



Monitoring and Evaluation in the GEF: How Country Stakeholders Get Involved

**GEF Expanded Constituency Workshops
Group Work**

Group Exercise

Work with the group at your table as a team to provide input to a newly appointed GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) who has to quickly get up to speed regarding various GEF processes **in your country**, including monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The team's task is to advise the OFP on four broad questions involving M&E of the GEF portfolio at the country level. Discuss these issues in your group and write thoughts on them in the provided space. Feel free to add extra sheets of paper if necessary. Use the background reading, the case study, and the GEF M&E Policy 2010 as supporting materials in considering the questions. Most answers will depend on the specific context and needs of **your** country.

Country-level monitoring of GEF portfolio and environmental trends

1. How should the GEF portfolio monitoring of all GEF-supported projects and programs that the country is involved in, as well as the country's environmental monitoring, be organized? Here are some questions to consider:
 - Who should coordinate GEF portfolio monitoring—the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Finance, the OFP and its office, the GEF Agencies, or another entity?
 - What kinds of data would be most important to track? Are there any existing sources of information or data systems that can be used? How can data from projects be integrated into national data systems?
 - Who should this information be shared with? What mechanisms for sharing information will be used?

(Suggested reference for question 1: the case study)

Involvement of the OFP in evaluation

2. The GEF M&E Policy (2010) gives an OFP the right to become engaged in M&E activities. How can the OFP get involved in M&E activities?
- What GEF-related evaluation activities should the OFP be informed of?
 - How can the OFP get involved in GEF midterm and terminal evaluations?
 - How can the OFP get involved in GEF country-level evaluations and studies?
 - How should the findings from these evaluation activities be used by the OFP? Who should they be shared with?

(Suggested reference for question 2: background reading (including minimum requirement four) and the case study)

3. One of the GEF Agencies plans to send the terms of reference (TOR) for a terminal evaluation of one of the country's full-size GEF projects to the OFP's office for feedback. How can the OFP provide feedback to the evaluation's TOR? What would be the most important parameters to provide feedback on?

Suggested reference for question 3: background reading (including minimum requirement three and evaluation criteria)

National coordinating mechanism for M&E

4. Should there be a national coordinating mechanism for M&E? How should it be built? Who should be involved: what institutions? How could civil society and communities be involved? How often should the parties involved meet? What would be the scope of work?

Background Reading

This handout explains key monitoring and evaluation (M&E) concepts relevant at the country level in determining the success and impacts of GEF-supported projects. More information can be found in the GEF M&E Policy 2010, provided as a handout in this training and available online at <http://www.thegef.org/gef/Evaluation%20Policy%202010>.

GEF Monitoring and Evaluation at the Country Level

Monitoring and evaluation are important parts of GEF activities globally and in every country. M&E promote accountability for the achievement of GEF activities and promote learning on results and lessons learned.

Monitoring asks: *Is our activity on track?* It uses systematic collection of data to keep activities on track. Information from monitoring serves as a critical input to ongoing management decisions (adaptive management), evaluation, and learning. At the country level, the following types of monitoring are performed:

- **Country portfolio monitoring:** routine monitoring of main elements of all GEF projects in a country. Countries use this information to:
 - Coordinate the GEF portfolio between ministries, GEF Agencies, and the public
 - Provide information for national decision making on GEF support—for setting priorities, securing support for activities, and planning future activities or support
 - Keep track of GEF country information that can be made available to all interested parties.
- **Environmental monitoring:** measuring changes in environmental status that have resulted from country initiatives. It involves tracking the improvement of environmental benefits (such as changes in biodiversity parameters and water quality) and reduction of environmental stress (e.g., monitoring of potential pollutants, coverage of protected areas).
- **Project monitoring:** tracking activities and financial resources, delivery of outputs, and progress toward outcomes. Since GEF-5, all GEF projects also include environmental monitoring: as a minimum they report on GEF focal area tracking tools. Project monitoring provides early information on progress—or lack thereof—toward achieving intended objectives and outcomes. It helps identify implementation issues that need management attention and decisions.

