

# Review of Results-Based Management in the GEF

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FULL REPORT





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# **Review of Results-Based Management in the GEF**

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# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>iv</b>	<b>4: Recommendations</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>v</b>	<b>Annex: Interviewees</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>vi</b>	<b>References and other documents consulted</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>vii</b>	<b>Tables</b>	
<b>1: Background</b> .....	<b>1</b>	E.1 GEF performance on key dimensions of results-based management .....	viii
<b>2: Key questions and methodology</b> .....	<b>3</b>	3.1 Project implementation duration by GEF replenishment period .....	7
2.1 Key questions .....	3	3.2 Number of outcomes and indicators for GEF-6 .....	9
2.2 Methodology .....	3		
<b>3: Findings and conclusions</b> .....	<b>5</b>		
3.1 The Role of RBM .....	5		
3.2 The RBM framework .....	6		
3.3 Effectiveness and efficiency .....	9		
3.4 Utilization .....	13		

# Foreword

Independent overall performance studies of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) are undertaken to provide evaluative evidence to inform the subsequent replenishment on the achievements and results of the GEF. A Review of Results-Based Management in the GEF was undertaken as an input to the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS6). The review assesses the extent to which the GEF results-based management system captures key results of GEF activities and promotes adaptive management.

The review was conducted from October 2016 to April 2017. Information was gathered through desk review of relevant GEF documents and

literature, an analysis of GEF Project Management Information System (PMIS) data sets and GEF Independent Evaluation Office data sets, and semistructured interviews of key informants. The findings of the review were presented to the GEF Council during its May 2017 meeting.

Final responsibility for this report remains firmly with the Office.



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Director, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

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The Review of Results-Based Management in the GEF was led by Neeraj Kumar Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer in the Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Pamela Branch, Senior Consultant, was the other member of the review team.

The GEF Independent Evaluation Office appreciates the time and input provided by various GEF stakeholders, including the GEF Secretariat, the GEF Agencies, other organizations, and independent experts, during the course of this review.

# Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
APMR	annual portfolio monitoring report	OPS5	Fifth Overall Performance Study
APR	annual performance report	OPS6	Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	PIF	project information form
GEF	Global Environment Facility	PMIS	Project Management Information System
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office	RBM	results-based management
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

The GEF replenishment periods are as follows: pilot phase: 1991–94; GEF-1 1995–98; GEF-2: 1999–2002; GEF-3: 2003–06; GEF-4: 2006–10; GEF-5: 2010–14; GEF-6: 2014–18; GEF-7: 2018–22.

All dollar amounts are U.S. dollars unless otherwise indicated.



# Executive summary

The approach paper for the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS6) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) specified results-based management (RBM) as one of the topics to be covered by the evaluation. This review of RBM has been undertaken within the framework of OPS6 and is an input to the evaluation. The review assesses the extent to which the GEF RBM system captures key results of GEF activities and promotes adaptive management.

The review was conducted from October 2016 to April 2017. It involves a survey of relevant GEF documents and literature, an analysis of Project Management Information System (PMIS) and GEF Independent Evaluation Office data sets, and semi-structured interviews of key informants. Those interviewed include the GEF Secretariat's RBM team, program managers, and focal area coordinators; GEF partner Agency staff and consultants; the GEF Convention staff; and staff of select peer organizations.

The review assessed performance of the GEF RBM system on several key dimensions (table E.1). It reached the following conclusions:

1. The GEF RBM system has played a strong role in supporting reporting, accountability, and communications. In comparison, so far, its role in supporting evidence-based decision making and learning has been limited.
2. The GEF has not articulated a clear theory of change or timeframes for achievement of, and reporting on, the expected environmental results for its GEF-6 (2014–18) focal area programs.
3. The long duration of the feedback loop poses challenges to incorporation of information on actual results of GEF activities in development of future programs.
4. The GEF is already addressing several Sustainable Development Goals through its programs. For GEF-7 (2018–22) it would need to incorporate the relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators in its RBM framework.
5. Although the burden for tracking results decreased during GEF-6, the GEF is still tracking too much information.
6. There are gaps in the submission and availability of tracking tools, and the quality of submitted information is often poor.
7. The GEF PMIS has not kept pace with the growing needs of and expectations from the partnership.
8. The GEF Secretariat has followed up on the GEF-6 policy recommendations by developing a workplan, although progress on measures specified in the RBM workplan has varied.

