



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY  
EVALUATION OFFICE

# OPS4

## PROGRESS TOWARD IMPACT



FOURTH OVERALL PERFORMANCE STUDY OF THE GEF

## APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT OF TIME LAGS IN PIF CLEARANCE

METHODOLOGICAL PAPER #4



## **Approach to Assessment of Time Lags in PIF Clearance**

This assessment was carried out for the Fourth Overall Performance Study (OPS4) of the GEF being undertaken by the GEF Evaluation Office. The assessment aimed to determine:

- The turnaround time of the GEF Secretariat in responding to the PIFs submitted for CEO clearance;
- The turnaround time of the GEF agencies in resubmitting the PIFs to the GEF Secretariat;
- The elapsed time from first PIF submission to clearance of the PIF by the CEO; and,
- Redundancies in PIF preparation and review process.

### **Methodology**

The PIFs submitted to the Secretariat between 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2006 and 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2009 were considered for this assessment. Since the new project cycle was adopted in June 2007, sufficient time is yet to pass to allow an analysis on elapsed time between all the steps in the project life cycle. Therefore, this assessment focuses only on the elapsed time for the PIF clearance step. In future, as more projects pass through the other steps in the process, analysis of the time lags involved in other steps will be possible.

Although the new project cycle was adopted by the Council in June 2007, the GEF Secretariat had started calling for submission of PIFs since October 2006. Since this assessment covers the duration of GEF4, the submissions made from October 2006 to June 2007 have also been included in this analysis. Wherever required, the results for the submissions during this period have been presented separately from that for the other periods.

For this analysis all the PIF submissions listed in the PMIS as on 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2009 were considered. For assessment of the response time for these PIFs, the PMIS data as on 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 was analyzed. For assessment of the redundancies in PIF preparation and review process, the PIF documents and the review forms uploaded in the PMIS up to 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2009 were reviewed.

The analysis presented in OPS4 is based on observations for 746 project proposals and include all the PIF submissions made for these proposals up to the fourth round. The decision to exclude the iterations beyond the fourth round was taken because after this the absolute number of resubmissions becomes very small and the records for many of the subsequent resubmissions were patchy. For the rounds considered, a total of 1381 PIF submissions have been recorded. Of the total submissions, 143 pertained to FY 2007, 660 to FY 2008 and 578 to FY 2009. Table 1 presents the distribution of the submitted PIFs considered for this review based on their status and submission round.

The data on submission dates was available for 99 percent of the submissions recorded in the PMIS dataset. The data on response dates was available for 84 percent of the observations. Consequently, the

assessment of the turnaround time was possible for 84 percent of the 1381 submissions<sup>1</sup>. In the period after 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 the Secretariat has filled most of these information gaps – by July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009 the fields where information on the response date of Secretariat was missing had been brought down from 16 percent to 2 percent. Although the updated information was not used for calculation of turnaround time, it was used for assessment of redundancies in the PIF review process.

The turnaround time pertains to work-days. It excludes all the weekends and holidays recognized by the World Bank Group including the national holidays of United States and other days when the Bank was not officially open for business. It, however, includes the days when the Council meetings have taken place and the 10 day period in December 2008 when the Secretariat affected a moratorium on PIF submission due to breakdown of the PMIS system. These inclusions have been made because, the project life cycle paper adopted by the Council does not allow for such exclusions. Moreover, the overall results on the turnaround time are not very sensitive to these inclusions.

The Council paper on project life cycle does not clarify whether the day of submission will be included while calculating the turnaround time. While this distinction may not make much difference to the overall results when a longer time frame is involved, it does when compliance is assessed against a relatively short 10 day standard. This review includes the day of submission in calculation of the turnaround time. In terms of sensitivity of results, exclusion of the day of submission from calculations leads to a 4 to 5 percent increase in the percentage of submissions for which the GEF Secretariat's turnaround time was in compliance with the adopted standard.

For the same submission different sources may provide a different date. For example, the date for submission listed in the PMIS database, the PIF document, and the email received may not be consistent with each other because of errors in recording the information. Similarly, the date of Secretariat response listed in these sources may also be inconsistent. To address these inconsistencies, the date listed in the email archive was taken as the most reliable date. If email date was not available for a submission or response then the dates listed on the PIF document, the PIF review sheet, or the dataset downloaded directly from the PMIS were considered.

Throughout this analysis the approach adopted to describe central tendencies in terms of turnaround time and time lapse between the first submission of PIF and its clearance has been to use the median (as against average). This approach has been adopted due to two reasons: firstly, the averages tend to get skewed by outliers; secondly, the average for the most recent cohort (FY2009) will be biased as it will capture a greater proportion of "success stories" and will give an impression of improvement even in absence of a real trend.

For assessment of redundancies and oversight during the PIF review process, the PIF documents and the respective reviews by the Secretariat were reviewed. There are sixteen parameters pertaining to project eligibility, resource availability, project design, and justification for GEF grant, on which the proposals are assessed during the PIF review stage. Based on the PIF reviews for the first, second and third rounds,

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<sup>1</sup> The figures for submissions pertaining to different financial years are - FY07: 77 percent; FY08: 88 percent; FY09: 81 percent.

the comments made on the second and the third round of submissions were classified into five mutually exclusive categories. The categories are:

- A new comment based on additional information presented in the resubmitted PIF
- A new comment based on old information (that had already been presented in an earlier version) presented in the resubmitted PIF
- An elaboration of a comment made in an earlier round because no changes had been made in the information on the relevant parameter in the resubmitted PIF
- A comment made in an earlier round repeated because no changes had been made in the information on the relevant parameter in the resubmitted PIF
- Unable to assess or categorize

A major limitation of the approach adopted to assess instances of redundancy and oversight during the PIF review process is that the quality of PIF submissions and of the comments made on the PIFs have not been assessed. The adopted approach is, however, justified because the resources required – in terms of technical skills of the team and time for review – would have been considerably greater for the alternative approach (wherein quality of submissions and reviews was also assessed).

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