

# Global Environment Facility

## ***CONCEPT PAPER FOR A FULL SIZED GEF PROJECT<sup>1</sup>***

### ***1 Project title***

*Strengthening Global Capacity To Sustain Transboundary Waters: The International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN), Operational Phase*

### ***2 GEF Implementing Agency***

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Bank (IBRD)

### ***3 Country or Countries in Which the Project is being Implemented***

Global

### ***4 GEF Focal Area(s)***

International Waters, with relevance to water-related projects of other focal areas.

### ***5 Operational Program/Short-term measure***

OP10: Contaminant-based Operational Programme Regional/Global Technical Support Component<sup>2</sup>

### ***6 Country Drivenness (Project linkage to national priorities, action plans and programs)***

IW:LEARN has fostered information sharing, structured learning, and collaboration across the GEF's International Waters portfolio. At local, regional and global scales, IW:LEARN stakeholders have adapted and applied information, skills and tools tested through IW:LEARN to sustain the benefits of their respective transboundary waters projects.

A successful Pilot Phase – now nearing completion – assessed and addressed the needs of country-driven GEF IW projects and their staff. IW:LEARN demonstrated how the GEF IW projects can effectively apply new Information and Communications Technology (ICT)<sup>3</sup> tools to increase access to transboundary waters information across participating countries. The Pilot Phase also tested the use of inter-project dialogue to clarify the needs of stakeholders relative to skills development and institutional capacity building. The Pilot Phase then evolved a methodology to target IW:LEARN activities to meet emerging GEF IW projects' demands.<sup>4</sup> In this manner, country-drivenness has been demonstrated by meeting the technical support demands of GEF IW projects that themselves received country-driven, focal point endorsements.

The Pilot Project directly contributed to the GEF's OP10 objective<sup>5</sup> of developing several global International Waters projects aimed at:

- “Deriving and disseminating lessons learned from projects undertaken in the pilot phase and the permanent GEF,
- Sharing the learning experience with groups of countries cooperating on International Waters projects, and
- Addressing the technical and institutional needs of those countries cooperating on International Waters projects.”

The Pilot Phase technically supported the national priorities and activities of over 120 nations in more than 70 International Waters (IW) projects that are now under implementation or in the GEF pipeline, as well as in water-related projects of other GEF focal areas. Based on this successful experience, the GEF Implementing Agencies<sup>6</sup> (IAs) now propose jointly launching an Operational Phase of IW:LEARN to scale-up information sharing and structured learning activities in order to strengthen the management of IW projects. In partnership with the GEF Secretariat and the GEF M&E Unit, the Operational Phase will also continue influential GEF International Waters Conferences (IWCs) and test innovative approaches to enhance efficacy throughout the GEF's IW portfolio.

Annex 3 highlights IW:LEARN's global importance and maps the nations with GEF-supported IW projects or programmes benefiting from participation in IW:LEARN. Many of these nations have expressed explicit need for technical support in building their own TWM capacity, as reflected in their GEF project briefs, Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses (TDAs) and Strategic Action Programmes (SAPs).<sup>7</sup> National representatives conveyed similar sentiments at the 2000 and 2002 GEF IWCs and other recent regional IW meetings.<sup>8</sup>

## 7 *Context*

### General Status of International Waters Capacity

In pursuit of their respective environmental and development objectives, IW projects have common capacity needs.<sup>9</sup> From the outset, project proponents rarely know where to go to discover viable solutions to the shared waters problems they face. They need access to information on TWM.

Fortunately, a high level of untapped experience exists among the GEF partners worldwide regarding the cooperative management of shared water resources. Projects supported by the GEF and its three Implementing Agencies (IAs) have accumulated a wealth of practical experience in managing International Waters over the past decade. The valuable information generated by mature projects, associated intergovernmental organizations, IAs and Executing Agencies (EAs), as well as other bodies, is only starting to become available via the Internet, learning exchanges, and other mechanisms.<sup>10</sup>

Ongoing efforts are required to ensure that pertinent experiences are rapidly transferred throughout the GEF IW portfolio. IW:LEARN support for such initiatives must be aligned with the Strategic Priorities of the GEF and its IW focal area, and fit directly within the scope of projects supported by the GEF OP10 Technical Support Component.<sup>11</sup>

Until very recently, learning by trial and error among isolated IW projects had largely been the status quo – a serious challenge to effective adaptive management across the GEF IW portfolio. Project personnel rarely have the time or resources for extended off-site education. It is thus important to establish readily

accessible information sharing and structured learning mechanisms to assist TWM personnel and their partners.

Structured learning is in high-demand. GEF IW project personnel and participants in IW:LEARN's Pilot Phase learning activities have indicated -

- Substantial demand for advanced training and learning from one another in order to increase their understanding of IW issues and their project management capacity.
- An urgent need for assistance regarding specific technical aspects of TWM as well as ways for applying ICT to improve TWM.<sup>12</sup>
- Projects and their partners can rarely afford to invest in prolonged off-site technical training.

Limited face-to-face encounters coupled with experience sharing via distance learning<sup>13</sup> (DL) and information systems can lower the threshold for access to ongoing peer-to-peer learning opportunities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. At the same time, hands on learning can be linked via ICT in real-time to work responsibilities in remote locations over an extended period.<sup>14</sup>

Where existing information and training opportunities are not readily accessible, peer-to-peer transfer of experiences is a valuable alternative. To this end, hundreds of representatives of GEF-supported transboundary waters projects and partners have expressed a common need: To regularly share TWM experience between practitioners within and among countries, in order to maximize the effectiveness of their respective project activities.<sup>15</sup> Regional and thematic learning exchanges help participants address specific technical problems, such as “how to develop an effective river basin or coastal management plan” or “ways to proactively involve civil society or the private sector river basin management.” But such opportunities are not systematically organized to cross international and ecosystem boundaries. Ongoing structured learning and ICT-mediated information transfer are needed to foster communication and collaboration around the world towards addressing the causes underlying global threats to transboundary waters.<sup>16</sup>

The recent GEF *International Waters Program Study* (IWPS) highlighted the difficulty of determining whether lessons learned are being channeled back into ongoing projects or into the project development process.<sup>17</sup> Participants in GEF IW projects may seek out these lessons, but they are difficult to discover and utilize without dedicated technical support mechanisms, such as those promoted through OP10.

