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GEF Council  
November 13 – 15, 2012  
Washington, D.C.

Agenda Item 10

## ANNUAL THEMATIC EVALUATIONS REPORT 2012

**(Prepared by the GEF Evaluation Office)**

### **Recommended Council Decision**

The Council, having considered document GEF/ME/C.43/02, *Annual Thematic Evaluations Report 2012* and document GEF/ME/C.43/03, *Management Response to the Annual Thematic Evaluations Report 2012*, requests the Secretariat to ensure that:

- a) An explicit discussion of envisaged causal linkages and chains of causality in line with current scientific knowledge forms the basis for the formulation of GEF-6 Strategies.
- b) GEF-6 Strategies enable a more flexible and strategic approach to Multi-Focal Area projects, which would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.
- c) GEF-6 Strategies include a strengthened articulation of potential pathways from activities to the broader adoption of results to maximize the GEF's catalytic role.
- d) GEF-6 Strategies revisit the GEF's overall approach to capacity development in response to concerns voiced by the conventions.

Given the impact of convention guidance on the Focal Area Strategies the GEF will continue its dialogue with CBD to further define the relationship between guidance and strategies in a way that allows for responsiveness as well as strategic coherence in GEF-6.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This is the second *Annual Thematic Evaluations Report* (ATER) presented by the Evaluation Office to the GEF Council. The ATER 2012 reports on the progress of the *GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation* and presents the main conclusions and recommendations for the *Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies*.

2. The Evaluation Office has made significant progress in the implementation of the *GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation* which started in May 2012 with the approval of the approach paper. The evaluation aims to provide the GEF Council with lessons learned from implementing Enabling Activities and evaluative evidence on their role in the overall catalytic effect of the GEF. Activities covered will only be those that are funded through the Enabling Activity modality. The first phase of the evaluation entails a meta-evaluation to collect evaluative evidence from previous evaluations conducted by the Office, GEF Agencies, conventions and other stakeholders. The second phase will build on the findings of the meta-evaluation and explore further issues or gaps of evaluative evidence identified by the meta-evaluation. The main findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be incorporated into OPS5.

3. The *GEF Focal Area Strategies Evaluation* was conducted between February and September 2012. The evaluation's main objective is to collect and assess information related to the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies to gain a systematic understanding of the elements and causal links each strategy envisions. The analysis provides the foundation for a subsequent assessment of the implementation of Focal Area Strategies in GEF projects, which will be conducted in the context of OPS5. In preparation for OPS5, the Office has developed a General Framework for the GEF theory of change (TOC) drawing on a large amount of evaluative evidence gathered over years. Using the General Framework, the evaluation team developed the TOC behind each Focal Area Strategy in consultation with the GEF Secretariat. The full Focal Areas evaluation report is provided as a Council information document and technical documents for each Focal Area are available on the GEF Evaluation Office Web site ([www.gefio.org](http://www.gefio.org)).

4. The evaluation reached the following eight conclusions:

- 1) The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies fulfill an important function for GEF programming by defining areas of GEF activities, providing a general rationale for GEF engagement in these areas and identifying the types of activities to receive GEF support.
- 2) The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies are not based on a systematic identification of envisaged causal relationships between the strategies' elements as well as the causal chains between GEF activities and expected results.
- 3) The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies recognize the potential for broader adoption of results but in most cases do not systematically consider the pathways that could maximize the catalytic role of GEF activities.
- 4) The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies do not include a comprehensive approach to the creation and utilization of synergies between Focal Areas through Multi-Focal Area activities.

