

Policy on Public Involvement in GEF Projects

Summary: This document provides the rationale, basic principles, and definition of public involvement in GEF-financed projects. It also identifies how the principles for public involvement will be applied by the Secretariat, GEF Partner Agencies, Project Executing Agencies, and others participating in GEF-financed projects.

Background: The GEF Council approved a Policy on *Public Involvement in GEF Projects* at its seventh meeting in April 1996, contained in Council document GEF/C.7/6. Taking into account GEF Council decisions in 2010 and 2011 to broaden the GEF Partnership, the GEF Secretariat updated the definitions and terminology for referring to GEF Agencies and GEF Project Agencies, as defined in Council paper GEF/C.39/8/Rev.2, *Accreditation Procedure for GEF Project Agencies*.

Applicability: GEF Secretariat, GEF Partner Agencies, Recipient Countries, Others participating in GEF-financed projects.

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Sponsors: GEF External Affairs Team (EXT)

Key Words: Consultation, Information Dissemination, Involvement, Project Executing Agency, Public, Stakeholder Participation.

I. Definitions

Consultation: Consultation involves information exchanges among the government, the Implementing Agency, the project executing agencies, and other stakeholders. Although decision making authority rests with the government, the Implementing Agencies, and the project executing agencies, periodic consultations throughout the project cycle help managers make informed choices about project activities. More important, it provides opportunities for communities and local groups to contribute to project design, implementation, and evaluation.

Information dissemination: Information dissemination refers to the availability and distribution of timely and relevant information on GEF-financed projects, including notification, disclosure, and public access to such information.

GEF Agency: Any one of the 10 institutions that were entitled to receive GEF Trust Fund resources directly as of November 2010. They include the following organizations: the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Development Program, United Nations Environment Program, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

GEF Partner Agencies: Those agencies eligible to request and receive GEF resources directly for the design, implementation, and execution of GEF Projects. This category includes both GEF Agencies and GEF Project Agencies.

GEF Project Agency: Any of the institutions that the GEF has accredited to receive GEF resources to implement and execute GEF-financed projects apart from the ten GEF Agencies.

Project Executing Agency: The institutions or range of institutions, which are directly responsible for project preparation, design, implementation, and evaluation. These may be recipient government agencies, U.N. specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, and/or other bodies. The term “project executing agency” is not synonymous with “executing agency” as used by UNDP. In UNDP, only recipient governments; organizations of the U.N. system, including U.N. specialized agencies and the U.N. Office for Project Services (UNOPS); governmental agencies not part of the U.N. system, and UNDP itself may be “executing agencies” although NGOs and other bodies may provide extensive services to project preparation, design, implementation, and evaluation.

Public involvement: Public involvement consists of three related, and often overlapping, processes: information dissemination, consultation, and stakeholder participation. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, or institutions which have an interest or "stake" in the outcome of a GEF-financed project or are potentially affected by it. Stakeholders include the recipient country

government;; project executing agencies; groups contracted to carry out project activities and/or consulted at various stages of the project; project beneficiaries; groups of people who may be affected by project activities; and other groups in the civil society which may have an interest in the project.

Stakeholder participation: Where stakeholders collaboratively engage in the identification of project concepts and objectives, selection of sites, design and implementation of activities, and monitoring and evaluation of project outcomes. Developing strategies for incorporating stakeholder participation throughout the project cycle is particularly necessary in projects which have impacts on the incomes and livelihoods of local groups, especially disadvantaged populations in and around project sites (e.g., indigenous peoples, women, poor households).

II. Introduction

1. The need for public involvement -- information dissemination, consultation, and stakeholder participation -- is explicit in the *Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility* (or *GEF Instrument*). As stated in the basic provisions of the Instrument, all GEF-financed projects will "provide for full disclosure of non-confidential information, and consultation with, and participation as appropriate of, major groups and local communities throughout the project cycle" (paragraph 5, p. 6). The Secretariat is to "in consultation with the Implementing Agencies¹, ensure the implementation of the operational policies adopted by the Council through the preparation of common guidelines on the project cycle. Such guidelines shall address project identification and development, including the proper and adequate review of project and work program proposals, consultation with and participation of local communities and other interested parties" (*GEF Instrument*, p. 12). The GEF Implementing Agencies also have their own policies, guidelines, and procedures on public involvement which are consistent with the above provisions.