Managing for results remains a stated priority of the GEF although its utilization has so far been primarily for accountability and communication purposes. With increased attention to RBM during GEF-6, including in staffing and funding, several gains were made. For example, corporate results reporting has improved, and several focal area tracking tools have been streamlined. However, the GEF approach to RBM needs to be

strengthened further for the GEF-7 period. The review has the following recommendations:

- Update the GEF RBM framework
- Upgrade the PMIS to facilitate reporting on achievement of targets
- Address the shortcomings of the focal area tracking tools

**TABLE E.1** GEF performance on key dimensions of results-based management

Dimension	Performance
A clear purpose for the RBM system	The stated purpose of the GEF RBM system is clear.
Quality of the RBM framework	The RBM framework of 2007 is inadequate for the present needs of the GEF partnership. It needs to be updated. The GEF-6 programming document and GEF2020 Strategy implicitly discuss the GEF theory of change. However, a clear statement has not been made.
Support for RBM	During GEF-6, there was an increase in GEF management support for RBM. While Agencies are generally supportive of the GEF RBM system, the GEF requirements for RBM are over and above what GEF Agencies do on their own. Their support is likely to increase if learning is strengthened and they see that the information they provide is being used.
Clear results set at the corporate level	The GEF has set clear and relevant results at the corporate level. However, long-term impacts and synergies between supported activities are not captured.
Program theories of change	Theories of change were not articulated for GEF-6 focal area programs.
Clear results set at the program level	Clear program outcome indicators have been specified in the GEF-6 programming documents. However, long-term impacts were not addressed.
Balance between short-term and long-term results	When compared to GEF-4 (2006–10) and GEF-5 (2010–14), the balance improved during GEF-6. However, despite fair coverage of outcomes, indicators for long-term impacts have not been adequately captured.
Manageable focal area results frameworks aligned to priorities	Focal area results frameworks are aligned to GEF priorities. However, too much is being tracked for the biodiversity and multifocal area projects.
Data availability and reliability	The GEF Secretariat assessed and found gaps in the availability and reliability of data through a diagnostic exercise. Some improvements in data and data-related processes were made. Full upgrade of the PMIS was delayed.
Use for reporting	The RBM system is used for reporting to the GEF Council, conventions, Replenishment Group, and to the wider partnership. Several improvements were made during the GEF-6 period, especially through introduction of the scorecard.
Use for decision making	GEF Secretariat and Agency staff report low use of information from the RBM system for decision making, although there are variations across focal areas. There is potential for the PMIS to play an increased role.
Use for learning	Less attention to promoting learning through RBM. The present reporting centers more on presenting successes and less on analysis of the challenges encountered and causes of failure. Candor in project implementation review reporting is low.

**NOTE:** Several key dimensions related to measurement included in the table have been adapted from OECD DAC 2002.

# 1: Background

The Global Environment Facility's (GEF's) approach to results-based management (RBM) has evolved over time. During the pilot phase of GEF implementation, progress was tracked through the *Independent Evaluation of the Pilot Phase* (UNDP, UNEP, and World Bank 1994). During the GEF-1 (1995–98) period, after the GEF was restructured and as the number of projects under implementation increased, ascertaining the quality of the GEF portfolio got more attention. A monitoring and evaluation unit was established in the Secretariat in 1996. Subsequently, the “Framework and Work Program for GEF’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Dissemination Activities” (GEF 1996) was approved in 1997. The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was made independent in 2003.

During the GEF-3 (2003–06) period, a tracking tool was introduced to track results of the projects focused on protected areas. During the replenishment process for the GEF-4 period (2006–10), the Replenishment Group asked the Secretariat to develop results indicators for all GEF focal areas. The GEF-5 (2010–14) programming document included a corporate results framework, which specified results and targets for the GEF-5 period to meet the GEF objectives. The GEF-6 (2014–18) programming document also includes a corporate results framework, which builds on the framework for the GEF-5 period.

In 2006, with the approval of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (2006), the monitoring function was transferred from the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) to the Secretariat. The transfer of the monitoring function led to the establishment of an RBM team at the Secretariat. In 2007, an RBM framework was adopted by the GEF Council with the objective of improving operations. Implementing an RBM system was seen as part of a process to equip the GEF with the tools needed to assess how its interventions contributed toward the institution’s overall goal of delivering global environmental benefits, to “better define the specific goals of the GEF and to design mechanisms to ensure the measurement of progress toward those goals” (GEF Secretariat 2007).

The GEF IEO’s review of RBM, conducted in 2013 as part of the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5), found that the GEF RBM system was overly complex and imposed a considerable burden on the Agencies, which are responsible for tracking project results. The GEF-6 replenishment recommended that the GEF strengthen its RBM system by “rationalizing the indicators in the focal area tracking tools, with particular focus on multifocal area projects” (GEF Secretariat 2014). It also requested the GEF Council to consider an RBM action plan in its fall 2014 meeting. In October 2014, the GEF Council approved the RBM Action Plan (GEF 2014b), which outlined the key actions to be undertaken during the GEF-6 period.

The action plan was later updated in 2016 (GEF Secretariat 2016).

The approach paper for the Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation (OPS6) of the GEF specified RBM as one of the topics to be covered by the evaluation. This review was undertaken as an input to the

OPS6 report. A draft version of this report was shared with the GEF Secretariat, the GEF, and Agencies for feedback. This report addresses the feedback received from them.

# 2: Key questions and methodology

## 2.1 Key questions

This review seeks to answer the following questions:

- What is the role of RBM in the GEF partnership?
- To what extent is the GEF RBM system relevant, effective, and efficient?
- To what extent, and how, is the information generated through the RBM system utilized?
- To what extent have the key concerns noted in OPS5 and in the GEF-6 Replenishment Group policy recommendations been addressed?