The GEF also recently emphasized the importance of continuing “targeted learning based on the success of the IW:LEARN approach.”<sup>18</sup>

#### Outcomes of the IW:LEARN Pilot Phase

The IW:LEARN Pilot Phase project directly contributed to realizing the expected outcomes for OP10.<sup>19</sup> The Pilot Phase initiated procedures for incorporating portfolio experiences into formulation and implementation of GEF IW projects by fostering a learning community of GEF IW projects and partners through face-to-face interactions and distance learning. Pilot activities demonstrated various distance learning, information sharing and ICT products and services, and tested their value to this community. Specific outputs and lessons from the pilot Phase are presented in Annex 5.

Independent evaluation has identified several highly successful capacity-building activities emerging from the IW:LEARN Pilot Phase. As Annex 6 details, the Pilot Phase has demonstrated a suite of complementary face-to-face, paper and ICT-mediated service areas that have proven relevant to GEF projects, effective and ready to be scaled up and made operational.

For instance, the first International Waters Conference (IWC) in Budapest (2000) provided participants an overview of the GEF portfolio and M&E process and acquainted projects with the upcoming *International Waters Program Study*. Over the course of 6 months in 2001-2002, project and portfolio managers used an IW:LEARN electronic forum to suggest themes for the next IWC and discuss findings from the Programme Study. The Programme Study and forum archives – along with GEF IW project profiles and related documents – are now accessible via an IW:LEARN-administered electronic clearinghouse, the International Waters Resource Centre (IWRC). The IWRC is available on-line via the World Wide Web and was circulated via CD-ROM to all participants of the second IWC in 2002. In an iterative manner, the second GEF IW Conference (Dalian, 2002) returned from email-based dialog to face-to-face discourse on project development, implementation and M&E. The 2nd IWC also revealed strong demand from project managers for additional guidance for developing effective indicators and for public involvement in IW projects, among other issues.<sup>20</sup>

The GEF's *International Waters Program Study* evaluation underscored that IW:LEARN and International Waters Conference pilot projects were “promising steps taken” to address existing deficiencies in inter- and intra-project collaboration to incorporate lessons learned, prevent duplication of effort and ensure efficiency. It concluded that there is a need to formalize the process of feeding back experiences in a transparent and effective manner, such as proposed through the Operational Phase of IW:LEARN. The GEF's *2001 Project Performance Review* further stated that IW:LEARN's “efforts towards horizontal linkages and learning between projects should be continued and strengthened.”<sup>21</sup>

Independent evaluation also determined that IW:LEARN's objectives are very relevant to GEF IW projects, emphasizing that the justification for the project is as valid today as it was when IW:LEARN was originally conceived.<sup>22</sup>

The GEF's IAs are now proposing to use IW:LEARN's successfully tested techniques in an Operational Phase Full-Sized Project (FSP) to build the capacity of GEF IW projects through ongoing information sharing, structured learning, IW conferences and innovative approaches to strengthen IW projects' implementation. IW:LEARN is poised to address projects' priorities (Annex 7) at the global scale and to collaborate with other projects to replicate its activities within their transboundary basins and subsets of the GEF IW portfolio.<sup>23</sup>

## ***8 Project Objectives and Rationale***

**Project Objective:** To strengthen the management of International Waters by facilitating information sharing and learning among Transboundary Waters Management (TWM) constituencies.

### **Baseline and Alternative Scenarios**

In the baseline scenario, information transfer and learning across GEF IW projects remains piecemeal and transboundary waters management (TWM) capacity builds gradually in isolation. This disrupts the pace and quality of project implementation and limits success. There exists no mechanism to deliver projects' experiences on demand. Technical support services within each IA are unresponsive to stakeholders' expressed needs across the entire GEF IW portfolio. Numerous opportunities are missed for projects to leverage emerging ICT tools for greater learning, transparency and participation in TWM. Project personnel operate in an experience vacuum, significantly limiting the overall performance of the GEF IW portfolio.

In the alternative scenario, the IW:LEARN Operational Phase project actively promotes TWM information sharing and targeted learning in support of the GEF's strategic priority areas. Thriving face-to-face international exchange and accessible ICT infrastructure foster community-level learning to promote the GEF's strategic priority areas for IW. Experiences regarding good practices and lessons learned are transferred horizontally across projects, and fed back from GEF M&E Unit to projects in preparation and those underway. Such interchanges create enduring *in situ* capacity to sustain TWM benefits well beyond the GEF project cycle.

Under the alternative, the IW:LEARN Operational Phase scales up and replicates its effective structured learning and information transfer activities across countries participating in the GEF IW portfolio, with a focus on GEF's new strategic priorities. For approximately \$5 million over five years, the GEF and its three IAs operationalize lessons learned from the IW:LEARN Pilot Phase to improve portfolio performance indefinitely. Highly successful structured learning and information sharing activities, such as biennial GEF IW Conferences and the International Waters Resource Centre, are sustained and enhanced through ongoing stakeholder participation and feedback. Targeted technical assistance proactively characterizes and addresses projects' needs early and rapidly during the GEF IW project cycle.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, the GEF and IAs collaborate through IW:LEARN to test innovative approaches for meeting projects needs and to extend IW:LEARN benefits beyond the Operational Phase.

