

May 2015



ECW-Extended Constituency Workshop

CSO MEETING

BAHAMAS- MAY 4th to 7th

**Extended Constituency Workshop-Report of the Civil Society Organizations to the GEF-
Prepared by Patricia Turpin– RFP Caribbean**

The **GEF Extended Constituency Workshop** (ECW) LAC was held on the 4th – 7th May 2015 at Freeport, Grand Bahamas.

The ECW aimed at keeping the GEF national focal points, convention focal points and other key stakeholders, including civil society, abreast of GEF strategies, policies and procedures and to encourage coordination.

The event was an opportunity for focal points to meet with their counterparts from other countries in the region and other GEF partners including CSO's to discuss and review policies and procedures and to share lessons and experiences from development and implementation of GEF projects and their integration Within national policy frameworks.

The ECW agenda spanned three days with the first days programme dedicated to meeting with Civil Society Organizations. The CSO meeting was chaired by the RFP Patricia Turpin and covered presentations about the GEF and the NGO network, an assessment of civil society engagement in GEF 6, core challenges experienced by CSO's, review of the GEF public Involvement Policy, the Network Strategic Plan, participation In preparation for the Convention meetings and MEA's, Star allocations and finally, establishing a way forward with an increase of regional membership and funding.

The second and third day was chaired by William Ehlers-GEF secretariat, with numerous presentations and hands-on practical exercises for project formulation etc. GEF 2020 new initiatives, Project cycle and accessing GEF STAR, Gender equality, thematic and focal areas. Convention Secretariats (CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD). The agenda also focused on M&E policy, GEF policies and operations, GEF SGP, Capacity development and New GEF Guidelines. Encouraged more connection between Country OFP's, PFP's and CSO's.

The Caribbean GEF NGO Network constituency attendants comprised 16 CSO's from 9 countries: **Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago.**

Global Environmental facility – Extended Constituency Workshop

Regional Civil Society Organizations Meeting

Freeport, Bahamas -May 4, 2015

PERSONS PRESENT:



Name	Country	Organisation
Erecia Hepburn	Bahamas	College of the Bahamas; BANROP/Bahamas Youth Forum
Natasha Leader	St. Kitts and Nevis	Fahies Agricultural Women Co-operative Society
Cosbert Manchester	St. Kitts and Nevis	St. Christopher National Trust
Patricia Turpin	Trinidad and Tobago	Environment Tobago
Bartholomew Teul	Belize	Ya'axche Conservation Trust
Gacintha Gordon	Bahamas	ONE Eleuthera Foundation
Nikki Hassell	Barbados	CARIBSAVE
Albert DeTerville	Saint Lucia	Indigenous People (Bethechilokono) of Saint Lucia Governing Council; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Talot Bertrand	Haiti	Promotion For Development (PROMODEV)
Brenda Thomas Odlum	Antigua and Barbuda	Community Development Division and Member of the Freetown Community
Shenique Smith	Bahamas	The Nature Conservancy
H. Arthur Greene	Jamaica	Kevoy Community Development Institute
Sharnette Mitchell	Jamaica	Clarendon Parish Development Committee Benevolent Society
Joanna Rosemond	Saint Lucia	St. Lucia National Trust
Isidro Cus	Belize	C'AC'ALENEL CAR SA NIMA
Robbie Bovino	United States	The Nature Conservancy

1. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

- 1.1 Discuss the GEF6 and options for CSO engagement in GEF 6 projects
- 1.2 Seek feedback from CSOs in the region on GEF 6 engagement
- 1.3 Discuss options to enhance CSO engagement in GEF programmes at country and regional level

1.4 Discuss the way forward for the CSO Network, in terms of:

- 1.4.1 Capacity strengthening needs and opportunities for CSOs;
- 1.4.2 Enhancing CSO engagement in GEF CSO Network in the region;
- 1.4.3 Issues specifically related to region; and
- 1.4.4 An action plan for follow-up in the region.

2. MAJOR POINTS AND COMMENTS MADE

- 2.1 Ms. Turpin welcomed all those present to the meeting/workshop, including Mr. Severin and Mr. Marquez who attended on behalf of the GEF for the first hour of the meeting only. Ms. Turpin next invited all persons seated around the table to introduce themselves. Ms. Turpin then explained the objectives of meeting and the mode of operation, introduced the GEF-CSO Network and its Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 Regarding the draft CSO Network Strategic Plan, several points of concern were noted by the meeting's participants. Mr. Green highlighted that the explanation of the term "RAF" is missing from the Glossary and that similarly, in Section 8 of the plan, the acronym "GCN" is referenced extensively, however it is also missing from the Glossary. Ms. Hepburn recommended that summary material can later be drafted from the full document, once it is finalized. Mr. Manchester opined that the document is not written for a broad audience, its content needed further distillation and in its current form, is poorly written and the glossary is lacking several terms of importance. These points were agreed by all present. Ms. Smith further commented that the CSO network is comprised of a broad, diverse membership and the document does not recognise this diversity. She further commented that Section 4 of the document in particular, could be re-written. Finally, Mr. Green noted that the SWOT Analysis in Section 6 could be improved by the addition of a timeline for each activity. Ms. Leader further added that one weakness not noted in the SWOT analysis is that the Caribbean is not represented sufficiently.
- 2.3 Ms. Turpin asked those present how much engagement most CSOs in various Caribbean countries have with the GEF. She noted that with the exception of Antigua and Barbuda, there seemed to be limited interaction. Ms. Thomas Odlum explained that CSO engagement in Antigua and Barbuda with the GEF was relatively high because funding was directed towards building the capacity of CSOs to access opportunities through the GEF. For instance, an individual was designated to go around the country and assist groups apply for the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP). Since this representative was appointed, a workshop was organised to explain to community groups the different funding options available and to build the capacity of groups to get them to the point where they can apply. Since these activities were undertaken, several CSOs have been successful in obtaining financial support.
- 2.4 Ms. Turpin noted that CSO Membership in the network could be improved. Mr. Manchester recommended that in order to strengthen the network, each organisation present in the room should register. Ms. Turpin further suggested that a Caribbean-wide drive to improve membership could be initiated by the Regional Focal Point and that letters of support could be provided to those interested in joining. It was noted as a point of concern that the length of time CSOs are required to be in operation in order to join the CSO net-