## 2.2 Methodology

The GEF Results-Based Management Framework (GEF Secretariat 2007) adopted the definition of RBM proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The OECD defines RBM as a “management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts” (OECD DAC 2002). This review, however, uses the United Nations Development Group’s definition of RBM, which is more comprehensive and more consistent with the actual practice in the GEF partnership. The United Nations Development Group defines RBM as

a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes,

products and services contribute to the desired results (outputs, outcomes and higher level goals or impact) and use information and evidence on actual results to inform decision making on the design, resourcing and delivery of programmes and activities as well as for accountability and reporting. (UNDG 2011, 2)

This review drew on information from both primary and secondary sources using document review and analysis and semi-structured interviews of key informants. The GEF documents relevant to RBM, including Council documents, replenishment documents, annual monitoring reports, annual performance reports (APRs), reports to the conventions, and the GEF Corporate Scorecard, were reviewed (annex A). These provided information on the expectations from the GEF RBM system, the framework adopted to deliver on those expectations, and how the data generated through the RBM system is being reported and utilized. The Project Management Information System (PMIS) and GEF IEO data sets were also analyzed to assess issues related to data gaps.

Information from the document review was supplemented and triangulated through key informant interviews (annex B) using semi-structured interview guides, which were differentiated by the targeted informants. Key informants included the GEF Secretariat’s RBM team and program managers, focal area coordinators, GEF Agency staff, and consultants. In all, 38 key informants

representing the GEF Secretariat, four GEF Agencies, five GEF conventions, and three other organizations were interviewed. In addition, the review drew from the interview notes prepared for the review on tracking tools undertaken by the GEF IEO within the framework of APR 2015.

The review focuses primarily on the RBM framework and its implementation. It does not fully address the knowledge management and learning dimensions, which are being addressed by the GEF IEO through a separate review on knowledge management, which also is being undertaken within the framework of OPS6.

# 3: Findings and conclusions

## 3.1 The Role of RBM

**Conclusion 1: The GEF RBM system has played a strong role in supporting reporting, accountability, and communications. In comparison, so far, its role in supporting evidence-based decision making and learning has been limited.** The purpose of RBM in GEF is to “improve management effectiveness and accountability” by “defining realistic expected results, monitoring progress toward the achievement of expected results, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and reporting on performance”<sup>1</sup> (GEF Secretariat 2007). The stated purpose of RBM in the GEF is consistent with what is generally expected across the international development community. Kusek and Rist (2004) see RBM’s role in identification of the goals of the organization, the extent to which these are being achieved, and in proving achievement. Other scholars see its role in promoting learning, facilitating evidence-based decision making, and fostering accountability for results (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Halligan 2015; World Bank 2011).

Although GEF support during GEF-6 is provided through focal area programs, the theories of change for these programs have not been articulated clearly. In terms of tracking of results, while expected outputs and outcomes of supported

activities are clearly specified, less attention has been given to tracking of the long-term impacts and environmental trends relevant to the GEF’s work. Given the challenges in tracking long-term impacts, the absence of impact indicators and arrangements to track them are likely to constrain future assessments of the GEF’s impact. This is also not in sync with international good practice. Multilateral development banks such as the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank have specified several indicators to track the long-term impact of their activities and to know whether their activities continue to be relevant (ADB 2012).

GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency staff generally opine that the GEF RBM system has so far not lived up to its potential. RBM in the GEF is perceived as an exercise focused on reporting to the Council and conventions, whereas its role in evidence-based decision making is perceived to have not received as much attention. Up to the GEF-6 period, the GEF Secretariat had not devoted sufficient staff to RBM activities. As a result, the systems to facilitate use of RBM in decision making—especially for operational decisions—are not fully developed.

The GEF RBM system facilitates reporting on progress in utilization of GEF resources, on efficiency and effectiveness of GEF activities

<sup>1</sup>The second part of the statement is adopted from CIDA (1999).

and processes, and on environmental results. The system provides information for the two key instruments for regular reporting to the Council: the annual portfolio monitoring report (APMR) and the Corporate Scorecard. The system also allows the Secretariat to respond to ad hoc requests from the GEF Council, the Replenishment Group, and the conventions for reporting on specific topics. Most of the GEF Agency and Secretariat staff that were interviewed indicated that RBM should play a greater role in supporting learning across the partnership. Several Agency staff members noted that RBM reporting does not provide useful feedback on Agency performance; nor does it identify areas where an Agency may improve, or lessons that may be drawn from good practices in, and experience of, other Agencies. Several interviewees noted contributions of the international waters focal area's IW-LEARN initiative in supporting learning within its community of practitioners as an example of what could be done.

### 3.2 The RBM framework

**Conclusion 2: The GEF has not articulated a clear theory of change and timeframes for achievement of, and reporting on, expected environmental results for its GEF-6 focal area programs.** “GEF-6 Programming Directions” discusses the goals and objectives of GEF activities, and specifies the expected focal area impacts and expected outcomes of its programs (GEF 2014a, Annex A). The corporate results framework included in the document specifies six environmental results along with 10 targets and several process indicators. There are, in all, 43 focal area programs through which the corporate environmental results are to be achieved. “GEF-6 Programming Directions” provides some information on each of the 43 programs. However, causal linkages and underlying assumptions have

not been clearly articulated for these GEF-6 programs. A clear expression of a program's theory of change is necessary to identify appropriate indicators to track outcomes and impact, and to monitor change.

