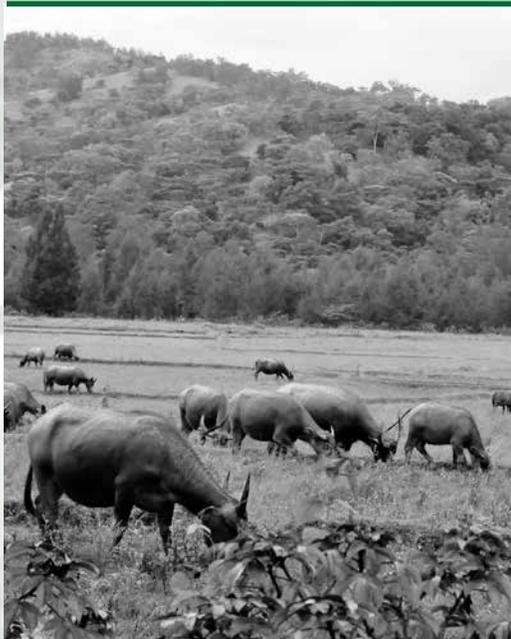


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ANNUAL
REPORT

GEF Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report 2013



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OFFICE

GEF Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report 2013

December 2013

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Foreword

The sixth *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report* provides a synthesis of the main conclusions and recommendations coming from country-level evaluations conducted by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in the Asia and Pacific region. These include one country portfolio study finalized in April 2012 in Timor-Leste, two country portfolio evaluations (CPEs)—one in India and one conducted jointly with the country in Sri Lanka—and one portfolio evaluation covering both Vanuatu national projects and regional projects executed by the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The reports of the two CPEs and the Vanuatu/SPREP portfolio evaluation were being finalized as of the writing of this annual report, which was submitted as an information document to the GEF Council at its June 2013 session.

On results of GEF support, the report concludes that in all the portfolios in the Asia and Pacific region, the GEF foundational support provided to the establishment of national environmental priorities, policies, and legislative frameworks has achieved good results. While progress to impact through broader adoption mechanisms occurs in large portfolios, this is not yet happening in medium-size, smaller, and/or younger portfolios. Effective communication and outreach as well as uptake of lessons are among the main factors facilitating broader adoption. Lessons from past interventions are being mainstreamed in the formulation of most recent GEF projects, with a few exceptions. Capacity, both individual and

institutional, is an issue of concern in small island developing states and in fragile states.

GEF support has been relevant to national needs and priorities in environmental conservation and sustainable development. The relevance of GEF support to country priorities strengthened project ownership in India; in the other portfolios, ownership is mixed. Long preparation times and delayed implementation affected overall efficiency in all the portfolios. Except for a few projects in the Vanuatu/SPREP and Sri Lanka portfolios, monitoring and evaluation is not occurring to its full capacity. The introduction of resource allocation mechanisms since GEF-4 (2006–10) fostered ownership of GEF support and stimulated country programming with varying degrees of success in the respective countries. Inadequate contractual arrangements between a GEF Agency and a national executing agency in India prevented a verification visit to two projects by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office. This was noted as a potential general problem in the Office's work program document discussed with the GEF Council in June 2013. The Council requested the Agencies ensure that their contractual arrangements include access to projects of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office.

Due to parallel work being performed on the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5) of the GEF, this report was not presented to the GEF Council for discussion. However, the evidence it contains points to three issues, two of which were followed up and integrated with other emerging evidence in the final OPS5 report. Both issues were brought to the

attention of the GEF Secretariat. The first calls for further promoting country programming in GEF-6 (2014–18), and the second for further strengthening knowledge management as an enabling factor for broader adoption by encouraging the introduction of communication and outreach components in GEF projects. As mentioned, the third operational issue calls the attention of GEF Agencies to ensuring that their contracts with national executing agencies require that they provide support to evaluations undertaken by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office without any conditions that would compromise the independence of the evaluation.

We are very grateful for the positive engagement of country stakeholders with these evaluations and for their comments, suggestions, and insights. The GEF Independent Evaluation Office remains fully responsible for the content of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob D. van den Berg', with a large, stylized initial 'R' and 'D'.

Rob D. van den Berg
Director, GEF Independent Evaluation Office

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by Carlo Carugi, Senior Evaluation Officer and Task Team Leader for country-level evaluations at the Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). He also managed the Timor-Leste country portfolio study, the Vanuatu/Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) portfolio evaluation, and the joint GEF–Sri Lanka country portfolio evaluation. Neeraj Negi, Senior Evaluation Officer, managed

the India country portfolio evaluation. Simon Blower, Ben Castle, and Ruchi Suhag acted as research assistants.

Government officials of the countries included in this report were all very supportive and provided full cooperation to these evaluation efforts. The teams are also grateful for the advice and logistical support provided by the GEF Agencies.

Abbreviations

ACPER	Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report	NPFE	National Portfolio Formulation Exercise
ADB	Asian Development Bank	OPS5	Fifth Overall Performance Study
CPE	country portfolio evaluation	PICCAP	Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Program
CPS	country portfolio study	POP	persistent organic pollutant
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	RAF	Resource Allocation Framework
FSP	full-size project	ROtI	review of outcomes to impacts
FY	fiscal year	SGP	Small Grants Programme
GEF	Global Environment Facility	SIDS	small island developing states
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	SPREP	Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
IFC	International Finance Corporation	STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
LCI	Local Conservation Initiatives	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
M&E	monitoring and evaluation	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
MSP	medium-size project	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
NBSAP	national biodiversity strategy and action plan	UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization

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

1. Introduction

The sixth *Annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report* (ACPER) provides a synthesis of the main conclusions and recommendations that have emerged from the evaluative evidence in the country portfolio evaluations (CPEs) and country portfolio studies (CPSs) conducted in the Asia and Pacific region by the Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). This includes one CPS completed in April 2012 in Timor-Leste; two CPEs, one in India and one in Sri Lanka, and one portfolio evaluation covering the Vanuatu national portfolio and the portfolio of regional projects executed by the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).¹

GEF support to these countries started in 1991 in India, Sri Lanka, Vanuatu, and the Pacific region; and in 2004 in Timor-Leste. These countries were chosen for evaluation through an established selection process (GEF EO 2010b) whose criteria include the size, diversity, and maturity of the country project portfolio. As with previous country-level evaluations, consultations were held with all major GEF stakeholders, particularly those residing in the countries. Several visits to project sites were also undertaken.

¹SPREP is an intergovernmental organization established in 1982 by the governments and administrations of the Pacific region. Its membership is comprised of 25 countries, consisting of all 21 Pacific island countries and territories, and 4 developed countries (source: U.S. Department of State, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/oes/ocns/rsp/cta/12179.htm>, accessed April 15, 2013).

As of this writing, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office is preparing separate reports for each of these evaluations, except for the Timor-Leste CPS, which was completed in April 2012 and published the following year (GEF EO 2013a). This study was conducted in parallel with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Assessment of Development Results for Timor-Leste (2003–2010). The lead consultant conducting the CPS was also responsible for coverage of Timor-Leste’s UNDP energy and environment portfolio within the UNDP assessment. Conducting parallel portfolio evaluations in Timor-Leste provided advantages for both the GEF and the UNDP evaluation offices, including a broader comparison of issues across sectors in a postconflict country in the process of building state institutions, a lower evaluation burden on the country, and cost savings.

The evaluative phase of the India CPE was conducted between April 2012 and February 2013. India was chosen because of its diverse and mature portfolio of projects, and because it is one of the largest recipients of GEF funding. The draft report of the India CPE has been distributed for comment at the time of writing this report. Completion of this evaluation is scheduled for June 30, 2013.

The Sri Lanka CPE is jointly managed by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office and the Sri Lankan Ministry of Finance and Planning through a joint steering committee. This arrangement conforms with the Office’s push for joint evaluations, which was begun in fiscal year (FY) 2011 with the El Salvador and Jamaica CPSs conducted jointly

with the UNDP Evaluation Office, and continued in FY 2013 with the Timor-Leste CPS.² In the Sri Lanka case, a solid and long-standing evaluation culture, coupled with the existence of independent and credible national institutions dealing with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within the government, made the joint evaluation possible. It is expected that the shared responsibilities deriving from such an arrangement will greatly increase national ownership of the evaluation conclusions as well as adoption and use of its recommendations. The credibility of this evaluation is further strengthened by independent national quality assurance support being provided by the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association through a peer review panel, and by the team of national consultants from the Center for Poverty Analysis that has been assembled to support the GEF Independent Evaluation Office in conducting the evaluation.

The Vanuatu and SPREP portfolio evaluation provides an opportunity to explore in depth the issue of national versus regional GEF support in small island developing states (SIDS). This issue was analyzed during FY 2011 in the cluster CPE of GEF beneficiary countries of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (GEF EO 2012a).