- 5) GEF activities regardless of Focal Area employ a certain “tool box” of elements and causal links that fulfill different purposes in each Focal Area Strategy, but are similar in their design.
  - 6) Many types of GEF activities identified in the GEF Focal Area Strategies build on creating local benefits for achieving Global Environmental Benefits.
  - 7) GEF Focal Area Strategies are largely responsive to and shaped by convention guidance. CBD guidance has been detailed and restrictive and this has made it difficult for the GEF to formulate a strategic approach in the biodiversity focal area.
  - 8) Based on results of the Real-Time Delphi process, the elements of GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies are with few exceptions in correspondence with current scientific consensus. However, room for improvement from a scientific perspective exists in terms of relative prioritization of specific aspects and the selection of elements.
5. The evaluation makes the following recommendations for GEF-6:
- 1) An explicit discussion of envisaged causal linkages and chains of causality in line with current scientific knowledge should form the basis for the formulation of GEF-6 Strategies.
  - 2) GEF-6 Strategies should enable a more flexible and strategic approach to developing Multi-Focal Area projects which would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.
  - 3) GEF-6 Strategies should be based on systematic considerations of potential pathways from GEF activities to the broader adoption of GEF results to further define and strengthen the GEF’s catalytic role.
  - 4) Given the impact of convention guidance on the Focal Area Strategies the GEF should continue the dialogue with CBD to further define the relationship between guidance and strategies in a way that allows for responsiveness as well as strategic coherence in GEF-6.
  - 5) GEF-6 Strategies should revisit the GEF’s overall approach to capacity development in response to concerns voiced by the conventions.

## INTRODUCTION

6. This is the second *Annual Thematic Evaluations Report (ATER)* presented by the GEF Evaluation Office. Through ATER the Office reports on evaluations of cross-cutting topics ranging from strategies and policies to cross-cutting programs. It presents the progress of ongoing evaluations and summaries or synthesis of findings and conclusions of evaluations completed during the year.

7. The *Annual Thematic Evaluations Report 2012* reports on the progress of the *GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation* and presents the main conclusions and recommendations for the *Evaluation of the GEF Focal Area Strategies*. The thematic evaluations team is also coordinating the work of the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5). The Progress Report of the Director presents detailed information on the implementation of OPS5.

8. The *GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation* started in May 2012 and is being conducted by a team comprising of a GEF Evaluation Office Senior Evaluation Officer, an Extended Term Consultant and a senior consultant with extensive experience in capacity development. The *GEF Focal Area Strategies Evaluation* was conducted between February and September 2012 by a team comprising of a GEF Evaluation Office Senior Evaluation Officer and an Extended Term Consultant. The evaluation team developed the Theory of Change (TOC) behind each Focal Area Strategy in consultation with the GEF Secretariat. The full Focal Areas evaluation report is provided as a Council information document and technical documents for each Focal Area are available on the GEF Evaluation Office Web site (<http://www.gefief.org>).

### **Progress on the GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation**

9. The Evaluation Office has made significant progress in the implementation of the *GEF Enabling Activities Evaluation*. The evaluation aims to provide the GEF Council with lessons learned from implementing Enabling Activities and evaluative evidence of the role of Enabling Activities in the overall catalytic effect of the GEF. Activities covered will only be those that are funded through the Enabling Activity modality. The Approach Paper for the evaluation was approved by the Director of the Evaluation Office on May 16, 2012 and is available on the GEF Evaluation Office Web site (<http://www.gefief.org>).

10. The evaluation is being conducted in two phases. The first phase entails a meta-evaluation to collect evaluative evidence from previous evaluations conducted by the Office, GEF Agencies, conventions and other stakeholders. A total of 64 documents have been reviewed and the analysis of the information collected is ongoing. In addition, convention guidance related to Enabling Activities has been collected and will be used to assess the relevance of Enabling Activities. A portfolio database of Enabling Activities including basic, project cycle, and financial information is under development. The first phase will set the framework for the second phase which will build on the findings of the meta-evaluation. The second phase will explore further issues or gaps of evaluative evidence identified by the meta-evaluation. The steps and methodology for the second phase will be developed in a Terms of Reference for the evaluation. The main findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be incorporated into OPS5.

## EVALUATION OF GEF FOCAL AREA STRATEGIES

### Context, Scope and Objective

11. The *Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies* builds on prior evaluative efforts conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office. In particular, past GEF Overall Performance Studies have presented assessments at the GEF Focal Area level. In the context of the Third Overall Performance Study (OPS3) in 2004, the GEF Focal Areas were assessed in a series of program studies. The Fourth Overall Performance Study (OPS4) presented evidence on Focal Area achievements, primarily focusing on their progress toward impact, as well as a comprehensive analysis of convention guidance to the GEF. The aggregation of evaluative evidence at the Focal Area level has proven to be of particular value to inform and provide recommendations for the GEF replenishment process. Accordingly, the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5) will continue to report evaluative findings on Focal Area activities. The *Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies* represents one building-block of this effort and a preparatory step for the broader assessment of Focal Area achievements in the context of OPS5.