Based on the outcomes of the replenishment negotiations, there may be changes in the GEF programs from one replenishment period to the other. Without continuity in GEF activities, comparison and aggregation of results across replenishment periods may be difficult. The GEF2020 Strategy (GEF 2015) provides a broad basis for continuity in GEF activities across replenishment periods. A comparison of the activities supported during GEF-4, GEF-5, and GEF-6 also shows that despite changes and shifts in strategies, there is considerable continuity in the supported activities and expected results.

The environmental results and targets listed in the results framework for the GEF-4 period were primarily outputs. The results framework for GEF-5 included some outcome indicators, but most indicators tracked outputs of GEF-supported activities. Compared to the results framework for the preceding two replenishment periods, most corporate environmental results and targets for GEF-6 track outcomes of GEF-supported activities. The GEF-6 corporate results framework tracks a lower number of core environmental results indicators than the framework for GEF-5. However, nonspecification of indicators of long-term impacts and environmental trends remains a gap.

The reporting arrangements provided for in the “GEF-6 Programming Directions” are focused on reporting on the aggregate of the environmental results targets promised in the project information form (PIF) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) endorsement/approval forms. Less attention has been given to how progress on actual results of



GEF-6 projects will be reported on during the subsequent replenishment periods when the GEF-6 projects will be under implementation or would have been completed. The “Results-based Management Framework” (GEF Secretariat 2007) and “RBM System: Process to Ensure the Quality of Objectives, Baselines, and Results Indicators” (GEF Secretariat 2011) suggest that the results would be tracked beyond the replenishment period. In actual practice, the Secretariat has so far reported on the aggregate of results targets of the GEF-6 projects, but has not yet reported on actual results of GEF-4 and GEF-5 projects against their respective targets.

**Conclusion 3: The long duration of the feedback loop poses challenges to incorporation of information on actual results of GEF activities in development of future programs.** After the start of a replenishment period, proposals for GEF activities for that replenishment period are submitted on a rolling basis. Analysis of PMIS data shows that the median time taken by the GEF-5 projects from first submission of the PIF to CEO endorsement is 27 months for GEF-5 projects (36 months for the 75th percentile). OPS5 indicates that the median time taken from CEO endorsement to start of project implementation is five months (10 months for the 75th percentile)

(GEF IEO 2014). The data for completed projects show that for most projects implementation duration may range from 4 to 10 years. Thus, it takes a long time before activities approved during a replenishment period are completed. Table 3.1 depicts this duration for projects from different replenishment periods. It shows that it takes about 9–10 years after the end of a replenishment period for implementation of at least 90 percent of full-size projects to be complete. During calendar year 2016, a significant number of projects from four replenishment periods (GEF-3 to GEF-6) were under implementation. It may take two more replenishment periods before actual outcomes of the approved activities of a replenishment period can be assessed against the targets for the period. Most of the long-term impacts will become evident much later. The long duration during which projects of a replenishment period are under implementation poses constraints to reporting on actual results on the ground against the targets and use of this information in future work. The challenge of a long time lag in manifestation of results is not unique to the GEF. Other organizations that address environmental concerns also seem to struggle with using information on actual results of supported activities in decision making. While some of these have long experience in RBM (e.g., the United Nations Development

**TABLE 3.1** Project implementation duration by GEF replenishment period

Period	Pilot			GEF-1				GEF-2				GEF-3				GEF-4				GEF-5				GEF-6		
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Pilot	■	■	■																							
GEF-1				■	■	■	■																			
GEF-2								■	■	■	■															
GEF-3												■	■	■	■											
GEF-4																■	■	■	■							→
GEF-5																				■	■	■	■			→
GEF-6																								■	■	→

**LEGEND:** ■ replenishment period in which implementation was begun; ■ implementation extending beyond originating replenishment period for more than 10% of projects.

Programme) or have integrated RBM in their institutional design from their start (e.g., the Climate Investment Funds), use of information on actual results on the ground in real-time decision making is a challenge for them too.

Although information on long-term impacts on GEF activities may not be available in real time to support management decisions, in some situations scientific evidence on the impact of similar activities undertaken by others may be available and useful in shaping future GEF strategies and programs. Within the GEF, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel has the mandated role of making scientific and technical knowledge more accessible to support decision making. It has prepared several knowledge products targeted at the GEF partnership and has provided advice to the GEF Council and the Secretariat to aid in decision making.

The GEF IEO plays an important role in documenting and reporting on impacts of GEF activities through impact evaluation, country portfolio evaluations, and other thematic and programmatic evaluations. Similarly, the GEF Secretariat has also in the past undertaken learning missions to review completed projects to assess their results on the ground. Although information on long-term impacts of GEF activities will not be available in real time to support decision making, given that there is some continuity in GEF activities in several situations the information may still be useful for designing better programs and strategies. To facilitate the drawing of lessons on long-term impacts of GEF activities, it is necessary to specify a clear theory of change for the programs, indicators that measure long-term impacts, and arrangements to measure at appropriate intervals.