Evaluation asks: *Are we doing the right thing? Is it being done well? Are there better ways of doing it?* Evaluation is a systematic assessment of an activity, project, program, strategy, policy, sector, focal area, or other topic. Evaluations aims at improving the institutional relevance and achievement of results, optimizing the use of resources, providing client satisfaction, and maximizing the impact of the contribution provided. Several types of GEF evaluation are conducted at the country level:

- **Project midterm evaluation (and midterm review):** assesses progress, identifies challenges, and facilitates changes to improve achievement of objectives in the middle of a project. Together with data from project monitoring, findings of mid-term evaluation are used for so-called adaptive management actions, to make necessary project modifications.
- **Project terminal evaluation:** assesses design, implementation, and achievements of a completed project for the purpose of accountability and to synthesize lessons for the future

- **Country portfolio evaluations/studies:** these are conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office. They analyze the totality of GEF support across all GEF projects, programs, and Agencies in a given country, with the aim of reviewing the performance and results of GEF-supported activities and assessing how those activities align with country strategies and priorities as well as with the GEF's priorities for achieving global environmental benefits.

Role of the GEF Operational Focal Points (OFPs) and Other Country Stakeholders in M&E

The GEF M&E Policy 2010 requires that the GEF Agencies ensure that Operational Focal Points are fully informed regarding the planning, conduct, and results of M&E-related matters through activities such as:

- Review of the evaluation terms of reference
- Review of draft reports resulting from evaluations
- Response to final evaluation reports

These mechanisms help ensure the lessons identified through evaluation are considered prior to country endorsement of new projects. The GEF Agencies are required to keep track of GEF Focal Point engagement in M&E-related activities.

The GEF M&E Policy 2010 specifies the role of the **GEF OFPs** in M&E processes as follows:

National monitoring, evaluation, and assessment systems on local and global environmental benefits

Paragraph 65: ...Many countries are undertaking efforts to improve national monitoring, evaluations, and assessment on local and global environmental benefits. This may include efforts to improve basic census and other data in partner countries, establishing national and project baselines, establishing participatory environment and natural resource monitoring schemes, using national communications and inventories of global environmental benefits, participating in various global initiatives...with the support of development partners as appropriate.

Focal points are to be consulted with and fully informed on M&E activities.

Paragraph 66: In line with the GEF operational principles and the increased GEF emphasis on country ownership, GEF M&E Activities shall provide for consultation and participation. The GEF OFPs will be fully consulted with and informed by the GEF Agencies and the GEF Evaluation Office about the planning, conduct, and results of evaluation activities performed in the country while respecting the independent nature of evaluation. Staff members of the cooperating governments will be expected to support evaluations by responding promptly and fully to Evaluation Office requests for information related to GEF projects, portfolios, or policies and for sharing relevant experiences.

Focal points play a key role in the in the use and sharing of M&E information.

Paragraph 67: The GEF OFP has a particular responsibility for the use of, follow-up to, and action on evaluation recommendations related to GEF matters and directed at the regional, national, and project levels. The focal point also plays a key role in keeping all national stakeholders (particularly the civil society organizations involved in GEF activities) fully consulted with, informed on, and involved in the plans, implementation, and results of country-related GEF M&E activities.

In accordance with the GEF M&E Policy 2010, the involvement of **other country stakeholders** depends on the project or program and the role they play in it.

Paragraph 69: ...For example, academic institutions or private sector companies may support M&E activities directly or provide outside perspectives and expertise. NGO and civil society organizations

may play an important role in monitoring project and program activities, as well as providing feedback as beneficiaries or representatives of community groups.

Paragraph 70: ...M&E in the GEF shall involve project stakeholders and beneficiaries, both as participants and contributors and users and beneficiaries as appropriate. Local stakeholder participation and participatory approaches to M&E are particularly necessary in projects and programs that affect the incomes and livelihoods of local groups, especially disadvantaged populations in and around project sites...

Paragraph 71: The stakeholders have a particular responsibility in providing their views and responsibilities. They use M&E to assess progress, raise issues, or confirm the achievement of results to improve performance and learning...

Five Main Evaluation Criteria

In general, GEF evaluations explore five major criteria, not all of which need to be systematically reviewed in all cases.

- **Relevance:** is GEF support relevant to local and national environmental priorities, development, and needs? Is it relevant to the achievement of global environmental benefits as per the GEF's mandate?
- **Effectiveness:** have project objectives been achieved? Based on progress to date, how likely is it that these objectives will be met?
- **Efficiency:** have the results been delivered at the least cost possible?
- **Results:** in GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short- and medium-term outcomes, progress to longer term impact, including global environmental benefits, replication effects, and other local effects.
- **Sustainability (environmental, financial, and social):** how likely is it that the intervention will continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion?

Minimum Requirements of the GEF M&E Policy 2010

The GEF M&E Policy (2010) specifies minimum requirements that must be followed in relations with project and program M&E plans, implementation of M&E plans, project and program evaluations, as well as engagement of OFPs in M&E activities.

