

GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: India (1991–2012)



The Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) undertook a country portfolio evaluation of GEF support to India across all GEF Agencies and programs

from 1991 to 2012. From its inception until July 2012, the GEF had allocated \$411.2 million through 55 approved national projects and 319 small grants to India. These activities involved an aggregated cofinancing commitment of \$3.2 billion by partner organizations. India is also a participant in 16 regional and global projects supported by the GEF. These projects, along with the Small Grants Programme, were reviewed in this country portfolio evaluation.

With an area of 3.29 million square kilometers, India is the seventh largest country in the world. It has a population of more than 1.2 billion, which makes it the second most populous country. India has experienced rapid economic growth over the last 20 years and is rapidly emerging as a major economic power. It has a very wide range of ecosystems and habitats, and is known for its rich biodiversity. Rapid population growth, gaps in institutional capacities, and trade-offs made for rapid economic development have, however, put India's significant natural resources under pressure. Given the size of its geographical area and population, and its economic growth, India is important to any global strategy for climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as from a biodiversity conservation and land degradation perspective.

Findings

Effectiveness, Results, and Sustainability

- The GEF projects in India have generally been effective in achieving their outcomes at the point of completion. In the postcompletion phase, projects have, in several instances, made significant progress toward long-term impacts.

- GEF projects are generating global environmental benefits at a higher scale than originally covered through broader adoption of the promoted technologies and approaches.
- The contributions of GEF activities to changes in India's legal, policy, and regulatory framework have been significant.
- GEF support for communication and outreach activities has been effective in facilitating broader adoption of promoted technologies and approaches. There is evidence that lessons from past interventions are being mainstreamed into the formulation of GEF projects.

Relevance

- GEF support to India is relevant to the country's priorities, needs, and emerging challenges and has led to country ownership.

Efficiency

- 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.
- Adoption of the GEF RAF and India's increased attention to portfolio planning have resulted in a decline in the rate at which projects and proposals are dropped or canceled.
- Contrary to expectations, for an overwhelming majority of GEF projects, executing agencies report sufficient administrative budget
- GEF projects in India are reported to have mobilized a significant amount of cofinancing which is often made available in a timely manner. Activities supported through cofinancing are generally well integrated into the project design.

- Although quality of M&E in the GEF portfolio is improving, it remains an area of weak performance.
- Inadequate understanding and arrangements prevented access of the GEF Independent Evaluation Office for independent field verification of two chemicals projects in India.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the GEF Council

- The GEF Council should request that Agencies ensure that their contracts with executing agencies require the latter to 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 also request Agencies ensure that lack of adequate contractual arrangements with executing agencies does not become a barrier to the GEF Independent Evaluation Office conducting independent field verification of projects that are already under implementation or that have been completed.
- The success of country-focused programming of GEF support in India should be taken into account as a way of increasing portfolio efficiency in GEF-6 programming, together with the national portfolio formulation exercise and STAR findings that will emerge in OPS5.

Recommendation to the GEF Council and India

- Knowledge management is again confirmed as an important factor that will help progress toward impact and that could be further strengthened.

Recommendation to India

- India should integrate GEF support to chemicals into its rich tradition of full collaboration with the GEF and its Agencies.

Follow-Up

The key findings and lessons were an input to the *GEF Annual Country Portfolio Report 2013*, which was shared with the GEF Council at its June 2013 meeting. The Council has asked the GEF Independent Evaluation Office to interact with the GEF Agencies to ensure access to all GEF projects. The main conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation were presented to the GEF Council in May 2014 as an information document.

The GEF Independent Evaluation Office is an independent entity reporting directly to the GEF Council, mandated to evaluate the focal area programs and priorities of the GEF. The full version of *GEF Country Portfolio Evaluation: India (1991–2012)* (Evaluation Report No. 84) is available on the GEF Independent Evaluation Office website, www.gefeo.org. For more information, please contact the Office at gefevaluation@thegef.org.