

Compilation of NGO Interventions

GEF Council Meetings

November, 2003

Q&A with GEF CEO and Chairman, Mr. Leonard Good **GEF-NGO Consultation, November 19, 2003**

On behalf of the GEF NGO Network, we heartily welcome you to the GEF and we look forward to building a close and productive relationship with you

Today, the GEF NGO Network consists of more than 600 accredited NGOs with an unique mixture of international, regional, national, and local NGOs as well as indigenous people and youth groups that are concerned for both environment and social development. We were particularly encouraged with your remarks at the last GEF Council meeting about the role of NGOs in GEF's operation. We look forward to working with you to develop an enabling environment to ensure public participation in GEF policy and programs.

As you know, since the establishment of the GEF, NGOs have played a critical role in developing and implementing GEF funded projects by reaching out to the most vulnerable communities towards environmental degradation. Moreover, the GEF NGO Network has been supported by the GEF Secretariat and the Council to participate in policy dialogue, support outreach and capacity building, and promote public participation in every step of the project cycle, including evaluation of GEF operations. Some of the NGOs have been playing critical role on the GEF replenishment and appropriation as well. We are hopeful and confident that under your leadership, the unique role of the NGOs would be further recognized and strengthened within the GEF operation.

Now that you have worked in your position for the past few months, we would like to hear your vision and overall plans on how you envision an enhanced role of NGOs on both GEF policy and project initiatives, and how you plan to ensure and strengthen implementation of the existing public participation policy of GEF.

In addition, we would also like to seek your attention on some of the key concerns that the NGOs share in terms of GEF operation and seek your feedback and support on the issues:

1. Project Cycle and Medium Size Project

As recognized also through the OPS2 and MSP reviews, we are very concerned about the lengthy as well as confusing procedures that the GEF imposes for project approval process and implementation. Many NGOs are finding it difficult to work on GEF proposals under this situation, not only the smaller NGOs but even also the larger INGOs, considering the time and cost that it takes. Thus, we urge that the recommendations made by the reviews to be implemented and streamlined at the earliest in order to increase efficiency of the procedures.

In this regard, we are grateful that after few years of discussion and following our discussion at the last council meeting, we now have the MSP working group to review the MSP processes, including few NGO representatives. Although the MSP has been developed to facilitate expedited access to GEF funding by diverse actors the MSP evaluation report of 2001 revealed the unacceptably lengthy, slow, and not always clear MSP processes. The working group is planned to present a concrete recommendations for improvement at the May Council meeting

next year and we look forward to your further support with your team and GEF partners on this important exercise.

2. Small Grants Programme

The NGOs find the SGP as an effective funding mechanism of GEF and have been long suggested for the increased allocation of funding, both vertically and horizontally by expanding initiatives in the countries under implementation as well as to cover increased number of new countries in this important programme. We welcome that this has been realized under the current replenishment cycle and the NGO Network is ready to provide our network and support for the continued success of the programme.

3. Country dialogue and consultation mechanism

We recognize that effective access to information by the civil society organizations is an important pre-condition for effective participation. GEF has made efforts in this regard with the GEF Country Dialogue Workshops, however, this has been a one-time event and need to be followed up for a sustained impact. Moreover, NGO participation to these meetings has been limited in many countries. We suggest that a regular follow up mechanism, particularly involving the civil society organizations, would be established at the country level to update on GEF developments and strategic priorities, and also enable NGOs participation in the programmatic discussion.

4. Implementation of capacity building initiatives

We welcome the increased emphasis and attention on the importance of capacity building initiatives under the GEF operation. However, we also recognize that until now, much of the resources have been allocated only for assessments. We urge the GEF partners to quickly shift its attention to the implementation of capacity building initiatives and actually work to build capacity of the key actors in developing countries, including the NGOs and other civil society organizations.

5. Strengthen public participation in GEF projects

As recommended by the OPS2 study, in order to strengthen and ensure public participation in GEF-funded projects, we suggest that the GEFSEC and the IAs to develop an effective and systematic way to document information on stakeholder consultations and public participation in all GEF-funded projects, including identifying effective indicators and best practices.