III. Objectives

2. Effective public involvement is critical to the success of GEF-financed projects. When done appropriately, public involvement improves the performance and impact of projects by:

- (a) Enhancing recipient country ownership of, and accountability for, project outcomes; (b) Addressing the social and economic needs of affected people;
- (c) Building partnerships among project executing agencies and stakeholders; and
- (d) Making use of skills, experiences, and knowledge, in particular, of CSOs, community and local groups, and the private sector in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities.

IV. Scope of Application

3. The policy applies to GEF Secretariat, Trustee, GEF Partner Agencies, Recipient Countries and Others participating in GEF-financed projects.

V. Policy Requirements

4. Based upon provisions contained in the Instrument, policies and procedures of the Implementing Agencies, and experience gained from the pilot phase, the following principles will apply in the design, implementation, and evaluation of GEF-financed projects.

Effective public involvement should enhance the social, environmental, and financial sustainability of projects.

¹ As a consequence of Council decisions to broaden the range of GEF implementing partners, first under the policy on expanded opportunities, and then through the policy to broaden the GEF partnership to include GEF project agencies, the provisions of the policy will apply to all GEF Partner Agencies. The Policy has been updated to reflect this.

5. Public involvement activities should be designed so that they contribute to the environmental, financial, and social sustainability of projects. By improving project performance and sharing accountability for project outcomes, public involvement contributes to the environmental and financial sustainability of projects. In addition, to be socially sustainable, projects should, as appropriate, address the social, cultural, and economic needs of people affected by GEF-financed projects. As mentioned in the operational strategy, relevant social issues will be taken into account in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects. Such issues may include the socio-economic needs of affected people, the special needs of vulnerable populations and access to project benefits.

Responsibility for assuring public involvement rests within the country, normally with the government, project executing agency or agencies, with the support of GEF Partner Agencies.

6. Public involvement activities should strengthen ownership of projects by recipient countries. Governments should ensure that all GEF-financed projects are country-driven and based on national priorities for sustainable development. Governments should promote public involvement in the identification of project concepts. GEF Partner Agencies will assist and collaborate with recipient governments and project executing agencies, as appropriate, in developing projects that make use of, and promote public involvement throughout the project cycle. GEF Partner Agencies will work closely with governments and project executing agencies to involve stakeholders starting at the earliest phase of project identification and throughout design, implementation and evaluation.

Public involvement activities should be designed and implemented in a flexible manner, adapting and responding to recipient countries' national and local conditions and to project requirements.

7. It is recognized that there are differences in requirements for public involvement across focal areas and types of projects. For example, biodiversity projects affecting indigenous peoples may require more extensive stakeholder participation than global projects which focus on technical assistance and capacity building at the national and regional levels. There will also be diversity in approaches to design of public involvement activities that respond to in-country conditions, such as the cultural, political, and project-specific factors influencing project development and implementation.

To be effective, public involvement activities should be broad-based and sustainable. GEF Partner Agencies will include in project budgets, as needed, the necessary financial and technical assistance to recipient governments and project executing agencies to ensure effective public involvement.

8. GEF Partner Agencies will work with governments and project executing agencies to ensure that public involvement activities are designed in a manner that is representative of a broad range of stakeholder groups and effectively carried out over the long-term. GEF Partner Agencies will support project executing agencies in: (a) providing relevant, timely, and accessible information to as many stakeholders as possible; (b) facilitating broad-based and project-specific consultations, especially at the local or sub-national levels; and (c) promoting the

active participation of key stakeholder groups throughout the project cycle, including awareness raising and capacity strengthening activities.