The present report draws on the main conclusions and recommendations from the completed Timor-Leste CPE, as well as information from the ongoing evaluations. All three of the ongoing efforts have completed the evaluative phase and have had a final consultation workshop in the respective country. Their findings and conclusions, along with key areas of recommendations identified during the workshops, have been considered in this report.

ACPER 2013 begins with a short background section containing an update on progress of the GEF multiannual cycle of country-level evaluations, followed by a description of GEF involvement

in the Asia and Pacific region.³ The remainder of this chapter outlines the objectives, scope, and methods used in the evaluations, and the limitations encountered and how these have been addressed. Conclusions are presented in chapter 2 according to the three dimensions of the evaluations: i.e., in terms of the **results** of the GEF support, its **relevance**, and its **efficiency**. Recommendations for the GEF Council are presented in chapter 3.

1.1 Background

The Office continues to conduct its multiannual cycle of country-level evaluations during GEF-5 (2010–14). After completion of the Latin America and the Caribbean region, reported last year in ACPER 2012, the Office plans to complete—by the third quarter of 2013 at the latest—coverage of country-level evaluations in the Asia and Pacific region, which started during the last quarter of 2011. In fall 2012, the Office began country-level evaluations in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, specifically in Tanzania and Eritrea. The Tanzania CPE, launched in September 2012, is expected to be completed by October 2013; the Eritrea CPE, begun during the second quarter of 2012, also will be completed in October 2013. In May 2013, a CPS was launched in Sierra Leone in partnership with the UNDP Evaluation Office. The Office plans to report to the GEF Council on the Sub-Saharan Africa region in ACPER 2014.

³ The Asia and Pacific region includes the Middle East and South Asia as well as East Asia and Pacific countries: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kiribati, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Niue, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, the Palestinian Authority, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, the Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, the United Arab Emirates, Vanuatu, Vietnam, and Yemen.

² The GEF fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

The Asia and Pacific region began participating in the GEF program during the GEF pilot phase in 1991. Since then, the GEF has invested around \$1.8 billion, with an additional \$15.8 billion in cofinancing, in 742 active and completed national projects in the region. The active national projects represent 73 percent of the total portfolio or \$11.7 billion (including GEF funding and cofinancing); the completed projects account for the remaining 27 percent, or \$5.9 billion. Most of the projects in the region's portfolio are in the biodiversity and climate change focal areas (271 and 244 projects, respectively), followed by multifocal area projects (100 projects) and the persistent organic pollutant (POP) (79 projects), land degradation (33 projects), and international waters focal areas (15 projects). UNDP is the GEF Agency responsible for implementation of 53 percent of the national projects in the region, followed by the World Bank (22 percent), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (11 percent), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) (7 percent). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) accounts for 3 percent of the projects; and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the GEF Secretariat each account for 1 percent. China and India have the largest country portfolios, together representing about 61 percent of the total funding committed for national projects in the region.

The country portfolios covered in this ACPER include 109 national projects in the six GEF focal areas: 30 in biodiversity, 55 in climate change, 1 in international waters, 3 in land degradation, 7 in POPs, and 13 multifocal (table 1.1). In biodiversity, the national portfolios analyzed total approximately \$107.2 million in GEF financing and around \$229.2 million in cofinancing (table 1.2). In climate change, the sum of all national portfolios analyzed totals approximately \$333.7 million in GEF financing and around \$2.9 billion in cofinancing. For international waters projects, GEF financing totals about \$12.3 million with about

\$9.2 million in cofinancing. In land degradation, the GEF has invested around \$10.2 million with about \$0.99 million in cofinancing. In POPs, GEF financing totals approximately \$47.8 million with around \$126.3 million in cofinancing. Lastly, the GEF has invested approximately \$54.8 million with \$438.5 million in cofinancing in multifocal area projects. UNDP is the main channel for GEF support, implementing 59 projects; it is followed by the World Bank and UNEP with 20 and 12 projects, respectively (table 1.3).

The GEF portfolios included in this ACPER are briefly described below.

- **Timor-Leste.** Participation with the GEF began in 2003 after Timor-Leste's independence. Since then, Timor-Leste has been involved in 7 national projects totaling about \$7.7 million in GEF support with about \$32.7 million in cofinancing. The national portfolio, exclusively implemented through UNDP, is small and focuses on enabling activities. The portfolio includes four projects in climate change, and one project each in the biodiversity, land degradation, and multifocal areas.
- **India.** India's participation with the GEF began during the GEF pilot phase. As of July 2012, the GEF had allocated \$416.2 million through 55 approved national projects (31 climate change, 12 biodiversity, 4 POPs, 1 land degradation, and 7 multifocal). These activities had combined cofinancing commitments of \$3.2 billion. Fourteen of these projects have been completed, and 22 are under implementation. India is also involved in 16 regional and global projects supported by the GEF.
- **Sri Lanka.** Since 1991, the GEF has invested \$60.9 million (with about \$338.1 million in cofinancing) through 23 national projects: 9 in biodiversity, 9 in climate change, 1 in POPs, and 4 multifocal. The projects are spread across the GEF project cycle, with 15 completed—the majority in the biodiversity and climate change areas—6

TABLE 1.1 Projects by Focal Area

Country	Biodiversity	Climate change	International waters	Land degradation	POPs	Multifocal	Total
Timor-Leste	1	4	0	1	0	1	7
India	12	31	0	1	4	7	55
Sri Lanka	9	9	0	0	1	4	23
Vanuatu	5	5	0	1	1	1	13
SPREP	3	6	1	0	1	0	11
Total	30	55	1	3	7	13	109

NOTE: Data for the Vanuatu/SPREP evaluation include the Vanuatu national projects portfolio and the SPREP regional projects portfolio.

TABLE 1.2 Portfolio Resource Allocation by Focal Area (million \$)

Country	Biodiversity	Climate change	International waters	Land degradation	POPs	Multifocal	Total
	GEF funding						
Timor-Leste	0.28	6.74	0.00	0.47	0.00	0.22	7.71
India	65.90	251.60	0.00	9.20	43.40	46.10	416.20
Sri Lanka	24.74	27.49	0.00	0.00	0.49	8.27	60.99
Vanuatu	1.24	15.53	0.00	0.50	0.39	0.22	17.88
SPREP	15.00	32.33	12.29	0.00	3.50	0.00	63.12
Total	107.16	333.69	12.29	10.18	47.78	54.82	565.90
Cofinancing							
Timor-Leste	0.02	31.89	0.00	0.56	0.00	0.23	32.69
India	178.90	2,485.90	1.10	0.00	120.20	428.90	3,215.00
Sri Lanka	38.64	290.19	0.00	0.00	0.02	9.26	338.11
Vanuatu	0.84	68.68	0.00	0.43	0.02	0.06	70.03
SPREP	10.84	116.28	8.12	0.00	6.05	0.00	141.29
Total	229.24	2,992.94	9.22	0.99	126.29	438.45	3,797.12

NOTE: Data for the Vanuatu/SPREP evaluation include the Vanuatu national projects portfolio and the SPREP regional projects portfolio.

TABLE 1.3 National Projects by GEF Agency

Country	UNDP	UNEP	WB	ADB	IFAD	IFAD	UNIDO	UNDP- FAO	UNEP- FAO	WB- UNDP	WB- ADB	WB- IFC	UNIDO- UNEP	GEF SEC	Total
Timor-Leste	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
India	28	2	15	1	0	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	55
Sri Lanka	12	2	3	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	23
Vanuatu	5	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
SPREP	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	11
Total	59	12	20	1	1	1	7	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	109

NOTE: IFC = International Finance Corporation; WB = World Bank. Data for the Vanuatu/SPREP evaluation include the Vanuatu national projects portfolio and the SPREP regional projects portfolio.

ongoing, and 2 at the approval stage. UNDP, with 12 projects totaling \$14.2 million, has been the country's main channel for GEF support to date, followed by the World Bank (3 projects totaling \$18.81 million) and UNEP (2 projects totaling \$2.04 million). Sri Lanka also participates in three regional and nine global GEF projects.

- **Vanuatu and SPREP.** In Vanuatu, the GEF supports a portfolio totaling about \$17.9 million with around \$70.0 million in cofinancing through 13 national projects—five each in biodiversity and climate change, and one each in the land degradation, POPs, and multifocal areas. Nine projects have been completed, one is ongoing, and three are in the pipeline; eight are enabling activities. UNDP accounts for the largest funding share, with five projects totaling about \$10.2 million in GEF funding with cofinancing of around \$35.6 million. The World Bank has two projects, with about \$6.6 million in GEF funding and about \$34.2 million in cofinancing). UNEP has six projects with total GEF support of about \$1.1 million and cofinancing of around \$0.2 million.