In closing, we reiterate our support to the challenges ahead and we look forward to working with you in enhancing and improving the capacity of the GEF.

▪ **GEF Business Plan FY05-07**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Business Plan that is presented before us. On behalf of the NGO Network, I would like to provide overall reactions to the plan. Many of the elements of the business plan will be covered by the following discussion agenda today, thus I will touch on the key issues, particularly the ones that are not going to be covered by the subsequent discussions.

First of all, we welcome the strong emphasis and further clarification provided on the increased funding for the capacity building initiatives. Since we will be having a separate agenda later to discuss about the Capacity Building Strategy, I would not discuss on it in much detail but we consider the dual approaches that has been presented here to be effective: one that is having the capacity building activities embedded in the individual projects and another to have a free-standing projects for capacity building as suggested by the Conventions. It is also highly welcomed that the GEF is finally ready to move beyond assessment to implementation of capacity building initiatives. We suggest that the GEF will strengthen coordination with ongoing and planned capacity building initiatives by the NGOs and other donors, generate and use best practices, and ensure capacity building among diverse stakeholders, including the NGOs and civil society organizations

Second, we very much welcome the introduction of the “Piloting an Operational Approach to Adaptation” under the climate change focal area. Development of adaptation response measures is critically important in many developing countries, such as the impact to mangrove and coral reef ecosystem that has profound impact also to the livelihood of the people, and we strongly support this initiative. We also suggest that while the GEFSEC further elaborate strategic programming approach with the implementing agencies to identify the types of adaptation activities, they will consult wider stakeholders such as the NGO partners that are actively involved in this field and jointly develop the strategical priorities.

Finally, we would like to share some critical concern about the level of financing allocated to some of the strategical priorities:

1. Integrated Approach to Ecosystem Management

We are concerned that the funding of this window is going to be decreased by one fourth, from 48M in FY04 to 13M in FY05. With a level of interest and importance to this focal area, we require a clear explanation on the reason for this decrease. As we all recognize, it has been supported by the Conventions and many other global forums to work on conservation initiatives beyond the traditional protected areas and focus on ecosystem level management at the landscape level. We strongly suggest that, considering the importance of this focal area, similar level of finance from the previous Business Plan period will continue during this planning period.

2. International Waters – reducing contaminants and addressing water scarcity.

Likewise, we also require clear explanation on the reduced finance under this window. Although the POPs focal area has been added to address part of the issue under the window, there are still many other toxic chemicals that needs to be addressed under this international water focal area and we suggest to continue adequate resources allocation under this strategic priority.

▪ **Performance-based Framework for Allocation of GEF Resources**

Dear Mr. Chairman. We NGOs appreciate the good effort by the Technical Working Group to tackle this complex and politically loaded topic.

NGOs share the concern for an allocation of scarce GEF resources with a view to maximize the impact in terms of global environmental benefits.

However, we **have some fundamental concerns regarding the approach and the scientific underpinnings of a country performance based allocation of GEF resources:**

- GEF should primarily be focused on global/transboundary environmental priorities/targets – **rewarding good national level performance should always be secondary to achieving global benefits.**
- We do see the relevance of country performance as **ONE criteria in approving GEF funding** [called screening framework in the Technical Working Group report], since a good performance track record will generally reduce the risk of project failure (although it will in no way guarantee success!).
- However, we do not think that poor performance should necessarily become a barrier to GEF funding. By contrast, poor performance should first of all be seen as an indication for poor capacity and should lead to stronger Capacity Building efforts.
- We seriously question how **ex-ante allocation** could enhance the impact of GEF resources. In fact, we see the possibility that it may act as a **perverse incentive**, giving countries who were lucky enough to receive an ex-ante allocation as sense of **entitlement**. However, GEF funding is not an entitlement: programs from different countries and different IA should compete for scarce resources on the basis of **which** program addresses global priorities in the most cost-effective way.
- We are concerned that proposed country performance indicators will give undue weight to the **performance and capacity of entities in the governmental sector**, and **less weight to the capacity of the civil society sector**. Civil society organizations have demonstrated that they can be effective instruments for achieving GEF objectives, e.g. by implementing community level projects, creating public awareness, and holding governments accountable with regard to their environmental policies and performance. Hence, should the performance and the capacity of one sector in a country be found

inadequate for implementing GEF projects, GEF funding should continue to other sectors which have demonstrated a satisfactory performance and capacity.