Initially comprised of IA and GEF Secretariat leads for IW, the IW:LEARN Steering Committee (SC) is enhanced with representation from the GEF M&E Unit, which utilizes the FSP as an instrument for assessing emerging information needs and advising IW projects accordingly. Additional funding agencies and non-GEF transboundary waters programmes are also invited to participate in IW learning exchanges. The SC plays a key role in coordinating IAs' contributions to and use of IW:LEARN in their respective projects. In this fashion, technical services and comparative advantages<sup>25</sup> that each IA provides can benefit the entire GEF IW portfolio. Projects receive additional technical support from IW:LEARN's Technical Advisory Panel (TAP), chaired by IW specialists from the GEF STAP (coordinated by UNEP-GEF). Thus, IW:LEARN integrates experiences and capacity-building activities across GEF IW stakeholders and agencies to improve TWM globally.

#### Why should GEF promote information sharing and structured learning through IW:LEARN?

The GEF has invested over US\$460 million to support countries jointly pursuing International Waters projects. Judicious utilization of this GEF investment requires that key institutions are effectively engaged and their experiences included to maximize projects' benefits. The complexity of IW projects also raises a variety of technical questions among participating countries. Stakeholders cooperating on IW projects must establish sufficient capacity to meet their common goal of sustaining the shared benefits of transboundary waters. During its Pilot Phase, IW:LEARN developed key activities designated in the Global Technical Support Component of OP10<sup>26</sup> to address these capacity issues.

The IW:LEARN Pilot Phase developed and tested several techniques to implement OP10 technical support objectives. It also helped build the technical capacity of GEF IW projects through face-to-face and ICT-mediated interactions across various levels of ICT usage.<sup>27</sup> Successful techniques are now ready to be incorporated into the Operational Phase of IW:LEARN.

As stated by the GEF's recent *Strategic Business Planning* (GEF/C.21/Inf.11):

The GEF Replenishment included a specific approach included in OP 10 and piloted in GEF-2. The learning experiences among GEF projects undertaken within the IW portfolio has been successful as judged by survey, project evaluations and OPS2. The learning is aimed at

exchanging successful approaches among existing projects and those under preparation so that they may be adopted within the framework of adaptive management that characterizes the GEF approach to transboundary water systems. They also help avoid problems that have been encountered by projects. Such South-to-South "structured learning" contributes significantly to the success of GEF's foundational/capacity building work in IW.

The IW:LEARN Operational Phase will actively involve all three IAs – as well as the GEF Secretariat, M&E Unit and STAP – in exchanging experiences and learning across 57 GEF-approved IW projects and 30 or more IW projects in preparation. IW:LEARN, with the support of its Steering Committee members and their agencies, will facilitate the incorporation of successful measures into current and new projects, so that the GEF can expeditiously replicate positive results. IW:LEARN technical assistance for appropriate use of ICT will also help to increase projects' transparency and participation. This, in turn, will promote greater stakeholder ownership and sustainability of IW projects catalyzed by the GEF. Thus by partnering through IW:LEARN, the three IAs will improve their IW projects' learning, replication efficiency, transparency, ownership and sustainability during and beyond the IW:LEARN Operational Phase project.

#### IW:LEARN Operational Phase Project Purpose

In pursuit of its global objective, IW:LEARN will improve GEF IW projects' information base, replication efficiency, transparency, stakeholder ownership and sustainability of benefits through:

- A. Facilitation of access to information on transboundary water resources among GEF IW projects
- B. Structured learning among GEF IW projects and cooperating partners
- C. Biennial International Waters Conferences
- D. Testing innovative approaches to strengthen implementation of the IW portfolio
- E. Fostering partnerships to sustain benefits of IW:LEARN and associated technical support

## ***9 Expected Outcomes and Activities of Full Project***

According to the components above, the proposed outcomes, outputs and activities of the IW:LEARN Full Project are as follows:

### COMPONENT A. FACILITATION OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON TRANSBOUNDARY WATER RESOURCES AMONG GEF IW PROJECTS

Immediate Objective A: To facilitate the integration, exchange and accessibility of data and information across GEF IW project sites to IW projects, their partners and stakeholders.<sup>28</sup>

Result A: 95% of GEF IW projects have established Web sites, based on a common format and linked to a comprehensive information network.

Activity A.1 Establish a central metadata directory of all available IW project data and information (GEF IW Information Management System: IW-IMS)

Details: A database for remote search and access to project profiles, contact information, publications, geo-referenced data, news, etc available on-line. Interface readily addresses stakeholders' priority needs and questions, and is accessed via the Web and CD-ROM and through IA-related portals (e.g., env-dir.org, developmentgateway.org). Additional elements include: (a) portfolio-wide

electronic lists and e-forums to share experiences and address IW projects' day-to-day needs (e.g., vacancies, consultancies, questions). (b) dissemination of IW projects' news, experiences, success stories, tools and events through central Web site. (c) presentations by and discussions among GEF IW projects attending IW community events. (Builds upon Pilot Project success of GEF IW Resource Centre Web site.)

Activity A.2 Develop a "Library of Practical Experiences" to increase access to GEF IW projects' experiences and address surveyed needs and priorities.

Details: Searchable Web-based compendium of practical experiences and insights derived from such experiences to address key IW management problems.

Activity A.3 Provide technical assistance to GEF IW projects to develop or strengthen their websites and ICT tools according to defined ICT quality criteria,<sup>29</sup> and connect all GEF IW project websites to the GEF IW Information Management System.

Details: Elements include: (a) An Internet-based help desk, on-line templates, training materials and workshops to support effective use of Web and ICT in IW project management established and functioning. (b) collaboration with GEF IW projects to facilitate transfer of effective ICT tools between projects; and (c) coordination with GEF IW projects achieved to integrate their information into the GEF IW IMS and maintain archived content after their projects end.

## COMPONENT B. STRUCTURED LEARNING AMONG IW PROJECTS AND COOPERATING PARTNERS

Immediate Objective B: To establish and technically support a series of face-to-face and electronically-mediated structured learning activities<sup>30</sup> – or learning exchanges – among related projects within the GEF IW portfolio.