**Conclusion 4: The GEF is already addressing several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its programs. For GEF-7 (2018–22), it**

**would need to incorporate the relevant SDG indicators in its RBM framework.** GEF programming is consistent with and contributes to the SDGs and targets for 2030. Several of the SDGs, targets, and indicators are congruent with the outcomes of GEF programs. *The GEF and the Sustainable Development Goals* (GEF n.d.) reports on the support that the GEF has provided so far to address the SDGs, with GEF contributions reported primarily in terms of the aggregate of expected project results targets.

In its 48th Session in March 2017, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted the global indicator framework for the SDGs and targets. Several of the indicators listed in the framework are relevant to GEF work. While several of the GEF environmental results indicators already respond to SDG targets, they may need some adjustments to make them fully compatible with the indicators listed in the global indicator framework.<sup>2</sup> Adoption of some of the SDG indicators, or tweaking the GEF indicators to make them compatible with the framework, would be necessary to make the GEF RBM framework better aligned with global efforts. Furthermore, given that multilateral organizations and United Nations member countries have already committed to measuring and reporting on the SDGs, it is likely that this may be done without additional burden on the GEF Agencies. The GEF Secretariat is already cognizant of these opportunities and is identifying the SDG goals and indicators that it may address through its RBM framework for GEF-7.

<sup>5</sup>This would include SDG indicators such as proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation (6.5.2), progress toward sustainable forest management (15.2.1), and proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels (14.4.1).

### 3.3 Effectiveness and efficiency

**Conclusion 5: Although the burden for tracking results decreased during GEF-6, the GEF is still tracking too much information.** The GEF Corporate Scorecard reports on 32 indicators. It includes the 22 indicators specified in the corporate results framework included in the GEF-6 Programming Directions, of which 10 indicators track environmental results and 12 track corporate efficiency and effectiveness. The GEF Corporate Scorecard tracks 10 additional indicators, which include 3 indicators on programming and resource utilization and 7 indicators on corporate efficiency and effectiveness. For comparison, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) uses 98 indicators for reporting at the corporate level. The Climate Investment Funds at the World Bank uses 15 core indicators for its four programs, while the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has approximately 60 indicators that together cover its 60 programs. Thus, in terms of indicators tracked and reported on at the corporate reporting level, the GEF seems to be in line with practices in other organizations. In fact, there may be some scope for a limited increase in

environmental results and trend indicators at this level.

At another level, there are 7 strategic focal area outcomes and 68 strategic program-level outcomes which the GEF RBM system needs to track. Each of these outcomes has at least one agreed indicator for measuring progress, for a total of 117 indicators. Table 3.2 summarizes the number of results and indicators contained in the GEF-6 replenishment document. Given the number and complexity of GEF programs, collection of data against 117 indicators seems reasonable.

The data for corporate results and outcome indicators are gathered from different sources. Data on indicators for GEF outreach and diversity of GEF staff are not linked with projects and may be reported independent of the data stream on GEF projects. Other indicators require aggregation of data on individual projects. Of these, the data on indicators for the project cycle, utilization of replenishment resources, and promised cofinancing have been maintained by the GEF for a long time and will continue to be easily available. However, several other indicators—mostly indicators

**TABLE 3.2** Number of outcomes and indicators for GEF-6

Area	Strategic programs level		Focal area level		Corporate level	
	Outcome	Indicator	Outcome	Indicator	Outcome	Indicator
Biodiversity	14	14	2	3	1	1
Climate change	3	4	1	3	1	1
Chemicals and waste	11	15	1	1	1	3
International waters	11	21	1	3	1	2
Land degradation	12	12	1	3	1	2
Forests	7	6	1	3		
Support to countries	5	7	n.a.	n.a.	1	2
Secretariat operations <sup>a</sup>	5	11	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>

**NOTE:** n.a. = not applicable

a. The results and indicators for Secretariat efficiency are contained in GEF Secretariat and World Bank 2014, Table 3, and reported in the Corporate Scorecard.

for environmental results of GEF activities—need to be tracked by the GEF Agencies and their executing partners on the ground.

The GEF Secretariat uses the PIF and CEO endorsement/approval forms submitted by the Agencies during the project preparation process to gather information on how and to what extent a proposed GEF project would contribute to corporate environmental results targets. During GEF-6, a table was incorporated in these forms (Table F in the PIF template and Table E in the CEO endorsement/approval template). Furthermore, Agencies are also required to submit focal area tracking tools that incorporate a larger number of environmental results indicators during the CEO endorsement/approval stage, at the mid-term of project implementation, and at project completion.

While corporate indicators track results at the institutional level, at the focal area level more granular information on program results is tracked through the focal area tracking tools. These tools are updated based on implementation experience to capture results of the new programs. OPS5, which reviewed the GEF focal area tracking tools, found these tools to be too complex and burdensome (GEF IEO 2014). It therefore called for simplification of the GEF tracking tools.