- In this context, we acknowledge, that the Technical Working Group recommends in para 50 b the possibility for NGOs to serve as project executing agencies in countries rated as low performing. However the report should go one step further, in para 50 a, and make **access to Medium Sized Projects** (MSPs) by civil society independent of any country performance rating, [i.e. treat MSP in the same way as the Small Grant Programs.] The rationale is that MSP can be executed by non-governmental organizations, even when Government performance is poor.
- We firmly believe that fundamental decisions like a change in the allocation mechanism should emerge as result of a broad consensus of a majority of GEF Council Members and civil society representatives. We trust that a fair and comprehensive model for allocating GEF resources will be a strong incentive in itself for getting such system up and going.
- We also feel that the scope of the Technical Working Group should be extended: in addition to developing methods for measuring country performance of recipient countries, the Technical Working Group should also develop methods for measuring the country performance of donor countries (including, e.g. the punctuality with which a country makes it previously pledged contribution, active participation in relevant international conventions, and timely compliance with convention requirements).

Mr. Chairman, in summary, we have fundamental reservations to the very approach of country performance based allocation, and in particular to any suggestion of an ex-ante allocation based on country performance.. We therefore recommend:

- the Council tasks the working group to focus efforts on developing a credible set of indicators for allocating resources based on global environmental priorities;
- the Council tasks the working group to develop a credible set of indicators for the assessment of country performance which could be used as one element in a screening mechanism when allocating GEF resources;
- the Council does not endorse any plan which, even if phased, would lead to an ex-ante allocation mechanism based on country performance.

▪ **Progress of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.**

On behalf of the GEF-NGO Network, we want to highlight the progress of:

1. Harmonization of data and compatibility of assessments across the implementing agencies for develop a common criteria for the evaluation process.
2. The development in retrofitting indicators to monitoring impacts and outcomes.

3. Establishment of projects-at risk system by the IA's for early identification and prevention of risk in the performance of the projects.
4. Project performance review for: Project Implementation Review (PIR); Secretariat Managed Projects Reviews (SMPR); Terminal Evaluations (TE), by the explicit incorporation of the criteria in favor of the Stakeholder participation, country ownership, sustainability and replication and lessons learned.

Others issues to highlight is the development of the Knowledge Management in order to increase emphasis on the feedback loop and improved the lessons learned capacity in the GEF Focal Areas.

Another important highlight is about the development of a Program Indicators in:

1. Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, for measure the results of the GEF supported activities in biodiversity related to the goal of reducing biodiversity losses.
2. and for International Waters Focal Area.

For these reasons, we recognize and applause the excellence progress of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and encourage to continue this independent tasks to strengthen the capacities of the GEF.

▪ **Third Study of GEF's Overall Performance (OPS 3): Terms of Reference and Budget**

On behalf of the GEF-NGO Network, we want to highlight which the OPS3 will focus more than its predecessors on program and projects outcomes, the sustainability of those outcomes and the move towards impact.

About the proposed methodology for OPS3 is suitable the combination of desk reviews, field visits of project, regional and sub-regional meetings, individual and national consultations, focus group meetings and expert interviews, in order to obtain feedback on perceived performance, expectations and needs.

But is not clear reflected in the proposed budget; for example: the differences of the amounts for internationals experts and local consultants, and the proposed quantity of only five sub-regional workshops and the amount for those for all the world.

We are concern about the real and effective space for the participation of the civil society organizations and indigenous peoples in the OPS3.

We request a clear definition and the adequate financial provision to ensure this participation. It's not possible reduce the cost of the OPS3 undermining the capacity of participation of those sectors.

Finally, we suggest adequate coordination with the GEF –NGO Network as a way to promote the engagement of the organized civil society and indigenous peoples in the OPS3, we offer our best support.