12. The *Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies* is designed as a formative<sup>1</sup> evaluation emphasizing learning as its primary goal. Accordingly, the evaluation's main objective is to collect and assess information related to the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies to gain a systematic understanding of the elements and causal links each strategy envisions. The evaluation encompasses the analysis of the following Focal Area Strategies: Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation, International Waters, Land Degradation, Chemicals, Sustainable Forest Management/REDD+, and Climate Change Adaptation (under LDCF/SCCF). The evaluation focuses on the most recent GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies and LDCF/SCCF Strategy covering the period from 2010 to 2014.

13. The *Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies* focuses on the analysis of the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies as they are formulated, emphasizing the strategies' intended rationale and internal logic. The analysis provides the foundation for a subsequent assessment of the implementation of Focal Area Strategies in GEF projects, which will be conducted in the context of OPS5.

### Approach and Methodology

14. Aiming to improve the understanding of elements and causal links reflected in GEF Focal Area Strategies, the *Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies* employs a four step approach:

- a) **Construct the theories of change:** What are the elements, causal links and overall rationale reflected in each Focal Area Strategy? What are the identified causal pathways envisioned to lead to the achievement of the strategy's objectives?

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<sup>1</sup> The evaluation literature distinguishes between "summative" and "formative" evaluations. Summative evaluations focus on the assessment of performance and progress measured against expected targets and are used to evaluate accountability of a given system. In contrast, formative evaluations analyze evidence in order to learn from past experiences to inform improvements of a given system moving forward. See: Scriven, Michael (1967). "The methodology of evaluation." In Stake, R. E. Curriculum evaluation. Chicago: Rand McNally.

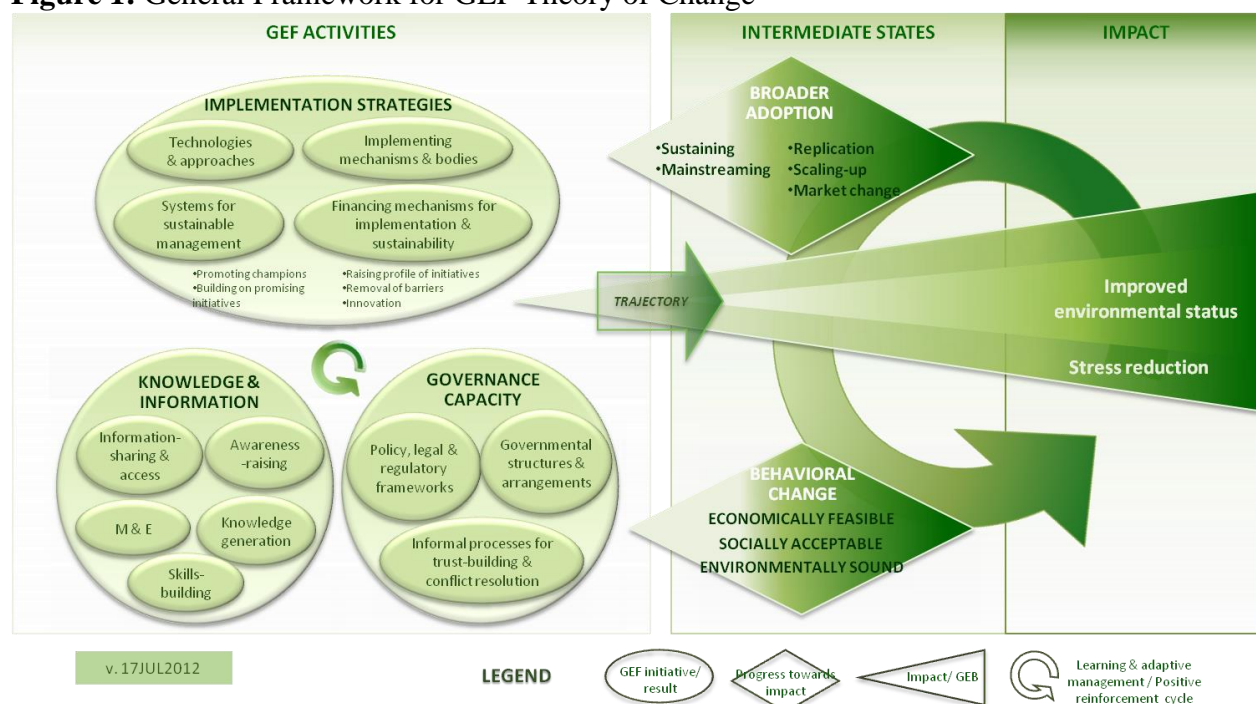
- b) **Review the relationship with convention guidance:** To what extent and in what way do the objectives formulated in the Focal Area Strategies relate to respective convention guidance?
- c) **Assess the connection with scientific knowledge:** To what extent do the Focal Area Strategies correspond with current scientific knowledge?
- d) **Make recommendations for future strategies:** Based on the findings of steps 1-3, what recommendations for the development of future GEF Strategies can be provided?