Result B.1: 10 - 20 projects share experiences within 3 - 5 regions

Activity B.1 Organize 3-5 inter-project learning exchanges on a regional scale

Details: Facilitated electronic and face-to-face discourses across the freshwater-to-marine continuum of GEF IW projects within a region or sub-region. (Meets regional or sub-regional demand in Africa, Caribbean Sea and Southeast Asia. )

Result B.2: 20 - 30 projects share experiences addressing 3 - 4 IW themes

Activity B.2 Organize 3-4 thematic inter-project learning exchanges

Details: Facilitated electronic and face-to-face discourses among GEF projects managing specific types of aquatic ecosystems (e.g., lake or river basins, aquifers, wetlands, large marine ecosystems (LMEs), coral reefs) or addressing similar IW management issues (e.g., water scarcity or fisheries depletion) or challenges (e.g., social indicators).

Result B.3: 10 - 14 projects share experiences through 5 - 7 inter-project exchanges of staff.

Activity B.3 Coordinate inter-project exchanges between GEF IW projects and partners

Details: Inter- and intra-regional learning through exchanges of project personnel for several weeks at a time.<sup>31</sup> Staff from public sector or NGO communities participating in similar GEF IW or other TWM projects would be eligible to participate in such exchanges.

Result B.4: At least 15 projects increase their capacity to involve the public in project development and implementation

Activity B.4 Provide face-to-face and virtual training to enhance public participation in Transboundary Waters Management.

Details: Targeted training to addresses Public Participation (the highest priority need among surveyed project participants and partners at the last GEF IW Conference). This activity draws upon public involvement experiences, strategies and tools used by projects across GEF focal areas (e.g., IW, Biodiversity and Climate Change) and by other projects to actively involve civil society in participatory management of transboundary waters.

#### COMPONENT C. BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL WATERS CONFERENCES

Immediate Objective C: To hold GEF IW conferences in 2004 and 2006, gathering the IW community for sharing experience among GEF IW projects, stakeholders, evaluators and other IW programs and institutions.

Result C: The GEF hosts two comprehensive reviews (2004, 2006) of the GEF IW portfolio, including exchange of experience within the portfolio and with related transboundary waters programs.

Activity C.1 Organize third GEF International Waters Conference

Details: Continues from Pilot Phase a successful series of global IW conferences hosted by the GEF.

Activity C.2 Organize fourth GEF International Waters Conference

Details: Continues from Pilot Phase a successful series of global IW conferences hosted by the GEF.

#### COMPONENT D. TESTING INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO STRENGTHEN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IW PORTFOLIO

Immediate Objective D: To test, evaluate and replicate novel approaches and ICT tools to meet IW stakeholder needs.<sup>32</sup>

Result D: GEF agencies develop, test and, where successful, replicate regional, sub-regional and thematic demonstrations for improving Transboundary Water Management among GEF IW projects.



#### Activity D.1 Organize Public Private Partnership (P3) Meeting

Details: Dialog among banks, projects and collaborating countries to promote, design and deliver innovative P3 mechanisms to support IW management during and beyond GEF's involvement. This activity supports the GEF IW Strategic Priority to promote innovative demonstrations of P3 initiatives in water sub-sectors, drawing on resources and comparative advantages of Bretton Woods partners (World Bank and IFC, with support from GEF-affiliated regional development banks).

#### Activity D.2 Develop African IW network

Details: A test of mechanisms to support a virtually-mediated network of African projects and partners sharing information and experiences in pursuit of GEF Strategic Priorities for IW (water scarcity/competing uses, fisheries depletion, contaminant reduction) within and between ecosystems, as well as with other GEF focal areas. This activity builds upon results of a successful DLIST demonstration from the IW:LEARN Pilot Phase, with potential to replicate or scale-up DLIST across other African LMEs. This IW Network could include demand-side management and data valuation as two other possible topics. (Facilitated in cooperation with existing networks such as African Association of River Networks (AARN, an INBO-affiliate), LakeNet, SEACAM, etc.<sup>33</sup>)

#### Activity D.3 Develop South East Asia Regional Learning Center (SEA-RLC)

Details: A test of benefits of decentralizing and tailoring IW:LEARN services at sub-regional level. A draft framework for SEA-RLC has been proposed by the GEF South China Sea project in partnership with SEA-START RC (Chulalongkorn University, Thailand), to serve GEF IW projects in SEA region (e.g., Mekong, Bay of Bengal, PEMSEA, Yellow Sea).

#### Activity D.4 Create a Black Sea/Danube Regional Distance Learning Program

Details: Deliver targeted training via distance learning to address nutrient reduction and other issues across the Black Sea and Danube basin. This activity utilizes peer-to-peer knowledge sharing to build basin-wide nutrient management capacity. (Coordinated with Train-Sea-Coast course on Reducing Black Sea basin Nutrient Pollution from Agriculture.)

#### Activity D.5 Build a Transboundary Aquifer and Groundwater Management Learning Community

Details: Build a shared aquifer and groundwater Internet portal to facilitate information and experience sharing amongst the GEF's geographically dispersed aquifer and groundwater projects and related organizations and institutions. Partner with global shared aquifer experts<sup>34</sup> and initiatives at the GEF STAP, IAs, ISARM, UNESCO-IHP, University Partnership for Transboundary Waters, *et al.* Develop Mediterranean Rim Transboundary Aquifers Community of Practice<sup>35</sup> to promote interactions among GEF and other aquifer projects in the region: (a) support exchange of experience and lessons learned on establishing frameworks for

transboundary groundwater management, (b) catalyse the launch of new initiatives around the Mediterranean, and (c) enhance the effectiveness of existing programs, and (d) transfer knowledge from the Mediterranean to other countries and regions with less experience in Transboundary Aquifer Management.

Activity D.6 Address South-eastern Mediterranean Transboundary Waters Information Management

Details: Support information management needs of a new Balkans initiative for Transboundary River Basin and Lake Management. Facilitate exchange of information from the GEF Danube River Basin and Transboundary Lakes Management experiences for use by stakeholders in the South-eastern Mediterranean to develop integrated water resources management plans for specific transboundary waterbodies in the region.

