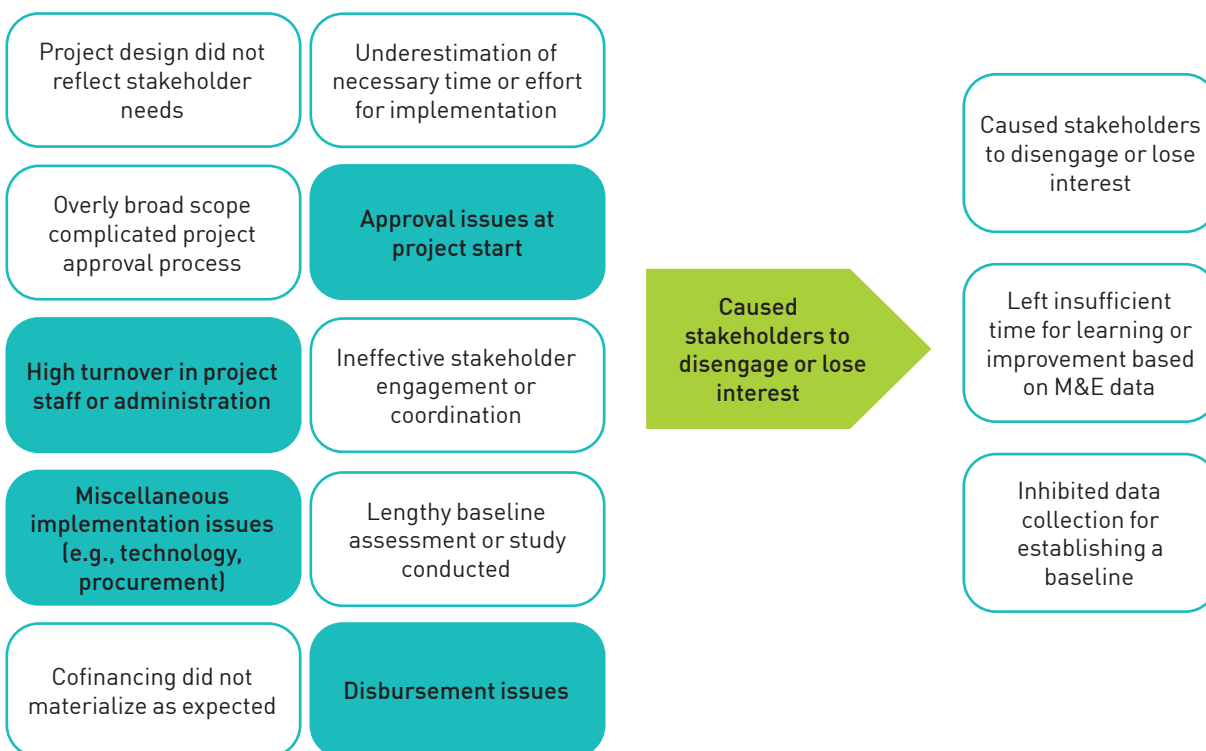
Although most do not identify direct consequences from poor coordination, a few note that it resulted in implementation delays. For example, the FAO-implemented project Mainstreaming of the Use and Conservation of Agrobiodiversity in Public Policies through Integrated Strategies and In Situ Implementation in Three Provinces in the Andean Highlands (GEF ID 4777) was challenged by financial procedures for acquiring materials that impeded project implementation. There was a delay of several months in purchasing and delivering seeds to producers, who then missed important critical deadlines of the growing season.

In some instances, project delays hindered M&E activities such as the collection of baseline data, or left insufficient time for learning and improvement. In a few instances, delays caused stakeholders to disengage or lose interest in the project, creating additional implementation challenges. For example, the UNDP-implemented Capacity Building for Mainstreaming MEA [multilateral environmental agreement] Objectives into Inter-Ministerial Structures and Mechanisms (GEF ID 5028) project in Costa Rica planned to administer surveys to collect baseline data. However, a delayed start due to political circumstances and administrative turnover made the survey no longer feasible. As a result, appropriate indicators were not established, and the monitoring of some activities suffered. The FAO-implemented Climate Change Adaptation to Reduce Land Degradation (GEF ID 4616) project in El Salvador successfully used participatory processes to engage partners in the design phase, which generated high expectations and commitment. However, several years of delays (for various reasons) resulted in decreased engagement and enthusiasm from partners that took time to rebuild.

### Staff turnover

High turnover of project or administrative staff is common and often results in delays, limited collection and use of M&E data, and lower outcome

**Figure 4.2** The causes and consequences of project delays



**Note:** Shaded boxes are the most commonly cited causes.

achievements. About half of the terminal evaluations report difficulties in recruitment or high staff turnover, which often disrupt project activities and result in a loss of institutional memory. High staff turnover also has a negative impact on project M&E, hindering the collection and utilization of data for learning and improvement. A few terminal evaluations provide details on how the high turnover adversely affected project outcomes. For example, the World Bank–implemented Watershed Approach to Sustainable Coffee Production (GEF ID 4631) project in Burundi was without an M&E specialist for a year, during which time data were not collected or aggregated. The terminal evaluation of the Mainstreaming of the Use and Conservation of Agrobiodiversity in Public Policies project in Ecuador reports that extensive institutional changes at the executing agency during project design and implementation contributed to the project’s losing a year. Other projects—including Strengthening

the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area Landscape in China; the UNDP–implemented Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Coastal and Marine Protected Areas in Guatemala (GEF ID 4716); and the UNDP–implemented Generating, Accessing and Using Information and Knowledge Related to the Three Rio Conventions in Cambodia (GEF ID 5295)—experienced high turnover of personnel that diminished project quality, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Conversely, continuity (low turnover) in project staff enables more effective coordination with stakeholders. Several terminal evaluations highlight instances where continuity in project staff benefited project implementation by facilitating effective coordination with project partners and stakeholders. For example, the terminal evaluation of the Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas in Georgia (GEF ID 4835)

finds that staff continuity within the implementing Agency, UNDP, was hugely beneficial to building and maintaining a strong working relationship with executing partners.

### Stakeholder coordination

Engagement of stakeholders in project design, continuity in project administration, and strong implementation teams facilitate better coordination with stakeholders. Most of the terminal evaluations highlight effective partner, stakeholder, or institutional engagement or coordination during project implementation. For example, the Benin Forests and Adjacent Lands Management (GEF ID 5215) project implemented by the World Bank had only two technical leads over a 12-year implementation period, which enhanced implementation and supervision, and allowed for strong cooperation and responsiveness between the World Bank and project management teams. The terminal evaluation of the Harmonization of Information Management for Improved Knowledge and Monitoring of the Global Environment in Georgia reports that the project's ability to maximize efficiency was the result of a high-quality implementation team, which used a participatory approach and transparent communication to effectively engage stakeholders. A few terminal evaluations also note that effective coordination of stakeholders enabled country ownership. About one-third of terminal evaluations explicitly discuss the effectiveness of the project implementation team. Several terminal evaluations note that a strong implementation team facilitated effective coordination among project partners and stakeholders.

### Finance

Terminal evaluations discuss project finance-related issues such as materialization of cofinancing and disbursement, along with their consequences. Cofinancing shortfalls led to delays, dropping, or scaling down of activities. About

one-third of the projects faced issues related to nonmaterialization or delayed materialization of cofinancing. Although most terminal evaluations do not report the implications of cofinancing shortfalls, some note delays in implementation or the need to drop activities or scale back project approaches. For example, the Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity project in Iran received less than 5 percent of expected cofinancing and had to reduce significantly the number of communities participating in the pilots. The UNEP-implemented project Reducing Global and Local Environmental Risks from Primary Mercury Mining in the Kyrgyz Republic (GEF ID 4985) had to reduce the coverage of a health survey planned for 5,000 people to only 200.

Disbursement-related issues commonly resulted in implementation delays. The Liberia Electricity System Enhancement (GEF ID 4336) project implemented by the World Bank faced procedural disbursement challenges from the start, which delayed initiation of project activities. This situation was complicated by poor information exchange between the project's finance and procurement units, causing further negative impacts on the project's disbursement ratio. Over one-third of terminal evaluations identify additional themes related to finance—a high degree of efficiency, or the materialization of cofinancing as expected or exceeding expectations—without detailing their implications, though both were noted as positive for project implementation or outcomes.

### Monitoring and evaluation

The terminal evaluations also discuss several themes pertaining to M&E; one of these—the use of M&E data for learning and improvement—was linked to positive results. Using M&E data for learning and improvement encouraged adaptive management. More than half of the terminal evaluations report the use of M&E data for learning



and improvement. The consequences of these efforts differed, but one shared result was that the use of M&E data by the project teams enabled adaptive management. This generally occurred when project teams reviewed periodic progress reports, noted challenges or gaps, and revised or improved project implementation accordingly. For example, the continuous review of findings from M&E activities enabled the Capacity Building for Mainstreaming MEA [multilateral environmental agreement] Objectives project in Costa Rica to determine that it needed to shift the focus of certain activities, request a no-cost extension, and reconfigure its management approach to take a more proactive role in project implementation. The Liberia Electricity System Enhancement project used electricity consumption data from newly connected households to identify issues, such as meter malfunction and irregular water supply, in a timely manner and resolve these issues accordingly.

In general, terminal evaluations mention issues related to M&E design and implementation but do not discuss their consequences. For instance, about one-third of terminal evaluations highlight a strong results framework or appropriate indicators as advantageous for project implementation without explaining how. Similarly, about half of the terminal evaluations praise a sound theory of change or program logic, or strong project monitoring or reporting, but do not identify the implications of these strengths. The consequences of weak M&E design and implementation are also not elaborated, despite one-third of terminal evaluations indicating significant data or reporting errors and nearly half indicating inappropriate or inadequate indicators. These information gaps limit understanding of the various factors that can positively or negatively affect the achievement and sustainability of project results.

# Effect of COVID-19 on GEF projects

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the countries that the GEF serves. The effect of the pandemic at the global, national, local, and individual levels has been reported regularly through mainstream and social media. Several international development organizations have reported how the pandemic has affected their operations, contributing to an emerging understanding of how the pandemic is affecting international development. The reporting on the pandemic's effects on GEF activities has so far been anecdotal and does not provide an account of experiences from all projects that were under implementation. The review presented in this chapter addresses this gap in systematic information.

The review examined project implementation reports of 846 GEF projects that were under implementation in FY 2020. Interviews of 21 key informants covering 14 projects were conducted to verify, expand on, and update information available through the PIRs.

The review found that the pandemic affected at least 88 percent of the GEF projects. The pandemic caused delay in implementation (69 percent); suspension of activities (34 percent); and, in a few instances, cancellation of activities (9 percent).

Projects reliant on physical site-based activities were disproportionately affected, as were those sensitive to crop timelines, involved in sectors more exposed to the global economy, or reliant on private sector investors. Project teams adopted several measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and adapt to changes in the operating environment, including accelerating or postponing planned activities and shifting to telework and virtual platforms. Barriers to virtual solutions included poor Internet connectivity in some recipient countries, inadequate technical capacity and equipment, and administrative processes that had not yet adapted to online work.

For 12 percent of the projects, the PIRs did not note any effect of the pandemic. Of these projects, 38 percent were close to completion. In comparison, only 14 percent of projects reporting on the effect of COVID-19 were close to completion. Overall among the GEF Agencies, United Nations (UN) entities were more likely to report on the effect of COVID-19 than were the multilateral development banks (MDBs)—93 percent versus 58 percent—which reflects the greater attention the UN Agencies have given to data collection on the topic.

It is still too early to assess the long-term effects of the pandemic, yet there is a high likelihood of underperformance and increased risks to longer-term sustainability. Whether these risks materialize, and if they are accentuated or mitigated, needs to be tracked for better understanding of the effects of the pandemic.

## 5.1 Background

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019, countries responded with nationwide lockdowns to reduce transmission and hospitalization rates. Upon guidance from public health experts and epidemiologists, diverse measures were implemented to minimize person-to-person spread of the virus and mitigate pressure on health and social systems. These restrictions differed from country to country and have changed with time—often cyclically—since early 2020 based upon the progression of the virus across different countries and regions. These measures have included international and national travel bans and restrictions; border closures; social distancing and mask-wearing protocols; shelter-in-place, quarantine, and stay-at-home orders; hygiene and sanitation practices, including handwashing and surface cleaning; and restrictions and guidelines for essential business operations. Many of these restrictions remain in place as of this writing.

In 2020, the GEF Secretariat presented two separate papers addressing the pandemic: “White Paper on GEF COVID-19 Response Strategy” (GEF 2020c) and “The Impact of COVID-19 on GEF Project Preparation and Implementation” (GEF 2020b). The former explores the opportunities for GEF investment in program scale. The latter—which is more relevant to the discussion in this chapter—provides an overview of the responses from across the GEF partnership on how COVID-19 has affected project preparation and implementation. The analysis presented by the GEF Secretariat is based on

a survey of GEF Agencies, an online survey of the GEF operational focal points (OFPs), regional OFP workshops, and discussions during the GEF Agency retreat. The respondents to the Agency survey perceived the COVID-19 pandemic to have had a greater effect on implementation and supervision than on project preparation and reporting. A vast majority of OFPs responded that the pandemic had affected project preparation, implementation, supervision, and activities. While the mechanisms through which the pandemic has affected activities is well explained in the paper, how individual projects have been affected and how they have adapted is not captured other than through anecdotal evidence.

This review deepens the understanding of the impacts of the pandemic across the whole GEF portfolio by systematically synthesizing data on reported effects of COVID-19 on projects. It includes a structured synthesis assessing how the pandemic has affected individual GEF projects, characterizing these effects and exploring how project teams on the ground have adapted (or not) to this situation.

## 5.2 Methodology

### SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

This chapter examines the effect of COVID-19 on GEF-funded projects that were under implementation through FY 2020. Thus, it is primarily focused on effects observed during the first two quarters of 2020 (January–June) which encompassed earlier stages of the pandemic. Additional information on subsequent effects was collated through key informant interviews, extending the period covered through March 2021 for a sample of projects.

The analysis aimed to address the following three questions:

- How is COVID-19 affecting project implementation?
- How is COVID-19 affecting achievement of results?
- How are projects addressing these effects?

## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Several surveys and studies on the early and ongoing effects of COVID-19 have already been produced by international development organizations (CEPF 2020; GEF 2020b; Martin, Buteau, and Gehling 2020; Voss 2020). These early studies were reviewed to develop an evaluation framework for characterizing typologies of project activities, implementation effects, and mitigation measures. This framework was developed into a codebook for data extraction ([annex E](#)).

## DOCUMENT REVIEW AND CONTENT ANALYSIS

The primary method for data collection was the review, analysis and synthesis of qualitative data reported in project-level self-evaluations. The self-evaluation reports included PIRs and mid-term reviews (MTRs). Terminal evaluations were not used because those that were available did not cover the period of interest.

The starting point was an Excel file provided by the GEF Portal team on the projects that were under implementation during FY 2020 along with links to the relevant documents. This file included 923 records, 74 of which were eliminated because they were either duplicates (43 entries) or no PIR/MTR could be accessed through the provided link (31 entries). The remaining 846 projects were covered by the review.

Reports were downloaded as portable document format (PDF) files, organized, and managed in an online evidence synthesis support tool, [Colandr](#),

which enables the tagging, tracking, and searching of documents and sections of text. A sample of the full reports was read and reviewed to design and test a codebook for data extraction. Following the development of the codebook, the reviewer searched within reports by the keywords “COVID” and/or “COVID-19” and/or “pandemic” and/or “corona” and/or “coronavirus.” Text adjacent to keyword location was read and relevant data extracted. Due to the number and length of reports (up to 100 pages in length), reports were not read in full beyond highlighted passages.

Of the 846 projects covered by this review, 88 percent (742 projects) reported on effects of COVID-19. To assess the reason why effects were not reported for the remainder (104 projects), this group of projects was compared with those reporting effects based on four factors: focal area, lead Agency, project implementation stage,<sup>1</sup> and the GEF replenishment period when the project was approved.

Distribution of projects across focal area and GEF replenishment period were similar for all assessed projects. Projects not reporting effects had 24 percent more projects at the closing phase than projects reporting effects—38 percent for the former compared to 14 percent for the latter. There are variations among the Agencies in terms of whether they report on the effects of COVID-19 ([table 5.1](#)). UNDP, which accounts for 35 percent of the total observations, reports these effects for almost all projects. In general, UN Agencies were more likely to report on effects of COVID-19 (93 percent) than were MDBs (58 percent). At least part of

<sup>1</sup> The project implementation stage was categorized as “starting,” “implementing,” or “closing,” using information on actual start date and expected or actual completion date. Projects with actual start dates between January 2019 and June 2020 were classified as starting. Projects with an actual or expected completion date between January 2019 and January 2020 were classified as closing. All other projects were categorized as implementing.

**Table 5.1** Reporting by GEF Agencies on the effects of COVID-19 on projects under implementation

GEF Agency	Number of projects	Projects for which COVID-19 effects were reported	
		Number	Percentage
Asian Development Bank	16	11	69
Conservation International	12	11	92
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	90	86	96
Inter-American Development Bank	20	14	70
International Fund for Agricultural Development	19	17	89
International Union for Conservation of Nature	10	9	90
United Nations Development Programme	297	295	99
United Nations Environment Programme	166	137	83
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	118	105	89
World Bank	78	39	50
Others	20	18	90
All Agencies	846	742	88

**Note:** Agencies with less than 10 active projects have been combined to form the category “others.”

the difference is due to variation in attention given to reporting on COVID-19 through PIRs. For example, UNDP—which accounts for the greatest share of projects under implementation—included a specific section in its reporting form that required a description of COVID-19 effects. PIRs submitted by Agencies that did not include a specific request for information on COVID-19 effects were less likely to report on such effects. This does not mean that these Agencies did not have other arrangements to keep track of the effect of COVID-19 on their project portfolio, but only that these were less likely to be reported in PIRs submitted to the GEF.

To facilitate analysis, projects were classified by type of country—LDCs, landlocked developing countries, and SIDS—and level of mortality outcomes from the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> Qualifying countries were assigned using three metrics: (1) countries with the highest COVID-19 mortality per capita, (2) countries with the highest COVID mortality in total

deaths, and (3) countries with the lowest COVID mortality or no reported deaths.

## KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

To supplement the data collated in the document review, 13 semistructured interviews were conducted gathering information from 21 key informants representing 14 different projects. The interviews were intended to validate evidence emerging from the desk review, as well as update effects beyond those documented in the PIRs and MTRs. Projects were selected using a purposeful sampling approach to ensure coverage of multiple GEF Agencies, geographical scope (national versus global), and focal areas. The projects sampled for the key informant interviews are not representative of the portfolio.

## LIMITATIONS

Given time and resource constraints, this analysis has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting findings and scoping

<sup>2</sup> Data on mortality rates were sourced from the Global Change Data Lab’s [Our World in Data](#) on May 20, 2021.

future assessments of COVID-19 impacts. The keyword-based search limits the examination to the narrative around the keywords; effects mentioned elsewhere may have been overlooked. Reporting through the PIRs is often limited by format and space, as well as by the topics covered in the template. In some instances where the effects were minor, these may not be reflected in the reporting. The analysis is also limited to reports that cover the early period of the pandemic, which is ongoing.

## 5.3 Findings

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Almost all projects that were under implementation were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the projects examined ( $n = 846$ ), for an overwhelming majority (88 percent) the respective GEF Agency reported effects of the pandemic through the PIRs and MTRs. Sixty-nine percent of projects experienced implementation delays (slowed or postponed to a later date); 34 percent had activities that were put on hold, suspended, or not able to continue until restrictions eased; and 9 percent had activities that were canceled outright. Cancellations were usually attributed to a fixed event in time such as attendance at an international conference or seasonal fieldwork, the nature of which would change if the event were postponed.

There were some differences across categories of projects based on where a project was being implemented ([figure 5.1](#)). Projects in SIDS reported slightly higher numbers of activities delayed. Although activities of global projects were less likely to be delayed or put on hold, they were more likely to be canceled compared to other projects in the GEF portfolio. In terms of global projects, workshops, conferences, and meetings were the most canceled activities. The observed patterns across focal areas are similar, and the incidence of

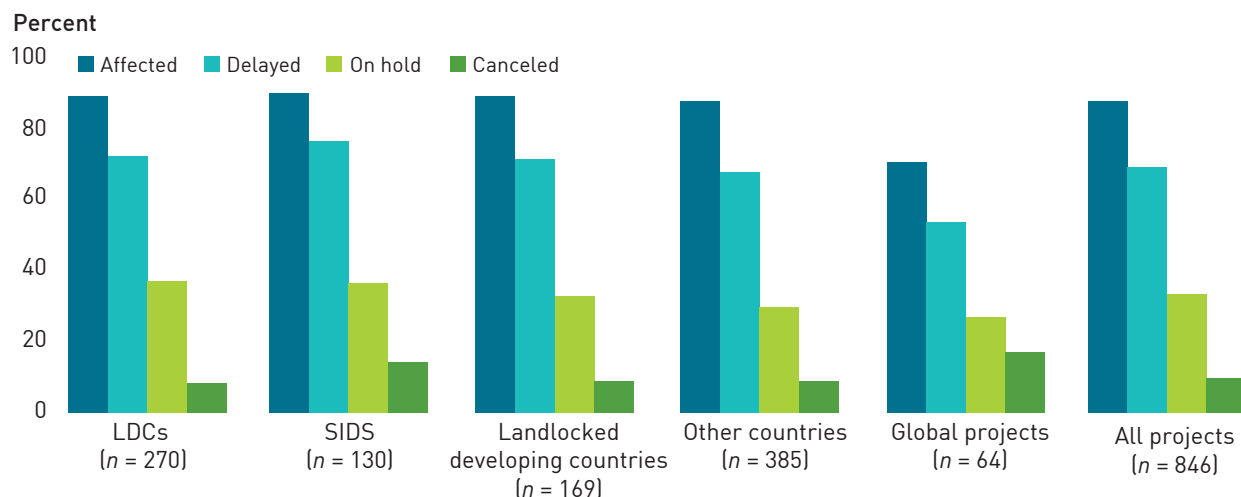
different types of effects does not vary substantially ([figure 5.2](#)).