In this state is appropriate remember that OPS2 requested in the executive summary, the creation of “an interagency task force should be organized by the GEF Secretariat for the purpose of developing an effective and systematic way to document information on stakeholder consultations and participation, including the involvement of indigenous communities, in GEF-funded projects”.

This task is even not accomplish.

▪ **Strategic Approach to Enhance Capacity Building**

We would first like to congratulate the GEF for this new Strategic Approach to Enhance Capacity Building.

Low capacity particularly within developing world NGOs and CBOs has without question drastically limited their ability to contribute to environmental management efforts.

We therefore specially applaud the proposed approach to support the capacity building needs of the least developed countries and small islands states:

- ✿ The proposed enhancement of the GEF projects review criteria, to give capacity building the same profile as other criteria such as sustainability and replicability
- ✿ As well as the mechanisms identified to built capacity including the creation of pathways for free-standing projects for capacity building, and the targeted capacity building across focal areas. The immediate areas identified for support in the cross-cutting focal areas of
 - institutional strengthening
 - capacity building for public awareness and education and
 - development of training materials

are of direct relevance and importance to NGOs and CBOs.

We would therefore suggest that special mention of the intent to address the capacity needs of NGOs and CBOs to be made.

We also have the following questions and concerns.

--throughout the document mention is made of the need for projects to be country driven and come up from a process of national prioritization. The consensus position with the NGO and CBO groups is that community groups in reality are often not include in these considerations, although a fair amount of “lip services “ is paid. We are concerned that community driven priorities will not be seriously taken into account unless there is a specific requirement for this to be so.

Community groups should be involved from conceptualization of project development, implementation, decision making and participatory monitoring and evaluation.

We also recognize the importance placed on the National Capacity Needs Self Assessment (NCSA) to inform capacity building areas of focus.

We ask for clarification on the cases of countries where the NCSAs have not been conducted.

--in paragraph 43 it is stated that "It may not be necessary for all countries in LDCS and SIDS to have access to capacity building support. And the specific eligibility criteria will be developed. We are concerned about LDCS and SIDS being excluded from this facility and ask that the developed criteria be reviewed by the NGOs and council before adoption.

Under technical support (paragraph 44) the need for information and examples of good practices to support capacity building efforts has been identified. We would like to emphasize the importance of lessons learnt in the field by CBOs and NGOs and public sectors entities to this end. We recommend that these be brought together at the local level for dissemination. This will complement the approaches at the regional and global levels which have been identified in the document.

Finally, the capacity building needs of CBOs and NGOs in developing countries are in the main priorities around issues of human resources, equipment (salaries for staff) and operating cost. We hope that capacity building will include direct support and the building of mechanisms to ensure sustainability. We would wish you to react on these requirements

▪ **National Dialogue Workshops**

1. The independent evaluation carried out things to see the utility and the impact of the program of the national dialogue workshops and all the interest of the countries and the GEF to realise the aims of these workshops, so : to make known the mechanisms of the GEF, to support the dialogue within the countries for the implementation of conventions, to reach the resources.

2. Nevertheless, it seems that the evaluation appears partially skewed owing to the fact that number of participants of the concerned countries with the implementation of this program were not associated at the process of evaluation. Is it a problem of communication?

On just indicative bases, only 3 ONGs and COBs and private operator were concerned by the investigation into 25 countries or areas. The major part of the guarantors are the operational focal points and the local agencies of the PNUD.

3. Concerning the participation of ONGs at the national dialogue workshops, particularly at the end of 2002, the appraiser announces the fact that the network of ONGs of the GEF would not been sufficiently active to ensure a large participation of ONGs to the workshops in comparison to the first workshops held. That calls the following observation: The participation depends on:

- choice's process of the local ONGs participants at these workshops,
- quality of the contacts and level of communication with the OPF and the PNUD,
- existence or not of frameworks of consultation in countries within the framework of national plans of development or of the environment and within the framework of the implementation of conventions.

4. Prospects for prolongations - Like that was say in the presence of Mr. Len Good, the national dialogue workshops can have significant impacts and must be the subject of a great attention. Thus, the results obtained until now can be diluted if the program is not reinforced in the countries and areas already touched and extended with new areas and new countries. In this mind, it is a question of being based on the existing networks and on the professional organizations, in addition to the OPF and of the UNDP. Also, a larger support of the GEF at the network NGOs can realize, particularly on the areas and of under areas, the objectives of the program relating to the national dialogue workshops.

