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Agenda Item 8

PROGRESS REPORT OF THE EVALUATION DIRECTOR

(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed document GEF/ME/C.32/1, *Progress Report of the Evaluation Director*, takes note of the on-going work on the evaluation of Capacity Development and requests the Office to incorporate appropriate methodology in the upcoming focal area evaluations. On the International Workshop on Evaluating Climate Change and Development the Council requests the Office to take into account the comments of the Council in its further preparations of the Workshop.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This year's progress report focuses on the on-going work for the evaluation of Capacity Development, as well as the preparation for the International Workshop on Evaluating Climate Change and Development.
2. In Fiscal Year 2007 the Evaluation Office began work on the evaluation of GEF Capacity Development Activities. To date the evaluation team has completed literature reviews and country case studies of the Philippines and Vietnam. These case studies have been published on the GEF Evaluation Office website. They found that the results of capacity development activities are generally positive and in some areas significant. GEF capacity development support has been relevant; in line with national policy priorities and with a good level of national ownership. The effectiveness of capacity development activities has varied, although even in areas which did not produce immediate benefits, they may develop in the longer term. Cost-effectiveness of capacity development activities was difficult to assess. Although there are many improvements to capacity at the individual, institutional and systemic levels, there are doubts about the sustainability. The case studies revealed a common underlying weakness in the training programs, namely the tendency to plan and execute training as a "one-shot" solution. It is necessary to build training approaches on the basis of existing bodies in the country or region, such as Universities, or specialist public or private sector training institutions.
3. After reflecting on the issues identified by the country case studies, the Evaluation Office decided that further work is needed to analyze capacity development across the GEF portfolio. The additional activities will promote the development of a set of tools, which will enable forthcoming Annual Performance Reports, Country Program Evaluations and OPS4 to evaluate the achievements of capacity development activities on a broader scale.
4. The Evaluation Office, together with an international partnership, is currently preparing an international workshop on evaluating climate change and development, which will take place in May 10-13, 2008, in Alexandria, Egypt, at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. At present, the workshop has received financial contributions from the GEF Council (25k), Denmark (21k), Norway (45k), Switzerland (60k), and France (in-kind contribution). Germany, the Netherlands and the UK have indicated that they would like to contribute, but these contributions have not yet been finalized. Furthermore, several partner organizations such as the International Development Research Centre in Canada and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt will also provide in-kind support.
5. Recent developments indicate that there is substantial interest to participate in the workshop, which is already overbooked half a year in advance. The Steering Committee of the workshop will meet in between the time of posting of this progress report and the Council meeting, and the Director will update the Council on developments during the Council meeting.

INTRODUCTION

6. The Progress Report of the Director is meant to provide the Council with important information on on-going work. As such this report will not contain a full overview of all activities of the Evaluation Office, but focus on a few issues that may require the Council's attention, on top of the agenda items that are scheduled for Council discussion.

7. The Office is presently conducting a series of country portfolio evaluations in Africa, in Benin, Cameroon, Madagascar and South-Africa. It will report on these evaluations in the April meeting of Council. Furthermore, the evaluation of the catalytic role of the GEF has started up and will enter a phase of field work in the coming months. Other on-going work includes preparation of the next Annual Performance Report, as well as support to the development of indicators and knowledge sharing work, and last but not least further support to the GEF Secretariat and Agencies for the implementation of the GEF M&E policy.

8. This report specifically asks attention for the progress in evaluating the GEF's support to capacity development and the preparation of the International Workshop on Evaluating Climate Change and Development.

EVALUATION OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

9. In Fiscal Year 2007 the Evaluation Office began work on the evaluation of GEF Capacity Development Activities. To date the evaluation team has completed its approach paper, literature reviews and country case studies of the Philippines and Vietnam. The country case studies examined the nature and results of the national, regional and global interventions and related these to capacity development targets at the policy, institutional and individual level in each country. These case studies have been published on the GEF Evaluation Office website.