Activity D.7 Assist IW Capacity Building in the Amazon Basin

Details: Support the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Secretariat in carrying out discussions and capacity building on IW issues involving all countries in the Amazon Basin. This could also include having a shared database of water-related issues and projects. The Amazon Regional Initiative will already be conducting some preliminary work on the establishment of a basin-wide network of monitoring points for water quality and flow.

COMPONENT E. FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS TO SUSTAIN BENEFITS OF IW:LEARN AND ASSOCIATED TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Immediate Objective E: To sustain and institutionalise information sharing and learning exchanges across GEF IW projects and GEF entities.

Result E: GEF agencies design and implement a strategic plan to sustain IW:LEARN project benefits to the GEF IW community

Activity E.1 Facilitate internal dialogue and partnerships with Implementing Agencies (IAs) and Executing Agencies (EAs).

Details: IW:LEARN helps IAs and EAs develop and co-implement plans for progressive decentralization/delegation of responsibilities for IW:LEARN information systems and services to projects, IAs, EAs, and regional institutions leverage these entities' comparative advantages and resources to institutionalise IW:LEARN activities beyond the Operational Phase IW:LEARN project.<sup>36</sup>

Activity E.2 Pursue dialogue and partnerships with external organizations

Details: Exploring collaboration with other partners, such as donor countries with relevant Transboundary Waters Management experience, to ensure sustained benefits to GEF IW community. This activity will promote cross-cutting information sharing systems and learning exchanges, as necessary, to sustain successful activities not supportable directly by GEF entities. (Actors to drive

the transfer of this sustainable benefits will be enlisted during the PDF-B period and explicitly identified in the Operational Phase Project Brief, in order to foster ownership from the outset of the project.)

This design will be refined during a PDF-B preparatory period, detailed below (Section 16).

## ***10 Sustainability (Financial, Social, Environmental) and Replicability of the Full Project***

Component E is included in the FSP in order to pursue strategic partnerships to sustain IW:LEARN benefits beyond the conclusion of this project. Additional components of sustainability and replicability include:

### Financial Sustainability

Since this project directly serves the GEF portfolio in IW, GEF and or IA financing is needed to sustain its core activities. As with the Pilot Project, a number of collaborations and financing mechanisms will contribute to project co-financing. In addition, GEF IW representatives from all three IAs have agreed in principle that new projects should include specific budget lines to cover substantial services obtained via IW:LEARN.

All plans for activities will be developed with defined financing plans. Specific grants may be pursued to support core activities to integrate project components into a unified capacity-building package. GEF projects will also benefit from in-kind contributions and IW:LEARN cost-sharing with the broader GEF and IW community (e.g., Cap-Net, CATHALAC, OAS, UNESCO/IHP). Market-based mechanisms tested during the Pilot Phase will be further developed and more comprehensively deployed during the full project (e.g., cost-recovery workshops, fee-for-service technical support to non-GEF IW projects, etc.). Where appropriate, products and services will be spun-off to regional or other institutional partners (Activity E.2) to ensure their longevity beyond the project period.<sup>37</sup>

### Institutional Sustainability

The project's institutional sustainability is founded on its ability to integrate broad collaborative partnerships of, by and for GEF IW projects and their stakeholders. Facilitating dialog and collaboration across the three IAs and major EAs is expected to help mainstream IW:LEARN support for TWM issues across these agencies over the course of the project duration. As its core community matures, inter-project information sharing, learning exchange, and collaboration will become progressively more integrated into projects' lifecycles and the GEF's information management practices.<sup>38</sup> As a result, the project's primary objective will be realized with the sustained institutionalization. The FSP will also work with existing capacity-building institutions to develop regional and thematic cross-sections of stakeholders to contribute to its service lines, so that IW:LEARN's integrated approach can be sustained well beyond the lifetime of the project. Furthermore, by providing the increment of *transboundary* experience to existing IWRM institutions responding to GEF projects' needs, IW:LEARN will ensure that its products and services are widely adapted and replicated through those institutions.

GEF Secretariat may also consider replicating the successful IW:LEARN approach across other GEF focal areas before the conclusion of this FSP.

### Environmental Sustainability

The project directly contributes to the improvement of many IW projects' respective process indicators for environmental sustainability.<sup>39</sup> Increased efficiency in GEF IW projects implementation will also likely expedite their achievement of environmental impact outcome and environmental status changes.

### Replicability

Replication is intrinsic to this project's design. The project fosters replication and adaptation of best practices, ICT tools, information products and expertise across GEF IW projects. Demonstrations of capacity-building will be regularly co-organized with, transferred to, and replicated by project partners, with funding from GEF, other donors and market-based mechanisms.

## ***11 Country Eligibility***

IW:LEARN support is made available to GEF projects of countries eligible under the GEF Instrument.

## ***12 Stakeholders Involved in Project***

During the PDF-B stage, substantial consultation is planned with representatives from GEF IW projects and their partners (e.g., regional, national and local agencies, NGOs, etc.), as detailed in Section 16. Thereafter, continued consultation via electronic forums, interviews and regional and global IW learning exchanges will ensure that stakeholder interests are regularly reviewed, revised and systematically addressed by the project and its regional, thematic and institutional partners. Since a number of recent GEF IW project briefs and documents explicitly identify planned cooperation with IW:LEARN, the project expects to establish more formal agreements to incorporate stakeholder involvement through these partnerships as well.

## ***13 Information on Project Proposer***

The project proponents are the three GEF Implementing Agencies (IAs) on behalf of all countries participating in GEF-sponsored IW projects. A letter of support, signed by GEF leads at all three IAs, is being submitted in conjunction with this Concept Paper.

In order to benefit from the core competencies of each IA, the project will be implemented through close cooperation between UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank. IW leads from all three agencies and from GEF Secretariat, M&E Unit and STAP will comprise the project's Steering Committee. An executive from the Executing Agency and additional donors to the project will also be invited to participate in the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will approve project work plans and major project outputs. During the interim PDF-B stage, the committee plans to evaluate and select the most appropriate option for NGO or international agency execution during the Operational Phase. Co-implementation and executing modalities among the IAs will be determined through consultations and through their participation in IW:LEARN's Steering Committee during the PDF-B period.