Most of the affected activities involved some aspect of in-person interaction, such as face-to-face meetings, training, and collection of social data; physical works, including installation, construction, and manufacturing; or activities involving travel, including site visits, fieldwork, and technical assistance, particularly by experts based outside of the country or in other regions ([table 5.2](#)). Other types of activities were affected by slowdowns in administrative systems, including government approvals; formal adoption of management tools, plans, or legal instruments; planning and validation; and licensing and certification. In addition, procurement and delivery of goods and equipment were delayed or stalled by disruption of international and national supply chains.

Among the recipient country categories, SIDS—with 2.2 affected activity categories per project—were the most affected. Global projects, with 1.3 affected activity categories per project, were the least affected. There were also differences across recipient country groups. In SIDS, in-person meetings, fieldwork (including lab work), stakeholder consultations, and procurement were more affected ([table 5.2](#)). In contrast, procurement and installation-related activities were not affected in global projects, given the limited role such activities play in these projects.

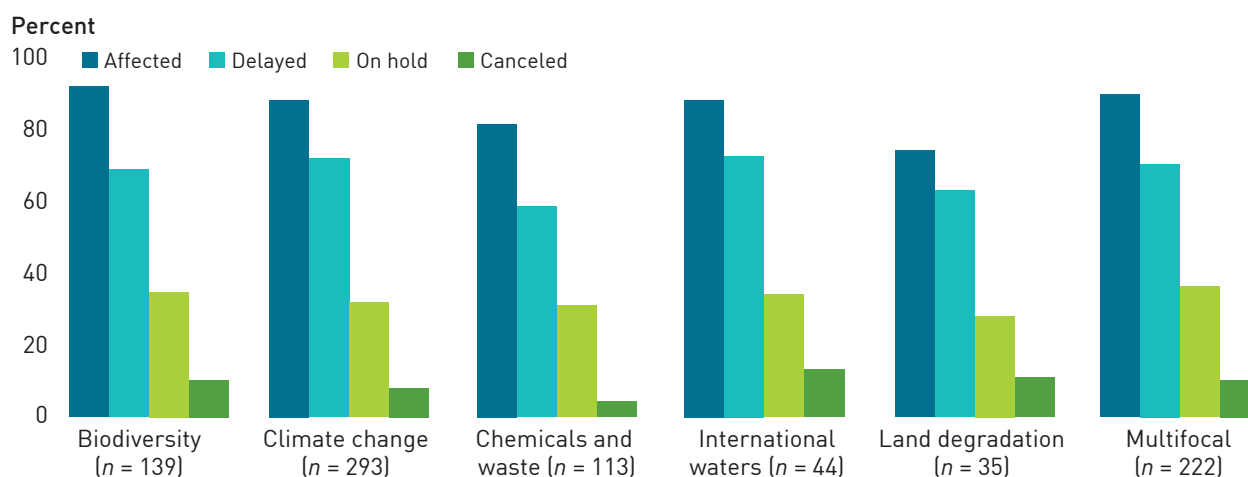
On average, multifocal and biodiversity projects were the most affected, with 2.0 affected activity categories per project; land degradation and chemicals and waste projects were least affected, with 1.5 affected activity categories per project. Focal areas also differed in terms of the types of affected activities. International waters projects were more likely to report effects on in-person meetings and fieldwork ([table 5.3](#)). Climate change projects were more likely to report effects on procurement and installation of

**Figure 5.1** Percentage of projects affected by category of recipient countries and types of effects



**Note:** Categories are not mutually exclusive. “Other countries” include countries that are not LDC, SIDS, or landlocked developing countries.

**Figure 5.2** Percentage of projects affected by GEF focal area and type of effects on activities



**Note:** Chemicals and waste also include projects approved as part of persistent organic pollutants and ozone-depleting substances focal areas.

equipment/infrastructure. Biodiversity projects were more likely to report effects on stakeholder consultations.

Certain types of projects or modes of intervention were disproportionately affected by COVID-19 restrictions, given the nature of project activities and conditions within countries for mitigating effects of the pandemic. For example, activities that involve manual work at a physical location,

such as wind turbine manufacturing in Mexico (Promotion and Development of Local Wind Technologies in Mexico, GEF ID 4132; implemented by the Inter-American Development Bank) or sound environment and PCB disposal in Indonesia (Introduction of an Environmentally Sound Management and Disposal System for PCBs Wastes and PCB Contaminated Equipment in Indonesia, GEF ID 4446; implemented by UNIDO) were usually suspended until lockdown restrictions were eased.

**Table 5.2** Percentage of projects affected, by affected activity and recipient country category

Affected activity	LDCs (n = 270)	SIDS (n = 130)	LLDCs (n = 169)	Other countries (n = 385)	Global (n = 64)	All countries (n = 846)
In-person meetings	48	56	49	38	45	45
Fieldwork/lab work	40	45	37	37	31	38
Training	40	40	43	36	22	38
Stakeholder consultations	28	37	28	24	19	27
Procurement	13	18	17	10	0	12
Installation	8	11	8	9	0	8
Paperwork	8	8	8	6	8	7
Contracting	3	3	2	2	2	2

**Note:** Categories are not mutually exclusive. “Other countries” include countries that are not LDC, SIDS, or landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).

**Table 5.3** Percentage of projects affected, by affected activity and focal area

Affected Activity	Biodiversity (n = 139)	Climate change (n = 293)	Int’l waters (n = 44)	Land degradation (n = 35)	Chemicals and waste (n = 113)	Multifocal (n = 222)	All (n = 846)
In person meetings	52	38	61	34	35	52	45
Fieldwork/lab work	45	28	48	40	35	45	38
Training	43	36	36	31	30	41	38
Stakeholder consultations	38	19	20	34	16	36	27
Procurement	6	16	7	3	13	13	12
Installation	1	16	7	3	5	5	8
Paperwork	10	5	5	6	8	9	7
Contracting	1	3	0	0	4	1	2

**Note:** Chemicals and waste also include projects approved as part of persistent organic pollutants and ozone-depleting substances focal areas.

In other cases, workers were able to access project sites with social distancing measures, such as when installing energy efficient technologies in buildings. Projects with significant stakeholder consultations and trainings were often not able to move activities online during the early months of the pandemic. Biodiversity projects were particularly affected when field sites were in remote areas with poor Internet connectivity or where communities had limited access or capacity to use technology.

Livelihood enhancement initiatives were also particularly affected by the pandemic. These activities,

such as artisanal crafts, small-scale farming, and tourism enterprises, are dependent on external factors (e.g., market access, income from foreign visitors, regional travel) to generate sufficient financial incentives for conservation. In Kenya, for example, the Kenya Wildlife Service, which manages park and wildlife reserves, derives up to 70 percent of its revenue and operations from tourism. International travel restrictions and border closures dramatically affected wildlife-based tourism, with likely long-term effects on management and sustainability of conservation outcomes.



## MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Almost a fifth of projects (21 percent) reported that the pandemic had delayed or affected evaluation activities (MTRs or terminal evaluations). Regular monitoring activities were likely also affected, but the extent of the effects was not systematically reported by projects. Evaluations were affected in several ways—in particular, the procurement and travel of international consultants and conduct of in-country field visits and “ground truthing.” To adapt, projects shifted evaluations to a virtual format with data collection occurring remotely, hired national consultants to conduct assessments, had the international evaluator coordinate with a local consultant or staff, or a combination of these measures. Postponement of evaluations until restrictions ease is likely to result in a lag between the end of activities and assessment, which might result in less availability of key informants and loss of institutional memory.

## PROJECT TEAM AND STAFFING

Twenty-six percent of projects reported some type of effect on staffing or project teams (216 projects). Twenty-one percent mentioned delays in procurement or travel by consultants (181 projects). Five percent reported reduction in staff due to furloughs, hiring freezes, or layoffs (38 projects). As this analysis focuses on funded projects, one would not expect significant job losses within teams, but economic instability from the pandemic may affect employment status and the longer-term financial health of partner organizations.

Only 1 percent (12 projects) explicitly reported health impacts (such as stress, illness, or death from COVID-19) on project staff because of the pandemic. One key informant reported that a project manager in one of the country offices had died from COVID-19. Other projects reported stress among project teams resulting from increased burden to

adapt project activities and manage new working arrangements. In addition, at least eight projects mentioned gender-related effects with female staff, or those from partner organizations, carrying a higher burden due to childcare, home schooling, or caring for elderly family members. At least one project mentioned how the burden of the pandemic on women had affected female participation in stakeholder consultations.

There was a lower incidence of reporting on health impacts in the PIRs covered by this review because the COVID-19 pandemic was less widespread within the GEF recipient countries through June 2020. This is likely to change for the reporting for FY 2021, when many GEF recipient countries experienced more severe waves of the pandemic.

## PROJECT BUDGET AND FINANCING

Twenty-five percent (214 projects) reported effects on finances and budgets, including low or slow financial delivery because activities were postponed or canceled. Nine percent (74 projects) reported a slowdown in disbursements. This was particularly high for projects with planned expenditures for equipment, workshops and travel, or fieldwork. Nine percent (73 projects) reported effects on the materialization of cofinancing. The economic instability resulting from the pandemic was among the contributing factors for delayed or reduced cofinancing from recipient country governments and/or private sector partners.

Four percent (38 projects) reported increased costs as projects adapted to new ways of working. A key informant noted that local social distancing restrictions on travel by people from different households in vehicles meant the project had to pay for additional vehicles and fuel to transport staff. Several projects noted ambiguity about whether they could use the project budget to pay for personal protective equipment and/or COVID-19 testing. For example, in Sumatra, Indonesia, government

regulations required a PCR [polymerase chain reaction] test costing \$20 per test in order to move between regions, for which staff were personally covering the cost.

## MEASURES TO ADDRESS EFFECTS ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Projects adopted measures to address the effects of COVID-19 in 74 percent of cases (624 projects). Commonly adopted measures included shifting to virtual interactions, requests for extension, and contingency planning. In general, projects that were midway through, or in the startup phase of, implementation were more likely to adopt measures to address effects of COVID-19 (table 5.4).

Fifty-one percent (435 projects) reported a shift to virtual interactions, which generally replaced activities that were usually conducted in person and/or involved travel. Projects moved to virtual and teleworking arrangements due to office closures and restrictions on in-person interactions. Projects highlighted both advantages and barriers to shifting ways of working. Modes included web-based communication platforms and tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp, and telephone. Radio, TV, and paper-based outreach were also used to raise awareness with communities and other stakeholders. Thus, a variety of measures

were used and tested. As one key informant highlighted, virtual meetings enabled greater participation and efficient use of project teams. Among the advantages noted were time saved from avoiding travel and cost savings from not having to pay for venues and refreshments for meetings. However, another key informant noted that in-person interactions were more effective in accomplishing the agenda in a timely manner.

Where COVID-19 was not yet present through June 2020 (e.g., Nauru), or restrictions had eased following strict lockdowns (e.g., Thailand), projects continued or resumed in-person events while adapting activities to reduced capacity, social distancing protocols, and biosafety in compliance with national laws. Not all projects were able to shift to virtual interactions; 25 percent (212 projects) reported an inability to move their interactions online.

Twenty-one percent (179 projects) reported use of contingency planning to address challenges due to the pandemic. The planning was aimed at adaptively managing activities and targets, adjusting scheduling of activities, and considering alternative scenarios.

Seven percent (59 projects) hired local staff or partners working in close geographic proximity

**Table 5.4** Percentage of projects that adopted measures to address effects of COVID-19, by adopted measure and project implementation phase

Measure	Closing phase	Midway	Start-up	Phase unclear	All projects
Contingency planning	10	23	22	25	21
Scheduling adjustments	6	15	27	8	14
Accelerate implementation	1	5	7	8	5
Request extension	28	36	18	17	33
Shift to virtual interactions	32	55	60	50	51
Hire locally/use local staff	3	9	0	0	7
Adapt in-person interactions	1	7	7	8	6
Total	145	644	45	12	846

to project sites, or shifted responsibilities to such staff for activities involving travel between and within countries. These local staff might, for example, coordinate with an international consultant or independent external evaluator working in a virtual capacity.

Many projects took measures such as rescheduling, scaling back activities, or shifting priorities to desk-based activities. Given delays and the need to reschedule and postpone activities, 33 percent of projects (279 projects) requested or received approval for extension of the project implementation duration. The length of extension requested varied between 3 and 12 months. Other affected projects (5 percent) planned to accelerate implementation of activities once restrictions eased to make up for lost time.

Although not consistently, projects did highlight several barriers related to technology constraints, nature of project activity, government closures, and travel restrictions that prevented them from adapting to the pandemic effectively. These factors were largely beyond project control. Several projects reported technology-related issues including poor Internet connectivity or a lack of equipment or expertise. Half of the countries reporting issues were LDCs or SIDS. It was difficult to move physical and location-specific activities such as procurement and delivery of goods, installation and manufacturing, or seasonal environmental fieldwork (e.g., tree planting). Administrative activities affected by government closures and capacity included approvals, certification, and licensing. In many countries, only essential government paperwork was processed. This also reflects shifts in government capacity as attention was diverted to deal with the pandemic. Remoteness and travel restrictions affected projects where field sites were a long distance from project offices or where there was a lack of local staff in regions where project stakeholders live.

## MEASURES TO ADDRESS EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON COMMUNITIES AND PROJECT STAFF

Eleven percent (106 projects) report having undertaken measures to help beneficiary communities and project staff address COVID-19-related challenges. These measures include facilitating access to health care (27 projects), providing information on COVID-19 (31 projects), providing personal protective equipment (32 projects), technology access and related assistance (19 projects), small grants (15 projects), and other measures (13 projects).

Projects that directly intersect with public health saw an increased demand for their services and with potentially significant contributions. For example, the UNIDO-implemented project Environmentally Sound Management of Medical Wastes in India (GEF ID 3803) observed, anecdotally, lower COVID-19 infections among hospitals and teams that had participated in training on appropriate and biosecure approaches to managing clinical waste.

Other projects pivoted their activities to rapidly respond to food security, health, and basic needs among vulnerable communities to make the best use of project resources. This effort often relied on infrastructure and trust built through existing projects.

## EFFECTS ON PROJECT RESULTS

Understanding of how the pandemic has affected or is likely to affect results is still emerging. It was not possible to infer the extent to which results were affected by COVID-19 unless this was explicitly stated in the reporting through PIRs/MTRs or interviews. Furthermore, it was not possible to uncouple the effect of COVID-19 from existing conditions affecting implementation or results—particularly as this reporting took place early in the pandemic.

Most of the projects appeared to be optimistic that results would still be achieved if adequate project extensions were granted (and associated additional costs covered). Yet it is highly likely that results will be affected in some way, given that the pandemic has intensified and continued for more than a year after the period covered by the PIRs and MTRs examined for this review. The projects report the following effects on results:

- **Results adversely affected.** Six percent of all projects assessed explicitly stated that results were adversely affected and would not be achieved as planned. Examples include lost revenue from tourism and other livelihood enhancement activities; increased pressure and illegal activities on conservation areas and wildlife populations compounded by mass migration, food insecurity, and reduced government enforcement and patrolling; lack of ridership on green transportation schemes; and reduced private sector commitment and reduced investor confidence in decarbonization and energy efficiency initiatives due to reduced liquidity. The magnitude of this underperformance across the portfolio (coupled with possible negative impacts and rollbacks of previous results) is not yet known.
- **Results achieved, but sustainability at risk.** Eighteen percent of projects report an increased risk of not achieving results. Risks were associated with extent of significant delays and missed activities, reduced attention or priority by government or other partners, or explicitly by decreased cofinancing and/or reduced likelihood of additional investment, given economic conditions.

The projects also report instances where the adaptive measures led to changes in project activities without changes in the development objectives of the project. Consequently, the achieved results may be somewhat different. For some projects, the

expected deliverables may be achieved but may be of lower quality. Many PIRs note systemic effects of the pandemic that may in turn affect the results and sustainability of GEF projects. Such systemic effects include economic instability (12 percent), reduced government capacity or change in government priorities (11 percent), reduced incentives for environmental conservation (6 percent), increased pressure on natural resources and biodiversity (2 percent), reduced level of enforcement of environmental laws and regulations (1 percent), and mass migration from urban to rural areas (< 1 percent), all of which may affect the results of some of the GEF projects.

For several projects, PIRs noted that the ongoing pandemic also positively affect some results (3 percent). For example, the pandemic is believed to have created an opportunity to raise awareness around links between wildlife conservation and public health (< 1 percent). A key informant highlighted how COVID-19 provides a practical example to talk about public health risks of deforestation in Sumatra through emergence of zoonotic diseases and links to illegal wildlife trade (Transforming Effectiveness of Biodiversity Conservation in Priority Sumatran Landscapes, GEF ID 4892; implemented by UNDP).

## IMPLICATIONS

The review confirmed patterns and trends documented by the GEF Secretariat (GEF 2020c). It provides additional information on the incidence of COVID-19's effects across the GEF portfolio.

The pandemic has had considerable effects across the portfolio; however, some types of projects and countries were disproportionately affected. These included projects that were midway through implementation, those involving physical activities or consultations with stakeholders (particularly those in remote areas where technological capacity is not available), or those highly dependent on

financing from tourism revenue. As predicted, reduction or cancellation of cofinancing commitments has occurred. Risks for achievements of results and sustainability are likely to increase for at least some projects: protected areas, ecotourism, energy efficiency initiatives reliant on capital investments, and those requiring substantial attention and cofinancing from government agencies.

The immediate implication is the need for project extensions and subsequent management of ongoing projects alongside new and upcoming investments. Performance on efficiency-related parameters—including timely implementation of activities and financial delivery—is likely to decline in the short to intermediate term. Most projects may require at least some tweaking; some will require major changes. Further, as of this writing, travel restrictions persist, and global vaccine

rollout continues to be slow. Therefore, oversight will be difficult without greater use of technology in project management, and may be particularly challenging in countries that are on the other side of the digital divide.

The extent to which the effects of COVID-19 are reported in PIRs is more affected by Agency than by focal area or country category. Where a template explicitly asked for reporting on COVID-19, project teams were more likely to report. Although project teams in other Agencies are required to report on important factors that affect implementation and results, they are more likely to give attention to specific factors if these are pointed out in the guidance.

# Results-based management

**T**he objective of the GEF results-based management system is

to improve management effectiveness and accountability by defining realistic expected results and targets, monitoring progress toward the achievement of expected results and targets, integrating lessons learned into management decisions, and reporting on performance. (GEF 2011, 1)

The GEF IEO regularly reviews the performance of the RBM system to assess its performance in achieving its objectives and identify areas for improvement. Usually, the IEO undertakes these reviews within the framework of the comprehensive evaluations. This chapter presents the findings of the most recent review of the GEF RBM system conducted by the IEO.

Within the framework of the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS7), the GEF IEO conducted several reviews and evaluations to examine different aspects of RBM in GEF. The review of the RBM system focuses on the RBM-related arrangements managed by the GEF Secretariat at the corporate level.

The review finds that the GEF RBM system improved during GEF-7. The number of results

indicators tracked at the corporate level was streamlined, which has reduced the burden on the GEF Agencies. Several challenges related to results indicators remain, because they do not adequately address drivers of environmental degradation and system transformation. Some of the core indicators are not realistic or are prone to double counting. The use of information from the RBM system for decision making is limited—due in part to the long feedback loop of environmental results.

## 6.1 GEF approach to RBM

Several actors within the GEF partnership play a role in shaping and implementing RBM across the partnership. The GEF Council establishes priorities after considering guidance provided by the GEF-relevant conventions, inputs from the GEF replenishment process, and evidence from M&E activities. The GEF Secretariat leads the monitoring function, and the GEF IEO leads the evaluation function. The GEF Agencies implement GEF activities in recipient countries and report on the results and implementation of these activities.