## Theory of Change Approach

15. A theory-based evaluation is designed around the “theory of change” (TOC) of an activity or strategy. The TOC systematically examines the elements and causal links that constitute the activity/strategy in order to understand and describe the logic of how the activity/strategy is expected to lead to the desired results (Fitz-Gibbon and Morris 1996, Weiss 1972). In preparation for OPS5, the GEF Evaluation Office has developed a General Framework for the GEF TOC drawing on a large amount of evaluative evidence gathered over the years. The *Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies* uses the General Framework to guide the construction of Focal Area Strategy TOCs.

16. Figure 1 shows the General Framework describing how GEF provides support for activities that directly or indirectly address drivers of environmental degradation. The framework proposes three general categories for GEF activities: implementation strategies, governance capacity development, and knowledge and information. Outputs and outcomes of GEF activities, and their interactions with their contextual environment and actions by other actors, are expected to lead to broader adoption of the promoted approaches and technologies, and to institutional action and behavioral change.

**Figure 1:** General Framework for GEF Theory of Change





17. The Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies applies the general framework to each of the GEF-5 Focal Areas as well as the LDCF/SCCF Strategy. The resulting TOCs map out the strategies' elements and causal links, depicting the means-ends linkages envisioned explicitly or implicitly in the strategy and thereby identifying the logical chain of actions that are supposed to lead to the achievement of the strategies' objectives. Throughout the TOC process, the evaluation team consulted extensively with the respective GEF Secretariat teams for the different Focal Areas to ensure correct interpretation of the strategy documents and establish agreement on the central aspects of the Theories of Change.

### **Analysis of convention guidance**

18. In order to assess the way in which the Focal Area Strategies reflect convention guidance the *Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies* conducted a full review of all convention guidance to the GEF issued by the COPs. The review includes the identification of guidance relevant to the GEF, a quantitative analysis of guidance over time, as well as a qualitative classification of each individual item of COP guidance. Based on the guidance review, the *Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies* conducted a "Guidance-Strategy-Mapping" identifying the links between guidance and Focal Area Strategies. The mapping illustrates how topics raised by the convention are reflected in the strategies and how the strategies in turn are shaped by different kinds of guidance.

### **Real-Time Delphi approach**

19. The Delphi method was originally developed at the RAND Corporation in the late 1950's as a method for collecting and synthesizing expert judgments. The Delphi methodology has since become a widely recognized technique of expert consultation. The Delphi methodology requires anonymity of participants to ensure equal weight of each participant's responses and reduce the bias caused by perceived authority of renowned experts.

20. The original Delphi process features repeated rounds of responses from experts on a questionnaire with each expert receiving feedback on her/his peers' responses between rounds. This time-intensive method was further developed into a "round-less", online-based process that allows for asynchronous input and makes expert answers available to the entire group in real time eliminating the need for round-to-round feedback. Thereby communication time is considerably shortened. This form of a Delphi process is called Real-Time Delphi (RTD).

21. Seven online questionnaires, one for each Focal Area Strategy, were formulated by the Evaluation Team with extensive input from the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel and embedded into a RTD online platform. Each question required a quantitative as well as qualitative response covering the central aspects of each Focal Area Strategy. A total of 167 participants signed on to the RTD platform to provide answers to one of the online questionnaires.