Minimum Requirement 1: Design of M&E Plans

All projects and programs will include a concrete and fully budgeted M&E plan by the time of CEO endorsement for full-size projects and CEO approval for medium-size projects. Project logical frameworks should align, where appropriate, to the GEF's focal area results frameworks. This M&E plan contains the following as a minimum:

- SMART indicators for results and implementation linked appropriately to the focal area results frameworks; additional indicators that can deliver reliable and valid information to management may also be identified in the M&E plan

- Baseline for the project or program, with a description of the problem to be addressed, with indicator data or, if major baseline indicators are not identified, an alternative plan for addressing this, by CEO endorsement
- Identification of reviews and evaluations that will be undertaken, including midterm reviews and terminal evaluations
- Organizational set-up and budgets for M&E

Minimum Requirement 2: Application of M&E Plans

Project and program monitoring and supervision will include implementation of the M&E plan, comprising the following:

- SMART indicators for implementation actively used
- SMART indicators for results actively measured, or if not, a reasonable explanation provided
- The baseline for the project fully established and data compiled to review progress, and evaluations undertaken as planned
- The organizational set-up for M&E is operational and its budget is spent as planned

Minimum Requirement 3: Project and Program Evaluation

Each full-size project and all programs will be evaluated at the end of implementation. This evaluation will have the following minimum requirements:

- The evaluation will be undertaken independent of project management, or if undertaken by project management, will be reviewed by the evaluation unit of the GEF Agency or by independent quality assurance mechanisms of the Agency.
- The evaluation will apply the norms and standards of the Agency concerned.
- The evaluation will assess at a minimum:
 - achievement of outputs and outcomes, and provide ratings for targeted objectives and outcomes;
 - likelihood of sustainability of outcomes at project or program termination, and provide a rating for this;
 - whether Minimum Requirements 1 and 2 were met, and provide a rating for this.
- The report of this evaluation will contain at a minimum:
 - basic data on the evaluation:
 - when the evaluation took place,
 - who was involved,
 - the key questions, and
 - the methodology—including application of the five evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, results, sustainability);
 - basic data of the project or program, including actual GEF and other expenditures;
 - lessons of broader applicability; and
 - the terms of reference of the evaluation (in an appendix).
- The report of the evaluation will be sent to the GEF Evaluation Office immediately when ready, and at the latest, within 12 months of completion of project or program implementation.

Minimum Requirement 4: Engagement of Operational Focal Points

Projects and programs will engage operational focal points in M&E-related activities. The following requirements shall be applied:

- The M&E plan will include a specification of how the project or program will keep the relevant
- GEF OFP informed and, where applicable and feasible, involved, while respecting the independent nature of evaluation.
- During implementation, GEF OFPs will be informed by the Agencies on M&E activities in the projects and programs that belong to their national portfolio.
- The GEF OFPs will be informed of midterm reviews and terminal evaluations and will, where applicable and feasible, be briefed and debriefed at the start and end of evaluation missions. They will receive a draft report for comment, will be invited to contribute to the management response (where applicable), and will receive the final evaluation report within 12 months of project or program completion.
- GEF Agencies will keep track of the application of the conditions specified here in their GEF-financed projects and programs.

Case Study

This case describes the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes of fictional Country A with regard to its GEF-supported project portfolio. The case was developed based on real-life examples of several countries.

Portfolio-level M&E

Monitoring at the country portfolio level is performed by the Ministry of Environment and focuses on GEF national projects. No information is maintained on the GEF regional and global projects in which Country A participates. The monitoring system includes the following data for all projects:

Basic data

- Project name with GEF ID and project contacts
- GEF Agency, including contacts
- Focal area
- Financial information (GEF grant and cofinancing)
- Project cycle dates (entry into pipeline, Council approval, start-up, completion—proposed and actual)

Substantive data

- Project objectives
- Expected outcomes

A recent country portfolio evaluation (CPE) conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office in Country A suggested that it would be extremely useful to document additional information, as it would identify implementation problems and delays; support adaptive management of projects; prevent duplication of effort by government agencies and donors; and contribute to reporting on national, convention, and GEF strategic targets. The following information may be added to that tracked:

- Relationship of project goals and objectives to national goals, and to GEF focal area results frameworks/strategies
- Ratings, including implementation progress and likelihood of achieving objectives
- Actual outputs and outcomes achieved, including environmental achievements
- Lessons learned

Project-level M&E

Monitoring and evaluation of GEF support in Country A is mostly done at the project level and carried out by the GEF Agencies. In accordance with the GEF M&E Policy, Agencies prepare progress implementation reports (PIRs), midterm reviews, and terminal evaluations for all national full-size projects and medium-size projects. No completion reports are prepared for enabling activities.