The GEF approach to RBM has evolved. Emphasis has shifted from tracking a wide range of indicators

through tracking tools to the present approach of focusing on a smaller set of core indicators and their subindicators. The instruments used for reporting on portfolio results and performance have also changed; the GEF monitoring report, which gives greater attention to strategic issues and reporting against targets and benchmarks, has replaced the annual portfolio monitoring report (GEF 2019a). The corporate scorecard, which the GEF Secretariat started publishing in GEF-6, provides an overview of performance on key indicators at regular intervals. Further, at the start of GEF-7, the GEF transitioned from the Project Management Information System (PMIS) to the GEF Portal.

The GEF's results architecture is based on information provided by the Agencies through project documents, PIRs, tracking tools, MTRs, and terminal evaluations. The data on results and performance of projects and programs is aggregated for reporting. Of these instruments, a tracking tool for protected areas was introduced during GEF-3. During GEF-4, tracking tools for other focal areas were introduced. From GEF-5 onward, the GEF began tracking a set of core results and performance indicators.

At the start of GEF-7, most tracking tools were dropped, as they were assessed to be burdensome. Projects approved from GEF-6 onward are expected to track performance on GEF-7 core indicators and subindicators. Projects approved through GEF-5 are expected to use the applicable tracking tools.

## 6.2 Coverage in past evaluations

OPS4 concluded that the tracking tools and environmental results indicators were not fully integrated into the GEF strategies and policies (GEF IEO 2010). Therefore, the evaluation recommended that the GEF integrate environmental results indicators into its RBM framework.

OPS5 found that the GEF RBM system was overly complex and burdensome for the Agencies and recommended simplification of tracking tools (GEF IEO 2014a). APR 2015 found that the tracking tools for GEF-6 had been streamlined and were better aligned with the focal area results framework indicators, but that the tools for biodiversity and multifocal area projects remained complex (GEF IEO 2017a). It also reported gaps in compliance with submitting the tracking tools and in the quality of the submitted data.

The Review of Results-Based Management in the GEF, which was carried out within the framework of OPS6, found that although RBM provides support for reporting, accountability, and communication, it played a limited role in evidence-based decision making and learning (GEF IEO 2017b). The review also found that the PMIS was unable to meet the increasing needs of the GEF partnership. It called for an update of the RBM framework and an upgrade of the PMIS, and for addressing the shortcomings of the focal area tracking tools.

As part of its work for OPS7, the GEF IEO has already undertaken three evaluations and reviews covering different aspects of RBM. The Review of the GEF Terminal Evaluation Validation Process (GEF IEO 2020) found that the GEF IEO's validation process was well established and the data set from the process provides a basis for comparisons across the GEF partnership. The review also called for greater information sharing on the validation process, graduation of Agencies that have a robust validation process in place, more attention to the newer Agencies, and strengthening the community of practice on validation of terminal evaluations.

The Evaluation of the Agency Self-Evaluation Systems (GEF IEO 2021) found that many GEF Agencies have put in place adequate arrangements for conducting self-evaluations, and some Agencies—particularly those new to the GEF partnership—are in the process of developing such arrangements. It

also found that the Agencies broadly follow a similar approach to rating performance, although minor differences in the approaches make cross-Agency comparisons difficult. The evaluation found that MTRs were not being prepared for most projects and that there were submission gaps for PIRs. It also found that the Agency self-evaluation systems generally provide support for learning on doing things right, but do not give as much attention to learning about doing right things. The report concluded that candor is not adequately incentivized to foster learning and reflection.

The Evaluation of the GEF Portal assessed the extent to which the portal has met its objectives (GEF IEO 2021). It found that the portal has substantially achieved its objectives to enhance project review and processing abilities, capture information in a consistent format, integrate GEF programming strategies and policies into the portal, keep track of results of GEF activities, enhance transparency, and safeguard confidential information. The evaluation found that the portal has mixed performance in areas such as protocols for taxonomy and tagging, search and analytical abilities, batch document downloading capability, auto alerts, and real-time availability of data to external stakeholders and the public. The evaluation recommended strengthening the process for addressing feedback from portal users and for speeding up the development of the portal through a time-bound plan.

### 6.3 Key questions and methodology

The review sought to answer the following questions

- To what extent have OPS6 recommendations related to the GEF RBM system been implemented?

- To what extent have the changes in the results architecture been effective?
- To what extent are the core indicators for GEF-7 appropriate and well suited for the needs of the GEF partnership?
- To what extent does the RBM system contribute to sound knowledge management?

The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development defines RBM as “a management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes, and impacts” (OECD DAC 2002). This definition has been applied in the analysis presented in this chapter. A review of relevant documents and key informant interviews were conducted to answer the key questions.

- **A total of 25 interviews with 32 interviewees were conducted.** Interviewees included GEF Secretariat staff with different responsibilities and relations with the RBM system, including the RBM team, the Knowledge Management Officer, program managers from almost all focal areas as well as the manager of the GEF Programs Unit. Representatives from five Agencies were interviewed, some in more than one interview. Four members of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) were interviewed, as was the leadership of the GEF–Civil Society Organization Network. The review also draws on the survey of OFPs conducted as part of the Evaluation of the GEF Portal.
- **The utility of the indicators in facilitating reporting on GEF results and performance is well established.** The interviews focused on gathering information on how indicators can be used (and are being used) in project and portfolio management. The interviews also covered the scope within the GEF for RBM decisions and how indicators, knowledge management, and projects can be usefully intertwined.



The review was conducted from January through June 2021.

## 6.4 Findings

### IMPLEMENTATION OF OPS6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The GEF IEO's Review of the GEF RBM Systems (2017b), conducted as a part of OPS6, had three recommendations ([box 6.1](#)). During GEF-7, the GEF made substantial but differential progress in implementing these recommendations. The recommendation to update the GEF RBM framework was partially implemented. In June 2018, the GEF RBM framework was replaced with the Updated Results Architecture for GEF-7 (GEF 2018d). The new results architecture includes new indicators, new monitoring and reporting requirements, and new tools for data collection and transmission. Corporate-level RBM now focuses on core indicators and subindicators. Overall, the GEF tracks about a third of the indicators that were tracked in GEF-6 (42 in GEF-7 compared to 117 in GEF-6). Most of the tracking tools have been dropped for projects approved from GEF-6 onward. The recommendation to focus on the drivers of environmental degradation was not fully implemented. The updated framework does not advance tracking of drivers of environmental degradation and long-term impacts; nor does it cover the transformative and systemic changes at which the integrated approach programs aim.

The recommendation to upgrade the PMIS to facilitate reporting on target achievement has been implemented through the transition to the more advanced GEF Portal. The Evaluation of the GEF Portal found that it has enhanced the online project proposal submission and review capabilities and has contributed to improvement in the quality of data for more recent projects. Reporting on actual target achievement is possible for GEF-4 and

GEF-5 projects. A sizable number of projects from these periods have been completed, and it is likely that the terminal evaluations and tracking tools for most, if not all, of the completed projects provide relevant information for reporting on achievement of corporate targets. A manual tabulation, as presented in [chapter 3](#), has not been undertaken by the Secretariat. The GEF Portal captures target achievement for projects approved from GEF-6 onward. So far, only a few GEF-6 projects and hardly any GEF-7 projects have been completed; therefore, it is too early to report on target achievement for these periods. As more projects from GEF-6 and GEF-7 are completed, it will be possible to report on their actual target achievement.

The recommendation to address the shortcomings of focal area tracking tools has also been adequately addressed. The recommendation called for “rethinking the approach to tracking tools for biodiversity and multifocal projects.” There was indeed a revision of the approach, but the actions went farther than the recommendation. Most of the tracking tools have been dropped for projects approved from GEF-6 onward. The Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for projects focused on protected areas has been maintained. This is justified, because the METT contributes to global databases and is used by external users. The METT also has a better track record in terms of completeness and quality of information.

### EFFECTIVENESS OF CHANGES TO THE RESULTS ARCHITECTURE

The changes to the results architecture—specifically the changes in the underlying systems and modalities—have made results monitoring in the GEF less burdensome, more transparent, and of higher quality. There is, however, room for improvement regarding the type of information collected and its use.

## Box 6.1 Recommendations of the Review of Results-Based Management in the GEF for OPS6

### Recommendation 1: Update the GEF RBM

**framework.** The GEF RBM framework of 2007 needs to be updated to reflect the evolved understanding of RBM across the GEF partnership. During GEF-6, the focus has been on inputs, outputs, and—in some cases—outcomes of GEF activities. The updated framework needs to address the indicators for drivers of environmental degradation and long-term impacts of GEF activities so that these are also tracked systematically. The GEF should also incorporate the relevant Sustainable Development Goals indicators in its results framework for GEF-7 (and beyond).

### Recommendation 2: Upgrade the PMIS to facilitate reporting on achievement of targets.

Reporting on results also needs to give adequate attention to past results. Given that GEF-4 and GEF-5 programming directions documents had specified targets for those replenishment periods, there is a case for reporting on the actual achievement of these targets. It may be the case that past gaps in the submission of tracking tools, availability of tracking tool data, and data

quality are constraints. Therefore, it is imperative that measures be put in place to ensure that these bottlenecks are mitigated. Upgrading of the PMIS has been delayed by several years; this upgrade urgently needs to be completed.

### Recommendation 3: Address the shortcomings of the focal area tracking tools.

The GEF needs to rethink the approach to tracking tools for the biodiversity and multifocal area projects. Although streamlining of the biodiversity tracking tools may be challenging, the GEF may consider alternatives such as tracking changes in the protected areas through geographic information system (GIS) and remote sensing-based tools, coupled with targeted learning missions. Streamlining the approach to tracking results of multifocal projects was recommended by OPS5 and the GEF-6 policy recommendations. However, no direct progress has been made on this front. Given that multifocal projects have emerged as an important modality, the burden for tracking these results needs to be rationalized.

Source: GEF IEO 2017b.

The reporting burden on the Agencies has been reduced due to the removal of most of the tracking tools. As noted, the number of indicators tracked in GEF-7 is significantly smaller than that tracked in GEF-6. However, several respondents from the GEF Agencies perceive that little has changed in their overall reporting burden. This may be true in specific instances where respondents are concerned with projects approved in GEF-5 or earlier, or where respondents are referring to projects related to protected areas. For others, the approach adopted for GEF-7 is less burdensome and, on balance, reduces the overall effort required of the Agencies.

Improved guidance on the core indicators, as well as faster and easier quality checks by the Secretariat, serve to improve information quality. The new system allows for some immediate data quality

checks through data format controls and a shorter feedback loop between the Agency entering the information and the GEF Secretariat.

The reporting is also integrated into the portal. At the Secretariat's end, entered data are automatically linked to project information—earlier, information was transmitted through emails, and the database did not contain the actual information but rather a link to a document that would contain the information, often together with a lot of other information. This marks an improvement in the transparency and availability of the data on indicators in real time. The GEF Portal aggregates results reports at the touch of a button, which constitutes major progress compared to the earlier technical solutions.

In several other areas, measures adopted to strengthen RBM are still a work in progress. Several key features of the GEF Portal—such as alert functions, multiple and customizable reporting functions, and functions that facilitate learning and knowledge management—are still under development (GEF IEO 2021). The GEF has provided improved guidance on reporting on the core indicators, especially where there may be a risk of double counting. However, it is not backed up with quality assurance at the Secretariat level. Similarly, the present guidance for reporting on geolocation may leave scope for inconsistencies in reported data.

## CORE INDICATORS

### Strengths and weaknesses

The core indicators consist of 10 indicators relating to environmental aspects that have targets from the replenishment process. These indicators address multiple dimensions of the global environmental benefits the GEF pursues. The 11th indicator, which measures number of beneficiaries differentiated by gender, does not have a target but is used for reporting only. The core indicators are complemented by 31 subindicators, bringing the total to 42 indicators to be tracked.<sup>1</sup> The suite of core indicators and subindicators offers the following advantages:

- The number of tracked indicators is substantially smaller.
- Reporting is on all core indicators and subindicators that apply to a project. This approach allows the global environmental benefits reporting to break the focal area silos, for more complete accounting of benefits at the corporate level. Even if a project is supported through

funds from a focal area, it is easily able to report on its global environmental “co-benefits” relevant to the other focal areas. Earlier, benefits reporting was linked to the focal area from which a project was funded.

- Compared to the GEF-6 global environmental benefits indicators—and potentially also to the tracking tools—there is clearer and improved guidance.
- Most GEF-7 core indicators and subindicators tracked have been part of the corporate results reporting requirements for several replenishment periods. Therefore, in some cases these may be retrofitted for projects approved in GEF-5 or earlier.
- The indicators are also easy to communicate and suited to telling the story of the GEF’s contribution to the global environment.

The key informants noted several weaknesses in the system of core indicators and subindicators, including the following:

- **The core indicators and subindicators leave out several environmental results that are important to the GEF.** This includes, for example, results related to urban biodiversity, non-place-specific approaches and place-independent ecosystem services such as pollination. The indicators are not capturing system qualities, systems transformation, or systemic changes; they focus on physical quantities.
- **Some indicators do not measure actual changes in the physical world but are aspirational.** For example, “area restored” is a core indicator for activities that address land degradation. Its subindicators include degraded agricultural lands restored, forest and forest land restored, natural grass and shrublands restored, and wetlands restored. However, area restoration is unlikely to be achieved within the lifetime of a project. The guidance of these indicators makes it clear that what is being tracked

<sup>1</sup> The core indicator “number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment” has been counted as one indicator.

is the area that is undergoing restoration, which is very different from what is being communicated through the labels used for the indicators.

- **Indicators that require measurement of geographical area are prone to double counting.**

When one or more GEF interventions on a given hectare provide more than one global benefit, there is a risk that it may be double counted even though the guidance makes it clear that it should not be. The reason is that in the absence of a geographic information system (GIS)-based inventory of the coverage at the corporate level, it is difficult to ensure that double counting is not occurring.

- **Core indicators do not look at net effects.** For example, there is no possibility of capturing leakage and displacement effects. Baselines are not recorded in the results architecture, impeding aggregation even for individual indicators. Adding hectares from different locations and situations implies that the qualitative improvement brought forward by the GEF intervention is always in the same increment.

- **The definition for counting the beneficiaries of GEF activities leaves too much room for interpretation and needs to be more precise.** The present guidance provides examples of who should be counted as beneficiaries but does not clarify what should not be counted.

Addressing some of the weaknesses of the present system of core indicators and subindicators for GEF-7 will require trade-offs; others may be addressed without any compromise on benefits. For example, inclusion of additional indicators may be useful in capturing some of the results that are important for the GEF, but it needs to be calibrated with the need to keep the system simple and the reporting burden manageable. On balance, there is scope for adding a few indicators without losing the advantages of the parsimonious approach adopted for GEF-7. Replacing some of the existing indicators with better ones—for example, replacing “area

restored” with simply “area under restoration”—does not require such trade-offs. In fact, it will make the GEF core indicators more transparent and less prone to misinterpretation.

## Target setting and portfolio management

The GEF results targets are defined for each GEF period during the replenishment negotiations. The replenishment policy documents specify targets for environmental benefits commensurate with the funding levels. For GEF-7, the targets were given for the 10 environmental core indicators. These targets are calculated by the GEF Secretariat, with scenarios for different funding levels. An important input to these calculations is specific cost per unit of a given environmental benefit. These can vary widely among the different environmental benefits but also for the same environmental benefit across different locations and approaches.

Several key informants consider the target-setting process one of the main opportunities for RBM. However, information on costs of generating environmental benefits has not been systematically recorded and analyzed. Although information from selected projects might be available without a formal retrieval system, there is at this point no clarity on average achievements (per unit of funding) or portfolio-wide cumulative achievements. In addition, it is not clear that these parameters would be stable over time or between funding periods. The low-hanging fruit has been picked; nonetheless, the GEF is expected to be more efficient and ambitious with every replenishment. Literature data are often considered more reliable for developing rules of thumb. In some instances, specifically in areas where precedents do not exist in the GEF portfolio or elsewhere, expert estimates are the only basis for calculation of expected environmental benefits per funding level.

The corporate targets for core indicators provide an instrument for steering development of project

proposals. Regularly taking stock of the extent to which cumulative targets in the project proposals meet the corporate targets for a replenishment period helps in identifying gaps. Similarly, the estimated per unit cost of benefits may also give some indication of the approaches that may be feasible and countries where these may be promoted. The GEF scorecard prepared by the Secretariat provides information about the degree to which the approved work programs contribute to the replenishment targets and highlights where salient gaps exist among specific indicators. A few key informants noted discussions between the Secretariat and potential project proponents with respect to developing projects that help address programming gaps for inclusion in the upcoming work program. However, overall, this target gap-driven prioritization seems to play a minor role in determining work program inclusion decisions. Rather, these decisions are influenced more by other factors such as (country) resource allocations, country priorities, and funding availability.

It also deserves mention that all these decisions can be based on expected global environmental contributions only. So far, actual achievements have played little role in discussions on programming, because past results have not been tallied and the time lag before information on actual results becomes available is lengthy. This limits the extent to which core indicators may play an explicit role in aiding management of the portfolio for results.

### Contributions to knowledge management

Results are an important anchor for knowledge management because they provide the basis for identifying good and poor practices. Therefore, there is a natural link between results measurement and knowledge management. This link was highlighted by many key informants.

Knowledge management in the GEF-7 is linked to the GEF-7 results architecture, among other things, through documents provided during the GEF-7 replenishment, specifically the “GEF-7 Policy Agenda: Analysis in Support of the Proposed GEF-7 Policy Recommendations” (GEF 2017). Here, the GEF Secretariat notes that the system used in GEF-6 has been criticized for not supporting learning and for generally tracking too much information with little focus on impact. At least part of the problem was that insufficient attention was paid to ensuring the quality, completeness, and consistency of submitted information and its use. This was one of the rationales for the new results architecture. That document does not explicitly state how learning should be facilitated and how RBM and the core indicators should be linked with knowledge management, however. As follow-up to the Evaluation of Knowledge Management in the GEF (GEF IEO 2022), a knowledge management strategy is under development.

Several key informants noted that the tracking tools provided an opportunity to gather in-depth qualitative information that would be relevant for knowledge management. However, the potential of these tools as a source of qualitative information was not utilized, and the gathered information was not adequately used for knowledge management.

Three major links between results monitoring and knowledge management have been highlighted by stakeholders:

- **Do the right thing.** Results monitoring systems data at this stage do not support this purpose. Although data from new proposals allow for the identification of locations covered by the intervention, it is currently not possible to identify the locations that require multiple follow-on interventions or those areas where duplication of funding is taking place. This also makes it difficult to trace back or attribute scale-up and replication to GEF interventions.

- **Tell the story and support it with figures and data.** This is partially under way. Apart from graphs, an obvious application is intervention maps—as geolocation data are collected with poor quality, it is not possible to draw such maps to illustrate the geographic spread of the work based on monitoring data. There is also a lack of GIS-based cumulative data that may be used to demonstrate the GEF’s impact and achievements.
- **Data needs to support learning about past experiences.** This includes, but is not limited to, recording what has been done before and how the learning from the experience may be used to build on past work—and to avoid (accidentally) repeating it in the same location.

Better results retrievability and visualization would also help OFPs assess the impact of GEF programming in their countries, as well as guide future activities, target setting, and strategic initiatives.

## 6.5 Implications

The review shows that the GEF RBM system has improved substantially. The results indicators tracked at the corporate level are relevant, better defined, and fewer in number. Overall, a lower level of effort is required in reporting. Data submission has become more efficient and reliable because it has moved from an offline mode to the GEF Portal.

The GEF RBM system supports the formulation of a replenishment period’s results targets, managing approvals toward expected targets, and reporting

on the expected results of a period. Management decisions, as also noted in OPS6 (GEF IEO 2018d), are generally based on information on expected, and not actual, results because of long feedback loops.

Implementation of most of the projects approved in GEF-5 is yet to be completed; it is likely that most of these will be completed during GEF-8. Given that the GEF Portal does not track results of projects from GEF-5 or earlier, the GEF needs to give attention to how best to manage the information contained in the tracking tools and project self-evaluations from these periods.

The core indicators and subindicators on “area restored” have an incorrect nomenclature, because the guidance clearly notes that what is being tracked is area under restoration. It is imperative that the indicators be labeled as “area under restoration.” Further, the indicators on area covered are prone to double counting, and this risk is not sufficiently addressed by the guidance alone. Use of GIS to manage and use cumulative information on area covered through GEF interventions may provide solutions.

The present set of core indicators and subindicators do not adequately measure transformative and systemic changes pursued by GEF programs. While the GEF IEO does report on such changes, it is difficult to report on what is not being recorded. More attention needs to be given to articulating what is being measured, how, and by whom.

# Concentration of GEF resources among Agencies

**F**or the GEF partnership to be effective, it is important that there be sufficient competition among GEF Agencies and that recipient countries and the GEF Secretariat have adequate choice in selecting Agencies based on their comparative advantage. In the absence of competition and choice, there is a risk of monopolization of GEF resources. This review assesses trends in choice available to recipient countries and the level of concentration of resources from the GEF Trust Fund.