10. The country case studies found that the GEF portfolios in the Philippines and Vietnam include considerable capacity development activities. The results are generally positive and in some areas significant. GEF capacity development support has been relevant; in line with national policy priorities and with a good level of national ownership. However, in the Philippines, there is no system which effectively integrates the objectives of capacity development across projects, so that aggregation of impacts can be achieved.

11. The effectiveness of capacity development activities has varied. In Vietnam some activities were effective in providing new skills and institutional capacities that showed direct and immediate results in the concerned sector; but in other cases, the activities had less immediate results, although benefits may develop in the longer term. In many cases in the Philippines, institutions have been unable to provide appropriate incentives for trained staff, and opportunities to use new skills have proved limited. Concerning efficiency, GEF capacity development activities have usually met their immediate output and outcome targets, although a few projects have suffered unusual delays in

implementation. Cost-effectiveness of capacity development activities was difficult to assess, since the activities rarely comprise a defined budget heading during project implementation or monitoring.

12. Although there are many improvements to capacity at the individual, institutional and systemic levels, there are doubts about the sustainability of a number of capacity development outcomes. In the Philippines, several project designs lacked clarity about how the improved capacity will be used and there are limited incentives available within the government system to retain and reward motivated and trained staff.

13. In Vietnam, the positive results reflect the substantial efforts put into individual level capacity development activities in many projects. Another key factor is the changing institutional environment in Vietnam, where the need for new skills and approaches is recognized and where improvements to individual capabilities are often accompanied by changes to institutional structures and procedures that mean these capabilities can be utilized. However, in other cases there are questions over the sustainability and effectiveness of activities, in the absence of a dynamic institutional environment.

14. The evaluation found that there has been no systematic monitoring or evaluation of overall capacity development performance at the country level, which could promote improvements to the coverage or approaches. The case studies revealed an underlying weakness in the training programs, namely the tendency to plan and execute training as a “one-shot” solution. Extensive stakeholder consultations showed the importance of progression and repetition in training. Progression is needed to allow successful trainees, who have made use of their new knowledge and skills, to undertake more advanced courses, to reach higher levels of expertise, thereby further strengthening institutional performance. Sustainability of training is necessary to deal with the attrition of trained personnel, which is a common problem in Government institutions and for increased needs as the value of improved approaches generates new demands.

15. In order to address this common deficiency in capacity development, it is necessary to build training approaches on the basis of existing bodies in the country or region, such as Universities, or specialist public or private sector training institutions. These can be supported to adapt their existing programs or create new ones to address the key environment-related skills identified as necessary during project preparation. In some cases, it may be effective to develop new specialist training bodies in a region. “One-shot” training inputs by international consultants should be a strategy of last resort, when it is evident that the required expertise is not yet available in the region. In the countries reviewed, the International Waters program has been the most effective in utilizing and developing regional training capacity.

16. After reflecting on the issues identified by the country case studies, the Evaluation Office decided that further work is needed to analyze capacity development across the GEF portfolio. In particular, the evaluation team will conduct a meta-evaluation of capacity development findings based on a review of a sample of Terminal Evaluations and

previous Evaluation Office reports, to explore the prevalence of the key issues identified by the country case studies. The team will also hold discussions with the GEF-UNDP-UNEP Support Program for Capacity Development to explore commonalities between its assessment of results and those of the evaluation. These additional activities will enable the development of a set of tools, which will enable forthcoming Annual Performance Reports, Country Program Evaluations and OPS4 to evaluate the achievements of capacity development activities on a broader scale.

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON EVALUATING CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

17. The Evaluation Office, together with an international partnership, is currently preparing an international workshop on evaluating climate change and development, which will take place in May 10-13, 2008, in Alexandria, Egypt, at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The workshop will allow a sharing of experiences in evaluating both mitigation and adaptation experiences. Evaluators from partner agencies, research community, donors and civil society will be invited to join. Efforts will be made to ensure a broad participation illustrative of the diverse evaluation capacities and experiences from all regions as well as a gender balance among participants. The workshop is expected to involve approximately 100 evaluators and circa 20 policy makers and practitioners at different levels. More information can be found on the workshop website at www.esdevaluation.org.