Since 1991, SPREP has been involved with the GEF as a regional executing agency through various GEF Agencies (UNDP, UNEP, the World Bank, and FAO). SPREP involvement comprises 11 regional projects totaling over \$63.1 million in GEF financing and about \$141.3 million in cofinancing. These include three biodiversity projects, six climate change projects, one international waters project, and one POPs project. Eight SPREP projects are full-size projects (FSPs), one is a medium-size project (MSP), and two are enabling activities. UNDP implements seven projects with about \$45.1 million in GEF grants and \$79.7 million in cofinancing; UNEP has two projects totaling \$5.0 million in GEF funding and \$6.5 million in cofinancing. A joint project is implemented through the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) with about \$9.5 million in GEF

funding and \$49.0 million in cofinancing; UNEP and FAO are jointly developing a project with about \$3.5 million in GEF support and around \$6.1 million in cofinancing.

1.2 Objectives, Scope, Methods, and Limitations

Evaluation work in the Asia and Pacific region is being conducted by staff of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office and consultants with extensive experience in each country. The India, Sri Lanka, and Vanuatu and SPREP evaluations follow country-specific terms of reference adapted from the standard CPE terms of reference (GEF EO 2012b) based on information collected and feedback received during the scoping phase. The Timor-Leste CPS follows the standard CPS terms of reference (GEF EO 2012c).

OBJECTIVES

The portfolio evaluations included in this ACPER were conducted with the following objectives:

- Evaluate the **effectiveness and results**⁴ of GEF support in a country, with attention to the sustainability of achievements at the project level and progress toward impact on global environmental benefits
- Evaluate the **relevance and efficiency**⁵ of GEF support in a country from several points of view:

⁴ *Effectiveness*: the extent to which the GEF activity's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance; *results*: in GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short-to medium-term outcomes, and progress toward longer term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects, and other local effects.

⁵ *Relevance*: the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national environmental priorities and policies and to global environmental benefits to which the GEF is dedicated.; *efficiency*: the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.

national environmental frameworks and decision-making processes, the GEF mandate and the achievement of global environmental benefits, and GEF policies and procedures

- Provide **additional evaluative evidence** to other evaluations conducted by the Office
- Provide **feedback and knowledge sharing** to (1) the GEF Council in its decision-making process to allocate resources and to develop policies and strategies; (2) the country on its participation in, or collaboration with, the GEF; and (3) the different agencies and organizations involved in the preparation and implementation of GEF-funded projects and activities

SCOPE

The portfolio evaluations included in this ACPER mainly focused on projects at all stages supported by the GEF within the national boundaries. The Small Grants Programme (SGP) was assessed against the respective national strategy and not on the basis of each individual SGP grant. Project ideas from either the governments or GEF Agencies included in the respective pipelines were not considered in the analysis. In addition to national projects, the analysis assessed a selection of regional and global projects. These were selected in line with a set of criteria including in-country

presence of a project coordination unit and/or project sites, the importance of the project focal area(s) to the country, and the existence of a clear connection to national projects. The SPREP portfolio evaluation focused specifically on regional projects as the main modality of GEF support to SIDS in the Pacific region.

The stage of each project determined the evaluation focus. For example, **completed projects** were assessed against the usual three evaluation criteria—i.e., effectiveness and results (outputs, outcomes and impacts), relevance and efficiency. **Ongoing projects** were assessed in terms of relevance and efficiency. **Projects under preparation**—i.e., those with an approved project identification form (PIF) or project preparation grant—were assessed primarily in terms of relevance, with some eventual limited assessment of efficiency. The results and sustainability of GEF support, particularly at the global environmental benefits level, were given special attention. Table 1.4 presents the portfolios of projects covered in the evaluations included in this ACPER.

METHODS

The Office’s country-level evaluations team continues to strive to update and further develop the set of quantitative and qualitative methods and tools used in these evaluations. These include

TABLE 1.4 Project Coverage of Each Country Portfolio Evaluation and/or Study

Country	Type of evaluation	Number of projects included in the evaluation				
		National FSPs/MSPs	SGP	Enabling activities	Regional/global projects	National completed projects
Timor-Leste	CPS	3	Yes	4	5	5
India	CPE	50	Yes	5	16	14
Sri Lanka	CPE	16	Yes	7	12	13
Vanuatu	Portfolio	5	Yes	8	10	9
SPREP	Portfolio	n.a.	No	2	11	n.a.
Total						

NOTE: n.a. = not applicable. Data for the Vanuatu/SPREP evaluation include the Vanuatu national projects portfolio and the SPREP regional projects portfolio.

traditional methods such as desk reviews, portfolio analyses, and interviews as well as specific ones such as country environmental legal framework analysis. During FY 2013, the standard terms of reference for CPEs and CPSs have been updated to incorporate the lessons learned from the meta-evaluation of the Office's country-level evaluation work conducted in early 2012, whose purpose was to improve methods and processes for the GEF-5 period. While fine-tuning the terms of reference to take recent developments into account, care was taken to maintain comparability of country-level evaluations throughout GEF-5.

This fiscal year, an analytical framework containing a set of indicators extracted from the second phase of the evaluation of the Paris Declaration has been developed and used for assessing country ownership and drivenness in the GEF for inclusion in the first report of the Fifth Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS5) (GEF EO 2013c, 11–12). The country-level evaluation team plans to further refine and use this framework to assess country ownership in future CPEs and CPSs. All country-level evaluation methods and tools can be found on the Office website (<http://www.thegef.org/gef/CPE>).

As with previous country-level evaluations, statistical data and scientific sources were consulted for the CPEs and CPS reported on in this ACPER, particularly with regard to national environmental indicators. Interviews were conducted with representatives of all GEF stakeholders, and numerous field visits were made. As mentioned, each of the evaluations included a national consultation workshop to discuss and receive feedback on the respective key preliminary findings. The quantitative analysis used indicators to assess the efficiency of GEF support using projects as the unit of analysis (e.g., analyzing project preparation and implementation duration and cost). Progress toward impact was assessed through several review of outcome to impact (ROtI) field studies: nine studies were completed in the India CPE, three in the Sri Lanka CPE, and two in the Vanuatu and SPREP portfolio evaluation.

Triangulation of evaluative evidence continues to be applied consistently in all CPEs and CPSs conducted by the Office. Such triangulation ensures that the cross-analysis of information results in better understanding of the contributions of GEF initiatives in the country portfolios analyzed. The method has been improved by including in the triangulation matrix the key indicators from the evaluation matrix, and by vertically triangulating the evidence and emerging findings across key evaluation questions.

Joint work with GEF member countries and Agencies continues to be pursued in the conduct of country-level evaluations. Two out of four evaluations included in this ACPER are joint efforts (Timor-Leste and Sri Lanka). Furthermore, national independent quality assurance/peer review panels continue to support country portfolio evaluations. In fact, setting up such panels has become a standard practice. These panels not only provide scientific, technical, and methodological support to these evaluations, but also increase their credibility, ownership, and potential use in the sense of facilitating follow-up action—especially concerning the recommendations addressed to the countries themselves.

LIMITATIONS

GEF country-level evaluations face a number of limitations and challenges. The following includes the ones found in the CPEs and CPS summarized in this report:

- Hurricane Sandy in November 2012 delayed the Vanuatu and SPREP portfolio evaluation by two months. While the Office and the consultant team endeavored to adhere to March 13 as the date for the final workshop, as of this writing, the evaluative phase needs to be completed.
- A three-month delay occurred in the Sri Lanka CPE due to a change in the consulting firm initially selected to support the Office in

conducting the evaluation. The final workshop thus took place April 29, 2013.

- The India CPE was delayed by opposition from the India executing agency of two POPs projects implemented by UNIDO, resulting in a three-month delay in finalizing the draft report.
- Intrinsic difficulties in defining the portfolio prior to undertaking the evaluations continues to be a limitation in country-level evaluations, as well as in many other evaluations conducted by the Office. To address this, portfolios are

carefully cross-checked with GEF Agencies and national stakeholders at the early stages of the evaluation.

- Lack of institutional memory due to travel, transfer, and staff absence or turnover posed a limitation in the Vanuatu and SPREP portfolio evaluation concerning the ROtI analyses. Especially for long-completed projects, the personnel involved in implementation and execution had either moved on or were no longer working with the respective agencies.

2. Conclusions

The countries covered in this ACPER were not selected to be representative of the vast and diverse Asia and Pacific region, but their experience could be relevant to other countries as well. While acknowledging the experiences and conclusions from previous country-level evaluations, the ACPER 2013 identifies common elements emerging from the four evaluations considered and presents overarching conclusions here. The conclusions presented correspond to the three evaluation dimensions of GEF support: results, relevance, and efficiency.