## ***14 Financing Plan of Full Project***

As discussed above, IW:LEARN products and services are designed to directly assist the strategic priorities of the GEF IW portfolio and its OP10 objectives. As a result, the GEF will finance most of the incremental costs of the project. This includes direct activities of the IW:LEARN secretariat and incremental costs associated with incorporating existing IWRM/ICM centres of excellence as service providers within IW:LEARN's global network for TWM. As with the IWC pilot, GEF funding will continue to be required to support the participation of IW projects' government focal points in GEF IW Conferences. Specific demonstration projects executed jointly by IW:LEARN and IAs primarily to benefit GEF IW projects will also require direct GEF support. Fully implementing all of these activities under the Operational Phase of IW:LEARN will require a projected total GEF contribution of approximately US\$5 Million. This estimate will be refined during development of the FSP Budget under the interim PDF-B period.

During the PDF-B, the project will seek co-financing from a diverse set of sources that contributed to the Pilot Phase's financial stability. These include IA grants and in-kind contributions; market-based cost-recovery and fee-for-service activities; and in-kind contributions from NGO partners and the private sector.

GEF IW representatives from all three IAs have also agreed in principle that new projects should include specific budget lines to cover any substantial new services expected to be acquired via IW:LEARN. IW:LEARN services need to be identified early on and integrated into its partners' project documents in order for this FSP to provide substantial technical services to new projects. This will also ensure that IW:LEARN services are directly accountable to the projects which aim to benefit from the Operational Phase.

Supplemental grant-based co-financing from multilateral and private foundation donors will also be pursued. In-kind contributions through partnerships with other IWRM capacity-building institutions is also expected to be an important component of IW:LEARN's fiscal planning. An overall target has been set for 1-to-1 co-financing through these various mechanisms.

The Pilot Phase of IW:LEARN demonstrated that IW:LEARN's products and services are valuable commodities among partner organizations interested in adopting them in whole or in part. As a result, IW:LEARN will work throughout the FSP to identify opportunities to spin off portions of its activities to realize further co-financing for its core initiatives.

## ***15 IA Coordination and Linkages To GEF and IA Programs and Activities***

In recent years, GEF support has fostered a broad body of experience and information regarding regional cooperation in TWM. As products of IW:LEARN's learning exchanges, the project will synthesize and disseminate information based on the experience and findings of these GEF IW projects and related initiatives (e.g., French GEF projects, IUCN freshwater, coastal and marine projects, etc) across the IW community and IAs water resource management-related programs.

Ongoing coordination with all three Implementing Agencies (IAs) and the GEF Secretariat is critical to the project's success. As a result, the GEF IW leads from each of these agencies will serve in pivotal strategic roles in IW:LEARN's Steering Committee. In addition, each activity jointly managed by the project Secretariat and an IA will have a point-of-contact in each organization for day-to-day operational

coordination. IW:LEARN has also established liaisons with certain GEF executing agencies (e.g., UNOPS, OAS, IMO, UNIDO) and non-GEF international partners (e.g., UNESCO) in order to further operational cooperation across agencies and GEF projects.

Specific comparative advantages and linkages with each IA are presented in Annex 10. Linkages beyond the IAs to related information transfer systems are presented in Annex 4.

## ***16 Proposed Project Development Strategy***

A PDF-B will be required for further development of this project. Intensive preparation began in late November 2002 to submit the Concept Paper the May 2003 pipeline. Securing co-financing and partnership commitments will lead to Project Brief submission to the fall 2003 GEF Council meeting, with Project Document delivered for GEF CEO review by the end of 2003.

Beginning no later than July 2003, the PDF-B will generate detailed information needed to design the FSP, including a fully developed logical framework (logframe) of activities. As part of this logframe, IAs and IW:LEARN partners will help determine indicators of success, as well as their co-financing and in-kind contributions (e.g., through programs they can make available through IW:LEARN to assist GEF IW projects).

Information will be derived, in part, from a 2002 update of pervasive capacity building needs cited in project-related documents and from priorities expressed by government focal points to projects, project managers and agency representatives during the GEF's 2002 International Waters Conference (see Annex 7). The PDF-B process will also further build upon recommendations from the final independent evaluation of the IW:LEARN Pilot Phase.

Constructive inputs from IW:LEARN's Pilot Phase evaluator, supplemented by consultations with project beneficiaries and project managers, will contribute to refining FSP components. A summary of this Concept Paper (motive, objectives, outputs) will be circulated to IWC participants to actively solicit their insights. To do so, IW:LEARN will use electronic stakeholder consultations via email and IW:LEARN-mediated electronic discussion forums at global and regional scales. The PDF-B period will also be used to identify opportunities to pursue joint activities with and for other projects during The Operational Phase.

Institutional mechanisms for implementation, execution, and sustained management of the project will be developed during this period. The respective contributions and roles of IAs, primary and partner EAs, as well as projects cooperating with IW:LEARN will be delineated and inter-organizational agreements developed as appropriate. In addition, the three IAs will decide on co-implementation, executing modalities and responsibilities in task management of each project activity. The PDF-B will detail budget components and activities, including co-financing and market-based cost-recovery mechanisms. Additional sources of co-financing will be pursued, potentially through a donor conference or similar mechanism.

It is anticipated that the full Project Brief with incremental cost analysis will be submitted to the GEF Council in the fall of 2003.

Pending approval and signature of the full project, IW:LEARN will support continuation, scaling up and replication of existing activities while promoting plans for at least one new demonstration per IA and per

region during the full project. Initial steps for implementing these activities will be drafted and submitted as a year 1 (2004) work plan for Steering Committee approval in fall 2003.