18. The workshop is expected to result in: 1) a dynamic repository of knowledge available for evaluators and policy makers; 2) a network of environmental and sustainable development evaluation experts and institutions; 3) capacity action plans to deal with identified evaluation capacity gaps; 4) a book with the workshop proceedings that could include selected regional and/or country papers.

19. At present, the workshop has received financial contributions from the GEF Council (25k), Denmark (21k), Norway (45k), Switzerland (60k), and France (in-kind contribution). Germany, the Netherlands and the UK have indicated that they would like to contribute, but these contributions have not yet been finalized. Furthermore, several partner organizations such as the International Development Research Centre in Canada and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt will also provide in-kind support.

20. Recent developments in the preparations of the International Workshop on Evaluating Climate Change and Developments are a source of great satisfaction but also lead to a cross-roads where decisions need to be taken. There is solid interest in the workshop, both on the donor side and on the side of collaborating partners. However, as usual it takes time for donor pledges to materialize and currently the Office is able to fund the preparatory work but not yet the actual participation of evaluators from developing countries, which is going to be an important part of a successful workshop. This problem is exacerbated by the good news on the side of registration of interest to participate: half a year before the workshop will take place, already more than 130 people have registered, most of whom should be considered as serious. Given the fact that the Office is aware of

at least 70 other participants who have expressed a strong desire to attend but have not yet registered, we are at a cross-roads.

21. The preparatory work that we have done has been very satisfying so far. We have established a Steering Committee and have regional coordinators who – on a voluntary basis – will help us ensure that we reach out to evaluation communities everywhere. The scoping for a substantive agenda has been done and the results are emerging. No less than 360 reports have been collected on mitigation issues and 88 on adaptation, allowing for promising meta-analysis. We have received many offers of in-kind support and collaboration. The work has been exciting and promising. Substantively, the Workshop will come at the right moment in time: when we can report on good practices on mitigation and can look forward to new methodologies and indicators for adaptation.

22. With the Steering Committee and the donors to the Workshop, two options will be discussed. The first option could be termed “ruthless rejection” and would entail stopping the possibility to register, announcing that participants will be limited in number to no more than 120, based on early registration and on an invitation basis and rejecting many of the current registrants and others who will express interest later on. This will allow us to ensure that those who have already expressed interest on an institutional basis (for example: participants from collaborating partners and from donors) will be able to participate. The on-going work would be limited to assembling the workshop program from the current proposals and institutional involvements. Engagements with donors would focus on ensuring that pledges will materialize. It is clear that our heart does not lie in this direction and also clear that we believe this would be an “underinvestment”, yet if the funding is not available, we will need to take this option.

23. The second option could be termed “go with the flow” and would entail a paradigm shift from a relatively limited International Workshop to a more open and ambitious International Conference, which could accommodate more perspectives, more participants and more outcomes. This would include continued work on scoping the substantive issues of the workshop on the basis of newly submitted proposals and new institutional linkages, and it would mean an enhanced joint effort to increase contributions and find new sources of funding.

24. Before the Council meeting, but after this progress report has been posted, a Steering Committee meeting will take place on October 18. The Council will be updated on developments during the agenda item on this progress report.

25. The GEF Evaluation Office is convinced that the International Workshop on Evaluating Climate Change and Development is coming at the right moment in time, when policy makers, program managers and evaluators are looking for better ways to measure results, link these to environmental and development priorities and better understand what works and why, both in mitigation and in adaptation. We hope that this opportunity will be used to its greatest advantage and that we can continue to prepare this

workshop or conference to be a source of inspiration and a repository of knowledge for the coming years.