## Conclusions

**Conclusion 1: The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies fulfill an important function for GEF programming by defining areas of GEF activities, providing a general rationale for GEF engagement in these areas and identifying the types of activities to receive GEF support.**

22. The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies fulfill crucial functions for guiding GEF programming: a) define the general areas of activity the GEF should engage in by breaking down the Focal Areas' overarching goals into objectives; b) establish the reason for GEF engagement in a specific area by describing the corresponding environmental challenges and explaining the GEF's potential to contribute to a solution; and c) identify the types of GEF activities to be supported under a certain GEF objective including illustrative examples of concrete activities to receive GEF financing.

23. The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies generally provide a clear picture of what the GEF intends to support during the GEF-5 replenishment period. The strategies thus serve as a guide for the GEF Secretariat on programming as well as an overview of fundable activities to inform recipient countries and GEF Agencies during project conception and development. In addition, the strategies include a Results Framework that defines expected outputs for each Focal Area objective. The Results Frameworks establish what the GEF intends to achieve and thereby serve as the basis for the GEF's Results Based Management system, a benchmark for evaluations, as well as the basis for resource allocation decisions during the GEF replenishment process.

**Conclusion 2: The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies are not based on a systematic identification of envisaged causal relationships between the strategies' elements as well as the causal chains between GEF activities and expected results.**

24. The GEF-5 Focal Areas in most cases do not draw on a systematic discussion of the envisaged causal relationships between different elements of the strategy. This pertains to the causal links between different types of GEF activities like the relationship between mutually reinforcing elements (e.g. enabling policy environment and successful demonstration). It also concerns the more complex chains of several causal links that are envisioned to lead from GEF activities to the achievement of results.

25. This does not mean that the causal links between GEF activities and the chains of causality towards the achievement of expected results are not recognized in de facto GEF programming. On the contrary, the Technical Papers 1-7 highlight a multitude of causal chains towards achievement of results that are implicit in the GEF Focal Area Strategies. Many of these causal links are identified and discussed in other publications of the GEF Secretariat and included in the GEF programming process. In most Focal Areas, they have however not been brought together in a systematic way and not been embedded as an explicit basis of the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies.

26. Using the system of causal links that is already reflected to a large degree in GEF programming as the basis for the GEF-6 Strategies could strengthen a strategic approach that allows for GEF projects to contribute only certain elements to the chain of causality towards results. This approach could reduce the burden on individual projects to cover a maximum of

different elements. Instead, GEF programming could rely on a more modular approach based on an explicit understanding of how elements from different projects are to be linked in order to achieve a complete causal chain towards results. In addition, an explicit “system of causality” that includes causal relationships of elements from different Focal Areas could support and guide the design of Multi-Focal Area activities (see also recommendations 1 & 2).

**Conclusion 3: The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies recognize the potential for broader adoption of results but in most cases do not systematically consider the pathways that could maximize the catalytic role of GEF activities.**

27. The construction of Focal Area Strategy TOCs highlights that the strategic approaches expressed in the Focal Area Strategies have the potential to catalyze broader adoption of GEF results through replication, scaling-up, inducing market change and other mechanisms for uptake. While this potential is reflected to some degree in GEF programming, considerations on the pathways of action towards maximizing broader adoption through GEF activities is in most cases not an explicit and systematic part of the Focal Area Strategies. This underpins conclusions presented in OPS4, which highlights the catalytic role of the GEF, but points out that the path towards broader adoption has “never been clearly defined.”

28. As in the case of causal links (see conclusion 2), the potential for broader adoption is recognized by the GEF and partially reflected in GEF programming. The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies in some instances refer to the influence of GEF activities on the larger national context and on the engagement of other actors. However, the strategies are in most cases not systematically based on considerations on chains of causality from GEF results to broader adoption that could serve a guiding framework for GEF programming that maximizes the GEF’s catalytic potential (see recommendation 3).

29. The level of consideration on pathways to broader adoption differs between Focal Area Strategies (see Technical Papers 1-7). The Focal Area Strategies on Climate Change Mitigation and International Waters feature a comparably stronger link to broader adoption. The CCM Strategy emphasizes the facilitation of systemic changes and dedicates a significant part of the strategy to the direct support of broader adoption as an integral part of GEF activities in collaboration with other actors. The IW Strategy characteristically focuses on long-term processes that emphasize broader adoption over time.