2.1 Results

Results are presented in terms of the aggregate outcomes and impacts of GEF support. Achievements are presented in terms of the GEF contribution toward addressing global and national environmental issues as well as national-level priorities, including raising awareness and developing national institutions and capacities. The use of the ROTI methodology enabled examination of progress toward impact, including impact drivers and external assumptions.

CONCLUSION 1: In all the portfolios analyzed in the Asia and Pacific region, GEF foundational support to the establishment of national environmental priorities, policies, and legislative frameworks has achieved good results.

The GEF successfully supported the creation of an enabling environment in all the countries reviewed. In small and recent portfolios (Timor-Leste and

the Pacific countries), this support mainly entailed helping countries comply with their obligations to the global environmental conventions as well as in producing environmental information (e.g., baselines and inventories) and developing capacity. In India and Sri Lanka, GEF foundational support went beyond this to introduce more sophisticated approaches such as the establishment of environmental conservation trust funds, proposing an agrobiodiversity initiative, and promoting the removal of market barriers as well as the establishment of transparent tariff mechanisms in the renewable energy sector.

The GEF supported Timor-Leste's participation in and accession to the Convention on Biodiversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Without GEF support, this achievement likely would have been delayed or still be pending. GEF enabling activities resulted in the development of the country's national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP) and national adaptation program of action, which have been presented to, discussed with and approved by the Council of Ministers—thus promoting cross-sectoral consideration of environmental issues.

The Indian environmental legal framework is complex in nature, as it results from the interaction of several diverse actors and institutions. Some major contributions from GEF projects to its development are worth mentioning. The eco-development strategy, formulated with support from the

India Eco-Development Project (GEF ID 84) had an influence on the national Five-Year Plan document and on laws regulating wildlife management.¹ The Mainstreaming Conservation and Sustainable use of Medicinal Plant Diversity in Three Indian States Project (GEF ID 1156) is reported to have provided inputs for development of the National Forest Working Plan Code. The Coal Bed Methane Recovery and Commercial Utilization project (GEF ID 325) contributed to increasing the profile of the concerns addressed and motivated the government to identify nodal agencies and establishing mechanisms for further work on the issue. The Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve's Coastal Biodiversity project (GEF ID 634) established the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust, which has become a statutory body of the government of Tamil Nadu.

In Vanuatu, the GEF supported the formulation of the NBSAP, a national adaptation plan of action and Climate Change Policy Framework, a national implementation plan for POPs, and a national action plan for land degradation. These initiatives also provided baseline information and a country-level assessment of threats, as well as priority actions for each focal area. Further, the Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Program (PICCAP) (GEF ID 336) executed by SPREP helped participating countries establish multisectoral country teams that continue to spearhead the implementation of climate change actions at the national level as well as participate at international climate change forums.

In Sri Lanka, some early FSPs and MSPs had important foundational components. The Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants (GEF ID 95) and the Development of Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management

(GEF ID 352) projects focused on capacity and institutional development. These projects dealt with information gathering, stocktaking, and management plans such as the Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan, which includes the sustainable use of medicinal plants. More recently, enabling activities such as the communication to UNFCCC (GEF ID 309) and the National Capacity Self-Assessment (GEF ID 2417) have compiled existing information on issues related to climate change; these have contributed to background papers that have been used for the country's recent (2010 onwards) climate change policy and climate change adaptation strategy. The GEF also supported the creation of an enabling environment for renewable energy uptake through a multipronged approach that focused on issues such as long-term finance, policy and tariffs, technology, and capacity. The connections between GEF projects, and continued support over the years (1997–2011) to subsequent project phases, enabled outcomes to be sustained and improved upon. The market orientation of these projects and the community organizations that were created enabled the policy and related initiatives to be taken forward independently after GEF support ended.

CONCLUSION 2: While progress to impact through broader adoption mechanisms occurs in large portfolios, this is not yet happening in medium-size, smaller, and/or younger portfolios.

Significant scaling-up of project results is observed in India, where the technologies and approaches promoted through GEF climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and chemicals projects have generated global environmental benefits. Several of these projects have been able to catalyze adoption of the promoted technologies and approaches at a higher scale. In Sri Lanka, uptake beyond GEF support is observed in the renewable energy sector through removal of market barriers, although this has not yet occurred at a large scale. No replication and scaling-up are observed in Vanuatu or the Pacific countries involved in

¹ Specifically, an eco-development strategy was included in the 10th national Five-Year Plan, and a 2006 amendment to the national Wildlife Act made it mandatory for all tiger reserves in the country to establish a foundation for management of the reserve.

SPREP-executed GEF projects, and support to Timor-Leste is still of an enabling nature.

Several completed projects in India have been able to catalyze adoption of promoted technologies and approaches at a higher scale. For instance, in the biodiversity focal area, the India Eco-Development project pioneered a community-based approach to protected area management, which has gained widespread acceptance across the entire country. Technologies and approaches promoted through the Coal Bed Methane Capture and Commercial Utilization project and the Optimizing Development of Small Hydro Resources in Hilly Areas project (GEF ID 386) have been adopted at a higher scale. These experiences confirm that broader adoption is aided by successful demonstrations along with proper dissemination, mobilization of appropriate partners, an enabling legal and regulatory context, country ownership, and relevance to national priorities.

The GEF's long-term support to Sri Lanka's energy sector has enabled the creation and strengthening of community-based organizations that are able to lobby for policy changes and for continuation of support. GEF support has been through the Renewable Energy for Rural Economic Development project (GEF ID 1545), which followed on the Energy Services Delivery project (GEF ID 104); these experiences have catalyzed projects that are presently under implementation or are planned for implementation, including the Portfolio Approach to Distributed Generation Opportunity project—Phase 1 (GEF ID 2996) and the Promoting Sustainable Biomass Energy Production and Modern Bio-Energy Technologies project (GEF ID 4096). Training to individuals provided by these projects on demand-side management of energy has led to the establishment of several energy service companies that continue to provide these services while working with the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority.

In Vanuatu and the Pacific, at both the national and regional levels, replication and scaling-up of community-based project outcomes have generally

faced constraints linked to limited financial resources, land tenure issues, and a lack of integration of environmental concerns in community livelihood initiatives. However, lower scale replication of project outcomes has occurred locally through the establishment of community conservation areas managed by traditional communities. Several projects contributed to these results, including the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (GEF ID 403), the International Waters Project (GEF ID 530), the Vanuatu Local Conservation Initiatives (LCI) project (GEF ID 1682), and the SGP. The community-based conservation approach piloted in the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme is now widely adopted throughout the Pacific, in various forms and scales. Many of the programme's 17 conservation areas spread over 12 Pacific Island countries are still operating—some as part of new, larger scale initiatives; others maintained by local communities at a low level of activity (i.e., enforcing resource bans). The Vanuatu LCI project established six new conservation areas in three islands that are still maintained by the traditional communities and at a community level with support from the provincial government offices, albeit at a much lower scale than during the GEF financing period.

CONCLUSION 3: Effective communication and outreach as well as uptake of lessons facilitated broader adoption. Lessons from past interventions are being mainstreamed in the formulation of most recent GEF projects, with few exceptions.

Evidence from 11 terminal evaluations confirms that GEF project experiences and lessons in India are disseminated through publications, conferences, project websites, research papers, books, workshops, CDs, toolkits, handbooks, and other publications. The information gathered through field visits and stakeholder interviews indicates that these communication and outreach efforts, as well as the publications developed by some GEF projects, have been effective. Examples include the

materials developed for promoting environmentally friendly lifestyles (Low Carbon Campaign for Commonwealth Games 2010 Delhi project [GEF ID 4215]), documentation of the wealth of biodiversity (Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve project), establishment of long-term mechanisms including e-libraries for information sharing (Coal Bed Methane Capture and Commercial Utilization project), and publications aiming at sharing good practices (Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management Partnership program [GEF ID 3468]). Final output documents from several GEF-supported enabling activities have become important documents for specific sectors to build upon. The national communication reports and the data contained in these reports are widely referred to by practitioners and cited by academics.

Available evidence suggests that lessons from GEF projects are being incorporated by Indian agencies and institutions in projects and activities that are not supported by the GEF. In the case of the Financing Energy Efficiency at Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises project (GEF ID 3551), the Institute of Industrial Productivity and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) have funded and invested in demonstration projects in other sectors (such as foundries) that are not covered through GEF support, as a result of the awareness and interest generated by the GEF project. The Tea Board of the government of India has taken up lessons learned from the Energy Conservation in Small Sector Tea Processing Units in South India project (GEF ID 2500) and initiated a replication of the project in Assam under India's 12th Five-Year Plan.