## ***17 Response to Reviews***

The concept paper incorporates contributions from GEFSEC and the IAs as drafts were circulated and reviewed from June 2002 through May 12, 2003. As presented in Annex 11, this version (April 29, 2003) also incorporates recommendations from the independent evaluation of the IW:LEARN Pilot Phase as well as comments received from an Inter-agency Teleconference (November 13, 2002), subsequent Steering Committee meeting (May 12, 2003), and via email and one-on-one consultations with Steering Committee members and partners.

Additional oral and electronic communications with Steering Committee members, GEF partners and stakeholders over the period of January-April 2003 also informed this version of the concept paper.

## ANNEXES

Annex 1. Glossary of Abbreviations

Annex 2: IW:LEARN's Demand-Driven Approach

Annex 3: IW:LEARN Importance, Coverage and Linkage to Global Priorities

3.1. Map of GEF International Waters Projects

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Annex 5: Outputs and Lessons From Pilot Phase of IW:LEARN

5.1 Outputs from IW:LEARN Pilot Phase

5.1.1 Pilot Phase Outputs Towards Development Objective

5.1.2 IW:LEARN Pilot Phase Outputs Towards Immediate Objective

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6.1. Summary of Findings of Independent Evaluation of IW:LEARN Pilot Phase

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Annex 7: Priority Needs Expressed by GEF IW Projects and Participating Countries at 2002 GEF IW Conference

Annex 8: Global IW Threats and Causes, Baseline and Alternative Scenarios

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Annex 9: Operational Phase Concept for the UNEP-IW:LEARN Best Practices Data Base ("IW:Insight")

9.1 Vision

9.2 Scope of Operational Phase of IW:LEARN best practice initiative

9.3 Environmental Experience Portal

9.4 Potential contributors to IW:LEARN Best Practice Initiative

Annex 10: Comparative Advantages and Specific Linkages IAs Bring to IW:LEARN

Annex 11: Detail of Response to Comments

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1 (Glossary of Abbreviations) for all acronyms used in this document.



<sup>2</sup> “Targeted regional or global projects useful in setting priorities for possible GEF interventions, meeting the technical needs of projects in this focal area, or distilling lessons learned from experience.” GEF Operational Program Number 10 [OP10], paragraph 10.2, 10.4, 10.6, 10.10 and 10.18-20. [http://gefweb.org/Operational\\_Policies/Operational\\_Programs/OP\\_10\\_English.pdf](http://gefweb.org/Operational_Policies/Operational_Programs/OP_10_English.pdf) (According to the GEF Operational Strategy, this component includes: “activities that help to demonstrate ways of overcoming barriers to the adoption of best practices to limit contamination of international waters ... Narrowly focused regional or global projects that can help meet particular technical needs, or improve the use of certain measures by several groups of international waters projects (and build capacity to undertake the measures), are also included in the program ... Targeted technical demonstration and capacity-building projects can help build awareness in recipient countries of international waters concerns as well as best-practice measures, tools for finding solutions, and policies for innovative institutional approaches.” (GEF. 1996. *International Waters*. Ch. 4, *Operational Strategy of the Global Environment Facility*. GEF, Washington, D.C. pp. 47-61))f

<sup>3</sup> ICT is defined here as any tool for recording, storing and processing data or information or for communicating between people separated by distance or time. ICT usually includes hardware (computers, fax machines, CD-ROMs, scanners), software (word processing programs, databases, computer simulations) or network applications (email, instant messaging, Web-based training platforms), but also includes less sophisticated instruments (radio, telephones, books, cassettes, chalkboards, litmus paper) that may be more affordable or pervasive ICT in some developing areas.

<sup>4</sup> See Annex 2 (IW:LEARN's Demand-Driven Approach).

<sup>5</sup> OP10, paragraph 10.4(d)

<sup>6</sup> I.e., UNDP, UNEP and World Bank.

<sup>7</sup> Most GEF IW project-related documents, including approved project briefs and finalized SAP documents, as well as GEF IWC summary reports and proceedings, can be found on-line via the GEF's *International Waters Resource Centre* (IWRC), developed and maintained by IW:LEARN. <http://www.iwlearn.net>

<sup>8</sup> E.g., the 4<sup>th</sup> Inter-American Dialog in Brazil in 2001; East Asian Seas meeting in Korea, a UNECE meeting in Poland, and Africa Water Facility presentations at the WSSD WaterDome in South Africa, all in 2002. See footnote 8 for more details.

<sup>9</sup> Priority needs of GEF IW Projects were identified by survey at the Dalian GEF IW Conference (September 2002), as summarized in proceedings ( <http://www.iwlearn.net/event/proc.php>).

<sup>10</sup> See Annex 4 and *IWRC*.

<sup>11</sup> Proposed Strategic Priority IW-2 of the *2003-2005 GEF Business Plan* (p.28) explicitly address "support for targeted learning," in noting "success of the IW:LEARN approach." The OP10 scope includes a component for “narrowly focused regional or global projects that can help meet particular technical needs or build capacity for the use of certain measures by various on-going International Waters projects. Targeted technical demonstration and capacity building projects can help build awareness in countries that are participating in International Waters projects and serve as a means to encourage best practices, develop tools for finding solutions, and formulate policies for innovative institutional approaches. Also included in this operational program are global International Waters projects that help contribute to the development of strategic approaches across operational programs in the focal area and facilitate exchange of experience among different International Waters initiatives. From these exchanges, capacity can be built and lessons learned derived for wider application. ” OP10, paragraph 10.6.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., Public participation throughout the project cycle; monitoring and evaluation, including indicator development; environmental monitoring and data analysis; remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS); co-financing and financial sustainability; appropriate ICT to support project management, information management, coordination and outreach.