During the first meeting of the GEF-8 Replenishment Group, some members requested that the GEF IEO analyze the level of concentration of resources among the GEF Agencies. This review was undertaken as a response to their request. It assesses the extent to which recipient countries have choice in selecting an Agency, trends in level of concentration of GEF resources, and factors that affect concentration. It draws from several data sets and updates the analysis presented in the Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF partnership (GEF IEO 2018a).

This review confirms that the two rounds of expansion of the GEF partnership—from 1999–2006 and then from 2013–15—have increased Agency choice for recipient countries. There has also

been a steady decline in the concentration of GEF resources. Up to GEF-3, this decline in concentration was primarily driven by a decrease in the World Bank's share in the GEF portfolio. From GEF-3 to GEF-5, an increasing share of the Agencies from the first round of expansion, combined with a further decline in the World Bank's share, contributed to a drop in the concentration of resources. From GEF-5 onward, the new Agencies have gained a share in the portfolio, although the decline in the level of concentration is small.

## 7.1 Expansion of the GEF partnership

At its start, the GEF operated through three Agencies: the World Bank, UNDP, and UNEP. Thereafter, the GEF partnership has undergone two rounds of expansion. The main objectives of these expansions include increasing the choice available to recipient countries, increasing competition among the Agencies, and reducing the concentration of GEF resources. The first round of expansion took place from 1999 to 2006, when seven additional multilateral organizations were accredited as GEF Agencies. These Agencies were already involved in the implementation of GEF projects but had to

access GEF resources through one of the three original Agencies. The first round of expansion was, therefore, also about leveling the playing field. The second round of expansion took place from 2013 to 2015, and it led to accreditation of eight more Agencies. Before this second round of expansion, only multilateral organizations had been accredited as GEF Agencies. The second round accredited three national agencies, three international nongovernmental organizations, and two regional development banks, thereby broadening the GEF partnership.

## 7.2 Key questions and methodology

This review sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of Agency choice available to recipient countries?
- What is the trend in concentration of GEF resources among Agencies?
- What factors play an important role in determining Agency share?

### DATA SETS

GEF Portal data through June 2021 have been used for this review. For GEF-7 (2018–22), data for the first three years are available. Therefore, figures for this period should be treated as provisional and subject to change when the GEF-7 period ends. For GEF-6 and GEF-7, much of the analysis is based on the actual level of resources managed by the Agencies, including those managed as an implementing partner of a lead Agency. For historical trends, the lead Agency approach has been used, because it is difficult to determine how resources were split among participating Agencies in past projects.

The GEF OFP survey conducted as part of the Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership (GEF IEO 2018a) is another source of data.

Thirty-two OFPs participated in this survey. The review analyzed responses to questions related to Agency presence and selection preferences. The survey was conducted in 2016 but remains relevant because the Agency shares observed in GEF-6 and GEF-7 are influenced by the OFP perceptions and decisions at the time of the survey.

### COUNTRY CATEGORIES

The LDC category is based on country status in the 2018 UN list of LDCs (UNCTAD 2021). As a result, Vanuatu, which graduated from the LDC list in 2020, is included in the LDC category. UN lists were also used to determine whether recipient countries were SIDS or landlocked in 2018.<sup>1</sup> The category “fragile state” is made up of countries classified as being in “fragile and conflict-affected situations” by the World Bank in FY 2018 (World Bank 2021). The “large GEF portfolio” category includes the top five countries that historically account for most GEF funding: Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and Russia. The category “other recipient countries” comprises countries that are not included in any of the following categories: LDCs, SIDS, landlocked developing countries, fragile states, and large GEF portfolio. The classification based on STAR country allocations is based on the total indicative allocation for a country for GEF-7, as listed in the GEF Portal.

### AGENCY PRESENCE IN RECIPIENT COUNTRIES AND COVERAGE OF FOCAL AREAS

The GEF-7 STAR provides indicative allocations for 144 recipient countries. For each of these countries, the presence of each GEF Agency (18 in total)

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<sup>1</sup> [United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform—Small Island Developing States; Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States - List of LLDCs.](#)



was assessed based on information reported in Agency websites, annual reports, and project portfolio data, where country coverage data may be expected. The review also used information on the focal area coverage of GEF Agencies provided in the Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership (GEF IEO 2018a).

## CONCENTRATION OF RESOURCES

Concentration of GEF resources among Agencies was assessed using the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI), which is a common measure of market concentration and competition (Rhoades 1993). The index sums the square of the share of firms operating in a market. Because the HHI squares the shares of individual firms, changes in shares of firms with large shares have more impact on the index compared to a similar absolute change in the share of firms with small shares. The values range from 0–1 (or from 0 to 10,000 based on the scale used), with 0 denoting perfect competition and 1 denoting perfect monopoly.

## AGENCY CHOICE

This review distinguishes the funding provided through STAR country allocations and that from outside of the STAR. The OFPs of participating countries are required to endorse a project proposal when GEF funding is requested. In cases where the requested funding is from the STAR allocation, by virtue of the endorsement requirement, the OFP exercises greater choice in Agency selection. In cases where GEF funds are from STAR set-asides or outside of the STAR, the level of choice in Agency selection is bounded, because other countries are also competing for the same funds. In such cases, especially for global projects and programs, the GEF Secretariat has a role in the Agency selection process.

The “Report of the Working Group on the GEF Partnership” discusses Agency choice and the concentration of GEF resources (GEF 2019b). It notes that recipient countries identify their relationship with an Agency as well as the Agency’s track record, experience and expertise, ability to mobilize cofinancing, and physical presence as important factors influencing their choice of Agency. The GEF OFP survey conducted as part of the Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership found several other factors related to project attributes, Agency track record, and expertise that play an important role in determining Agency choice of the recipient countries. The GEF Secretariat also specifies requirements for the Agencies leading the impact programs, although for several other programs and global and regional projects these may not be clearly articulated.

Data on some of the important determinants of Agency selection and resources managed by it are easy to gather. These determinants include the Agencies present in a recipient country, the focal areas covered by the Agencies present in a country, and the recipient country’s STAR allocation. This review makes use of data on these determinants to predict an Agency’s share in the GEF portfolio assuming other things remain the same. The analysis then assesses and identifies Agencies for which the actual and predicted shares differ. Given that several determinants have not been included in predicting Agency shares, wide variations among Agencies that are predicted to have similar shares may be expected. The analysis explores the reasons for such variations and whether observed variations are consistent with recipient country preferences (GEF IEO 2018a; GEF 2019b).

## 7.3 Findings

### COUNTRY PRESENCE OF AGENCY

The number of Agencies present in GEF recipient countries ranges from 3 to 12, with most countries (62 percent) having 8 to 10 Agencies present (table 7.1). On average, the seven Agencies added during the first round of expansion increased Agency choice for a recipient country by roughly four. In comparison, the eight Agencies added during the second round increased the Agency choice by about two. Thus, both rounds of expansion have increased the presence of GEF Agencies in recipient countries. Eighteen countries have five or fewer GEF Agencies present; SIDS and fragile states are overrepresented in this group. In general, countries with higher STAR allocations have more GEF Agencies present.

### TRENDS IN CONCENTRATION OF GEF RESOURCES

From the pilot phase onward, concentration of GEF resources has declined. More recently, the pace of decline has slowed. HHI scores for the GEF portfolio show a substantial decline from the pilot phase to GEF-7 (figure 7.1). From GEF-6 to GEF-7, a substantial decline in HHI score is evident for the SIDS and for landlocked developing countries.

The drop in the World Bank's share has been the single most important reason for the drop in concentration witnessed so far. The data show that from the pilot phase to GEF-4 the decline in concentration of resources was driven primarily by the decline in the World Bank's share—from 62 percent to 27 percent (figure 7.2). This drop was accompanied by an increase in UNEP's share and of the new

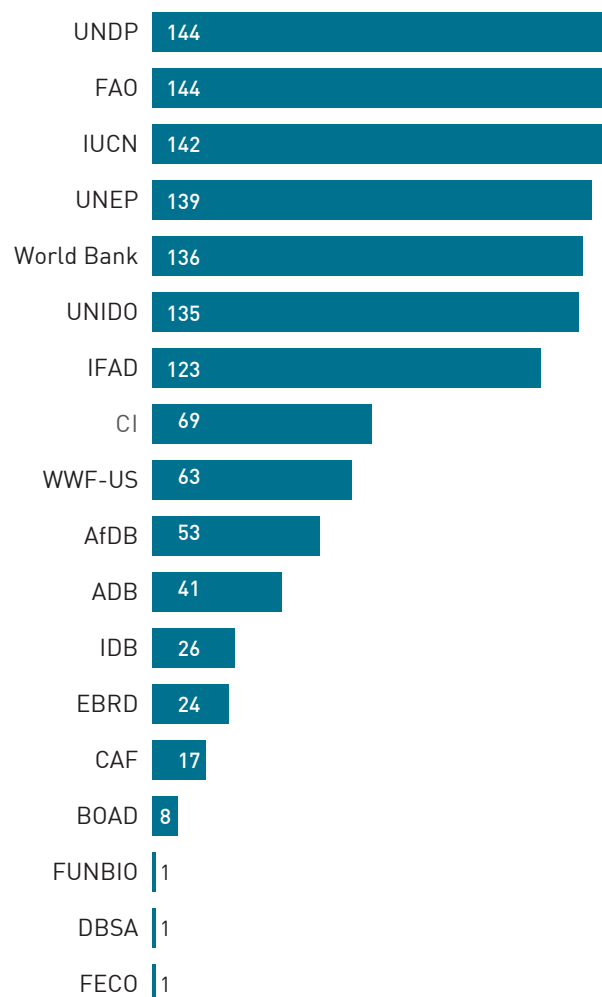
**Table 7.1** Number of GEF Agencies per recipient country in 2021

Country category	Number of countries	Number of Agencies per recipient country			
		Original (3)	1st round (7)	2nd round (8)	Total (18)
Country characteristic					
LDC	47	3.0	3.9	1.8	8.6
Fragile state	34	3.0	3.7	1.6	8.3
SIDS	38	2.7	3.3	2.1	8.1
Landlocked developing countries	32	3.0	4.2	1.8	8.9
Large GEF portfolio	5	3.0	3.8	3.4	10.2
Other recipient countries	42	3.0	4.0	2.5	9.4
GEF-7 STAR country allocation					
≤ 7 million	61	2.9	3.6	1.9	8.3
\$7–\$10 million	33	2.9	4.0	1.6	8.5
\$10–\$20 million	32	3.0	3.9	2.3	9.3
\$20 million +	18	3.0	3.9	3.2	10.1
All recipient countries	144	2.9	3.8	2.1	8.8

**Source:** Calculated using data from GEF Portal and GEF IEO 2018a; the data from the latter were updated based on information provided by the GEF Agencies.

**Note:** The number of recipient countries in which a particular GEF Agency is present ranges from one (for national Agencies such as the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund, the Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, Ministry of Environmental Protection of China, and the Development Bank of Southern Africa) to all (for UNDP and FAO). Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund are present in nearly half of GEF recipient countries. The country presence of regional development banks such as the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the West African Development Bank, the Development Bank of Latin America, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, and national Agencies is restricted by their respective mandates. The Development Bank of Southern Africa is an anomaly; it has an institutional mandate to serve southern Africa but serves only South Africa as a GEF Agency because it has been accredited only as a national Agency. See GEF IEO 2018a.

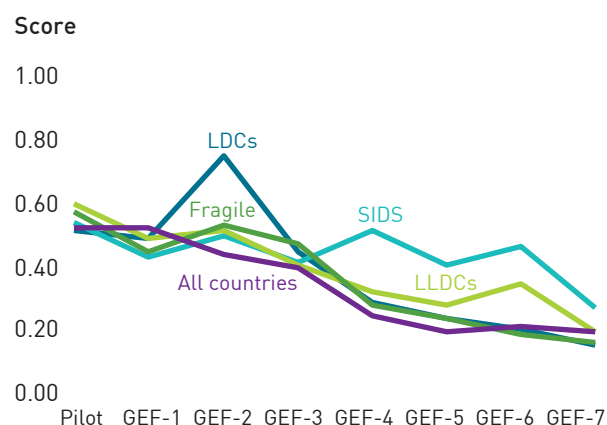
**Figure 7.1** Number of recipient countries with a GEF Agency presence



**Note:** ADB = Asian Development Bank; AfDB = African Development Bank; BOAD = West African Development Bank; CAF = Development Bank of Latin America; CI = Conservation International; DBSA = Development Bank of Southern Africa; EBRD = European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; FECO = Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, Ministry of Environmental Protection of China; FUNBIO = Brazilian Biodiversity Fund; IDB = Inter-American Development Bank; WWF-US = World Wildlife Fund. The figures are based on an assessment of country presence in 144 recipient countries that had a STAR country allocation for GEF-7.

Agencies added during the first round of expansion. The decline in concentration from GEF-5 onward has been due to a further drop in the World Bank's share and an increase in the share of the Agencies added during the second round of expansion. From GEF-6 to GEF-7, there has been a slight drop in UNDP's share, which has led to a drop in the HHI

**Figure 7.2** Trends in concentration of GEF resources: Herfindahl-Hirschman Index score of the GEF portfolio



**Source:** Calculated using GEF Portal data.

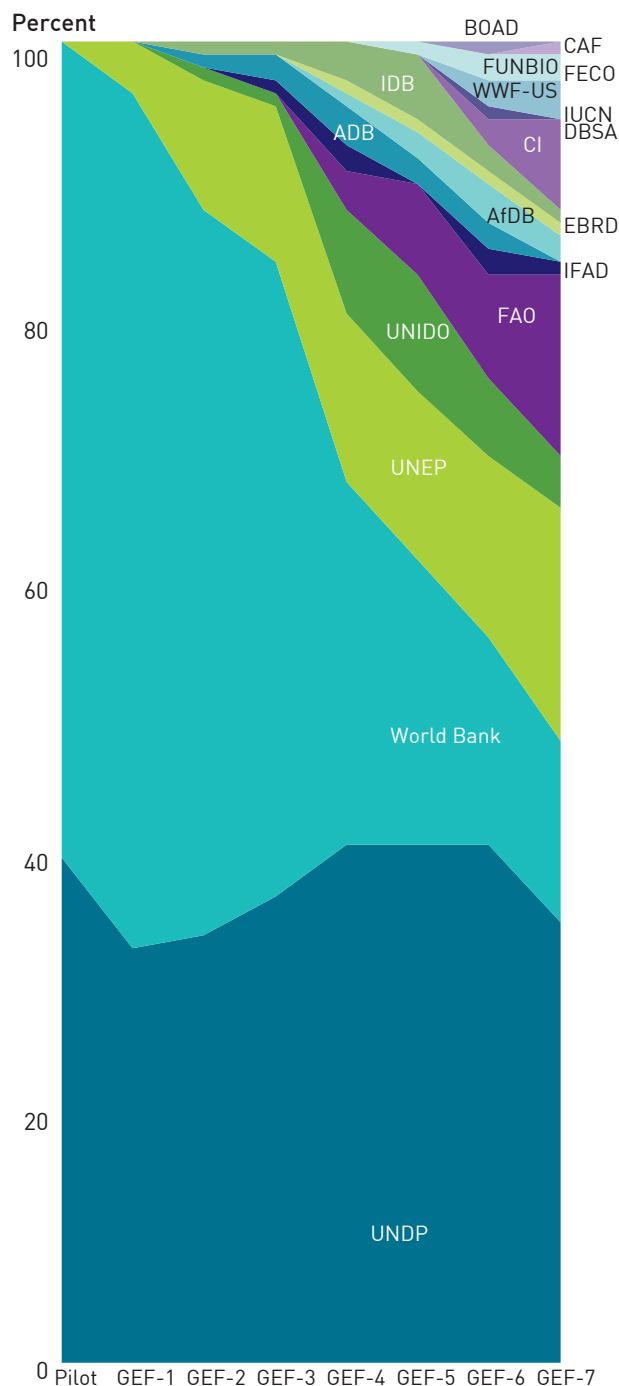
**Note:** LLDCs = landlocked developing countries.

score. Although there has been a corresponding increase in UNEP's share, because that Agency has a substantially lower share in the GEF portfolio, it does not fully balance the drop in the HHI score.

## 7.4 Determinants of Agency share

UNDP's share is substantially higher and those of UNEP and the World Bank somewhat higher than their predicted shares based on country presence, focal area coverage, presence of competing Agencies, and recipient countries' GEF STAR allocations. (The prediction assumes that recipient countries do not have an Agency preference.) [Figure 7.3](#) presents the actual shares of the GEF Agencies during GEF-6 to GEF-7 as a percentage of their predicted shares. The actual shares of the three original Agencies are higher than their predicted shares. Conversely, the share of some Agencies such as IFAD, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF-US), and the regional development banks is substantially lower. Overall, the share of UN Agencies is higher than their predicted share, whereas the MDB share is lower.

**Figure 7.3 Trends in Agency share in GEF portfolio across GEF replenishments**



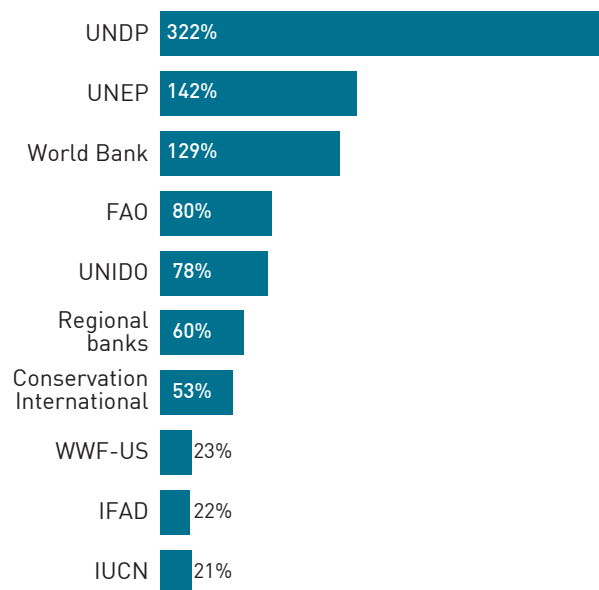
**Source:** Calculated using GEF Portal data.

**Note:** ADB = Asian Development Bank; AfDB = African Development Bank; BOAD = West African Development Bank; CAF = Development Bank of Latin America; CI = Conservation International; DBSA = Development Bank of Southern Africa; EBRD = European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; FECO = Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, Ministry of Environmental Protection of China; FUNBIO = Brazilian Biodiversity Fund; IDB = Inter-American Development Bank.

Agency actual shares may be at variance with their predicted shares and yet be fair because the Agencies may differ in terms of the quality of their presence, expertise, and engagement with the recipient countries (figure 7.4). Agencies that undertake more activities, at a larger scale, and in GEF-relevant areas are more likely to be considered active by the OFPs. Similarly, Agencies that give greater attention to outreach and regularly interact with OFPs are more likely to be preferred by the OFPs when they consider Agencies for developing a project proposal.

Some Agencies are more easily recalled by the OFPs than others. Figure 7.5 presents the percentage of GEF OFPs who recall an Agency's presence in the country as a percentage of the surveyed recipient countries where an Agency was reported to be present. It shows that UNDP, the Asian Development Bank, UNEP, and the World Bank are recalled in more than 90 percent of instances.

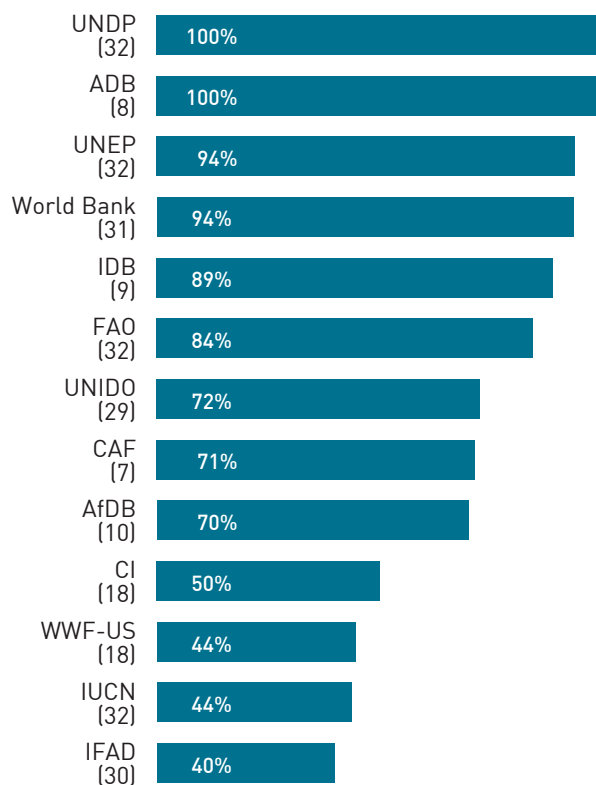
**Figure 7.4 Actual Agency share as a percentage of predicted share for GEF-6 to GEF-7**



**Source:** Calculated using GEF Portal data.

**Note:** Includes only those Agencies whose predicted share is at least 5%. Six regional development banks have been included collectively. GEF-6 and GEF-7 data through June 2021 are included.