In Sri Lanka, lessons from past interventions were not fully utilized in the early GEF phases. Recent projects from GEF-4 (2006–10) and later refer to experience from earlier projects in their design and include budget lines for disseminating lessons learned both locally and internationally. Three recent projects—Strengthening Capacity to Control the Introduction and Spread of Alien Invasive Species (GEF ID 2472), Promoting Sustainable

Biomass Energy Production and Modern Bio-Energy Technologies, and Mainstreaming Agro-Biodiversity Conservation and Use in Sri Lankan Agro-Ecosystems for Livelihoods and Adaptation to Climate Change (GEF ID 3808)—have specific activities/budgets allocated for the dissemination of lessons learned. They also feature cross-fertilization between key topics (i.e., combining agriculture and land use with climate change, and energy with biodiversity) and institutional links that foster greater sharing of lessons. It is too early to say what the impact of this greater attention to lessons learning and dissemination will be, as implementation of these projects has just begun.

Available project terminal evaluations produced some very useful lessons and recommendations for future action in the Vanuatu and SPREP portfolios. Unfortunately, these lessons do not appear to have been incorporated into the design of subsequent projects or taken up by governments in their daily work programs. Examples include the recommendations from the LCI project to enact the Conservation Area Regulation in Vanuatu and provide support for communities to maintain their established conservation areas. The terminal evaluation of that project found that neither of these recommendations has been addressed. The recent recommendation from the Coral Triangle Initiative (GEF ID 3647) terminal evaluation highlighted the need for improvements in the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation. This recommendation is similar to findings emerging from the LCI terminal evaluation, the NBSAP project, and the International Waters Project. Unfortunately, the recommendation has not been acted on, mainly due to a lack of political commitment to raise the profile of environmental issues at the national level.

CONCLUSION 4: Capacity, both individual and institutional, is an issue of concern in SIDS and in fragile states.

GEF projects invested heavily in developing the capacity of individuals involved with projects

to alleviate one of the main problems faced by Vanuatu and SPREP member countries in implementing projects and scaling up the results and outcomes to achieve long-term impacts. Examples in Vanuatu include strengthening staff of the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation through training during the LCI project; the establishment of multisectoral country teams in PICCAP implementation; and preparation of the NBSAP, national implementation plan, and national action plan documents. Unfortunately, the country teams have been dormant since the completion of these activities, with the result that most of the actions identified in the plans and reports produced have not been used or mainstreamed by the relevant government agencies into their sectoral work. The Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation, which is supposed to coordinate these committees, does not have the resources or staff to sustain them.

Since the government of Vanuatu was not been able to retain trained individuals beyond project end, the organization's capacity reverts essentially to zero. On the other hand, staff not retained after completion of GEF projects move to other organizations, where they utilize the skills they gained. This was the case with the former national coordinator of the Vanuatu International Waters Project, who is now the national coordinator for the SGP. In her new post, she is able to continue support to former International Waters Project communities, as well as to LCI project communities. Similarly, the former LCI coordinator is now the coordinator of special projects for the Ministry of Lands, and a former LCI staff member now directs the Community-based Conservation Program for the Church of Melanesia.

The climate change focal area is a notable exception to this general trend of attrition. The national climate change country teams established during PICCAP implementation continue to function effectively, despite staff transitions, due to the mainstreaming of such committees into national frameworks. These same country teams have been

used for subsequent GEF projects—i.e., the Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Programme (GEF ID 1058), the Pacific Islands Greenhouse Gas Abatement through Renewable Energy (PIGGAREP) project (GEF ID 2699), and the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change project (GEF ID 3101). This ability to retain country teams and work together at the national level proved effective in the sustainability of activities and in engaging in international forums on climate change.

2.2 Relevance

The relevance of GEF support was assessed against the country's national development and environmental agendas, the GEF mandate, and the country's responsibilities and obligations to the global conventions.

CONCLUSION 5: GEF support has been relevant to national needs and priorities in environmental conservation and sustainable development.

GEF support has been relevant to Timor-Leste's constitution and to its strategic development plan and priorities, as well as to efforts to fulfill its obligations under the international agreements to which it is a signatory. GEF support to biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation has been aligned with government policies and plans for the environment; and has given impetus to the development of plans and strategies that have further sharpened priorities in these focal areas. Gaps exist in the chemicals and international waters focal areas, where GEF support has not been provided. Timor-Leste has yet to ratify the Stockholm Convention on POPs or the international waters-related United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.

Although in India the scale of GEF support is quite small compared to the country's size and needs, this support relates well to India's development challenges. Overall, GEF support has been relevant to India's sustainable development agenda

and environmental priorities in supporting energy efficiency, biodiversity conservation, land and water ecosystem management, protected area management, and land degradation. GEF projects are also linked to the agenda of the ministries involved in project execution. Of the 65 projects reviewed, 51 were assessed to be relevant and in line with the country's environmental and sustainable development priorities. Examples include the projects developed within the framework of the Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management program (GEF IDs 3869, 3870, 3871, 3872, and 3873), which besides generating global environmental benefits, focus on income-generation activities for local community members and thus contribute directly to one of the main development objectives of the country. This is particularly evident in the Sustainable Rural Livelihood Security through Innovations in Land and Ecosystem Management project (GEF ID 3470). In subprojects at Sundarbans and Andamans, local community involvement in project activities is being ensured to deal with the newly emerging challenges of soil salinity in paddy fields.

GEF support has been relevant to the sustainable development agenda and to development needs in Vanuatu and the Pacific Island countries involved in SPREP-executed projects funded by the GEF. The GEF had a strong catalytic role in helping move the environmental and sustainable development agenda to the national forefront of SPREP member countries. For instance, the GEF-supported enabling activities that produced the NBSAP and the PICCAP were instrumental in the long-awaited passage of the Environmental Management and Conservation Act, which integrates the concept of sustainable development into the national development plans of SPREP member countries. Furthermore, the outcomes of the LCI project formed part of the National Council of Chiefs Land Summit Resolution promoting sustainable land management and conservation practices on traditional lands in Vanuatu. Similarly, the Pollution and Waste Management Acts were

enacted following the development of the national implementation plan. Elsewhere in the Pacific region, there is more evidence of the relevance of GEF support in accelerating national sustainable development agendas as the outcomes of the PICCAP with national greenhouse gas assessments and vulnerability assessments helped frame the Pacific Forum Leaders Communiqué of the past 10 years, stressing the importance of actions to combat climate change and priority adaptation measures. The evaluation team also found strong evidence on the development of national sustainable development plans after GEF-supported projects such as the NBSAP in Fiji. The outcomes of GEF projects have been instrumental in mainstreaming climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation into the Samoa Development Strategy 2012–2014.

GEF projects in Sri Lanka have largely addressed the country's environmental and sustainable development objectives. The initial projects were aligned to sectoral plans: e.g., the national environmental action plan, the biodiversity conservation action plan, the coastal zone management plan, and the special area management plan. In addition to addressing the objectives of these plans, later GEF projects also address the objectives of national programs such as the Ten-Year Horizon Development Framework (2006–2016), the National Physical Planning Policy and Plan (2006–2030), and the National Action Plan for Haritha Lanka (Green Lanka) Programme 2009.

CONCLUSION 6: The relevance of GEF support to country priorities strengthened ownership in India, while in the other portfolios analyzed ownership is mixed.

In India, ownership of GEF support is strong at the central as well as provincial levels. In Sri Lanka, externally driven project design, capacity issues, and inadequate stakeholder consultation during implementation have weakened ownership. Vanuatu and SPREP member countries showed good ownership only for enabling activities. Weak ownership was observed in Timor-Leste.

Ownership in India is not only visible at the central government level, but is also demonstrated by the relevant provincial governments. Up to GEF-3 (2003–06), the involvement of the national government in shaping the country portfolio was largely passive. However, when the GEF introduced a Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) for GEF-4, India was among the few countries that started a country-driven national portfolio planning exercise on its own. Thereafter, the central government's involvement in planning GEF support has increased. While government institutions have played an important role in execution of GEF projects, the role of civil society organizations and the private sector has been equally important. Government has supported the participation of nongovernmental organizations, especially through the SGP. In addition to GEF funding, the government has provided funding to the SGP to increase the level of grants made by the program. This government support of the SGP is indicative of a high level of ownership.

The materialization of some \$3.2 billion in cofinancing against approximately \$416.2 million in GEF grants for national projects further strengthens the evidence of country ownership in India. For 10 completed projects in the portfolio, 100 percent or more of the committed cofinancing is reported to have materialized. Two of these projects are reported to have achieved more than three times the cofinancing originally promised. In only one project did less than 50 percent of the committed cofinancing materialize. For the remaining five completed projects, between 50 and 100 percent of committed cofinancing actually materialized. The SGP has also mobilized significant cofinancing, amounting to \$12.1 million against total GEF funding of \$8.2 million.