**Conclusion 4: The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies do not include a comprehensive approach to the creation and utilization of synergies between Focal Areas through Multi-Focal Area activities.**

30. Multi-Focal Area (MFA) activities are rapidly gaining importance for the GEF portfolio. The GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies were formulated before this development. Consequently, the strategies provide limited guidance on how to utilize synergies between Focal Areas in a consistent and strategic way. The Focal Area Strategy on Land Degradation represents a partial exception as it elaborates on linkages and potential synergies to other Focal Areas. However, none of the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies includes a systematic discussion on how elements of different Focal Areas can be strategically combined to create effective Multi-Focal Area projects. During consultations in the context of the *Evaluation of GEF Focal Area Strategies* stakeholders

have consistently raised the formulation of a strategic approach to MFA activities as a central challenge for the GEF-6 Focal Area Strategies (see also recommendation 2)

**Conclusion 5: GEF activities regardless of Focal Area employ a certain “tool box” of elements and causal links that fulfill different purposes in each Focal Area Strategy, but are similar in their design.**

31. The Focal Area Strategy TOCs illustrate that the elements and causal links embodied in the strategies fulfill different purposes in each Focal Area Strategy, but are similar in their design. This confirms the basic assumption of the General Framework for GEF TOC that GEF activities regardless of Focal Area employ a certain “tool box” of comparable elements and causal mechanisms. The basic categories and sub-categories established by the General Framework proved to be suitable for adequately capturing the elements in all Focal Area Strategies.

32. At the same time, each of the Focal Area Strategies retains its own unique character and internal logic. The differentiation between Focal Area Strategies derives from the distinctive selection and combination of common elements and causal links. The specific selection is mainly determined by the nature of environmental challenges a strategy addresses. For example, some objectives require an emphasis on market oriented elements and mechanisms like in the case of the Climate Change Mitigation Strategy; others rely more heavily on legally rooted activities like the Chemicals Strategy. However, all strategies combine market oriented and legal oriented elements. Other dimensions of differentiation include stakeholder composition (the type of stakeholders that the successful achievement of objectives particularly hinges on), and convention guidance to the GEF (see conclusion 7).

**Conclusion 6: Many types of GEF activities identified in the GEF Focal Area Strategies build on creating local benefits for achieving Global Environmental Benefits.**

33. Many of the elements of the “GEF Tool Box” identified in the Focal Area Strategies (see Conclusion 5) build on the creation of local benefits in order to ultimately achieve Global Environmental Benefits. GEF activities like changing economic incentive structures in favor of sustainable practices, demonstrating benefits of alternative livelihoods, or reducing initial investments through new financing mechanisms are offering local benefits in exchange for behavioral change that ultimately is envisioned to create Global Environmental Benefits.

34. This conclusion drawn from the Focal Area Strategy TOCs closely matches earlier findings presented in the GEF Evaluation Office’s study on the “The Role of Local Benefits in Global Environmental Programs” (2006) which states “that local and global benefits are strongly interlinked in many areas where the GEF is active. Changing human behavior is one of the critical underlying premises of the GEF approach to achieving global environmental gains, and local benefits play a central role in stimulating changes that produce and sustain such gains.”

**Conclusion 7: GEF Focal Area Strategies are largely responsive to and shaped by convention guidance. CBD guidance has been detailed and restrictive and this has made it difficult for the GEF to formulate a strategic approach in the biodiversity focal area.**

35. The mapping from convention guidance to the corresponding elements of Focal Area Strategies shows that GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies are largely responsive to the guidance of the conventions the GEF serves as financial mechanisms to. Correspondingly, differences in the nature of guidance from different conventions have shaped the corresponding Focal Area Strategies. To illustrate this aspect, the evaluation specifically compared the influence of convention guidance from CBD and UNFCCC on the Focal Area Strategies.

