Regional collaboration
Lessons learned
(from terminal evaluations of GEF projects)

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Methodology

- Considered all 83 completed GEF projects with IW funding that had received a Terminal Evaluation as at 1st March 2013;
- Focused on projects that made reference in their design to strengthening regional cooperation, regardless of whether they were “global”, “regional” or “national”. This review resulted in 48 projects to be analyzed (2 global, 42 regional and 4 national).
- Compared evaluation findings against the overall study question: “how does the GEF address systematically regional considerations and the sustainability of its actions?”
Potential scope of enquiry

1. **What regional connections have projects made?**
2. Which are the desirable regional connections?
3. What benefits have resulted from these connections?
4. What are the measured outcomes?

- This initial “desk study” answers only the first question for the cohort of GEF IW projects that have been formally evaluated – looking at regional connections.
- The study observed that this cohort of projects falls into one or more of 7 groups or **modes of operation** (ranked from less to more strategic).
Connections to regionality

- GEF IW projects address multiple issues through multiple modalities as revealed in project design briefs and TEs; Projects by observation clustered into 7 main modalities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation of a regional body for the duration of the project (n=5)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Creation of a regional body for the duration of the project and fostering a formal agreement and political body (n=4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support to or from an existing regional body (n=16)</td>
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<td>Support to an existing regional Plan under a regional Convention or Commission (n=15)</td>
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<td>Creation of a regional Convention and supporting bodies (n=3)</td>
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<td>Contributing actions towards the goals of a global framework or Convention (n=5)</td>
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<td>Creation of a global Convention (n=1)</td>
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Creation of a temporary regional body

- **Reasoning:** countries willing to collaborate on a transboundary issue but which have no relevant pre-existing regional body to work through.

- e.g. GEF ID 2041. *Managing Hydrogeological Risk in the Iullemeden Aquifer System* (IAS), resulted in three countries outlining a groundwater-focused regional mechanism.

- **Key modal lesson:** the risk of lack of sustainability of a regional coordination function after project closure was highlighted by evaluators of five projects using this modality.
Creation of a regional body & Agreement

- **Reasoning**: Addressing a regional cooperation gap and need for political recognition for a resulting body. This need is often recognized during the process of analyzing the environmental and socio-economic status of shared waters.

- e.g. the *Benguela Current LME project* (GEF ID 789), resulted in the Benguela Current Commission (BCC) shared by three countries and is expected to result in the Benguela Current Convention.

- **Key modal lesson**: Stepwise development of regional cooperation and of its political underpinning is promising but should not neglect its foundation of national inter-ministerial/cross-sectoral development.
Support to/from existing regional body

- **Reasoning**: Countries drawing upon or building the capacity of a regional body.

- e.g. GEF support to strengthening of regional bodies that focuses on capacity building, including basing the PCU within the body concerned, led to measurable outcomes in the cases of the Niger Basin Authority and the Senegal River Basin Commission (OMVS).

- **Key modal lesson**: Regional level bodies should be used to design projects for national level delivery, consistent with regional goals and coordination but owned by national governments.
Support to an existing regional Plan

- **Reasoning:** Countries collaborating on the implementation of an existing regional agreement or plan.

- e.g. the evaluators noted that the project, *Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden* (GEF ID 340), helped a great deal to shape the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden as an effective organization and to strengthen its ability to perform its duties and mandates.

- **Key modal lesson:** Regional Plans can outline cooperation, but sustainability lies in strengthening and obtaining the commitment of participating national governments collectively towards achieving common goals.
Creation of a regional Convention

- **Rationale**: Countries responding to findings from foundational projects that a regional agreement is in their common interest.

- e.g. the project *Towards a Convention and Action Programme for the Protection of the Caspian Sea Environment* (GEF ID 1618) resulted in the Tehran Convention.

- **Key modal lesson**: that regional projects may influence, catalyze and lever common actions, while a regional delivery mechanism is not an appropriate channel for delivery of core institutional change at national level.
Support to the goals of a global Agreement

- **Rationale:** Countries fulfilling obligations to global conventions either singly or in combination.
- e.g. the project *Regional - OECS Ship-Generated Waste Management* (GEF ID 59); the evaluators noted that a regional approach may facilitate regional compliance on international treaty issues, such as MARPOL 73/78.

- **Key modal lesson:** Regional cooperation is assisted by Project Management Units embedded in regional organizations. For example, in the above project, the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) acted as coordinator.
Creation of a global Convention

- **Rationale**: Partnership between countries and global agencies to address emerging issues

- **Unique example**: The International Maritime Organization’s International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships Ballast Water & Sediments was supported by the GloBallast project (GEF ID 610).

- **Key modal lesson**: Evaluators noted that global projects dealing with “new” issues, involving the coordination of multiple pilot sites, require at least 5 years to develop.
The GEF’s support for regionality

- There is no evidence from the evaluations of this cohort of projects that the GEF and its partners ignores regional bodies. The quality of these links is, however, the issue of concern.
- Evaluators were concerned that there is a danger that such bodies will be bypassed, rather than strengthened if they are considered weak and ineffective.
- Evaluators noted that well-managed Project Management Units are essential to GEF’s regional projects; capacity building of regional host bodies and a sound exit strategy were noted as essential to avoid post-project weakness or failure.
Summary

- Evaluations and publications emphasize the priority for national (before regional), capacity building and integration to support GEF funded actions.
- Evaluators found that the GEF should exercise care to avoid creating regional mechanisms without an exit strategy and lacking adequate participation of countries in deciding whether a regional mechanism can be politically viable.
- GEF appears to lack adequate guidance in its TDA/SAP toolkit to address regional cooperation as a topic, or to prompt project developers adequately to test their assumptions about regional cooperation.