In Vanuatu, the evaluation found strong ownership for the enabling activities funding window, thanks to its expedited procedures and absence of a cofinancing requirement; 8 of the 10 completed Vanuatu national projects are enabling activities. The only two MSPs in the country were initiated by GEF Agencies: the LCI project was initiated and driven by UNDP; and the Sustainable Land

Management MSP, which is part of a global project, was initiated by UNEP. SPREP regional projects—including the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme, the International Waters Project, and the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change project—were based on SPREP Council resolutions. These projects tend to address more common issues throughout the region rather than national priorities. The other regional and global projects in which Vanuatu participates are driven by GEF Agencies, with national involvement occurring around issues common to the various participating countries.

Ownership of GEF support is mixed in Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Finance and Planning and the Ministry of Power and Energy were interested in developing renewable energy sources in the early 1990s, as power generation was inadequate and the country's electricity grid penetration was only 40 percent. Given this commitment, the support extended by the government to overcome issues related to tariffs and power purchase agreements was high, and GEF support was easily exploited. On the other hand, GEF projects related to protected area management were largely designed by external consultants. This circumstance led to resistance from within the government (i.e., the Department of Wild Life Conservation) and by concerned members of civil society, who filed legal cases against the implementation of certain components of these projects. For the Conservation of Globally Threatened Species in the Rainforests of Southwest Sri Lanka project (GEF ID 818), a more participatory process was adopted in the design phase, which generated ownership. The Participatory Coastal Zone Restoration and Sustainable Management in the Eastern Province of Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka project (GEF ID 2753) was designed by a team assembled by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Mixed government ownership in Sri Lanka is evidenced by the low in-kind contribution to MSPs and FSPs. The Sri Lankan government's funding commitment at the project approval stage amounts to 19 percent of total project costs. The evaluation of the

Conservation of Biodiversity through Integrated Collaborative Management in Rekawa, Ussangoda, and Kalametiya Coastal Ecosystems project (GEF ID 802) found that the staff time of government officials to be contributed to the project (in kind) did not sufficiently materialize, as they continue to have commitments to their parent organization.

The GEF Timor-Leste portfolio has been mainly designed by UNDP. The government and other stakeholders have been consulted during design and have been involved at appropriate points in implementation. However, most if not all of the key documents have been produced by international experts and United Nations Volunteers. Extremely limited national capacities have greatly constrained the extent to which national ownership could be effectively built—in short, it has been challenging to give the Timorese a leadership role in the preparation and drafting of key enabling activity reports when they lack the skills to produce reports that will meet convention requirements. The decision was thus made to rely on external expertise; by so doing, however, ownership and capacities have remained lower than expected. The operational focal point has the individual capacity to become more involved, but with minimal resources, possibilities for enhanced ownership will be difficult to attain.

2.3 Efficiency

The efficiency of GEF support was assessed in terms of the time, effort, and financial resources needed to prepare and implement GEF projects; the different roles and responsibilities of the various GEF stakeholders (national, international, and local) and the synergies between projects and these stakeholders; and the role and functioning of the national GEF focal point mechanism.

CONCLUSION 7: Long preparation times and delayed implementation affected overall efficiency in all the portfolios analyzed.

Several factors affected efficiency in the portfolios analyzed, including weak capacity in Timor-Leste;

a tradition of heavy bureaucracy in India; and loss of institutional memory, changes in staff, and changing national priorities in Vanuatu and SPREP. While in Sri Lanka the GEF cycle was efficient in its early phases, it slowed during GEF-4, but is largely on track in GEF-5.

In Timor-Leste, at independence in 2002, the government's capacity was close to zero. In the last 10 years, considerable progress has been made to improve skills, education, and knowledge of government officials across all sectors. However, the level of education, skills, and work experience within the government are not yet sufficient to move project ideas from design to implementation. Almost all the GEF projects implemented so far have been delayed because of a lack of skilled nationals to fill vacant project management or team member positions. The lack of capacity is widely reported in other sectors and is thus not specific to the environmental sector. On a positive note, the approach being developed for the first national communication to the UNFCCC is based on a national team complemented with expertise from within the region (Indonesia and the Philippines).

GEF projects in India have involved a long preparation time. The majority of the national FSPs (57 percent) took more than two years from first submission of a proposal to endorsement/approval by the GEF Chief Executive Officer. The processing time taken for MSPs is similar: 60 percent took more than two years to move from first submission of a proposal to Chief Executive Officer endorsement/approval. There is wide variation among projects regarding project preparation time, ranging from six months from first submission to disbursement for the Low Carbon Campaign for Commonwealth Games 2010 Delhi project to eight years for the Mainstreaming Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plant Diversity project. As to efficiency of implementation, 12 projects in the portfolio required extensions to complete project activities. The reasons for extension included slow start-up, overly optimistic

estimation of the time required for implementation of activities, inadequate support from some critical stakeholders, unexpected delays on the part of technology suppliers, and issues related to inter- and intra-agency coordination.

The approval process takes an average of 636 days (1.7 years) for Vanuatu national projects and 881 days (2.4 years) for SPREP-executed regional projects. There is substantial variation across project modalities: Vanuatu FSPs have a longer approval process (1,582 days or 4.3 years) than SPREP-executed regional FSPs (915 days or 2.5 years); and Vanuatu MSPs take an average of 984 days (2.7 years), while the single SPREP-executed regional MSP took 371 days (just over 1 year) for approval. Enabling activities have been approved somewhat faster, on average, for Vanuatu national projects (431 days or 1.2 years) compared to SPREP-executed regional enabling activities (501 days or 1.4 years). The hazard of long project preparation timelines is that, by the time the project is approved, the actual priorities and commitments identified in the project document may have changed, with consequences on the efficiency of implementation. In most of the regional projects, project documents were completely reworked after the GEF Council and GEF Agency approvals due to changes in some countries concerning national priorities, institutional memory, staff movement, and budgetary constraints. For example, cofinancing initially allocated to the International Waters Project, the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change project, and the Vanuatu LCI project had to be shifted to newly emerging national needs in response to natural disasters.

Nationally executed projects in Vanuatu experience more implementation delays and extensions than SPREP-executed projects. The lag is explained by the fact that regional project coordinators provide assistance to national coordinators in preparing project reports and implementing project activities; such institutional support mechanisms do not exist for nationally executed projects. Thus, the enabling activities for preparing the POPs

national implementation plan and land degradation national action plan have not been closed, since the appropriate records and financial acquittals have not yet been completed—even though the project activities were completed several years ago. SPREP, on the other hand, has a fully functioning technical staff to backstop regional projects and to support countries on climate change and biodiversity projects. These technical support teams have been used extensively in the implementation of the Pacific Islands Greenhouse Gas Abatement and the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change projects, as well as in the Island Biodiversity and Invasive Species project (GEF ID 3664) just starting implementation.

Sri Lankan FSPs take an average of four years from entry in the pipeline to project start-up. The process of project solicitation changed with the introduction of the RAF in GEF-4, where projects were expected to be submitted directly by identified national stakeholders to the operational focal point. However, the process did not occur as expected, necessitating that GEF Agencies get involved in the development of project ideas. Consequently, new projects only began to be registered in the GEF Project Management Information System three years later, in 2009. In some cases, project approval is delayed by a slow government response, as is the case with the Strengthening Capacity to Control the Introduction and Spread of Alien Invasive Species project. GEF-5 project development and approval are largely on track.

Concerning the efficiency of implementation, 11 projects had been completed up to 2012 in Sri Lanka, with an average implementation period of five years. Climate change projects were all implemented on time, except for the first enabling activity, the initial communication to UNFCCC, which took 10 years to complete. All biodiversity projects have been extended. Reasons for extension include issues related to design, management, staffing, and funding, along with external factors. Both the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants project and the Protected Areas Management and

Wildlife Conservation (GEF ID 878) project had underestimated the time required for involving communities in conservation activities, resulting in delays in implementation. In other cases, changes in laws had negative impacts on project implementation. The Protected Areas Management and Wildlife Conservation project estimated that changes to the Fauna and Flora Ordinance could be made by the government within the first year of the project; ultimately, this took seven years to accomplish.

Insufficient technical capacity, delegation of tasks and responsibilities within the partner government entities, and frequent organizational changes comprise another set of reasons for observed implementation delays. The lack of technical staff within the Department of Wildlife Conservation and its reluctance to recruit external staff had an impact on the progress of the Development of Wildlife Conservation and Protected Areas Management project and the subsequent Protected Areas Management and Wildlife Conservation project. Staff recruitment was hampered by a 2001 government moratorium against recruiting for permanent government positions.