Public involvement activities will be carried out in a transparent and open manner. All GEF financed projects should have full documentation of public involvement.

9. Consistent with provisions in the Instrument, there should be transparency in the preparation, conduct, reporting, and evaluation of public involvement activities in all projects. The format for documentation of public involvement will be developed by the Secretariat, in consultation with GEF Partner Agencies. Such a format should be brief and concise and should take into consideration good practice formats currently in use by GEF Partner Agencies, CSOs, and project executing agencies.

10. The Secretariat will undertake the following to facilitate effective public involvement in all GEF-financed projects:

- a) Establish, in consultation with the GEF Agencies, operational guidelines for assessing the effectiveness of public involvement activities in the project's design and implementation plan; subsequent monitoring of public involvement activities through the annual project implementation review; and evaluating the impacts of public involvement in terms of improving projects;
- b) Facilitate the exchange of good practices on public involvement among recipient governments, GEF Partner Agencies, project executing agencies, and other stakeholders with a view to ensuring that lessons learned are incorporated into design of future projects;
- c) In collaboration with GEF Partner Agencies, explore ways in which NGO roles can be strengthened in project preparation, design, implementation and evaluation and conduct periodic assessments of the effectiveness of CSOs, and other stakeholders, in promoting public involvement in projects; and
- d) Ensure that funding is available to recipient governments, executing agencies, and, as appropriate, CSOs for carrying out effective public involvement.

11. GEF Partner Agencies are committed to promoting effective public involvement within their own institutional environment. In accordance with internal policies and procedures, and consistent with the principles outlined in Part III above, GEF Partner Agencies should develop guidelines for public involvement in their own GEF-financed projects, which may include the following:

- a) Modalities for incorporating public involvement in projects, and addressing social issues, starting at the earliest stages of the project cycle, and recognizing the difficulties and long-term nature of cultivating local participation; and
- b) Financing options during project preparation, and within project budgets, to facilitate design and implementation of public involvement activities, as appropriate, including

allocation of project funding to encourage participation of CSOs, local groups, and the private sector.

Responsible Party	Required Actions
a. GEF Secretariat	In consultation with the GEF Agencies, ensure the implementation of the operational policies adopted by the Council through the preparation of guidelines on the project cycle. Such guidelines shall address project identification and development, including the proper and adequate review of project and work program proposals, consultation with and participation of local communities and other interested parties
b. GEF Partner Agencies	GEF Partner Agencies will assist and collaborate with recipient governments and project executing agencies, as appropriate, in developing projects that make use of, and promote public involvement throughout the project cycle. GEF Partner Agencies will work closely with governments and project executing agencies to involve stakeholders starting at the earliest phase of project identification and throughout design, implementation and evaluation.
c. Recipient Countries	Governments should ensure that all GEF-financed projects are country-driven and based on national priorities for sustainable development. Governments should promote public involvement in the identification of project concepts.

VI. References

- a. *Public Involvement in GEF Projects*, GEF/C.7/6
- b. *Draft Outline of Policy Paper on Public Involvement in GEF-Financed Projects* (GEF/C.6/Inf.5)
- c. *Joint Summary of the Chairs, Seventh GEF Council Meeting*, April 2-4, 1996, paragraph 16.
- d. *Accreditation Procedure for GEF Project Agencies*, GEF/C.39/Rev.2.
- e. *Broadening the GEF Partnership under Paragraph 28 of the GEF Instrument*, GEF/C.40/09.
- f. *Joint Summary of the Chairs, 39th GEF Council Meeting*, November 18, 2011.
- g. *Enhancing the Engagement of Civil Society Organizations in Operations of the GEF*. GEF/C.39/10/Rev 1
- h. *Enhancing Civil Society Engagement and Partnership with the GEF*. GEF/C.34/9
- i. *Joint Summary of the Chairs, 40th GEF Council Meeting*, May 26, 2011.

VII. Those seeking more information on this policy should contact the GEF External Affairs Team.