APR 2015 followed up on the extent to which the OPS-5 recommendation had been implemented (GEF IEO 2017). APR 2015 reported that, although significant progress had been made for most focal areas, the GEF-6 tracking tools for the biodiversity focal area continue to be complex and burdensome. Furthermore, APR 2015 reported little progress for the multifocal area projects, as a streamlined and integrated tracking tool has not yet been developed for such projects. For the three integrated approach pilots, a customized tool that drew only the relevant indicators from

the focal area tracking tools was prepared. While this does not decrease the number of indicators that the integrated approach pilots will report on, it may decrease the effort required in preparing tracking tools for them.

The relative complexity of the biodiversity focal area tracking tools and the reporting burden that they entail does not mean that the information being gathered is not useful. In fact, the biodiversity focal area performs well compared to other focal areas in terms of the extent to which Agencies comply with tracking tool–related reporting requirements and use of the gathered information by the focal area team and other stakeholders. However, the ready availability of information from the biodiversity focal area tracking tool and its aggregation remains a challenge. Much of the burden in reporting is from the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) and the financial sustainability scorecard tool. While the METT was streamlined for GEF-6, the financial sustainability scorecard was not revised. Both tools still involve reporting on a high number of data fields, more so for the METT which is prepared per protected area covered by a given project.

It is unlikely that the biodiversity focal area tracking tools will retain their full utility if they were cut drastically. However, there are other approaches such as the use of remote sensing and undertaking targeted learning missions that may help in tracking results on the ground and understanding causal linkages better. Use of these approaches may mitigate or obviate the need to have complex tracking tools for the biodiversity focal area. Interviews with biodiversity focal area staff suggest that these options are being considered for the GEF-7 period.

**Conclusion 6: There are gaps in the submission and availability of tracking tools, and the quality of submitted information is often poor.**

It is easier to ensure the submission of tracking tools during the CEO endorsement/approval stage, as compliance may be verified as part of the project appraisal process; in the absence of compliance, the project may not receive CEO endorsement/approval. However, incentives for submission of tracking tools during project implementation are not as well aligned. During implementation, ensuring compliance with the submission of agreed reports requires tracking project implementation progress, alerting Agencies on approaching milestones, and following up with the Agencies in instances of delays in submission and/or submission of incomplete information. Once full compliance is ensured, the submitted tracking tool needs to be uploaded to the database and made available for analysis in a machine-readable form.

An internal review conducted by the RBM team in 2016 showed substantial gaps in the submission of tracking tools and overall poor quality of information in the submitted tracking tools for several focal areas. APR 2015 also found gaps in the submission of tracking tools and concluded that at least a part of the problem was that the tracking tools submitted by the Agencies had not been properly uploaded. During interviews conducted for this review, several Agency staff observed that the project managers are willing to put more effort in filling out the tracking tools and submitting them when there is proper follow-up, i.e., tracking of submission and feedback on quality of submission. This observation is supported by empirical evidence. The internal review conducted by the RBM team found that compared with the other focal areas, the biodiversity focal area fared better in terms of compliance with the submission requirements and quality of information provided in the submitted tracking tools despite the complexity of, and high effort required from Agencies in preparing, the tracking tools.

The Corporate Scorecard reports on some indicators such as time taken from CEO endorsement to first disbursement, ratings on progress toward development objectives and implementation, and ratings on outcomes of completed projects. Of these, the ratings on outcomes of completed projects are sourced from the GEF IEO. The information on first disbursement and ratings on progress toward development objectives and implementation are based on the annual reporting through the project implementation review process coordinated by the RBM team. The processes for terminal evaluation and project implementation review submission are well established, and as a result there are fewer submission gaps.

The RBM team was established in the Secretariat in 2006 when the monitoring function was transferred from the GEF IEO to the Secretariat. Despite RBM being given a central place in the GEF2020 Strategy and the policy recommendations of the GEF-5 and GEF-6 replenishments, the resources in terms of number of staff and consultants devoted to strengthening it were inadequate before GEF-6. Furthermore, changes in the leadership of the RBM team also affected continuity. This limited the extent to which the RBM team could engage with the focal area teams and the Agencies, and also the extent to which it could put in place systems to ensure compliance with the requirements. During the GEF-6 period, the GEF Secretariat brought on board a Lead RBM Specialist to lead the RBM team. As a result, the team has been able to get greater management attention and additional resources for RBM activities. An internal self-assessment indicated several gaps in the processes for tracking, following up, and managing tracking tools. The team is now addressing these weaknesses by strengthening its processes for tracking submission and follow-up on tracking tools. It has developed

a dashboard to facilitate tracking of project implementation progress and tracking tools submission. These are steps in the right direction.