CONCLUSION 8: Except for a few projects in Vanuatu/SPREP and Sri Lanka portfolios, monitoring and evaluation is not happening to its full capacity.

In India, the quality of M&E in the GEF portfolio remains an area of weak performance, although it is improving. A desk review undertaken as part of the India CPE revealed that the indicators used to track results for 8 of the 14 completed projects for which sufficient information was available were assessed as not having been appropriate to the project objectives and activities. This appraisal is consistent with ratings provided by the Office in its terminal evaluation review process. The quality of M&E was assessed to be in the satisfactory range in only three of seven completed GEF projects in India for which the Office provided ratings. Overly optimistic reporting of progress of GEF

activities in project implementation reports has emerged as a concern in this regard. Even though they are aware of problems faced on the ground, GEF Agencies do not tend to communicate these in the project implementation reports submitted to the GEF.

Evidence from the India CPE shows that the quality of M&E arrangements is improving. Both ongoing and pre-implementation projects have been assessed as having a relatively better M&E design than completed projects. Appropriate performance and impact indicators have been included along with corresponding means of verification. Appropriate emphasis has been given to reporting requirements, external evaluations, and inclusion of M&E costs in the project budget. Another improvement in recent years has been the greater involvement of the operational focal point in tracking the status of projects and proposals through various stages of the GEF cycle. However, attention in this regard is primarily focused on projects that are under preparation and less on projects that are either under implementation or have been completed.

In the Vanuatu and SPREP portfolios, GEF project M&E provided important information and lessons both for institutional capacity development and actions to address environmental concerns. GEF projects regularly produce project implementation reports, midterm reviews, and terminal evaluations. The M&E systems in place are used effectively during the project life. All the completed regional and national projects include examples of adoption of midterm review recommendations. Some good examples of adaptive management include the adjustments UNDP and SPREP have initiated to address delays in funds disbursement for the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change project—a pervasive issue that has existed since UNDP and SPREP began working together on GEF projects in the mid-1990s. The new approach allows disbursement of funds only to those countries that have submitted the necessary reports on time, rather than waiting until

all countries have submitted their reports before funds are disbursed to SPREP. Also, SPREP now submits progress reports on a biannual basis rather than quarterly.

In Sri Lanka, many projects do not have project implementation reports. For completed projects, evaluation reports indicate that the quality of the logical framework matrix has affected the quality of project monitoring and outcomes. The logical framework matrix of the Conservation of Globally Threatened Species in the Rainforests of Southwest Sri Lanka project had to be revised at midterm, and was subsequently not used for project monitoring. The evaluators of the Development of Wildlife Conservation and Protected Areas Management project felt that the project objectives mentioned in the logical framework matrix were task oriented (e.g., the development of human-elephant conflict-resolution techniques) instead of outcome/impact oriented (e.g., fewer cases of human-elephant conflicts in the buffer zones of protected areas). The 2011 completion report on the first phase (2002–2007) of the Renewable Energy for Rural Economic Development project is the only report on GEF work in Sri Lanka that provides information on the level of environmental stress reduction (i.e., estimation of the reduction of emissions due to the use of the renewable energy technology introduced). Arrangements or institutions in place to monitor stress reduction or improvement in the environment and/or socioeconomic conditions at the systemic level after project completion are weak.

CONCLUSION 9: The introduction of resource allocation mechanisms since GEF-4 stimulated country programming with varying degrees of success in the respective countries.

In India, the RAF stimulated country programming, which consequently reduced the amount of dropped/canceled projects in the national portfolio. Fifty-one projects are listed in GEF Project Management Information System as dropped or canceled in India. From GEF-2 (1999–2002)

onwards,² there has been a decline in the number of project proposals that were dropped or canceled. Of the proposals that pertain to GEF-2, 15 projects were dropped or canceled; this is more than twice the number of project proposals that made it to the implementation stage in that replenishment period. For GEF-3, although the number of dropped or canceled projects increased to 21, the number of approved projects also increased to 14. In GEF-4, 9 projects were dropped or canceled, and 28 were endorsed or approved. The GEF-5 project portfolio is still developing. As of this writing, 5 projects have been dropped or canceled, and 11 have been endorsed or approved. Regardless of how the trends for GEF-5 eventually turn out, it is unlikely that the rate of dropped or canceled project proposals will be as high as in GEF-2 or GEF-3.

In Sri Lanka, a country programming exercise was conducted in 2006 with support from UNDP to identify priorities and projects to be funded with GEF-4 resources. In 2011, the opportunity afforded by the introduction of the voluntary National Portfolio Formulation Exercises (NPFs) in GEF-5 was taken up by the GEF Sri Lanka operational focal point. Both exercises benefited from wide stakeholder consultation that included experts and state and civil society representatives. Both efforts had the participation of GEF Agencies: in 2006, two of the three GEF Agencies—UNDP and the World Bank—were included as they were present in the country; in 2011, consultations also included ADB, FAO, IFAD, IFC, and UNIDO. Both processes included line ministry/department representatives relevant to the GEF focal areas; and in both exercises, the identified projects were taken back to the respective ministries, either via one-on-one

²Information for previous years is incomplete, because the Project Management Information System only began operation during GEF-2. While information on projects from the pilot phase and GEF-1 (1995–98) was uploaded to the system, information on dropped or canceled projects was not included in several cases. As a result, accurate analysis of the dropout and cancellation rate is possible only from GEF-2 onwards.

consultations in 2006 or workshops in 2011, to prioritize the proposed activities.

In 2006 and 2011, the project proposals formulated are not consistent with the country programming documents that were produced. In GEF-4, the slowness of the GEF cycle highlighted in Conclusion 7 added to delays encountered at the national level. Clearance by the National Planning Department of the Ministry of Finance and Planning was delayed due to doubts expressed regarding the national importance of the proposals submitted; this caused the proposals to miss the national budget cycle and have to wait for another year. According to stakeholders interviewed, one of the reasons the existing proposals are not aligned with the NPFE document is changes in the national interest and new circumstances emerging while proposals go through the GEF approval cycle. This is the case for the Strengthening the Resilience of Post Conflict Recovery and Development to Climate Change Risks in Sri Lanka project (GEF ID 4609), which was not mentioned in the NPFE.

CONCLUSION 10: Inadequate contractual arrangements between GEF Agencies and national executing agencies in India created a barrier to independent evaluation of projects by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office.

During the course of the CPE in India, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office was not able to

conduct field verification for two POPs projects implemented by UNIDO—the completed Development of a National Implementation Plan in India as a First Step to Implement the Stockholm Convention on POPs project (GEF ID 1520), and the ongoing Environmentally Sound Management and Final Disposal of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) in India project (GEF ID 3775). At first, access was denied because the contractual arrangement between UNIDO and the national executing agency did not specify that such access should be granted to the Office. In November 2012, after intervention from the GEF India operational focal point, the executing agency agreed to facilitate field verification, but later added the condition that representatives from UNIDO and the national executing agency would be present to oversee the fieldwork being conducted. This condition was unacceptable, as it would have compromised the independence of the evaluation. The team could have requested another intervention from the operational focal point, but had to drop the fieldwork for these two projects to avoid further delay and ensure timely finalization of the CPE.

3. Issues for Follow-Up

The findings and conclusions emerging from the CPEs and CPS conducted in the Asia and Pacific region provide three issues for follow-up. The first two will be integrated with other emerging evidence in the OPS5 final report. The third is an important operational issue already included in the GEF Independent Evaluation Office's work plan and budget for FY 2014.

ISSUE 1: The GEF Secretariat should further promote country programming in GEF-6, to be steered by national focal point mechanisms and to be conducted paying more attention to the efficiency of the process.

Evidence from Timor-Leste, India, and Sri Lanka shows the importance of how country programming is conducted for it to be effectively used by project proponents. In Timor-Leste, the portfolio of individual projects adds up to less than the sum of its parts, as projects lack a cohesive approach and the longer time scale of engagement required to develop capacity in a country emerging from a conflict situation. Developing a program with the country may enable more predictable, longer term support to government priorities, rather the start-and-stop approach of individual enabling activities, FSPs, or MSPs. As has been evident in India, country-focused programming since GEF-4 has helped foster greater country ownership of GEF activities and increased efficiency, thanks to the operational focal point's office taking the lead in bringing various national stakeholders together to identify priority areas for GEF programming in the

country and activities that may be undertaken in the identified areas. During GEF-5, India was able to further strengthen its national portfolio formulation process. In Sri Lanka, two inclusive and comprehensive country programming exercises have been conducted, but their effective use was hindered by delays resulting from the GEF cycle and at the national level.