36. The CBD provides frequent, reiterated guidance on a high number of technical matters and prioritization of activities. CBD guidance tends to be concrete, prescriptive and specific, leaving little room for strategic interpretation. UNFCCC guidance is equally frequent with regard to the absolute amount of items of guidance. However, UNFCCC guidance focuses on issues directly relating to national obligations under the convention (national reporting) and largely refrains from concrete elaborations of technical issues or prioritization of areas to be supported by the GEF. UNFCCC guidance also differs from CBD guidance in its formulation which implies a greater degree of flexibility for the GEF to integrate guidance into an overall strategy.

37. The difference in CBD and UNFCCC guidance is reflected in the respective Focal Areas Strategies. The Biodiversity Focal Area Strategy reflects the large amount of distinct, prescriptive and at times fragmented CBD guidance through a number of separate objectives or sub-sections of objectives. A large number of specific issues and priority areas demanded by the CBD are prominently addressed by the BD Strategy following CBD decisions. CBD guidance however does not provide guidance on how it envisions these various aspects to be integrated into an overall strategic approach in a consistent, effective and efficient way. As a result, parts of the Biodiversity Focal Area Strategy appear less connected to the overarching strategic direction that is primarily embodied in Biodiversity objectives 1 and 2.

38. The objectives of the Climate Change Mitigation Strategy, following UNFCCC guidance that allows for flexibility of interpretation and integration of issues, display a high degree of consistency. The objectives are equally weighted, addressing the main areas of GEF activity in a balanced and integrated way.

39. The influence of CBD and UNFCCC guidance on the respective Focal Area Strategies highlights the potential tension between adequately reflecting convention guidance in the strategies on the one hand and the formulation of a balanced, integrated and coherent strategic approach on the other hand (see recommendation 4). In this context, already existing CBD mechanisms and ongoing processes aimed at streamlining and improving the strategic coherence of CBD convention guidance to the GEF need to be highlighted. The effort to reduce redundancies and consolidate guidance through the “Review of the Guidance to the Financial Mechanism”<sup>2</sup> represents a step towards reducing the overall quantity of guidance, albeit not decreasing the number of priority areas identified by the CBD to be supported by the GEF. Furthermore, the “Framework of programme priorities related to utilization of GEF resources”

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<sup>2</sup> COP IX (Decision IX/31 C, paragraph 1) requested a review of the guidance to the financial mechanism. The CBD Secretariat prepared the review with the objective to identify obsolete, repetitive and overlapping guidance, and compiled an updated list of the existing guidance to the financial mechanism. The review was submitted as a working document to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation. COP X (Decision X/24) approved the proposed list of obsolete, repetitive and overlapping guidance and the updated compilation of guidance.

provides additional CBD guidance on the prioritization of GEF support. Most recently, the “Strategic Plan of the CBD for 2011-2020” aims at providing a more coherent and consistent overall framework for GEF support. However, results of these efforts are not visible yet.

**Conclusion 8: Based on results of the Real-Time Delphi process, the elements of GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies are with few exceptions in correspondence with current scientific consensus. However, room for improvement from a scientific perspective exists in terms of relative prioritization of specific aspects and the selection of elements.**

40. The quantitative responses provided by scientific experts during the Real-Time Delphi consultations on the scientific soundness of Focal Area Strategy objectives and elements converged around a rating of 6 (“fair”). Means and medians fell into the range of 5 (“somewhat”) to 7 (“considerably”) with few outliers in either direction. While these quantitative results imply room for further improvement, the qualitative responses show that the majority of answers do not suggest a lack of scientific soundness of the strategies’ existing elements. Instead, the suggestions for improvements mostly concern the relative prioritization of specific aspects over others as well as the selection of elements to be included in the strategies.

41. A partial exception is the discussion on Protected Areas as a suitable instrument for biodiversity conservation. Some experts voiced fundamental doubts about the contribution of Protected Areas to biodiversity conservation. Most experts deemed the emphasis on Protected Areas as the main component of the Biodiversity Focal Area Strategy as too high. Many responses pointed to the close connection between the effectiveness of Protected Areas and the successful mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into production landscapes, suggesting a stronger relative emphasis on the activities envisioned under objective 2 of the Biodiversity Focal Area Strategy.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1: An explicit discussion of envisaged causal linkages and chains of causality in line with current scientific knowledge should form the basis for the formulation of GEF-6 Strategies.**