**Conclusion 7: The GEF PMIS has not kept pace with the growing needs of and expectations from the partnership.** The discussion to create a PMIS first took place in the December 1999 meeting of the GEF Council. The Secretariat wanted to develop a project data system to help track GEF projects and commitments. The PMIS eventually became operational in 2001 as an internal platform accessible only to users at the GEF Secretariat. Over the years, the role of and expectations from the PMIS have increased. It is now accessed by the GEF IEO, GEF Agencies, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, the Council, and operational focal points for their information needs. It is expected to provide support for real-time decision making across the GEF partnership and to be an information reservoir for monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Over the years, there have also been several updates to the system. In 2009, the system changed from a Microsoft Access platform to a Structured Query Language platform. The updated system provided web-based access, was more secure, minimized errors, and facilitated better tracking of project progress through the project cycle (GEF IEO 2010). Since 2009, there have been several minor updates in the system. However, these updates have so far not kept up with changing expectations, as the PMIS design primarily caters to the GEF Secretariat whereas needs of other users are not fully addressed. For example, it is not convenient for other users to prepare and download customized reports.

In June 2012, the GEF Council approved an upgrade of the system. The GEF Trustee was tasked with the upgrade, which was expected to be delivered by the end of fiscal year 2014.

The upgrade, among other things, was expected to automate the work flow and facilitate easy self-service reporting. Delivery of the full upgrade was delayed. In May 2015, the GEF Secretariat reported that it had assumed responsibility for the upgrade. Work on upgrading the system is still under progress.

Quality of information provided by the PMIS is another area of concern. In part, this is because of gaps in information on projects approved during the pilot phase to GEF-2 (1999–2002), when the PMIS was not operational. Another reason for the errors is that most of the decisions that are recorded take place outside the PMIS platform. The information is then manually entered. In the absence of quality assurance processes, such as double entry of data, mistakes creep in and may not be noticed for a long time. In addition to errors made at the Secretariat in data entry, the data provided by Agencies on project cycle milestones after CEO endorsement/approval and project status may also contain errors and may be difficult to identify and correct.

Past evaluations and reviews undertaken by the GEF IEO show that the tracking tool data is especially problematic.<sup>3</sup> Given the submission gaps, gaps and mismatches in uploading, concerns related to quality of information, and inconsistent formats in which tracking tools have been prepared, it is difficult to use this information for reporting. Through an internal assessment exercise, the RBM team reported that it has identified data that are of adequate quality and have recorded these data in the PMIS in a machine-readable format for future use. It also reported putting in place measures to ensure improved quality of data, including operationalization of a PMIS dashboard to track project

<sup>6</sup>See GEF IEO (2016, 2017) for details.



implementation progress and tracking tools submission. The GEF IEO did not verify the reported progress.

The upgrade of the PMIS remains a work in progress. The GEF Secretariat needs to complete the upgrade of the PMIS urgently so that it may provide support to decision making and learning across the partnership.

### 3.4 Utilization

The information gathered through the RBM system is used for reporting through the APMR, Corporate Scorecard, reports to the GEF conventions, the GEF website, and analysis that may be requested by the GEF Council. Among these, the APMR, earlier referred to as the annual monitoring report, is the most important tool for formal reporting to the Council. It provides information on the overall health of the GEF Trust Fund's active portfolio of projects and provides an overview of portfolio approvals in any given fiscal year. In addition, it may include an in-depth analysis on a theme, aspect, or part of the portfolio.

Much of the reporting in the APMR is based on ratings provided in the project implementation reviews. A high percentage of projects (at or above 90 percent) obtain ratings in the satisfactory range for implementation progress and for development objectives. Annual cohorts of the midterm reviews and terminal evaluations for a given year form the basis for discussion on actual results of activities presented in the APMR. So far, these have not been discussed in relation to progress toward achieving results targets of the given replenishment periods.

The Corporate Scorecard was introduced during the GEF-6 period. It has been included as part of the APMR (2016) and is also being published by the Secretariat as a stand-alone document.

The scorecard facilitates focus on 32 key performance and results indicators. It is perceived to be a useful information tool by a wide array of GEF stakeholders, especially the GEF Council.

The GEF conventions find GEF reporting to be useful in providing information on GEF funding and cofinancing for relevant focal area activities, and in demonstrating how the GEF has responded to convention guidance. In addition, some conventions find that the annexes to GEF reports on specific areas of work—especially knowledge products—are useful to some of their working groups and are discussed during the conferences of the parties.

As noted earlier, gaps in submission of tracking tools at midterm and project completion, inconsistency in formats, and data quality limit their usefulness. Nonetheless, there is evidence to suggest that the data are used, although the extent of usage varies across focal areas. Focal areas such as biodiversity and international waters use the tracking tools for aggregation and analysis. The biodiversity focal area team reported some use of the tools in tweaking its programs. The international waters focal area team prepares a portfolio review on an annual basis, which is then shared with the international waters focal area task force and Agencies to foster learning. The chemicals and waste focal area found the tools useful in tracking intervention costs over time, enabling development of cost benchmarks.

Most respondents—including respondents from partner Agencies, the Secretariat, and the conventions—indicated that the information generated through the RBM system is not being used for decision making and for strategy development to the extent it could be. Furthermore, they feel that the RBM system is underutilized for promoting learning. Users of the PMIS perceive that it is

difficult to extract information, and often they find the information to be incomplete and unreliable. Agencies and conventions report that although the GEF website provides a wealth of information, it is difficult to access it in a readily usable form.