5. Finally, the support of synergy between conventions, can create a favourable ground to the dialogue in the developing countries and based on the participative dialogue.

▪ **Review of Experience with Executing Agencies under Expanded Opportunities**

The GEF-NGO network appreciates the good work done by the GEF Secretariat on this Review and shares most of the Statements of the document.

As stated in the Review, the Executing Agencies (EAs) have the technical, managerial and operational capacity to produce projects for the GEF meeting the needs of its Business Plan. Moreover, they can provide regionally an invaluable source of additional technical expertise, on a geographical basis, to help countries shape and refine GEF operations.

For the above mentioned reasons:

1. We support that the EA's, according to their own comparative advantage and expertise, must be entitled immediately to present proposals to the GEF directly, without going through an Implementing Agency.
2. We also agree that EA's must have an expedite access to the GEF Secretariat for PDF-A funds, PDF-B grants and funds for Enabling Activities .
3. We request that as sated in paragraph 6 the GEF should expand opportunities for execution of activities to NGO's and Regional Development Banks, as referred in Paragraph 28 of the Instrument, for enhancing regional joint work pursuing global environmental benefits.

Last but not least, we share with the EA's its perception of lack of commitment and difficulties in collaboration with the IA's and local focal points that didn't see them as active partners in developing GEF projects, as long as NGO's have confronted the same troublesome situations with the IA's and the focal points.

Thus, we support the request done by the EA's to the GEF Secretariat about officially informing the Local Focal Points of the role of the EA's and the urging need to invite representatives of the EA's to participate in GEF - CDW's and in GEF - National Dialogue Initiative. The NGO's

experiences in Country Dialog Workshops have been very fruitful for NGO's, CBO's and other Civil Society Organizations.

▪ **Participation of GEF in work of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)**

As key institution involved in the implementation of agenda 21 and the JPOI GEF should strengthen its visibility at the CSD and similar forums. We are of opinion that the GEF as the primary financing mechanism of agenda 21 and the various conventions is little known among civil society, and even International institutions. For instance very few civil society organizations know that UNDP is the executive agenda of GEF as regards the small grants program. In countries civil society groups, NGO'S know that it is UNDP project and money. Hence the urgency of bringing more visibility of the GEF at all levels.

We request that GEF should during each CSD meeting organize side events such as exhibitions, workshops, displays, presentations, etc. For example a GEF staff should be permanently posted at the GEF display table and also at the learning centre. GEF should also take the initiative to organize and promote dialogue sessions during the CSD session.

During these dialogue session success stories of GEF projects which are bringing change in the lives of rural and communities should be highlighted. GEF should for such sessions bring one or two persons from these communities to participate in the dialogue sessions.

The GEF should also support the GEF NGO network and indigenous reps to the CSD and similar forums. We have in mind the PRE-WSSD workshops where GEF facilitated GEF NGO reps to these workshops. We are officially requesting GEF to facilitate the participations of GEF NGO reps to the two workshops to be organized in the context of the forth coming SIDS conference to be held next year in Mauritius (ref. Para. 18) and also in the conference itself.

▪ **CASE STUDY PRESENTATION: PANAMA: San Lorenzo: Effective Protection with Community Participation 1999-2003**

Background

- Canal area reversion to Panama, 1979-1999
- Sherman home of US JOTB, Jungle Operations Training Battalion, defense site of Panama Canal,
- Off limits to Panama since 1903, Canal Zone
- UXOs in Piña firing range
- Citizen participation in decision making

Panama vegetation cover 2000

Our objectives and results

- Objectives, 1999
- (i) to contribute to the conservation of the San Lorenzo Protected Area, as an important link in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor in Panama
- (ii) to strengthen support for this by all interested stakeholders

Specific objectives....