**Figure 7.5** Number of GEF OFPs that recall an Agency's presence in their country as a percentage of recipient countries where an Agency is present



**Source:** GEF IEO 2018b.

**Note:** ADB = Asian Development Bank; AfDB = African Development Bank; CAF = Development Bank of Latin America; CI = Conservation International; IDB = Inter-American Development Bank. Data are for 32 recipient countries whose OFPs responded to an online survey administered in 2016. The number of countries in which an Agency operates is given in parentheses.

At the other end of the range, IFAD, IUCN, and WWF-US were recalled by a lower percentage of OFPs. The Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership (GEF IEO 2018a) notes that IUCN has a relatively limited presence in several GEF recipient countries. Similarly, IFAD, IUCN, and WWF-US have not yet worked in the chemicals and waste focal area. Comparison with actual shares shows that Agencies that are recalled consistently tend to have a greater share vis-à-vis their predicted share.

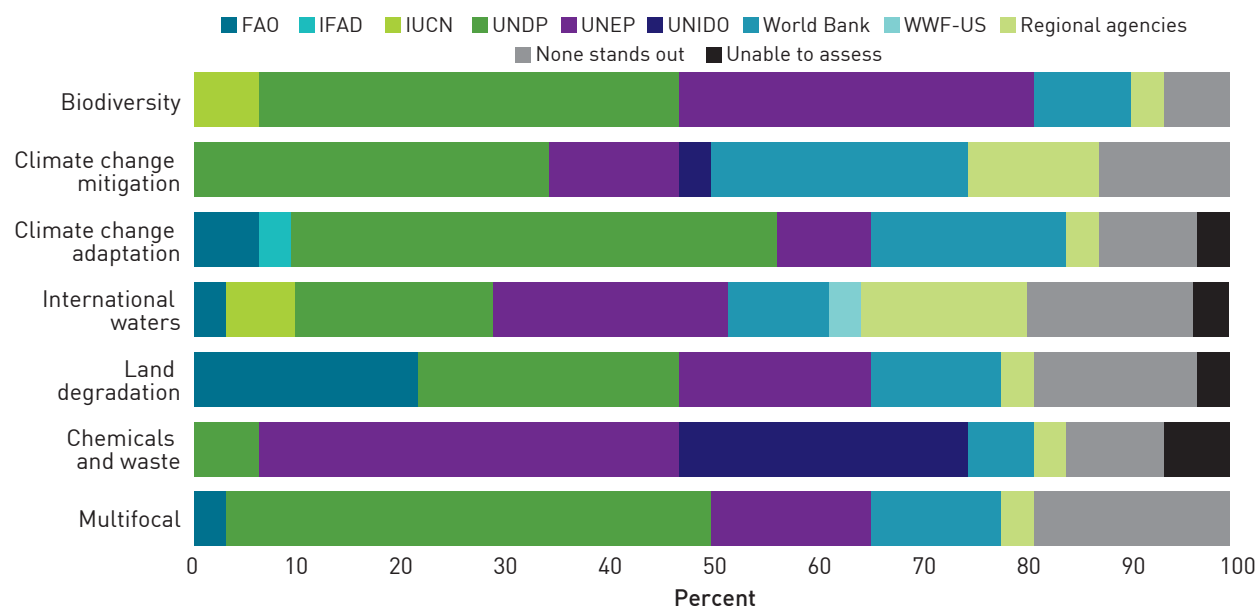
OFPs may also perceive an Agency to be better suited for the proposed activity. [Figure 7.6](#) presents the frequency distribution of the Agencies that were

mentioned as the most preferred by OFPs for activities in a GEF focal area. The OFPs mention one of the three original Agencies as the most preferred Agency in two-thirds (67 percent) of instances. UNDP alone was identified as the most preferred in 31 percent of instances. In comparison, Agencies from the first round of expansion were identified as the most preferred Agency in 16 percent of instances. Several OFPs identified FAO as the most preferred Agency for activities in the land degradation focal area and UNIDO for the chemicals and waste focal area. The eight Agencies from the second round were mentioned in 3 percent of instances. The survey was conducted in 2016, when the Agencies from the second round of expansion were new to the partnership. It is likely that the frequency of their mentions as the most preferred Agency would increase if the survey were conducted now.

Recipient country preference for an Agency may also differ based on project features. For example, 31 percent of the OFPs mention the World Bank as the most preferred Agency for implementing a full-size project, but only 3 percent prefer it for a medium-size project. Similarly, a plural majority of OFPs mention UNDP as the strongest in project preparation (44 percent) and the World Bank as strongest in project implementation (25 percent). In several other areas, such as engagement with the private sector and postcompletion follow-up, a majority of OFPs noted one of the original Agencies to be the strongest.

The level of interest an Agency has in undertaking GEF activities is another important determinant of Agency share. The Evaluation of the Expansion of the GEF Partnership noted that for some Agencies—especially for the MDBs—the relative importance of the GEF partnership has declined. The evaluation found that GEF funding is generally about 5–30 percent of the UN organizations' total funding and 0.1–1 percent of MDB funding. Increasingly, several MDBs have established internally managed funds to support their environmental activities, especially

**Figure 7.6 Most preferred Agency for GEF activities by focal area**



Source: OFP Survey 2016.

Note: n = 32.

those addressing climate change. One of the original purposes for seeking MDB involvement in the GEF partnership was to facilitate mainstreaming of the environment in their work. Through the establishment of environment-focused funds managed by MDBs, the purpose of mainstreaming has been strengthened; however, it has also meant that MDBs may be less inclined to meet the challenges of an external review and approval over and above their own internal processes. Another challenge for the MDBs has been managing their relationships with the OFPs effectively. While MDBs generally have strong engagement with ministries of finance and economy, they generally are not closely engaged with environment and natural resource management ministries. This puts them at a disadvantage, because GEF OFP offices are generally hosted by these latter ministries. MDBs have been effective at managing their relationships with OFPs and have a greater share in GEF funding in countries where an OFP is based in the finance ministry or ministry of economy than in countries where the OFP is in an environment-related ministry (GEF IEO 2018b).

The level of concentration of funding through STAR country allocations is about the same as that of funding through other envelopes of the GEF Trust Fund. Compared to the HHI scores of 0.22 (GEF-6) and 0.20 (GEF-7) for activities supported through STAR country allocations, the scores of activities funded outside of the STAR are 0.19 (GEF-6) and 0.18 (GEF-7). This, however, does not mean shares of individual Agencies do not vary based on whether funding comes from STAR country allocations or from outside of the STAR. For example, UNEP and Conservation International have substantially greater shares in funds excluded from STAR country allocations than included in it. Such anomalies may be explained by the relative strengths or weaknesses of an Agency in implementing activities funded from the STAR country allocations vis-à-vis those funded from other envelopes. For example, UNEP's portfolio is focused on global and regional projects that tend to be supported from other envelopes. In the case of Conservation International, the number of relevant projects is too small for strong inferences to be drawn.

The fact that the concentration of funds provided through STAR country allocations is comparable to that from outside of the STAR does not mean that the STAR does not influence concentration. Although there was a declining trend in the World Bank's share of the GEF portfolio up to GEF-3, the decline seems to have been precipitated by the switch to the STAR during GEF-4. A direct result of the move to the STAR was that the centralized pool of funds for the climate change and biodiversity focal areas was divided among the GEF recipient countries—which in turn meant that a substantial proportion of GEF funding may be used only for projects that involved limited GEF funding. This fragmentation of resources was advantageous for some Agencies but did seem to have disadvantaged the World Bank (GEF IEO 2014b). Further, during GEF-4, the Climate Investment Funds were established in the World Bank, and corporate budgets for the three original Agencies were abolished, making it difficult to isolate the STAR's net effect.

## 7.5 Conclusions

The review shows that most GEF recipient countries can choose among 8 to 10 GEF Agencies for implementation of GEF activities in their country. It confirms that while both rounds of Agency expansion contributed to an increase in choice available to the recipient countries, the first round contributed to a greater increase because the Agencies from the first round have a presence in more recipient countries.

Overall, the level of resource concentration among Agencies has declined; much of this decline is attributable to a decline in the World Bank's share in the GEF portfolio. Agencies from the first and second rounds of expansion may be credited for the decline. A small drop in concentration from GEF-6 to GEF-7 is due to a decline in UNDP's share.

Factors such as quality of country presence, recipient country's assessment of relative strengths of

a GEF Agency, project requirements, and Agency interest play an important role in determining Agency selection. In general, original Agencies are preferred by recipient countries because of their long-standing engagement, expertise, and capacities. Thematic expertise of Agencies brought onboard through the two rounds of expansion is also recognized by the OFPs. The level of concentration does not seem to be affected by whether activities are supported by STAR country allocation or from GEF funds outside of it, although the level of funds available to a country may have a bearing on Agency choice.

Further decline in concentration is likely to be marginal without structural and procedural changes in the partnership. The options for addressing concentration may include caps on Agency share and/or an increase in the number of Agencies. A procedural option is broadening the perspectives reflected in the choice made by the OFPs. For example, MDBs have stronger working relationships with the ministries of economy/finance than with ministries of environment/forest/natural resources. Measures that encourage OFPs to seek the participation of other ministries to develop project proposals may create more space for MDBs to implement GEF activities.

Ramifications of the structural and procedural options need to be studied in depth, as each of these options require trade-offs. For example, a cap on individual Agency share (as a percentage of the GEF replenishment) may reduce the choice available to some countries, especially toward the end of a replenishment period. Similarly, the addition of new Agencies is likely to increase competition for GEF resources and may increase the choice available to countries. However, it may increase the complexity of the partnership and further reduce incentives for some of the Agencies to prepare and implement GEF activities.

# Effect of GEF-7 STAR on country allocations

The GEF uses the STAR to allocate resources from the GEF Trust Fund to recipient countries. The framework was first applied in GEF-4 (2006–10) to allocations for the biodiversity and climate change focal areas. The GEF-7 STAR model was used to allocate \$1.896 billion among 144 countries. Several changes were made in the STAR used for GEF-7. This chapter presents an analysis of the effects of the changes incorporated in the STAR for GEF-7.

The GEF IEO has undertaken several evaluations to assess performance of the STAR. The evaluation of the STAR for GEF-4 pointed out several major weaknesses, which were addressed through updates for GEF-5. Similarly, evaluations of the GEF-5 and GEF-6 STAR have informed changes in the STAR for subsequent replenishment periods. The STAR review for GEF-7 assesses effects of the changes in the GDP-based Index (GDPI) and rebalancing of the floors on allocations of the recipient countries. It was undertaken as an input to OPS7.

From GEF-6 to GEF-7, 80 percent of recipient countries experienced a drop in their aggregate allocations. The drop in the STAR envelope for the climate change focal area was the most important factor that led to an overall decrease in allocations.

For 15 percent of recipient countries, aggregate allocations increased—primarily because of an increase in their allocations for the biodiversity focal area. For some countries, this increase was a result of an increase in the floors for the biodiversity and land degradation focal areas. The data update led to a substantial increase in resources allocated to Europe and East Asia. Had the GEF-6 STAR model been used without any change for GEF-7, all country groups would have experienced a drop in their total allocations. The decrease would have been higher for countries that do not benefit from the climate change focal area allocation floors.

The rebalancing of the floors and the increase in the weight of the GDPI had a somewhat counterbalancing effect on allocations. On average, rebalancing of the focal area floors increased allocations for countries that did not benefit from the climate change floors. Although some countries did gain from the increase in the floors for the biodiversity and land degradation focal areas, the support provided through the floors decreased because of a drop in the floors for climate change and because more countries are eligible for the climate change floors than for the two other focal areas. Increased weight for the GDPI increased resources



for low-income and lower-middle-income countries, LDCs, landlocked developing countries, and Africa. Overall, the GEF-7 STAR struck a balance between mitigating the effects of the lower level of resources available for the climate change focal area and providing increased resources to LDCs and other countries with lower income.

## 8.1 The STAR model for GEF-7<sup>1</sup>

The STAR model has three distinct components: the Global Benefits Index (GBI), including subindexes for biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation; the Country Performance Index including subindexes for GEF portfolio performance and institutional assessment; and the GDPI. The formula may be summarized as follows:<sup>2</sup>

$$\text{Gross country score} = \text{GBI}^{0.8} \times \left( \frac{\text{GDP}}{\text{capita}} \right)^{-0.12} \times \frac{(0.65 \text{ CEPIA} + 0.15 \text{ BFI} + 0.2 \text{ PPI})}{\text{BFI} + 0.2 \text{ PPI}}$$

The model is used to calculate individual country scores for each of the three covered focal areas. The country scores are then used to calculate country shares for a focal area. A country share is then multiplied by the total resource envelope available for allocation to derive preliminary country allocations. The preliminary allocations are subjected to floors and ceilings. Thereafter,

<sup>1</sup>This section draws on GEF (2018b).

<sup>2</sup>In the formula, the CEPIA factor is Criterion #11, “Policies and Institutions for Environmental Sustainability,” of the World Bank’s Country Policy and Institutional Assessment indicators; and the Broad Framework Indicator (BFI) is a simple average of the five criteria comprising cluster D (Public Sector Management and Institutions) of the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment indicators. Of the 0.20 weight for the GEF Project Performance Index, 0.12 is accounted for by the outcome ratings given or adopted by the GEF IEO for the completed GEF projects. The remaining 0.08 is accounted for by the PIR ratings for implementation progress.

the country shares are iteratively recalculated for the remaining countries unaffected by ceilings and floors until all available resources have been allocated.

Three major changes were made in the STAR model for GEF-7:

- The focal area floors were rebalanced: broadly, the floors for the biodiversity and land degradation focal areas were increased, but those for climate change were decreased.
- The weight of the exponent of the GDPI was increased from –0.08 to –0.12.
- Countries that had marginal flexibility—those with an aggregate allocation of more than \$7 million—were given more flexibility.

The data used for calculation of the country scores are updated before the model is applied to determine the STAR country allocations for a replenishment period. Whether a specific set of data is updated is contingent on its availability. The Secretariat used updated data for running the GEF-7 STAR model. For the biodiversity focal area, the data were updated for the first time since GEF-4. The update reduced data gaps and led to substantial change in the relative scores of some countries.

## 8.2 Key questions and methodology

The review sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the effects of change in resources available for allocation through the STAR on country allocations?
- What are the effects of the data update on country allocations?
- What are the effects of the changes in the STAR model on country allocations?

The review is primarily based on desk research and quantitative analysis. The GEF-6 STAR proposal and the GEF-7 STAR policy and guidelines (GEF 2014, 2018b) provide details on the model and data used by the GEF Secretariat to calculate country allocations for GEF-6 and GEF-7, respectively. The data used by the Secretariat for GEF-6 and GEF-7 were accessed and analyzed.

The analyses make comparisons among different counterfactuals for GEF-7 country allocations generated through simulations and the actual allocation using the GEF-7 STAR model. The aim is to determine the effects of changes in the resource envelope, data updates, and the STAR model on country allocations. Both absolute and relative changes were considered.

To establish the larger context, the absolute change in the ex ante country allocations has been compared for different country groups. Subsequent analyses focus primarily on the change in relative share of different country groups.

The GEF-7 STAR model is applied to the GEF-7 resource envelope using GEF-6 data to generate a baseline for assessing changes that ensue from the data update. The results are compared with actual GEF-7 allocations for which updated data were used.

The baseline to assess the effect of changes to the STAR model is generated using the updated GEF-7 data and the GEF-7 resource envelope and applying the GEF-6 STAR model. The results are then compared with the allocations using the GEF-7 model. The effects of changes in the floors and in the GDPI are assessed separately following an analogous approach.

The effects are assessed at the individual country level and across various country categories. The country categories that are used for analysis include LDCs, SIDS, landlocked developing

countries, large portfolio countries (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and Russia), and other countries.<sup>3</sup> The classifications are based on country status in 2018, when the GEF-7 STAR model was adopted. The country categories based on regions correspond to the GEF regions. The data are also analyzed using country income categories—high income, upper middle income, lower middle income, and low income—based on World Bank country classifications by income level for 2018.

## 8.3 Findings

### OVERALL CHANGES IN COUNTRY ALLOCATIONS

Most recipient countries experienced a decrease in their STAR allocations for GEF-7 because of the decrease in their allocations for the climate change focal area. The total resource envelope for STAR allocations decreased from \$2.338 billion in GEF-6 to \$1.896 billion in GEF-7. The envelope was reduced substantially (–46 percent) for the climate change focal area and marginally (–2 percent) for the biodiversity focal area. Although there was a modest increase of 2 percent for the land degradation area, the increase was not sufficient to mitigate the decrease in the other focal areas.

Eighty percent of the recipient countries experienced a drop in their total allocations. Ninety-seven percent experienced a drop in their climate change allocation. Although allocations of 63 percent and 61 percent of countries increased for the biodiversity and land degradation focal areas, respectively, in most instances the increase was not sufficient to offset the decrease in allocation for climate change. All of the 21 countries (15 percent) that had an increase in their total

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<sup>3</sup> Other countries are those that are not LDCs, SIDS, landlocked developing countries, or large portfolio countries.

allocation also had an increase in their biodiversity focal area allocation.

All country categories experienced a decrease in their total STAR allocation from GEF-6 to GEF-7 (table 8.1); nonetheless, the categories vary considerably in how much the decrease led to changes in their relative shares. On average, LDCs and SIDS experienced only a marginal decrease in total allocations; the decrease in their climate change allocation was mitigated by an increase in their biodiversity and land degradation allocations. Countries that have historically accounted for the five largest GEF portfolios (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and Russia) experienced a substantial decrease in their total allocation and their relative share in the STAR allocations. The share of the landlocked countries and “other countries” for GEF-7 tracked their share for GEF-6.

## EFFECTS OF THE DATA UPDATE

The effect of the data update on some of the country categories is substantial. Compared to the baseline that uses GEF-7 focal area envelopes and the GEF-7 model but with GEF-6 data, the scenario that uses updated GEF-7 data shows a decrease in the share of SIDS, large GEF portfolio countries, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean (table 8.2). At the same time, updated data led to an increase in

the shares of Europe and Central Asia, Africa, and other countries.

Because of the data update, several countries experienced substantial shifts in allocations for the biodiversity focal area. The normalized biodiversity Global Benefits Index scores of countries such as Indonesia, Madagascar, and Papua New Guinea increased; and those of Brazil, China, and Mexico decreased substantially. In climate change and land degradation, the shifts in country shares due to the data update were not so pronounced.

## EFFECTS OF CHANGES IN THE STAR MODEL

Changes in the STAR model for GEF-7 led to shifts in allocations for several groups of countries. The net effect of the STAR model on country allocation share has been assessed using the GEF-7 focal area envelopes and data. Compared to the model used in GEF-6, there were changes in the floors and in the GDP used for GEF-7. Calculations show that the GEF-7 model delivered lower shares to LDCs, SIDS, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean; and provided slightly higher relative shares to countries with large portfolios and other countries, and to Europe and Central Asia (table 8.3). However, when the GEF-7 actual and the baseline for analysis are compared to the actual share in allocation

**Table 8.1** Ex ante STAR allocations for different country categories: GEF6 versus GEF-7

Country category	Biodiversity				Climate change				Land degradation				Total			
	GEF-6		GEF-7		GEF-6		GEF-7		GEF-6		GEF-7		GEF-6		GEF-7	
	Mil. \$	%	Mil. \$	%	Mil. \$	%	Mil. \$	%	Mil. \$	%	Mil. \$	%	Mil. \$	%	Mil. \$	%
LDCs	210	19.7	249	24.2	181	18.9	81	15.9	116	33.1	131	36.9	506	21.4	461	24.3
SIDS	130	12.4	144	14.0	91	9.6	43	8.5	38	10.9	46	12.9	259	11.0	233	12.3
Landlocked	109	10.4	113	11.0	128	13.7	74	14.5	104	29.9	107	30.3	341	14.6	295	15.5
Large portfolio	246	23.4	181	17.6	350	37.2	198	38.8	36	10.5	26	7.5	632	27.1	406	21.4
Other	444	42.3	444	43.1	279	29.7	157	30.7	112	32.2	110	31.2	834	35.7	712	37.5
All recipient countries	1,051	100	1,031	100	941	100	511	100	346	100	354	100	2,338	100	1,896	100

**Note:** Details do not sum to totals because of an overlap between LDCs and SIDS, and between LDCs and landlocked countries

**Table 8.2** Effects of data update on STAR country allocation share

Country category	Using the GEF-7 focal area envelopes and model		Change
	GEF-6 data	GEF-7 (actual)	
LDCs	24.3	24.3	+0.2
SIDS	13.3	12.3	-7.3
Landlocked developing countries	15.8	15.5	-1.4
Large portfolio	23.4	21.4	-8.7
Other countries	35.0	37.5	+7.3
Africa	29.4	30.2	+2.8
Asia	34.1	32.9	-3.5
Europe and Central Asia	9.1	10.9	+19.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	27.4	26.0	-5.2

**Note:** The baseline scenario uses GEF-7 focal area envelopes with the GEF-7 model and GEF-6 STAR indexes data. The scenario for comparison provides predicted calculations using the GEF-7 focal area envelopes, applying the GEF-7 model with updated data used for GEF-7 STAR indexes.