**Conclusion 8: The GEF Secretariat has followed up on the GEF-6 policy recommendations by developing a workplan, although progress on measures specified in the RBM workplan has varied.** The GEF-6 replenishment document [GEF Secretariat 2014] recommended that the GEF improve its RBM system by “rationalizing the indicators in the focal area tracking tools” and requested the Secretariat to develop a comprehensive workplan to strengthen the RBM system. The RBM action plan (GEF 2014b) was approved by the Council in October 2014 and revised in 2016 to broaden its scope. Key measures of the workplan are as follows:

- Review and upgrade of results frameworks
- Strengthening of corporate-level results reporting
- Review and upgrade of the information technology platform for RBM
- Review and strengthening of the capacity for RBM in the GEF Secretariat
- Improve data quality, increase learning, and enhance use of geospatial information

The corporate results framework presented in “GEF-6 Programming Directions” is being used for reporting on environmental results and processes. The Corporate Scorecard not only reports on the indicators listed in the framework presented in the programming directions, but also reports on several other indicators. The Secretariat, in consultation with the GEF Agencies, reviewed the focal area tracking tools. It updated the tools and in general made them simpler and

technically more robust. While tracking tools for the biodiversity focal area were made technically robust, they continue to be complex. The revision of the GEF approach to tracking tools for multi-focal area projects was not addressed. Areas where more work needs to be done for the GEF-7 period include updating the 2007 RBM framework, specifying indicators for tracking long-term impacts of GEF-supported activities, clearly articulating the theory of change for GEF focal area programs, and streamlining the approach to tracking tools for the biodiversity and multifocal area projects.

During the GEF-6 period, the Secretariat overhauled its RBM reporting. It is now presenting performance on key indicators through a Corporate Scorecard, which is presented on a biannual basis. The APMR combines the two reports of the annual monitoring report. Currently, APMRs are based on the annual cohorts of projects that have conducted a midterm review or that were completed during the preceding year. The APMR needs to also incorporate reporting on actual cumulative results by replenishment period so that progress against replenishment period targets may be ascertained. The Secretariat has also advanced its work on geolocation of GEF projects, which may facilitate tracking of the GEF portfolio on the ground and may provide a useful input for future programming.

Full upgrading of the PMIS, which should have been completed at the start of the GEF-6 replenishment period, has been delayed by several years. This is a source of frustration across the GEF partnership. The upgrade needs to take into account the varied needs of its users spread across the Secretariat, the GEF IEO, the Agencies, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, the operational focal points, and others. The upgrade needs to be accomplished with urgency.



Compared to preceding periods, staff devoted to RBM increased during GEF-6. A Lead RBM Specialist was recruited to coordinate RBM activities, which has provided the team greater access to GEF management. The RBM team was also able to hire consultants to assess quality of tracking tools data and identify bottlenecks. The RBM team has identified measures to improve quality

of information and has established processes to improve follow-up with the Agencies. However, the extent to which these have been implemented was not ascertained by this review.

## 4: Recommendations

**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 SDG 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 are put in place to ensure that these bottlenecks are mitigated. Upgrading of the PMIS has been delayed by several years; this upgrade needs to be completed with urgency.

**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.

# Annex: Interviewees

No.	Date	Institution	Name
1	October 10, 2016	ADB	Arun, Nina, Mohammed Nasimul Islam, Walter Kolkma, Jazira Asanova, and Bernard Woods
2	October 11, 2016	ADB	K. E. Seetharam and Bruce Dunn
3	November 10, 2016	GEF	Claude Gascon
4	November 10, 2016	GEF	Christine Roehrer and Omid Parhizkar
5	November 21, 2016	GEF	Sonja Sabita Teelucksingh
6	November 23, 2016	GEF	Deepak Kataria
7	December 9, 2016	United Nations Development Programme	Nancy Bennet
8	December 13, 2016	United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Juergen Hierold, Pamela Mikschofsky, and Marina Ploutakhina
9	December 14, 2016	Climate Investment Funds	Emmanuel Kouadio and Jagjeet Sareen
10	December 14, 2016	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	Matthew Nathaniel Foster
11	December 21, 2016	GEF	Omid Parhizkar
12	January 12, 2017	GEF	Chizuru Aoki
13	January 13, 2017	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	Melchiade Bukuru
14	January 17, 2017	Convention on Biological Diversity	Yibin Xiang
15	January 24, 2017	Stockholm Convention	Frank Moser
16	January 25, 2017	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	Alejandro Kilpatrick and Noah Kim
17	January 26, 2016	GEF	Gabriella Richardson Temm
18	January 30, 2017	OECD Development Assistance Committee	Rosie Zwart
19	January 31, 2017	Minamata Convention	Jacob Duer
20	February 2, 2017	GEF	Christian Severin
21	February 14, 2017	GEF	David Rodgers
22	February 23, 2017	GEF	Mark Zimsky
23	March 6, 2017	World Bank	Shaanti Kapila, Louise Shaw-Barry, Christopher James Warner, Laurent Granier, and Karin Shepardson

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