<sup>13</sup> DL is defined here as the ICT-mediated transfer of experience or skills between people.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, one student in IW:LEARN's distance MSc pilot program wrote his thesis on local mangrove areas while working in his project region, providing a basis for him to advance to the project's National Coordinator for Djibouti. Meanwhile, a Namibian regional planner enrolled in IW:LEARN's virtual ICM training pilot (“DLIST,” at <http://www.dlist.org>) and continued to work while learning about relations between coastal management and sustainable tourism.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Needs identified at the GEF International Waters Conferences in Budapest, Hungary (2000) and Dalian, China (2002); recommendations of the IW:LEARN-hosted Inter-American Water Resource Managers Forum in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil (2001) and a similar forum of East Asian IW projects in Busan, Korea (2002); testimonials at the Second International Conference on Sustainable Management of Transboundary Waters in Europe in Miedzzydroje, Poland (2002); the Petersburg Declaration [<http://www.dse.de/ef/petersb.html>]; as well as through various electronic forums associated with regional and global GEF IW communities.

<sup>16</sup> Annex 8 summarizes threats to transboundary waters and underlying causes which IW:LEARN helps address.

<sup>17</sup> J. M. Bewers and J. I. Uitto. 2001. *International Waters Program Study*. GEF Monitoring and Evaluation: Washington, DC. On-line at: <http://www.iwlearn.net/ftp/iwps.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> GEF. 2002. *Strategic Planning: Directions and Targets*. (GEF/C.21/Inf.11) at:

[http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Council\\_Documents/GEF\\_C21/C21.Inf.11-Strategic\\_Business\\_Planning.pdf](http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Council_Documents/GEF_C21/C21.Inf.11-Strategic_Business_Planning.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> OP10 expected outcomes include “a collection of global and regional projects that provide programmatic and strategic benefits for the global environment through technical support, assessment, and derivation of lessons learned across operational programs in this [IW] focal area.” (paragr. 10.8).

<sup>20</sup> Documented in the IWC proceedings and final report, available via the IWRC at <http://www.iwlearn.net/event/proc.php>.

<sup>21</sup> GEF. 2002. *2001 Project Performance Review*. GEF Monitoring and Evaluation: Washington, DC. On-line at: [http://gefweb.org/Documents/Council\\_Documents/GEF\\_C19/C.19.Inf.6\\_Project\\_Performance\\_Review.doc](http://gefweb.org/Documents/Council_Documents/GEF_C19/C.19.Inf.6_Project_Performance_Review.doc).

<sup>22</sup> The evaluation also provided a number of recommendations for the IW:LEARN Operational Phase (see Section 17)

<sup>23</sup> E.g., subsets of stakeholders with common issues, ecosystems or geographic areas.

<sup>24</sup> For example, IW:LEARN assesses projects needs at IW Conferences and other venues then developed 2 annual work plans to address those needs. The project also responds to impromptu requests from IW projects, such as examples of good public participation strategies or M&E plans.

<sup>25</sup> See Annexes 9 (Operational Phase Concept for the UNEP-IW:LEARN Best Practices Database) and 10 (Comparative Advantages and Specific Linkages IAs Bring to IW:LEARN).

<sup>26</sup> OP10 (paragr. 10.17) describes typical activities of the Technical Support Component as follows: “The complexity of International Waters projects raises technical questions about how and what contaminants to monitor, how to analyze complex sets of data, where to get help, how countries can institutionally work together, and how to involve the public in decision-making. Targeted regional or global capacity-building projects may be necessary to help increase awareness on how to jointly address these contaminant problems. Global projects in this component can help individual groups of countries to share experience with other areas around the globe and lessons can be derived from the experience.

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New ... information systems have been developed ... that can help countries sort through complex decisions for dealing with root causes of transboundary environmental degradation. Targeted technical information sharing, capacity building, and training opportunities may also be appropriate.”

<sup>27</sup> For specific examples of benefits derived by stakeholders from these IW:LEARN activities, see <http://www.iwlearn.org/benefit.php>.

<sup>28</sup> Addresses priorities expressed in GEF Operational Program Number 10; “Program Objectives” section, paragraph 10.4(d).

[http://gefweb.org/Operational\\_Policies/Operational\\_Programs/OP\\_10\\_English.pdf](http://gefweb.org/Operational_Policies/Operational_Programs/OP_10_English.pdf), the GEF Business Plan FY03-05 (GEF/C.19/10), GEF Council Meeting 19 Summary of the Charge (pagr. 61) and GEF/C18/5 (pagr. 11), and Priority Issues which STAP Should Address in GEF Phase III (section 3). <http://stapgef.unep.org/documents/PRIORITY%20ISSUES%20III.doc>. Furthermore, this also objective facilitates the lead responsibility of GEF IAs and EAs to “disseminate project level information, including lessons learned,” as expressed in Clarifying the Roles and Responsibilities of the GEF Entities

([http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Council\\_Documents/GEF\\_C19/C.19.8\\_Roles\\_and\\_Responsibilities.pdf](http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Council_Documents/GEF_C19/C.19.8_Roles_and_Responsibilities.pdf)).

<sup>29</sup> ICT quality criteria include elements such as usability, accessibility in low-bandwidth contexts, and metadata standards for effective information searching and discovery via search engines.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., conferences, meetings, workshops, virtual forums and e-learning exchanges.

<sup>31</sup> Ideally in conjunction with activities such as Activity D.4 here.

<sup>32</sup> GEF OP 10, paragraph 10.4(d).

<sup>33</sup> See Sub-Saharan Africa setion of Annex 4 for other potential partners.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., ISARM/ITARM, UNESCO-IHP, University Partnership for Transboundary Waters.

<sup>35</sup> Derived from recommendations to the GEF from transboundary waters meeting in Athens (May 2003)

<sup>36</sup> E.g., collaboration with UNEP-DEWA to enhance and integrate IW information management; with UNDP’s Cap-Net to provide capacity-building support at sub-regional scales; with World Bank and IFC to address Public-Private partnerships; with World Bank Institution to sustain Black Sea -Danube Regional Distance Learning Program, etc.

<sup>37</sup> Section 14 provides additional details regarding ensuring financial sustainability of the project.

<sup>38</sup> As measured by the level of spontaneous interaction amongst GEF projects, unprompted by and independent of external facilitation.

<sup>39</sup> GEF. 22 April 2002 [Draft]. *Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators for GEF International Waters Projects*. Washington, D.C. p. 9