**Table 8.3** Effects of changes in the STAR model on share of country categories in total allocations

Country category	GEF-6 (actual)	Using the GEF-7 focal area envelopes and data		
	GEF-6 model	GEF-6 model	GEF-7 (actual)	Change
LDCs	21.4	25.9	24.3	-6.2
SIDS	11.0	13.9	12.3	-11.4
Landlocked developing countries	14.6	15.8	15.5	-1.4
Large portfolio	27.1	20.0	21.4	7.2
Other	35.7	36.4	37.5	3.0
Africa	26.7	31.4	30.2	-3.8
Asia	34.9	32.9	32.9	0.0
Europe and Central Asia	11.6	8.9	10.9	22.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	26.7	26.8	26.0	-2.9

**Note:** The baseline scenario uses GEF-7 Global Benefits Indexes, GEF-7 focal area envelopes, and GEF-6 floors. The scenario for comparison uses the focal area floors for GEF-7.

for GEF-6, LDCs, SIDS, landlocked countries, and Africa made substantial gain in terms of relative share. Thus, the overall effect of the changes in STAR for GEF-7 is to moderate the change in share driven by a decrease in the envelope for climate change.

### Effects of changes in floors

Changes in the country allocation floors for focal areas in GEF-7 led to a shift in resources from LDCs, SIDS, and countries in Africa to countries

with large portfolios, other countries, and Europe and Central Asia. In GEF-7, there was an increase in floors for the biodiversity and land degradation focal areas and a decrease in the floors for the climate change focal area (table 8.4). Despite the increase in the floors for two focal areas as against the decrease in one, on average resources for LDCs, SIDS, and Africa decreased because of rebalancing, because they benefited more from the climate change floors than from the other floors (table 8.5). Overall, more countries benefited from the climate change floors; therefore, the decrease

**Table 8.4** Focal area country allocation floors (million \$)

	For LDCs		For other countries	
	GEF-6	GEF-7	GEF-6	GEF-7
Biodiversity	2	3	1.5	2
Climate change	3	1.5	2	1
Land degradation	1	1.5	0.5	1

**Table 8.5** Effects of changes in focal area allocation floors on share of country categories in total allocations

Country category	Using the GEF-7 focal area envelopes and data		Change
	GEF-6 floors	GEF-7 (actual)	
LDCs	26.8	24.3	-9.4
SIDS	13.8	12.3	-10.8
Landlocked developing countries	16.0	15.5	-2.8
Large portfolio	19.6	21.4	+9.1
Other countries	36.1	37.5	+4.1
Africa	32.2	30.2	-6.2
Asia	32.9	32.9	-0.1
Europe and Central Asia	8.8	10.9	+23.8
Latin America and the Caribbean	26.1	26.0	-0.3

**Note:** The baseline scenario uses the GEF-7 model with GEF-6 floors on GEF-7 focal area envelopes and updated data. The comparison scenario uses actual GEF-7 model results to assess change.

in the floors for climate change both decreased the number of countries eligible for the benefit and reduced the size of the benefit. In GEF-6, for example, 56 percent of the countries benefited from the climate change floors, compared to 31 percent and 15 percent for biodiversity and land degradation, respectively.

Data support the decrease in the floor for the climate change focal area for GEF-7. The measure helped in calibrating the floors to a level that matched the decreased envelope available for allocation for the climate change focal area. Without the decrease in the floors for climate change, 110 countries would have been eligible to benefit from the climate change floor in GEF-7 compared to 80 countries in GEF-6. The increase in the number of countries that would have benefited is primarily on account of the decreased envelope for the focal area. Without the decrease, the

110 countries—which together account for about a 13 percent share in the total of country scores for climate change—would have received 52 percent of the focal area envelope. Because of the decrease in the floors, the number of countries eligible for the floor was 90. These 90 countries accounted for 7 percent of the total of the country scores and 21 percent of the share in the focal area envelope.

### Effects of changes in the GDPI

The increase in the weight of the exponent of the GDPI provided more resources to recipient countries with lower per capita GDP. The share in STAR resources increased by 3.6 percent for LDCs and by 2.5 percent for countries in Africa (table 8.6). The relative shares of Europe and Central Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean declined. Overall, the level of change due to the increase in weight of the GDPI was lower than the effect of the

**Table 8.6** Effects of changes in the weight of the exponent of the GDP on share of country categories in total allocations

Country category	Using the GEF-7 focal area envelopes and data		Change
	-0.08 exponent weight (used in GEF-6)	-0.12 exponent weight (GEF-7 actual)	
High income	3.1	3.0	-4.1
Upper middle income	45.8	44.7	-2.4
Lower middle income	34.7	35.2	1.4
Low income	16.4	17.2	4.6
LDCs	23.5	24.3	3.6
SIDS	12.3	12.3	-0.4
Landlocked developing countries	15.4	15.5	1.0
Large portfolios	21.7	21.4	-1.4
Other countries	37.9	37.5	-1.0
Africa	29.5	30.2	2.5
Asia	32.7	32.9	0.5
Europe and Central Asia	11.1	10.9	-1.7
Latin America and the Caribbean	26.7	26.0	-2.6

**Note:** The baseline scenario uses a -0.08 weight in the GDP of the GEF-7 STAR model, the GEF-7 focal area envelopes, and updated GEF-7 STAR index data. The comparison scenario provides predicted calculations using the actual GEF-7 STAR model, which used a higher GDP exponent weight (-0.12 instead of -0.08, with the negative sign signifying a preference for countries with lower per capita GDP).

rebalancing of the focal area country allocation floors. The recent proposal by the GEF Secretariat to shift from the use of per capita GDP to per capita gross national product (GNP) in the GDP is well reasoned. Projections comparing the effect of using gross national product vis-à-vis the use of GDP on country allocations (using the GEF-7 model, focal area envelopes, and other data) show that the effect, in terms of shifts in allocation across country categories, ranges from +0.3 percent to

-0.3 percent, with LDCs, low-income countries, and countries in Africa likely to gain somewhat. The shifts at the individual country level have a higher range. The move to gross national product is an improvement because it better captures the socio-economic condition of a recipient countries' citizens than GDP. It is also in line with the practice of peer organizations (GEF IEO 2018a).

# Approach paper

*This annex has been lightly edited for style and consistency. Its original annexes have been appended to this final evaluation report and the references updated accordingly.*

## A.1 Background and context

The GEF Annual Performance Report (APR) prepared by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO) provides an overview of the performance of GEF activities and processes, key factors that may affect performance, the quality of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, and a summary of Management Action Record (MAR). Along with reporting on the performance of completed projects, an APR may cover performance issues that are of current interest to GEF stakeholders.

Recent APRs have covered topics such as tracking tools (APR 2015), progress to impact (APR 2016), sustainability (APR 2017), the transportation portfolio (APR 2019), and quality of terminal evaluation reports (APR 2020). APR 2021 will be prepared as an input to the Seventh Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS7) of the GEF. Along with other topics that APRs cover regularly, APR 2021 will cover two special topics: progress to GEF-5, GEF-6, and GEF-7 targets; and the effect of COVID-19 on GEF projects.

This paper presents the approach that will be followed for preparation of APR 2021. It discusses the key questions, methodology, arrangements for stakeholder involvement, evaluation products, and calendar of activities. Two peer feedback providers will provide advice for quality assurance. The emerging findings of APR 2021 will be shared across the GEF partnership through an inter-Agency meeting to facilitate discussion and feedback on the draft report. The findings of APR 2021 will be shared at the GEF-8 replenishment meetings. The report will be presented at the June 2021 meeting of the GEF Council.

## A.2 Evaluation questions, coverage, and methodology

APR 2021 will present analysis on several performance-related themes that involve different data sets and methodological approaches. These are discussed separately in this section.

### PERFORMANCE OF COMPLETED PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

Assessment of, and reporting on, the performance of completed projects and programs is a regular

feature of the APR. The issues that are covered include an account of outcomes, sustainability, implementation, and project M&E. APR 2021 will seek to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do GEF projects achieve their expected results?
- How well are the GEF-supported activities implemented and executed?
- What is the quality of project M&E?
- What are the factors that affect project performance?
- What is the quality of reporting through the terminal evaluations?

## Coverage

Reporting will be based on the data from 1,805 completed GEF projects (table A.1). The terminal evaluations for these projects have been submitted to the GEF IEO since the beginning of the GEF through August 2020. Of these, 99 projects submitted terminal evaluations since the completion of the last APR. These 99 projects comprise the APR 2021 cohort and will be covered in this APR for the first time (annex B).

**Table A.1 Terminal evaluation submissions for the APR 2021 cohort**

Terminal evaluation submissions	Number
Past submissions through APR 2020	1,706
Submissions for APR 2021	99
Asian Development Bank	5
African Development Bank	1
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	13
Inter-American Development Bank	3
United Nations Development Programme	31
United Nations Environment Programme	14
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	12
World Bank	20
Cumulative total	1,805

Of the projects in the APR 2021 cohort, the terminal evaluations of 35 projects will be validated. This includes a 10 percent sample of terminal evaluations for projects implemented by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and all terminal evaluations prepared by other GEF Agencies. The rationale for this graduated approach is that the GEF IEO has a long track record of validating the ratings provided by the evaluation offices of the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP, and has found them to be consistent with its own ratings. Validation of a 10 percent sample of the terminal evaluations from the World Bank, UNDP, and UNEP allows the GEF IEO to monitor the extent to which the ratings continue to be consistent. The cumulative number of terminal evaluations submitted by other Agencies so far is too small to assess consistency with the validated ratings by the GEF IEO. Nonetheless, the number of terminal evaluations from some of the other Agencies is approaching a level where consistency may be ascertained.

Reporting on environmental stress reduction and status change, the broader adoption of GEF initiatives, and related achievements of completed projects will include data from 200 additional projects for which terminal evaluations were validated by the GEF IEO after the completion of OPS6.<sup>1</sup> These 200 projects are in addition to the 415 projects that were covered in OPS6 for this analysis and for which terminal evaluations were submitted after completion of OPS5 and through completion of OPS6.

Of the 1,805 projects for which terminal evaluations have been submitted so far, qualitative analysis will cover only the completed projects approved from GEF-5 onward. In total, terminal evaluations for 161

<sup>1</sup> The analysis presented in OPS6 is available in GEF IEO (2018c).



projects that were approved in GEF-5 and onward were submitted by December 2019. Of these 161, a purposive sample of approximately 70 projects will be reviewed to explore factors and pathways affecting project outcomes and sustainability.

### **Methodology: Analysis of performance ratings of completed projects**

APR 2021 will report on outcome achievements, risks to sustainability of outcome achievements, the quality of M&E design and implementation, the quality of implementation and execution of completed projects, and the quality of terminal evaluation reports. Risks to the sustainability of outcome achievements will be rated on a four-point scale, while all other indicators will be rated on a six-point scale. [Annex D](#) provides a detailed account of the assessment approach for rating scales.

Data used in APR 2021 will be drawn primarily from the GEF IEO's terminal evaluation reviews and reviews conducted by the Agency evaluation offices. All of the terminal evaluations used for analysis and reporting in the APRs are reviewed by the GEF IEO or the Agency evaluation offices to verify that ratings are properly substantiated, and, where needed, provide additional or revised ratings (such as for the quality of terminal evaluations). The GEF IEO accepts the terminal evaluation review ratings provided by the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group, the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, and the UNEP Evaluation Office, if these ratings are available within two years of completion of a terminal evaluation. To track whether the ratings provided by Agency evaluation offices continue to be consistent with the GEF IEO ratings, the Office will continue to conduct reviews of their terminal evaluations on a random sample basis. For FY 2021 the random sample for projects from these Agencies will be about 10 percent of their total new submissions for APR 2021.

The GEF IEO procedure for terminal evaluation review is standardized. GEF IEO reviewers assess the evidence present in the terminal evaluation, along with the information provided in the project implementation reports (PIRs) and midterm reviews. The objectives and outcomes set forth in the project design documents, approved by the GEF Council and/or GEF CEO, form the basis for comparing expectations with actual results. Based on this assessment, the reviewers provide performance ratings for the project. The reviewers also assess the extent to which performance ratings provided in the terminal evaluation are consistent with the evidence provided in the terminal evaluation. After a draft report of the review has been completed, a peer reviewer with experience in preparing terminal evaluation review reports provides feedback on the draft. This feedback is then incorporated by the primary reviewer into the final terminal evaluation review report. When a primary reviewer proposes downgrading a project outcome rating from the satisfactory range to the unsatisfactory range, another reviewer (in addition to the peer reviewer) also examines the review to ensure that the proposed rating revision is justified.

Although there are several common elements in the review and rating approach adopted by the GEF IEO and evaluation offices of the GEF Agencies, they also have differences. While the GEF IEO's adoption of the project performance ratings provided by the Agency evaluation offices (of UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank) reduces duplication of effort, it introduces another source of variation in rating and makes inter-Agency comparisons difficult. Over the years, the IEO has tracked the difference in the outcome ratings it provides and those of the Agency evaluation offices and has found that the difference is not statistically significant. However, there may be variations in ratings on other parameters where differences in ratings have not been tracked and/or there may be gaps in the extent to which ratings are provided.

## Methodology: Environmental status change and broader adoption

Environmental results of GEF projects are expected to manifest in the form of environmental stress reduction and status change. It is unlikely that environmental results manifest fully or substantially at implementation completion stage, as it is still too early. However, some early indications of progress—especially in the form of environmental stress reduction at a local scale—may be evident. A project also achieves greater influence through its indirect effects. The technologies, policy measures, and approaches supported by a project may be adopted by targeted stakeholders that are not direct participants in the project or may be sustained beyond the project time frame, adding to what the project achieves directly. Processes of broader adoption, such as sustaining, mainstreaming, replication, upscaling, and market change help in the achievement of these indirect effects. The evidence presented in the terminal evaluation is assessed to determine whether environmental stress reduction and/or status change was taking place, the scale at which it was taking place, and the mechanisms used to effect this change.

OPS5 and OPS6 included an analysis of the environmental status change and broader adoption-related results of GEF projects at the completion of implementation. The analysis presented in OPS5 covered 473 projects, and in OPS6 415 projects. After OPS6, analysis of environmental status change and broader adoption has been incorporated into the terminal evaluation validation process. So far, this assessment has been conducted for 108 completed projects of the OPS7 cohort.<sup>2</sup> The sample will be further expanded to

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<sup>2</sup> The OPS7 cohort includes projects for which terminal evaluations were received after closing of the OPS6 cohort. Inclusion of a project in the OPS7 cohort is based on when the terminal evaluations were received (after closing of the OPS6 cohort in December 2016 and

include additional projects of the OPS7 cohort, especially those being covered for the first time in this APR. In all, about 200 projects will be sampled.

## Methodology: Qualitative analysis of performance of completed projects

Quantitative analysis helps in identifying patterns across the GEF portfolio in a consistent manner, while qualitative analysis complements it by helping us understand factors and relationships at play, observed patterns within their context, and the mechanisms that drive these patterns. Although APRs draw more from quantitative analysis, some of these have also included detailed qualitative analyses on project performance. For example, APR 2008 included a qualitative analysis of the factors associated with lower outcome achievements. Similarly, APR 2014 included a qualitative analysis of the lessons reported in the terminal evaluations. However, those efforts were narrowly targeted. APR 2021 will present the findings of a more comprehensive effort that assesses factors and mechanisms affecting project performance.

The qualitative analysis will be based on review of terminal evaluations from a sample of completed projects that were approved during GEF-5 or later, as the experience of projects from these replenishment phases will be more relevant to the GEF activities that are currently under preparation or implementation. Terminal evaluations for 161 projects that were approved in or after GEF-5 were submitted to the GEF IEO through December 2019. From these, a purposive sample of 70 projects was drawn.

The qualitative analysis explores factors and pathways that affect project outcomes, sustainability, implementation, and M&E. The terminal evaluations are rich with examples of projects managing

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through August 2020). In all, the cohort is estimated to include about 600 completed projects.

adaptively, mitigating risks and challenges, and exceeding targets. They offer a multitude of lessons learned, recommendations, and effective practices for bolstering outcomes and sustaining results.

Qualitative coding of the terminal evaluations started in FY 2020 and will be completed in FY 2021. The information presented in the terminal evaluations is coded and analyzed using NVivo software. The methodology applies a blended deductive and inductive approach to build on prior findings,<sup>3</sup> identify new factors as they emerged, and develop and modify a coding scheme accordingly. The coding scheme has been iteratively updated as progressively more terminal evaluations have been coded, and terminal evaluations coded earlier have been recoded per the updated scheme. A total of 55 terminal evaluations have been coded through October 2020, and data saturation has been reached for the development of the coding scheme.

## PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS TARGETS

The analysis on progress in achieving environmental results targets is being undertaken as a direct input to OPS7. GEF-funded activities aim at delivering global environmental benefits. The programming directions document for GEF replenishment periods provide projections of the global environmental benefits that may be expected from the GEF funding for a replenishment period. The achievement of these results is assessed through core indicators. Project proposals—project identification forms (PIFs) and requests for Chief Executive Officer (CEO) endorsement—provide information on the expected level of achievement on the core indicators. PIRs, midterm reviews, and terminal evaluations are expected to provide information on actual achievement on the ground. The

<sup>3</sup>This includes the GEF IEO's previous outcomes analysis in APR 2014 and sustainability analysis in APR 2017.

analysis assesses the extent to which the targets established by past replenishment processes are being achieved; therefore, it provides information of the extent to which past projections have been realistic.

OPS5 and OPS6 included analyses on progress to environmental results targets. OPS7 will include an updated assessment of progress to GEF-5, GEF-6, and GEF-7 targets. The analysis is based on taking stock of the best possible estimate of the aggregate target achievement by the GEF projects for a given replenishment period. For a given project, data on target achievement progress considers its project cycle stage. For example, for a project for which only a PIF has been approved, the projections provided in the PIF indicate the anticipated results. Although these projections may be updated in the request for CEO endorsement, they remain projections as the actual results are yet to be achieved. Aggregation of data on results anticipated at CEO endorsement shows the extent to which the GEF projects have planned for achievement of the replenishment targets. In comparison, PIRs, midterm reviews, tracking tools, and terminal evaluations may provide information on realized results. For projects that have advanced through later stages, data on actual achievements are used.

[Table A.2](#) provides a summary of the sources of information for reporting on progress to environmental results targets. The information drawn from these sources will be adjusted to arrive at an aggregate estimate. In OPS5 and OPS6, a factor of 0.8 was used to adjust the projected results in the PIF and request for CEO endorsement. This factor is based on historical data that about 80 percent of completed GEF projects have an outcome rating in the satisfactory range, and that some approved projects get canceled after approval. With the availability of data on actual results for a significant share of GEF-5 projects, this factor will need to be applied only to the projects where the projections

**Table A.2 Progress to environmental results targets—source of information**

GEF replenishment period	Source of information				
	PIF	Request for CEO endorsement/approval	PIR	Midterm review	Terminal evaluation
GEF-5	—	—	Yes	Yes	Yes
GEF-6	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
GEF-7	Yes	Yes	Yes	n.a.	n.a.

**Note:** — = not used as a source; n.a. = not applicable.

provided in the PIF or request for CEO endorsement/approval are used.

## MANAGEMENT ACTION RECORD

The GEF MAR tracks the level of adoption of GEF Council decisions and underlying GEF IEO recommendations by GEF management. The MAR serves two purposes: (1) to provide the Council with a record of its decisions based on the evaluation reports presented by the GEF IEO, the proposed management actions, and the status of these actions; and (2) to increase the accountability of GEF management regarding Council decisions based on GEF IEO evaluations. To assess progress on the adoption of a Council decision, relevant actions undertaken by management are considered. MAR 2020 reported on level of adoption of decisions based on GEF IEO recommendations included in eight different evaluations. The number of new GEF IEO evaluations and related Council decisions to be tracked in MAR 2021 will be clear after the December 2020 Council meeting.

## EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON GEF PROJECTS

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe effect on societies around the world. The pandemic has also affected operations of international and national development organizations, including the operations of GEF Agencies and GEF-supported activities implemented by them. The GEF Secretariat’s paper “The Impact of COVID-19 on GEF Project

Preparation and Implementation” (GEF 2020b) provides an overview of the responses from across the GEF partnership on how COVID-19 has affected project preparation and implementation. The analysis presented to the GEF Secretariat is based on a survey of GEF Agencies, online survey of the GEF operational focal points (OFPs), regional workshops of the OFPs, and discussions during the GEF Agency retreat. The respondents of the Agency survey perceive the COVID-19 pandemic to have had a greater effect on implementation and supervision than project preparation and reporting. A vast majority of OFPs responded that the pandemic had affected project preparation, implementation, supervision, and activities. While the mechanisms through which the pandemic has affected activities is well explained in the paper, how individual projects have been affected and have adapted is not captured other than through anecdotal evidence.