- Develop and implement the first Management Plan for the San Lorenzo Protected Area,
- Establish appropriate institutional framework for management of the area
- Financial mechanisms set up for viability of the San Lorenzo Protected Area
- Local communities capacity for sustainable management and use of natural resources increased

.... and Results

- The Management Plan was agreed in the final year, by 4 government agencies, includes change of category to National Park
- Four alternatives for managing the National Park were proposed in the Management Plan, but no final decision was made

The budget and real costs

- Without the GEF project, (US\$725,000), estimated government investment in personnel etc. in the area, plus research expenses by the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute at nearly US\$2 million over 4 years.
- CEASPA with the GEF project helped leverage additional funds of more than US\$1 million, from Peace Corps, US Forest Service/USDA, USAID, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Natura Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, plus volunteer hours

The project design, planning, monitoring and evaluation

- Project designed by CEASPA, with participation of the Panama Audubon Society, seven government agencies, and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
- The design helped monitor progress,
- Helped keep us on track
- External consultant for the mid term review gave CEASPA credibility and reduced tension regarding the role of the NGO ref government decision making

The project plan: did it work?

- The overall plan and the objectives of the project continued to be valid, though less attainable in four years than CEASPA and the World Bank had originally envisaged
- change of government

- Some aspects required nation wide regulations
- new challenges for consolidation of the Protected Area appeared
- the governments´ interpretation of participation was different from CEASPA´s

CEASPA´s approach

- Full time dedication to the area
- We encouraged development of a sense of place, the magic, the dream, perceptions becoming reality
- Citizens rights- who do national parks belong to? Who does the Canal area belong to?
- Presence and commitment to people and communities
- Experience, credibility in facilitation of institutions with different agendas
- Focus on the good news

Methodologies used

- Constant analysis of the context, and stakeholder analysis
- Popular education methodology in communities and groups
- Working simultaneously at policy making/decision making level, and in the field
- Getting people together, taking them out

Evaluation of impacts

- Visibility of the San Lorenzo Protected Area
- The forest is still there
- Four government agencies with different agendas negotiated and agreed on the Management Plan
- Little encroachment on the forest by local people, several issues still unresolved

Greater self-esteem in individuals in the buffer zone, people running the Park, the CEASPA team

Innovations and replicability

- Project design: rural families and decision makers
- Communication strategy
- Financial mechanisms, dedicated bank account for San Lorenzo Protected Area
- New methodologies in preparing the Management Plan, adapted from US Forest Service, ROS/SMS
- Protection Plan for patrolling and reducing threats

Role of GEF and World Bank: what CEASPA learned

- (i) Useful to be a MSP related to a full size project, with shared Task Manager
- (ii) World Bank participation can make government take an NGO more seriously
- (iii) World Bank procedures helped CEASPA update its project management
- (iv) An MSP is huge for NGO, and tiny for World Bank- so little micromanaging

What works

- Synergies with other projects, MBC, being part of a big idea

- Relating the regional to the local, international to national
- Communication, getting the word out, running an open inclusive project
- Having a dream, dreams inspire people, not losing it when the going gets tough
- Having good back up from the World Bank Task Manager
- Training for the project team

What did not work

- Activism, working individually rather than as a team
- Second guessing rather than picking up the phone
- Misunderstanding about the limitations of a NGO to “make” the government do something, rather than creating conditions to let the government do it
- Working alone, rather than with other NGOs or friendly institutions
- Concentration on numerical indicators of community participation, rather than the quality of participation
- What did we do about this?
- TTT, TIME TO THINK, slow down, don’t give up, ask for help, bring in outside facilitators, more training, more communication and get feed back from outsiders

Challenges in 2003 for San Lorenzo and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor

- Threats to habitat, connectivity, from private tourism developments and impacts and from Panama Canal expansion and modernization
- Lack of institutional definition of management responsibility
- Local people, local government and NGOs have to fight for their space, to be heard and to be the ones to benefit
- “National security” issues, conflict with public civilian use of area

Challenges for CEASPA

- Commitment to local people and processes started
 - applying lessons learned in buffer zone and habitat management
- building on what has been set in place
- watchdog function
- a new Community learning center/visitors center in Achiote buffer zone
- incorporating new partners and activities
- supporting the fledgling National Park
- ongoing education for transformation

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