42. An explicit, systematic and comprehensive “system of causality” that is embedded as an integral part of the GEF-6 strategies could enhance the strategies’ utility as the guiding framework for GEF programming. The already existing knowledge on causal links as reflected in GEF programming should be fully incorporated at the strategy level. An explicit understanding of how elements from different projects, within as well as across Focal Areas, are to be linked in order to create a complete chain of causality towards results could inform and support a more modular approach to GEF programming. The inclusion of causal relationships of elements from different Focal Areas into a comprehensive “system of causality” could facilitate and guide the design of effective Multi-Focal Area activities that maximize the synergies between Focal Areas. In addition, the identification of causal relationships could aid the coordination of activities implemented by different GEF Agencies, allowing GEF Agencies to intensify their focus on respective comparative advantages based on systematic collaboration with activities of other GEF Agencies.

43. The results of the Real-Time Delphi illustrate that close consultations with the scientific community can provide important information on the relative prioritization of existing elements as well as the identification of additional and/or alternative elements to be included in the GEF-6 Strategies. To ensure that up-to-date scientific knowledge is fully taken into account, STAP should assume a strong role in the process of preparing GEF-6 Strategies.

**Recommendation 2: GEF-6 Strategies should enable a more flexible and strategic approach to developing Multi-Focal Area projects which would be able to adopt elements from several focal areas in a consistent manner.**

44. Given the increasing importance of GEF activities that cut across Focal Areas, approaches to maximize synergies and ensuring the added value of Multi-Focal Area activities should become an integral part of GEF-6 Strategies. An approach to GEF programming that facilitates the combination of elements from different Focal Areas should be considered during the formulation of GEF-6 Strategies. The systematic identification of causal links between elements can support and inform corresponding efforts.

**Recommendation 3: GEF-6 Strategies should be based on systematic considerations of potential pathways from GEF activities to the broader adoption of GEF results to further define and strengthen the GEF's catalytic role.**

45. The Focal Area Strategy TOCs highlight the potential of GEF activities to trigger broader adoption and induce systemic change. This catalytic role of the GEF should be further defined and strengthened by basing GEF-6 Strategies on systematic consideration on potential chains of causality between GEF activities and broader adoption through replication, scaling-up, change of market structures, or mainstreaming (with or without direct GEF support) in the GEF-6 Strategies. The already existing knowledge on pathways to broader adoption as reflected in GEF programming should be fully incorporated at the strategy level.

**Recommendation 4: Given the impact of convention guidance on the Focal Area Strategies the GEF should continue the dialogue with CBD to further define the relationship between guidance and strategies in a way that allows for responsiveness as well as strategic coherence in GEF-6.**

46. The FAS Evaluation findings illustrate the strong influence of convention guidance on GEF Focal Area Strategy formulation, highlighting the importance of close coordination between Convention Secretariats and the GEF in the strategy-building process. The potential tension between adequately reflecting convention guidance in the strategies on the one hand and the formulation of a balanced, integrated and coherent strategic approach on the other hand should be addressed during the formulation of GEF-6 Strategies. In cases like the CBD, where conventions choose to issue specific technical guidance to the GEF, guidance should follow a coherent overall vision in order to ensure that it can be integrated into a consistent strategic approach. The CBD is already taking steps to enhance strategic coherence of convention guidance to the GEF. Ongoing efforts are positive steps towards balancing convention demands and the coherence of GEF support. The formulation of GEF-6 Strategies should be closely

connected to these efforts. The GEF should continue and intensify the dialogue at the appropriate level with the CBD to facilitate this process.

**Recommendation 5: GEF-6 Strategies should revisit the GEF's overall approach to capacity development in response to concerns voiced by the conventions.**

47. Based on interviews with convention secretariats, GEF support to capacity development is perceived to be at odds with convention expectations. The analysis of Focal Area Strategies suggests that this is primarily an issue of implementation rather than a lack of inclusion at the level of the strategies. In terms of implementation, the issue will therefore be further examined during OPS5.

48. On the strategy level, GEF-6 Strategies should revisit the approach taken by GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies that largely address capacity development elements through distinct objectives within the Focal Area Strategies as well as in a separate strategy (Cross-Cutting Strategy on Capacity Development). The integration of capacity development as an integral part of activities under different objectives is in many cases not emphasized in the GEF-5 Focal Area Strategies.