APR 2021 will deepen the understanding of the impacts of the pandemic on the GEF portfolio. It will include a targeted review that will assess how the pandemic has affected GEF projects and how project teams on the ground have adapted to this situation. The review will primarily rely on reporting from the PIRs, midterm reviews, and terminal evaluations that are completed during calendar year 2020. Where relevant and appropriate, complementary information will be gathered through interviews of those involved in project preparation and implementation. The review is expected to provide a real-time synthesis of the effects of the pandemic on GEF projects, but it will not be able to

assess the long-term effects of the pandemic on environmental results.

### A.3 Peer and stakeholder feedback

In addition to quality control mechanisms within the terminal evaluation review process, APR 2021 will benefit from two peer reviewers—one external and one internal. Johannes Dobinger, Chief of the Independent Evaluation Division at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, is the external peer reviewer. Anna Viggh, Senior Evaluation Officer at the GEF IEO, is the internal peer reviewer. The peer reviewers have already provided feedback on an earlier draft of this approach paper, and their inputs have been incorporated in this revised version. The peer reviewers will provide feedback on the intermediary products of the evaluation, including the analysis of topics covered by APR 2021 and its draft report.

The GEF IEO is reinstating the practice of sharing the terminal evaluation validation reports it prepares with the respective Agencies. This will help in ensuring that reporting through the APR is accurate, and that there is better understanding of the validations prepared by the GEF IEO.

The preliminary findings of the APR 2021 will be shared with key stakeholders through an inter-Agency meeting. Inter-Agency meetings were a preferred mode of sharing emerging findings of APRs up to 2014. This meeting is being reinstated for APR 2021. The meeting will provide an opportunity for key stakeholders, such as the GEF Agencies (operations and evaluation), the Secretariat, the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, and the GEF–Civil Society Organization Network, to provide feedback on the emerging findings of the APR. The draft report will be shared with these key stakeholders to get their feedback on emerging conclusions and identify errors of analysis and of omission and commission.

### A.4 Expected outputs, outreach, and tracking

The APR is primarily intended for the GEF Council and a GEF corporate audience, including the GEF Secretariat, the GEF partner Agencies, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, and the GEF–CSO Network. The report will be delivered at the June 2021 Council meeting. The report will be published on the GEF IEO website and distributed via email among the GEF Council members, GEF country focal points, GEF Secretariat, Partner Agencies, and the GEF–Civil Society Organization Network. Data on ratings can also be accessed at the [Data & Ratings](#) web page at the GEF IEO website, which has been used to share the data for past APRs as well. A four-page summary of the preliminary findings will also be prepared for circulation prior to the first meeting of the GEF-8 replenishment. Other outputs include technical papers on the effects of COVID-19, the MAR 2021, and the qualitative analysis of terminal evaluations.

### A.5 Resources and schedule

#### EVALUATION TEAM

APR 2021 will be completed by a team including Neeraj Kumar Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer; Meghan Jutras, Consultant; and other consultants.

#### SCHEDULE OF WORK

The draft report will be ready by April 1, 2021, and the final report will be ready by May 15, 2021, in time for the June 2021 GEF Council meeting. Table A.3 shows the schedule of work activities for completion and presentation of the findings of APR 2021. The schedule of work has been prepared with respect to the GEF Council meeting schedule.

**Table A.3** Schedule of work activities for completion and presentation of APR 2021

<b>Project milestone</b>	<b>Work period or completion date</b>
Approach paper	December 20, 2020
Review of terminal evaluations	September 1, 2020–December 31, 2020
Analysis of terminal evaluation data	December 1, 2020–January 31, 2021
Qualitative analysis of completed projects	January 31, 2021
Preparation of the four-page flier on preliminary findings	February 15, 2021
Presentation of draft APR	April 15, 2021
Council information document of APR 2021 uploaded	May 15, 2021
Publication of the finalized report of APR 2021	June–September 2021

# APR 2021 project cohort

GEF ID	Title	GEF Agency	Country	GEF period
1185	Integrated Coastal Resources Management Project	ADB	Philippines	GEF-3
1331	Demonstrating Cost-effectiveness and Sustainability of Environmentally-sound and Locally Appropriate Alternatives to DDT for Malaria Control in Africa	UNEP	Regional	GEF-3
2095	Sustainable Management of the Water Resources of the la Plata Basin with Respect to the Effects of Climate Variability and Change	UNEP	Regional	GEF-4
2546	Demonstration of Sustainable Alternatives to DDT and Strengthening of National Vector Control Capabilities in Middle East and North Africa	UNEP	Regional	GEF-4
2597	Cogen for Africa	UNEP	Regional	GEF-3
2703	Effective Conservation and Sustainable Use of Mangrove Ecosystems in Brazil	UNDP	Brazil	GEF-4
2714	National Reporting to the CBD: Supporting Countries to Prepare the Third National Report on Biodiversity, Phase I	UNDP	Global	GEF-3
2766	CBPF: Integrated Ecosystem and Water Resources Management in the Baiyangdian Basin	ADB	China	GEF-4
2788	CBPF: Ningxia Integrated Ecosystem and Agricultural Development Project	ADB	China	GEF-4
2880	National Reporting to the CBD: Supporting Countries to Prepare the Third National Report on Biodiversity (Phase II)	UNDP	Global	GEF-3
3005	CleanTech Fund	IDB	Regional	GEF-3
3279	Citarum Watershed Management and Biodiversity Conservation Project	ADB	Indonesia	GEF-4
3349	DSSA Establishment of Efficient and Effective Data Collection and Reporting Procedures for Evaluating the Continued Need of DDT for Disease Vector Control	UNEP	Global	GEF-4
3377	SIP: Fostering Agricultural Productivity in Mali	WB	Mali	GEF-4
3403	SIP: Kalahari-Namib Project: Enhancing Decision-making through Interactive Environmental Learning and Action in Molopo-Nossob River Basin in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa	UNEP	Regional	GEF-4
3414	Support to GEF Eligible CBD Parties for Carrying out 2010 Biodiversity Targets National Assessments- Phase II	UNDP	Global	GEF-4

GEF ID	Title	GEF Agency	Country	GEF period
3540	Industrial Energy Efficiency in Key Sectors	UNIDO	Iran	GEF-4
3551	IND: Financing Energy Efficiency at Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)	WB	India	GEF-4
3595	CF: Promoting Energy Efficiency in the Industries through System Optimization and Energy Management Standards	UNIDO	Indonesia	GEF-4
3601	CF: Industrial Energy Efficiency	UNIDO	Philippines	GEF-4
3701	Enhancing Climate Risk Management and Adaptation in Burundi (ECRAMB)	AfDB	Burundi	GEF-5
3719	Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Improved Energy Efficiency in the Industrial Sector in Moldova	UNIDO	Moldova	GEF-4
3742	Industrial Energy Efficiency (IEE)	UNIDO	Egypt, Arab Rep.	GEF-4
3746	Support to GEF Eligible CBD Parties for Carrying out 2010 Biodiversity Targets National Assessments- Phase II	UNDP	Global	GEF-4
3757	CBSP – Strengthening the National System of protected areas in Equatorial Guinea for the effective conservation of representative ecosystems and globally significant biodiversity	UNDP	Equatorial Guinea	GEF-4
3767	SFM Strengthening National Policy and Knowledge Frameworks in Support of Sustainable Management of Brazil's Forest Resources	FAO	Brazil	GEF-4
3798	Increasing Resilience to Climate Change and Natural Hazards	WB	Vanuatu	GEF-4
3921	Promoting Sustainable Energy Production and Use from Biomass in Pakistan	UNIDO	Pakistan	GEF-4
3923	SPWA-CC: Promoting market based development of small to medium scale renewable energy systems in Cape Verde.	UNIDO	Cabo Verde	GEF-4
3971	SFM Biodiversity Conservation through Sustainable Forest Management by Local Communities	UNDP	Bolivia	GEF-4
4035	MENARID: Ecotourism and Conservation of Desert Biodiversity	WB	Tunisia	GEF-4
4042	TT-Pilot (GEF-4): Climate Change Related Technology Transfer for Cambodia: Using Agricultural Residue Biomass for Sustainable Energy Solutions	UNIDO	Cambodia	GEF-4
4141	Developing Core Capacity to Address Adaptation to Climate Change in Productive Coastal Zones	UNEP	Tanzania	GEF-4
4176	Encouraging the Establishment and Consolidation of an Energy Service Market in Chile	IDB	Chile	GEF-4
4184	Promoting Small Biomass Power Plants in Rural Thailand for Sustainable Renewable Energy Management and Community Involvement	UNIDO	Thailand	GEF-4
4207	Sustainable Production Systems and Biodiversity Project	WB	Mexico	GEF-4
4268	Enhancing Resilience to Climate Change by Mainstreaming Adaption Concerns into Agricultural Sector Development in Liberia	UNDP	Liberia	GEF-4
4345	Renewable Energy for Rural Livelihood (RERL)	UNDP	Nepal	GEF-5
4387	Phase-out of CFC Consumption in the Manufacture of Aerosol Metered-dose Inhalers (MDIs) in the Russian Federation	UNIDO	Russian Federation	GEF-5
4441	Dioxins Reductions from the Pulp and Paper Industry in China	WB	China	GEF-5
4488	Green Energy Schemes for Low-Carbon City in Shanghai, China	WB	China	GEF-5
4500	GEF Large-City Congestion and Carbon Reduction Project	WB	China	GEF-5
4512	Pilot Asia-Pacific Climate Technology Network and Finance Center	ADB	Regional	GEF-5



GEF ID	Title	GEF Agency	Country	GEF period
4533	Development of Tools to Incorporate Impacts of Climatic Variability and Change in Particular Floods and Droughts into Basin Planning Processes	UNEP	Global	GEF-5
4580	ABNJ Global Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (PROGRAM)	FAO	Global	GEF-5
4581	Sustainable Management of Tuna Fisheries and Biodiversity Conservation in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)	FAO	Global	GEF-5
4582	ABNJ: Strengthening Global Capacity to Effectively Manage Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)	FAO	Global	GEF-5
4600	Reducing Pressures on Natural Resources from Competing Land Use in Non-irrigated Arid Mountain, Semi-desert and Desert Landscapes	UNDP	Uzbekistan	GEF-5
4605	Management and Protection of Key Biodiversity Areas	WB	Belize	GEF-5
4625	Shire Natural Ecosystems Management Project	WB	Malawi	GEF-5
4644	Addressing Barriers to the Adoption of Improved Charcoal Production Technologies and Sustainable Land Management Practices through an Integrated Approach	UNDP	Uganda	GEF-5
4659	LME-EA: Coastal Resources for Sustainable Development: Mainstreaming the Application of Marine Spatial Planning Strategies, Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use	WB	Vietnam	GEF-5
4660	ABNJ: Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)	FAO	Global	GEF-5
4724	Enhancing Resilience of Vulnerable Coastal Areas and Communities to Climate Change in the Republic of Gambia	UNDP	Gambia	GEF-5
4725	Solomon Islands Water Sector Adaptation Project (SIWSAP)	UNDP	Solomon Islands	GEF-5
4744	Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation, SFM and Carbon Sink Enhancement Into Mongolia's Productive Forest Landscapes	FAO	Mongolia	GEF-5
4751	Mainstreaming SLM in Rangeland Areas of Ngamiland District Productive Landscapes for Improved Livelihoods	UNDP	Botswana	GEF-5
4766	Implementation of Eco-industrial Park Initiative for Sustainable Industrial Zones in Vietnam	UNIDO	Vietnam	GEF-5
4767	Capacity Development : Generating Global Environmental Benefits from Improved Local Planning and Decision-making Systems in Burkina Faso	UNDP	Burkina Faso	GEF-5
4769	Improving Forest and Protected Area Management	FAO	Trinidad and Tobago	GEF-5
4771	Enhancing National Capacities to Manage Invasive Alien Species (IAS) by Implementing the National Strategy on IAS	UNDP	Mexico	GEF-5
4779	Sustainable Forest and Landscape Management	WB	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GEF-5
4792	Conservation of Coastal Watersheds to Achieve Multiple Global Environmental Benefits in the Context of Changing Environments	WB	Mexico	GEF-5
4822	Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change through Integrated Agricultural and Pastoral Management in the Sahelian zone in the Framework of the Sustainable Land Management Approach	FAO	Mali	GEF-5
4839	Establishing Integrated Models for Protected Areas and their Co-management	UNDP	Afghanistan	GEF-5

GEF ID	Title	GEF Agency	Country	GEF period
4930	Enhancing the Conservation Effectiveness of Seagrass Ecosystems Supporting Globally Significant Populations of Dugong Across the Indian and Pacific Ocean Basins	UNEP	Global	GEF-5
4937	Strengthening Law Enforcement Capabilities to Combat Wildlife Crime for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Species in South Africa (target: Rhinoceros)	UNEP	South Africa	GEF-5
4948	Technology Needs Assessment	UNEP	Global	GEF-5
4950	Strengthening Liberia's Capability to Provide Climate Information and Services to Enhance Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change	UNDP	Liberia	GEF-5
5006	Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Africa for Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change	UNDP	Sierra Leone	GEF-5
5094	Belize Chemicals and Waste Management Programme	UNDP	Belize	GEF-5
5106	National Capacity Development for Implementing Rio Conventions Through Environmental Governance	UNDP	Bangladesh	GEF-5
5111	Reducing Vulnerability and Increasing Adaptive Capacity to Respond to Impacts of Climate Change and Variability for Sustainable Livelihoods in Agriculture Sector in Nepal	FAO	Nepal	GEF-5
5187	GGW: Community based Rural Development Project 3rd Phase with Sustainable Land and Forestry Management	WB	Burkina Faso	GEF-5
5220	PSG: Sustainable Land Management Project 2	WB	Ethiopia	GEF-5
5266	Oases Ecosystems and Livelihoods Project	WB	Tunisia	GEF-5
5269	Adriatic Sea Environmental Pollution Control Project (I)	WB	Regional	GEF-5
5292	MENA: Morocco GEF Social and Integrated Agriculture (ASIMA)	WB	Morocco	GEF-5
5316	Promotion and Up-scaling of Climate-resilient, Resource Efficient Technologies in a Tropical Island Context	UNDP	Seychelles	GEF-5
5393	Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas	UNDP	Regional	GEF-5
5423	GGW: Building Resilience Through Innovation, Communication and Knowledge Services (BRICKS) Project	WB	Regional	GEF-5
5440	Mainstreaming Incentives for Biodiversity Conservation in the Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy (CRGE)	UNDP	Ethiopia	GEF-5
5481	Conservation of Biodiversity and Mitigation of Land Degradation Through Adaptive Management of Agricultural Heritage Systems	FAO	Morocco	GEF-5
5592	Enhancing Climate Resilience of the Vulnerable Communities and Ecosystems in Somalia	UNDP	Somalia	GEF-5
5605	Developing a National Framework on Access to and Benefit-Sharing of Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge as a Strategy to Contribute to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Morocco	UNDP	Morocco	GEF-5
5610	Reducing GHG Emissions Through Community Forests and Sustainable Biomass Energy in Afghanistan	FAO	Afghanistan	GEF-5
5624	China's Compliance with the Stockholm Convention	UNIDO	China	GEF-5
5663	R2R Integrated Environmental Management of the Fanga'uta Lagoon Catchment	UNDP	Tonga	GEF-5

GEF ID	Title	GEF Agency	Country	GEF period
5715	Strengthening of Institutional and Legal Capacities to Enable Improvement of the National Monitoring System and Management of Environmental Information	UNDP	Kyrgyz Republic	GEF-5
5716	Generate Global Environmental Benefits through Environmental Education and Raising Awareness of Stakeholders	UNDP	Armenia	GEF-5
5774	Advancing the Nagoya Protocol in Countries of the Caribbean Region	UNEP	Regional	GEF-5
5776	Supply Change Securing Food Sustaining Forests	UNEP	Global	GEF-5
5785	Sustainable Land Management Promotion	FAO	Mexico	GEF-5
5798	Adaptive Management and Monitoring of the Maghreb's Oases Systems	FAO	Regional	GEF-5
5824	Sharing Knowledge on the Use of Biochar for Sustainable Land Management	UNEP	Global	GEF-5
5839	Mitigating Deforestation in Brazil Nut Concessions in Madre de Dios, Peru	IDB	Peru	GEF-5
5846	Enhancing Biodiversity Protection through Strengthened Monitoring, Enforcement and Uptake of Environmental Regulations in Guyana's Gold Mining Sector	UNDP	Guyana	GEF-5
6964	Volta River Basin Strategic Action Programme Implementation Project	WB	Regional	GEF-6
8015	Enhancing Resilience Of Liberia Montserrado County Vulnerable Coastal Areas To Climate Change Risks	UNDP	Liberia	GEF-6
9941	Structuring and Launching CRAFT: the First Private Sector Climate Resilience & Adaptation Fund for Developing Countries	CI	Global	GEF-6

**Note:** ADB = Asian Development Bank; CI = Conservation International; FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, IDB = Inter-American Development Bank, UNDP = United Nations Development Programme, UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme, UNIDO = United Nations Industrial Development Organization, WB = World Bank.

# APR 2021 terminal evaluation cohort

GEF ID	Title	GEF Agency	Country	GEF period
4276	Adaptation in the Coastal Zones of Mozambique	UNDP	Mozambique	GEF-5
4332	Sustainable Land and Forest Management in the Greater Caucasus Landscape	UNDP	Azerbaijan	GEF-5
4336	Liberia Electricity System Enhancement Project	WB	Liberia	GEF-5
4340	Strategic Planning and Action to Strengthen Climate Resilience of Rural Communities in Nusa Tenggara Timur Province	UNDP	Indonesia	GEF-5
4352	Environmental Land Management & Rural Livelihoods Project	WB	Tajikistan	GEF-5
4368	Promoting Value Chain Approach to Adaptation in Agriculture in Ghana	IFAD	Ghana	GEF-5
4412	Establishing the Tools and Methods to Include the Nine New POPs into Global Monitoring Plan	UNEP	Global	GEF-5
4447	Strengthening Climate Resilience and Reducing Disaster Risk in Agriculture to Improve Food Security in Haiti Post Earthquake	FAO	Haiti	GEF-5
4470	Building a Multiple-use Forest Management Framework to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Hyrcanian Forest Landscape	UNDP	Iran	GEF-5
4479	Sustainable Forest Management and Multiple Global Environmental Benefits	UNDP	Guatemala	GEF-5
4492	Adaptation of Nicaragua's Water Supplies to Climate Change Project	WB	Nicaragua	GEF-5
4500	GEF Large-City Congestion and Carbon Reduction Project	WB	China	GEF-5
4517	Reducing Barriers to Accelerate the Development of Biomass Markets in Serbia	UNDP	Serbia	GEF-5
4551	Community Based Flood and Glacial Lake Outburst Risk Reduction Project	UNDP	Nepal	GEF-5
4562	Network of Managed Resource Protected Areas	UNDP	Mongolia	GEF-5

GEF ID	Title	GEF Agency	Country	GEF period
4584	Improving Sustainability of PA System in Desert Ecosystems through Promotion of Biodiversity-compatible Livelihoods in and around PAs	UNDP	Kazakhstan	GEF-5
4609	Strengthening the Resilience of Post Conflict Recovery and Development to Climate Change Risks in Sri Lanka	UNDP	Sri Lanka	GEF-5
4616	Climate Change Adaptation to Reduce Land Degradation in Fragile Micro-Watersheds Located in the Municipalities of Texistepeque and Candelaria de la Frontera	FAO	El Salvador	GEF-5
4618	ABS Guatemala: Access to and Benefit Sharing and Protection of Traditional Knowledge to Promote Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use	UNEP	Guatemala	GEF-5
4631	Watershed Approach to Sustainable Coffee Production in Burundi	WB	Burundi	GEF-5
4642	Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change Mitigation Project	WB	Uzbekistan	GEF-5
4653	CBPF-MSL: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Protected Area Landscape in Altai Mountains and Wetlands	UNDP	China	GEF-5
4655	CBPF-MSL: Strengthening the Management Effectiveness of the Sub-system of Wetland Protected Areas for Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity	UNDP	China	GEF-5
4716	Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in coastal and marine protected areas	UNDP	Guatemala	GEF-5
4729	Strengthening the Capacity of the Protected Area System to Address New Management Challenges	UNDP	Namibia	GEF-5
4750	Multiplying Environmental and Carbon Benefits in High Andean Ecosystems	UNEP	Regional	GEF-5
4777	Mainstreaming the use and conservation of agrobiodiversity in public policy through integrated strategies and in situ implementation in four Andean Highlands provinces	FAO	Ecuador	GEF-5
4811	Strengthening the management effectiveness of the wetland protected area system in Hainan for conservation of globally significant biodiversity	UNDP	China	GEF-5
4835	Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Achara Region's Protected Areas Georgia	UNDP	Georgia	GEF-5
4908	Agriculture Production Support Project Chad	WB	Chad	GEF-5
4922	Decision Support for Mainstreaming and Scaling Up of Sustainable Land Management	FAO	Global	GEF-5
4960	Scaling Up Adaptation in Zimbabwe with a Focus on Rural Livelihoods	UNDP	Zimbabwe	GEF-5
4976	Addressing the Risks of Climate-induced Disasters through Enhanced National and Local Capacity for Effective Actions	UNDP	Bhutan	GEF-5
4985	Reducing global and local environmental risks from primary mercury mining in Khaidarkan, the Kyrgyz Republic	UNEP	Kyrgyz Republic	GEF-5
4994	Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Malawi to Support Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change	UNDP	Malawi	GEF-5