More recent projects have logical frameworks (logframes), indicators, and M&E plans. However, many projects still lack sound baseline data on environmental resources and a corresponding lack of systematic monitoring data to assess environmental trends over time; these limitations make assessing long-term impact more difficult.

At least half of the country's full-size projects actively used M&E findings to make necessary modifications. For example, based on its midterm review, a project underwent a significant restructuring, including down-scaling of its indicators and up-scaling of some project components; these changes resulted in achievement of satisfactory project outcomes.

Involvement of the OFP in project– and country-level evaluation

Following the introduction of Minimum Requirement 4 into M&E Policy 2010, some new projects already included discussion of OFP role in its M&E Plans. For example, one project sets out the responsibilities of the GEF OFP and the Focal Point of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in using, following up on, and acting on project evaluation recommendations. The OFP is also included on the project's steering committee.

The GEF Evaluation Office recently completed a CPE in Country A, providing an assessment of the totality of GEF-funded projects and programs in the country. The main findings and conclusions of this CPE were presented to the GEF Council during its last session. During the conduct of the CPE, the OFP helped the GEF Evaluation Office identify critical stakeholders and coordinated meetings with them. This included the OFP's inviting a large number of stakeholders to discuss the evaluation findings. The OFP also coordinated the country response to the CPE.

Sharing M&E information

According to the recent CPE conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office, M&E information is not always shared across the GEF partnership in Country A. It does not regularly flow from GEF Agencies to national partners and vice versa. It does not always circulate among different ministries involved in GEF activities. The OFP plans to establish procedures to ensure that recommendations from evaluations are incorporated into future project proposals. The OFP's office has also proposed creating a project management information system that would be shared across partners.

Resources for Further Learning on M&E

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of M&E resources. Many more toolkits, trainings, and videos are available on the web. The GEF Evaluation Office will periodically update the list and make it available via its web page, www.gefeo.org.

GEF M&E Policies and Guidelines

- GEF M&E Policy (2010) in English, French, and Spanish: <http://www.thegef.org/gef/Evaluation%20Policy%202010>
- GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines in English: <http://www.thegef.org/gef/Ethical%20Guidelines>
- GEF Guidelines for Conducting Terminal Evaluations in English (to be updated in 2013): <http://www.thegef.org/gef/Guidelines%20Terminal%20Evaluations>

Examples of GEF terminal evaluation reports and country portfolio evaluations (including their terms of reference):

- GEF country Portfolio Evaluations and Studies: <http://www.thegef.org/gef/CPE>
- GEF website (many terminal evaluations can be accessed via country profile search): http://www.thegef.org/gef/country_profile
- UNDP Evaluation Resource Center (search for “GEF evaluations”): <http://erc.undp.org/index.html;jsessionid=2409E7F665E19DE2CD6AFD11CED0F002>

Evaluation toolkit at My M&E, including checklists, handbooks, videos, and training materials (in English, French, and Spanish): <http://mymande.org/howto-recomm-page>

Resources cover the following topics, among many others:

- How to plan an evaluation
- How to manage an evaluation
- How to conduct an evaluation
- How to ensure the quality of an evaluation
- How to use evaluation results

M&E resources of the World Bank, including multiple practical examples, case studies, tools, methods, videos, and how-to guides (many in the six UN languages):

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTOED/EXTEVACAPDEV/0,,menuPK:4585748~pagePK:64829575~piPK:64829612~theSitePK:4585673,00.html>

- Resources cover the following topics, among many others: Designing a Results Framework for Achieving Results
- Writing Terms of Reference for an Evaluation: How to Guide

Face-to-Face Trainings:

- International Program Development Evaluation Training (IPDET): <http://www.ipdet.org/>

Evaluation networks and associations:

- Climat-Eval, Community of Practice of Evaluation of Climate Change and Development: www.climate-eval.org
- Comprehensive Evaluation Platform for Knowledge Exchange: www.cepke.net
- International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS): www.ideas-int.org
- Environmental Evaluation Network (EEN): <http://www.environmentalevaluators.net/>
- American Evaluation Association: <http://www.eval.org/>
- PREVAL, Regional Platform for Evaluation Capacity Building in Latin America and the Caribbean (in Spanish and English): <http://preval.org/>
- And many others