The midterm evaluations of the NPFE initiative (GEF EO 2013d) and the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) (GEF EO 2013e) currently being conducted by the Office to inform OPS5 will provide further information on the effectiveness of country-focused programming. The evidence that will emerge from these evaluations will have to be taken into account in programming for GEF-6.

ISSUE 2: The GEF Secretariat should further strengthen knowledge management as an enabling factor for broader adoption, by encouraging the introduction of communication and outreach components in GEF projects.

The GEF has provided considerable support for activities that generate and disseminate knowledge. In India, several examples of learning from past GEF activities being mainstreamed into new activities—both GEF and non-GEF—came to light during the conduct of the CPE. Several projects were able to catalyze further action from other stakeholders through effective dissemination. However, systematic tracking of the long-term impacts of activities supported by the GEF by relevant

national stakeholders is limited. The Sri Lanka, Vanuatu, and SPREP portfolios showed that lessons learned from past interventions have not been fully utilized. Even though the situation seems to be improving since GEF-4 with a few projects that include specific budget lines for disseminating lessons learned both locally and internationally, there is certainly room for improvement in this regard.

ISSUE 3: GEF Agencies should ensure that their contracts with the executing agencies require that they provide support to evaluations undertaken by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office without any conditions that would compromise the independence of the evaluation.

Inadequate contractual arrangements between UNIDO and its Indian executing agency was a

barrier to the GEF Independent Evaluation Office's ability to undertake field verification of sampled projects in the POPs focal area. When the problem surfaced, UNIDO acknowledged this as a gap in its contractual arrangements with its executing agencies and committed to rectify the problem accordingly. This is the second evaluation in which such a situation has arisen, with the recently completed South China Sea impact evaluation having formulated a similar recommendation (GEF EO 2013b). This situation needs to be addressed so that the various GEF partners can fulfill their M&E roles in GEF activities as outlined in the GEF M&E Policy (GEF EO 2010a, para. 57).

Annex A. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Lessons

Conclusions				
Results	Relevance	Efficiency	Recommendations	Lessons
Timor-Leste				
GEF support has assisted Timor-Leste in developing foundational capacities, raising the profile of environmental issues, and establishing national priorities, particularly in biodiversity and climate change.		Weak capacity is a problem affecting GEF-funded projects throughout the project cycle.		The GEF project approach is challenging for Timor-Leste, given its transition out of fragility. A longer term engagement or a programmatic approach may reduce the administrative burden and improve continuity.
	GEF support in Timor-Leste has been relevant to the constitution and to the strategic development plan and priorities, as well as to the country's efforts to fulfill its obligations under the international agreements to which it is a signatory.			Livelihood linkages to environmental management are key to the development of the GEF portfolio in Timor-Leste.
India				
GEF projects in India have generally been effective in achieving their outcomes at the point of implementation completion. In the postcompletion phase, in several instances, projects make significant progress to long-term impacts.	GEF support to India is relevant to the country's priorities, needs, and emerging challenges and has led to country ownership.	Proposals for the majority of GEF projects require considerable preparation time, and once implementation starts most projects require extensions for completion. In some instances, this has limited outcome achievements.		
GEF projects are generating global environmental benefits at a higher scale through broader adoption of the promoted technologies and approaches.		Contrary to expectations, for an overwhelming majority of GEF projects, executing agencies report sufficiency of the administrative budget.		

Results	Conclusions		Recommendations	Lessons
	Relevance	Efficiency		
Contributions of GEF activities to changes in the legal, policy, and regulatory framework have been significant.		GEF projects in India are reported to have mobilized a significant amount of cofinancing that is often made available in a timely manner. Activities supported through cofinancing are generally well integrated into the project design.		
		Although the quality of M&E in the GEF portfolio is improving, it remains an area of weak performance.	The experience in India shows how country-focused programming of GEF support may increase efficiency in the portfolio. This should be taken into account in further promoting programming in GEF-6, together with the NPFE and STAR findings that will emerge in OPS5.	
		Due to the adoption of an RAF by the GEF and increased attention to portfolio planning by India, the rate at which projects and proposals were being dropped or canceled has declined.		
GEF support for communication and outreach activities has been effective in facilitating broader adoption. There is also evidence that lessons from past interventions are being mainstreamed in the formulation of GEF projects.			Knowledge management is once again confirmed as an important factor that will help progress toward impact and that could be further strengthened.	
		Inadequate understanding and arrangements prevented access of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office for independent field verification to two POPs projects in India.	UNIDO should ensure that its contracts with executing agencies require that they provide support to evaluations undertaken by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office without any conditions that would compromise the independence of the evaluation. The Council should request that UNIDO amend its contractual arrangements with the executing agencies.	

Conclusions				
Results	Relevance	Efficiency	Recommendations	Lessons
			GEF support to the POPs focal area in India should be implemented in the same spirit of partnership as the well-established, smoothly running support in other focal areas.	
Vanuatu/SPREP				
The GEF helped pave the way for the development of national plans, the establishment of environmental agencies, and the establishment of relevant environmental legislative frameworks in Vanuatu and SPREP countries in all focal areas through enabling activities.	GEF support is relevant to SPREP and Vanuatu environmental needs and challenges in all GEF focal areas.			
GEF support has been instrumental in raising environmental awareness in all focal areas in Vanuatu and the SPREP countries.	There is strong relevance of GEF support in Vanuatu and SPREP in accelerating the sustainable development agenda and meeting development needs. The GEF has been the catalyst in helping move the environmental and sustainable development agenda to the national forefront.			
The replication and scaling-up of community-based project outcomes to the national level has faced constraints both for Vanuatu national projects and SPREP regional projects.	Ownership of Vanuatu national GEF projects is generally low, except for enabling activities.			
The GEF paved the way for the strengthening of capacity at the individual, institutional, and system levels, but sustaining this capacity has been and still is problematic, except in the area of climate change.			The excessive preparation time of GEF projects affects efficiency of implementation in terms of changes in institutional memory, staff movement, and national cofinancing allocations.	

Conclusions				
Results	Relevance	Efficiency	Recommendations	Lessons
Institutional capacity needs to be strengthened for Vanuatu to effectively implement projects nationally.		GEF project M&E produced important information and lessons both for institutional capacity development and actions to address environmental concerns. The use of these lessons has had varied results, some of which were successfully used; several others have not been used at all.		
Sri Lanka				
GEF projects in biodiversity have contributed to actions identified by national executing agencies.	GEF support is aligned to Sri Lanka's environmental and sustainable development objectives in terms of laws, plans, and policies, but implementation weaknesses reduce the full integration of environmental concerns into sectoral agendas.	The time taken for the project approval stage has increased over time.		
In climate change, GEF-supported activities have created an enabling environment for renewable energy through removal of barriers and establishment of transparent tariff mechanisms, enabling commercialization and uptake beyond GEF support.	GEF support has helped Sri Lanka address some of its international commitments. However, the spread of activities and project ideas is limited.	Extension of project implementation has occurred mostly in biodiversity projects.		
The use and incorporation of lessons from previous projects has been at best ad hoc in the early GEF phases. Recent projects (GEF-4 and later) refer to previous lessons in their design and include budget lines for disseminating lessons learned both locally and internationally.	The GEF has supported the setup of the national environmental agenda and has supported incremental activities that have contributed to setting priorities in the national sustainable development agenda.	M&E systems and activities in GEF projects in Sri Lanka are not fully implemented.		
Outcomes are mixed with regard to the effectiveness of GEF support to Sri Lanka in producing results that last over time and continue after project completion.	Ownership of projects and their performance is linked to who carried out the design, what sort of process was used, and how projects are able to be aligned to sectoral priorities and availability of funds.	GEF projects have a adaptive management to steer project implementation.		

Results	Conclusions		Recommendations	Lessons
	Relevance	Efficiency		
GEF-supported projects have not followed a sequential process from foundational activities to demonstration and investment. In addition, investment after GEF support has ended has not been consistent and not at the level needed to continue progress toward impact.	Although the GEF Sri Lanka portfolio shows a strong relevance to global environmental benefits in biodiversity, it is not as well aligned to other global environmental benefits in other focal areas, including climate change, POPs, and land degradation.			
GEF support to Sri Lanka has had a demonstration effect in linking environmental conservation measures with compatible sustainable livelihood and development activities.		The budget cycles of the government, the GEF, and the GEF Agencies differ, resulting in implementation problems.		

NOTE: The India draft report was circulated in April 2013. Its conclusions and recommendations are considered final and are included in this table as such. The Sri Lanka CPE and the Vanuatu/SPREP portfolio evaluation conclusions were validated at the respective final stakeholder workshops and therefore can be considered final. Areas of recommendations were also identified during those workshops; these are included where relevant in this table and are not necessarily in their final form.

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