GEF ID	Title	GEF Agency	Country	GEF period
4995	Strengthening climate information and early warning systems in Eastern and Southern Africa for climate resilient development and adaptation to climate change—Zambia	UNDP	Zambia	GEF-5
5028	Capacity Building for Mainstreaming MEA Objectives into Inter-Ministerial Structures and Mechanisms	UNDP	Costa Rica	GEF-5
5031	Ensuring Global Environmental Concerns and Best Practices Mainstreamed in the Post-Conflict Rapid Development Process of Sri Lanka Through Improved Information Management	UNDP	Sri Lanka	GEF-5
5038	Implementation of BAT and BEP for reduction of UP-POPs releases from open burning sources	UNIDO	Armenia	GEF-5
5045	Integrating Global Environment Commitments in Investment and Development Decision-making	UNDP	Solomon Islands	GEF-5
5048	Capacity Building for the Strategic Planning and Management of Natural Resources in Belize	UNDP	Belize	GEF-5
5056	Strengthening Community Resilience to Climate-induced Disasters in the Dili to Ainaro Road Development Corridor, Timor-Leste	UNDP	Timor Leste	GEF-5
5096	Payment for Watershed Services in the Chishui River Basin for the Conservation of Globally Significant Biodiversity	UNDP	China	GEF-5
5097	Enhancing Capacity for Implementing Rio Conventions Vietnam	UNDP	Vietnam	GEF-5
5110	Applying Knowledge Management to Scale up Partnership Investments for Sustainable Development of Large Marine Ecosystems	WB	Regional	GEF-5
5126	Mainstreaming global environment commitments for effective national environmental management	UNDP	Suriname	GEF-5
5170	Discovering Nature-based Products and Building National Capacities for the Application of the Nagoya Protocol	UNDP	Fiji	GEF-5
5178	Strengthening Capacities to Measure, Report and Verify Indicators of Global Environment Benefits	UNDP	Papua New Guinea	GEF-5
5186	MENA Desert Ecosystems and Livelihoods Knowledge Sharing and Coordination Project	WB	Regional	GEF-5
5215	Benin Forests and Adjacent Lands Management Project	WB	Benin	GEF-5
5218	Cleantech Programme for Small and Medium Enterprises in India	UNIDO	India	GEF-5
5236	Strengthening Capacity for an Environmental Information Management and Monitoring System in Tajikistan	UNDP	Tajikistan	GEF-5
5295	Generating, Accessing and Using Information and Knowledge Related to the Three Rio Conventions	UNDP	Cambodia	GEF-5
5297	Promoting Access to Clean Energy Services in St. Vincent and the Grenadines	UNDP	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	GEF-5
5320	Assisting LDCs with country-driven processes to advance National Adaptation Plans	UNEP	Global	GEF-5
5448	Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources & Benefit Sharing in Bhutan	UNDP	Bhutan	GEF-5

GEF ID	Title	GEF Agency	Country	GEF period
5467	Harmonization of information management for improved knowledge and monitoring of the global environment in Georgia	UNDP	Georgia	GEF-5
5494	Development of Mercury Risk Management Approaches in Latin America	UNEP	Regional	GEF-5
5505	Cleantech Programme for Small and Medium Enterprises in Turkey	UNIDO	Turkey	GEF-5
5515	Cleantech Programme for Small and Medium Enterprises in South Africa	UNIDO	South Africa	GEF-5
5525	Global Project on the Updating of National Implementation Plans for POPs	UNEP	Global	GEF-5
5553	Cleantech Programme for Small and Medium Enterprises in Pakistan	UNIDO	Pakistan	GEF-5
5570	Mainstreaming Rio Convention Provisions into National Sector Policies Project	UNDP	Jordan	GEF-5
5601	Support to GEF Eligible Countries for Achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 17 Through a Globally Guided NBSAPs Update Process	UNDP	Global	GEF-5
5627	Improving Clean Bus Operations and Management in the People's Republic of China	ADB	China	GEF-5
5633	Lead Paint Elimination Project in Africa	UNEP	Regional	GEF-5
5700	Land Degradation Offset and Mitigation in Western Mongolia	UNDP	Mongolia	GEF-5
5750	Mainstreaming Sustainable Management of Tea Production	UNEP	Regional	GEF-5
5771	Improving Mangrove Conservation Across the Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape (ETPS)	WWF-US	Regional	GEF-5
5797	Securing Tenure Rights for Forest Landscape-Dependent Communities: Linking science with policy to advance tenure security, sustainable forest management and people's livelihoods	FAO	Global	GEF-5
5812	Geothermal Resource Development in Saint Lucia	WB	St. Lucia	GEF-5
5826	Strengthening National Systems to Improve Governance and Management of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Conserved Areas and Territories	UNDP	Philippines	GEF-5
5831	Establishing the Foundations of a Partnership to Accelerate the Global Market Transformation for Efficient Appliances and Equipment	UNEP	Global	GEF-5
9329	Scaling up the SE4ALL Building Efficiency Accelerator (BEA)	UNEP	Global	GEF-6
9567	Renewable Energy for the City of Marrakech's Bus Rapid Transit System	UNDP	Morocco	GEF-6

**Note:** ADB = Asian Development Bank; FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, IDB = Inter-American Development Bank, IFAD = International Fund for Agricultural Development, UNDP = United Nations Development Programme, UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme, UNIDO = United Nations Industrial Development Organization, WB = World Bank; WWF-US = World Wildlife Fund.

# Terminal evaluation report review guidelines

The terminal evaluation review will be based primarily on the information presented in the terminal evaluation report of the completed project covered by the review. If insufficient information is presented in a terminal evaluation report to assess a specific issue such as, for example, the quality of the project's monitoring and evaluation system or a specific aspect of sustainability, then the preparer of the review will briefly indicate so in that section and elaborate more, if appropriate, in the section on the quality of the terminal evaluation report. The reviewer will also consider all independent relevant information when verifying ratings, such as information provided in project documents, project implementation reports, midterm reviews, and tracking tools. If additional sources of information are used, the reviewer should note these sources under Section 11 of the terminal evaluation review form.

## D.1 Criteria for outcome ratings<sup>1</sup>

Based on the information provided in the terminal evaluation report, the terminal evaluation review will assess the relevance of the project results, the extent to which the project's major relevant objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved,<sup>2</sup> and the project's cost-effectiveness. The following should be considered when assessing each criterion:

- **Relevance.** Were project outcomes consistent with the focal area/operational program strategies, country, and Agency priorities?

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<sup>1</sup> *Outcomes* are the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs. Outputs are the products, capital goods, and services that result from a development intervention; these may also include changes resulting from the intervention that are relevant to the achievement of outcomes (OECD DAC 2002). For the GEF, environmental outcomes are the main focus.

<sup>2</sup> *Objectives* are the intended physical, financial, institutional, social, environmental, or other development results to which a project or program is expected to contribute (OECD DAC 2002).



- **Effectiveness.** Are project outcomes commensurate with the expected outcomes (as described in the project document) and the problems the project was intended to address (that is, the original or modified project objectives)?
- **Efficiency.** Include an assessment of outcomes and impacts in relation to inputs, costs, and implementation times based on the following questions: Was the project cost-effective? How does the project's cost/time versus outcomes equation compare to that of similar projects? Was the project implementation delayed due to any bureaucratic, administrative, or political problems, and did that affect cost-effectiveness?

The reviewer of the terminal evaluation will provide a rating for each of the three criteria (relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency). Relevance of outcomes will be rated on a binary scale of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory." If an 'unsatisfactory' rating has been provided for relevance, then the overall outcome achievement rating may not be higher than "unsatisfactory." Effectiveness and efficiency will be rated using the following six-point scale:

- **Highly satisfactory:** Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no shortcomings.
- **Satisfactory:** Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no shortcomings, or the shortcomings were minor.
- **Moderately satisfactory:** Level of outcomes achieved are more or less as expected and/or there were moderate shortcomings.
- **Moderately unsatisfactory:** Level of outcomes achieved were somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings.
- **Unsatisfactory:** Level of outcomes achieved was substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings.

- **Highly unsatisfactory:** A negligible level of outcomes was achieved and/or there were severe shortcomings.
- **Unable to assess:** The reviewer was unable to assess outcomes on this dimension.

An overall project outcome rating will be provided based on project performance across these three criteria. First, the overall rating cannot be higher than unsatisfactory if relevance is rating as unsatisfactory. Second, the overall rating cannot be higher than the effectiveness rating. Third, the overall rating cannot be higher than the average score of the effectiveness and efficiency criteria, where:

$$\text{Outcomes} = (b + c) \div 2$$

Lastly, in the case that the average score is lower than the score obtained after application of the first two constraints, then the average score will be the overall score. The score will then be converted into an overall rating with midvalues being rounded upward.

## D.2 Criteria for sustainability ratings

Sustainability will be understood as the continuation or likely continuation of positive effects from the intervention after it has come to an end, and its potential for scale-up and/or replication (GEF Evaluation Policy 2019). To assess sustainability, the terminal evaluation reviewer will identify and assess key risks that could undermine the continuation of benefits at the time of the evaluation. The reviewer will assess risks across the following dimensions: financial, sociopolitical, institutional frameworks and governance, and environmental.

The following questions provide guidance to assess the different types of risks to sustainability:

- **Financial resources.** What is the likelihood that financial resources will be available to continue the activities that result in the continuation of benefits (income-generating activities, and trends that may indicate that it is likely that in future there will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project outcomes)?
- **Sociopolitical.** Are there any social or political risks that can undermine the longevity of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership is insufficient to allow for project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public/stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project?
- **Institutional framework and governance.** Do the legal frameworks, policies, and governance structures and processes pose any threat to the continuation of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, consider if the required systems for accountability and transparency, and the required technical know-how, are in place.
- **Environmental.** Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project environmental benefits? The terminal evaluation should assess whether certain activities in the project area will pose a threat to the sustainability of project outcomes. For example, construction of dam in a protected area could inundate a sizable area and thereby neutralize the biodiversity-related gains made by the project. Similarly, gains made by the project may be negated by climate change related risks.

Taking into account the incidence and magnitude of these factors, the reviewer will provide a rating for the overall likelihood of sustainability at project completion using the following four-point scale:

- **Likely:** There are little or no risks to sustainability.

- **Moderately likely:** There are moderate risks to sustainability.
- **Moderately unlikely:** There are significant risks to sustainability.
- **Unlikely:** There are severe risks to sustainability.
- **Unable to assess:** Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

### D.3 Assessment of processes affecting attainment of project outcomes

The reviewer will summarize the factors or processes related to cofinancing, implementation delays, and country ownership that may have affected the attainment of project results. The reviewer will consider the following:

- **Cofinancing.** If there was a difference in the level of expected cofinancing and actual cofinancing, what were the reasons for it? To what extent did materialization of cofinancing affect project outcomes and/or sustainability? What were the causal linkages of these effects?
- **Project extensions and/or delays.** If there were delays, what were the reasons? To what extent did the delay affect project outcomes and/or sustainability? What were the causal linkages of these effects?
- **Country ownership.** Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability. Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links.

## D.4 Criteria for assessment of quality of project M&E systems

GEF projects are required to develop M&E plans at the time of work program inclusion, to appropriately budget M&E plans, and to fully carry out the M&E plan during implementation. Project managers are also expected to use the information generated by the M&E system to improve and adapt the project to changing situations during implementation. Given the long-term nature of many GEF projects, projects are also encouraged to develop long-term monitoring plans that measure results (such as environmental results) after project completion. Terminal evaluation reviews will include an assessment of the achievement and shortcomings of M&E systems.

- **M&E design at entry.** The reviewer will assess the following: Was the M&E plan at the point of CEO endorsement practical and sufficient? Did it include baseline data (including data, methodology, and so on)? Did it also specify: (1) clear targets and appropriate (SMART)<sup>3</sup> indicators to track environmental, gender, and socioeconomic results; (2) a proper methodological approach for data collection; (3) logistics of the M&E activities, including schedule and responsibilities for data collection; and (4) a budget adequate funds for M&E activities?
- **M&E implementation.** The evaluators will assess the following: Did the M&E system operate as per the M&E plan? If necessary, was the M&E plan revised in a timely manner? Was indicator data gathered in a systematic manner? Were relevant GEF focal area tracking tools utilized? Were appropriate methodological approaches used to analyze data? Were resources allocated for M&E sufficient?

<sup>3</sup>Specific, measurable, attributable, realistic, and time-bound (GEF Evaluation Policy 2019).

How was the information from M&E system used during project implementation?

Ratings for M&E design at entry and M&E implementation will be provided using the following six-point scale:

- **Highly satisfactory:** There were no shortcomings and the quality of M&E design/implementation exceeded expectations.
- **Satisfactory:** There were no shortcomings, or the shortcomings were minor, and the quality of M&E design/implementation met expectations.
- **Moderately satisfactory:** There were some shortcomings and the quality of M&E design/implementation more or less met expectations.
- **Moderately unsatisfactory:** There were significant shortcomings and the quality of M&E design/implementation was somewhat lower than expected.
- **Unsatisfactory:** There were major shortcomings and the quality of M&E design/implementation was substantially lower than expected.
- **Highly unsatisfactory:** There were severe shortcomings in M&E design/implementation.
- **Unable to assess:** The available information does not allow for an assessment of the quality of M&E design/implementation.

## D.5 Assessment of project implementation and execution

The assessment of the implementation and execution of GEF projects will take into account the performance of the GEF Agencies and project executing agencies in discharging their respective roles and responsibilities.

- **Quality of project implementation.** Within the GEF partnership, GEF Agencies are involved in activities related to a project's identification,

concept preparation, appraisal, preparation of detailed proposal, approval and start-up, oversight, supervision, completion, and evaluation (GEF 2020a). To assess the performance of the GEF Agencies, the evaluators will assess the extent to which the agency delivered effectively on these counts, with a focus on elements that were under the control of the GEF Agency. The reviewer will also assess how well risks were identified and managed by the GEF Agency.

- **Quality of project execution.** Within the GEF partnership, the executing agencies are involved in the management and administration of the project's day-to-day activities under the overall oversight and supervision of the GEF Agencies. The executing agencies are responsible for the appropriate use of funds, as well as the procurement and contracting of goods and services to the GEF Agency (GEF 2020a). To assess executing agency performance, the evaluators will examine the extent to which it effectively discharged its role and responsibilities.

Quality of implementation and of execution will be rated separately. Quality of implementation pertains to the role and responsibilities discharged by the GEF Agencies that have direct access to GEF resources. Quality of Execution pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received GEF funds from the GEF Agencies and executed the funded activities on ground. Their performance will be rated using the following six-point scale:

- **Highly satisfactory:** There were no shortcomings and the quality of implementation/execution exceeded expectations.
- **Satisfactory:** There were no shortcomings, or the shortcomings were minor, and the quality of implementation/execution met expectations.
- **Moderately satisfactory:** There were some shortcomings and the quality of implementation/execution more or less met expectations.

- **Moderately unsatisfactory:** There were significant shortcomings and the quality of implementation/execution was somewhat lower than expected.
- **Unsatisfactory:** There were major shortcomings and the quality of implementation/execution was substantially lower than expected.
- **Highly unsatisfactory:** There were severe shortcomings in the quality of implementation/execution.
- **Unable to assess:** The available information does not allow for an assessment of the quality of implementation/execution.

## D.6 Assessment of project impacts

Has the project achieved impacts, or is it likely that outcomes will lead to the expected impacts? Impacts will be understood to include positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term effects produced by a development intervention. They could be produced directly or indirectly and could be intended or unintended. The reviewer will take note of any mention of impacts, especially global environmental benefits, in the terminal evaluation report, including the likelihood that the project outcomes will contribute to their achievement. Negative impacts mentioned in the terminal evaluation report should be discussed along with the lessons that may be drawn from the experience. Although project impacts will be described, they will not be rated.

## D.7 Criteria for assessment of quality of terminal evaluation reports

The ratings on quality of terminal evaluation reports will be assessed using the following criteria:

- The report assesses all relevant outcomes and the achievement of project objectives.
- The report is consistent, the evidence presented is complete and convincing, and the ratings are well substantiated.
- The report presents a sound assessment of sustainability of outcomes and/or the project exit strategy.
- The lessons and recommendations are supported by the evidence presented and are relevant to the portfolio and future projects.
- The report includes the actual project costs (totals and per activity) and the actual cofinancing used.
- The report includes an assessment of the quality of the M&E plan at entry, the M&E system used during implementation, and whether the information generated by the M&E system was used for project management.

Each of these criteria will be rated as follows:

- **Highly satisfactory:** There were no shortcomings in the terminal evaluation on this criterion.
- **Satisfactory:** There were minor shortcomings in the terminal evaluation on this criterion.
- **Moderately satisfactory:** There were moderate shortcomings in the terminal evaluation on this criterion.
- **Moderately unsatisfactory:** There were significant shortcomings in the terminal evaluation on this criterion.

- **Unsatisfactory:** There were major shortcomings in the terminal evaluation on this criterion.
- **Highly unsatisfactory:** There were severe shortcomings in the terminal evaluation on this criterion.

The first two criteria (i.e. those assessing the achievement of project results and the consistency and substantiation of claims) are more important and have therefore been assigned a greater weight. The quality of the terminal evaluation reports will be calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report} = 0.3 \times (a + b) + 0.1 \times (c + d + e + f)$$

The total number will be rounded and converted to the aforementioned scale.

# Codebook for data extraction: Effect of COVID-19 on GEF projects

GEF COVID-19 EFFECTS		
1. BASIC INFORMATION		
1.1	GEF ID	
1.2	GEF Phase	
1.3	Focal Area	
1.4	Lead Agency	
1.5	Country	
1.6	Actual Start Date	
1.7	Expected Completion Date	
1.8	Actual Completion Date	
2. IMPLEMENTATION		
2.1	Implementation effects	
		Activities delayed
		Activities on hold or suspended
		Activities canceled
2.2	Activities affected	
		Procurement, delivery of goods & equipment
		Installation, manufacturing, construction
		Paperwork: Approvals, licensing, certification
		Fieldwork, onsite data collection
		Training, capacity building
		Stakeholder consultation
		Meetings, workshops and conferences
		Evaluation
		Other in-person activities
		Other activities

2.3	New Activity: COVID response	
		Provision of PPE [personal protective equipment] to staff or community
		Small grants
		Health information
		Access to water, food or health care
		Technology access or assistance
		Other
2.4	New Activity: COVID activity	
		[open]
2.5	Budget and financial effects	
		Low financial delivery
		Increased costs
		Budget allocation or adjustment
		Budget increase reported
		Payment issues
		Decreased or delayed cofinancing
		Other
2.6	Staffing effects	
		Reduced staff (furlough, layoffs or hiring freeze)
		Increased staff
		Procurement delayed
		Health and well-being
		Financial security
		Equity
		Other
2.7	Demand for services	
		No change
		Increased
		Decreased
<b>3. MITIGATION</b>		
3.1	Mitigation measures	
		Contingency or risk planning
		Shift to virtual events or activities
		Shift to teleworking by project team
		Adapted in-person (reduced capacity, social distancing)
		Adjust scheduling of activities to prioritize desktop
		Accelerate implementation
		Hire or shift to locally-based staff
		Extension requested
		No measures reported
3.2	Other mitigation measures	

4. RESULTS		
4.1	Effects on achievement of results	
		Stalled
		On track
		Adversely affected
		Enhanced
4.2	Risks to goal attainment	
		No change
		Increased risk
		Decreased risk
4.3	Other effects on results	
5. SYSTEMIC EFFECTS		
		(No change / Increased / Decreased / Not reported)
		Awareness of biodiversity
		Pressure on biodiversity and other natural resources
		Mass migration
		Enforcement and regulation of environmental laws
		Government capacity / priorities
		Community human well-being and rights
		Environmental incentives
		Economic stability
		Other reported systemic effects



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The Office undertakes independent evaluations that involve a set of projects and programs implemented by more than one GEF Agency. These evaluations are typically at the strategic level, on focal areas, or on cross-cutting themes. We also undertake institutional evaluations, such as assessing the GEF resource allocation mechanism or GEF governance.

Within the GEF, the Office facilitates cooperation on evaluation issues with professional evaluation networks; this includes adopting evaluation guidelines and processes consistent with international good practices. We also collaborate with the broader global environmental community to ensure that we stay on the cutting edge of emerging and innovative methodologies.

To date, the Office has produced over 100 evaluation reports; explore these on our website: [www.gefieo.org/evaluations](http://www.gefieo.org/evaluations).



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