work was currently too long (3 years) and that this was inhibiting membership. It was agreed by all present that it should be suggested to be changed to 2 years.

2.5 Ms. Hepburn pointed out that the GEF-SGP National Coordinator in the Bahamas has done a good job in assisting CSOs gain access to funding available through the SGP. Mr. Crus further commented that the GEF-SGP National Coordinator in Belize has similarly done a good job in reaching out to communities to promote funding opportunities available through the GEF. He also commented that the organisation “TIDES” has provided mentorship to other organisations, to help them develop proposals. It was agreed by all that peer to peer mentorship for CSOs is one way to build capacity for them to access funding. Ms. Odum-Thomas provided an example that in Antigua her CSO made a video of how a project was implemented to share with other CBOs. Mr. Teul commented that one of the challenges he sees with NGOs, is that many of them are competing for the same resources and that there could be much greater impact overall if there was sharing of knowledge between groups.

2.6 Mr. Teul noted that because the GEF Focal Points are government representatives there is the possibility that they may not share information about potential funding opportunities to CSOs if the Government’s interest are contrary to CSOs. Ms. Thomas Odum further commented that this was why it was so important that information about funding opportunities be disseminated widely and that there exists multiple conduits for the dissemination of this information. Ms. Leader commented that overall, CSOs need greater access to such information.

2.7 Based on the previous conversation, Mr. Green emphasized that CSOs require capacity building and organisational strengthening. He noted that part of the failure of CSOs is due to the reality that they operate with limited resources, communication and information sharing and he recommended that there needs to be a conduit from the ministries to CSOs and vice versa, in each country. He further suggested that each country should elect one representative to act as the CSO National Focal Point and that funding be provided to the CSO Regional Focal Point to actualise this. Ms. Turpin noted that there needs to be adequate understanding of what it means to be a CSO and their needs and aspirations, as well as incentives at the lowest level for persons to engage, e.g. community members and private partners to provide technical feedback. These points were agreed by all. Ms. Leader further suggested that the CSO Network meet every year.

2.8 With regards to current funding provided to the CSO Network, it was unanimously agreed that this could benefit from enhancement, particularly to provide resources to the Regional Focal Point. Mr. Manchester noted that this funding would be used to support the Network and in doing so, enhance the process of providing support to each CSO’s clients on the ground. The group agreed that the current \$50,000.00 allotted to the CSO Network was insufficient, especially considering the number of regions this funding was intended to cover and the amount of time and effort invested by the CSO Focal Points. It was unanimously agreed that there needed to be enough funds to have a stationary, permanent Secretariat. It was also unanimously agreed that proper support for the SGP National Coordinators was required, since they are the main point of contact for CSO engagement with the GEF.

2.9 On the topic of country needs and aspirations, several issues were proposed by those present. It was unanimously agreed that there needs to be additional focus on capacity building and information sharing about

the GEF, its funding opportunities and project development and management. Ms. Hepburn commented that some CBOs could provide more assistance to less experienced ones and particularly, go out of their way to share information.

2.10 It was noted by several CBOs that they had limited input into the development of the GEF-SGP Strategic Plan, which typically falls under the purview of the National Coordinator to develop. However, in some countries (Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas), the development of this plan has been a key means for CSOs to provide feedback to the GEF about local needs.

2.11 On the topic of how to increase engagement by CSOs into international forums (e.g. Ramsar Convention), several points were noted. Ms. Turpin commented that there is limited presence of CSOs at major international forums, since only the major internationally recognized CSOs typically are able to attend. Ms. Smith noted that GEF SGP paid for civil society consultation in advance of the Samoa meeting. She further commented that governments often have the option of bringing non-governmental persons to such international forums, but it takes time to establish this relationship. Ms. Thomas Odlum further noted that having a strong regional CSO network, which in itself is registered as a NGO may be a good idea, as representatives from this group would then be able to attend on behalf of those individual groups which are not selected or do not have the resources to support their own representation.

2.12 Ms. Rosemond provided an example of her work in Saint Lucia. Her organization, the Saint Lucia National Trust has taken a leading role in driving the civil society agenda. She noted that many CSOs lack institutional support which affects their capacity to maintain membership and that most of them lack capacity to seek funding because the proposal writing process is viewed as onerous. The Trust approached the SGP for funding to create a Civil Society Coalition. In Saint Lucia, the concept of sustainable development is often regarded as pertaining solely to the environment, not the economy and because of this, it has been difficult to get CSOs to join the coalition because their issues relate to social problems. As an ongoing activity, Ms. Rosemond noted that the coalition was working on developing operational guidelines and they had to be sensitive in the development of these guidelines to ensure the language was inclusive. In particular, this was being done so that CSOs focusing on social issues felt that they could be included in the coalition.

2.13 Ms. Smith commented that in the Bahamas, at a national level the CSOs are not organised under one umbrella group. She further added that project development is important separately from proposal development and that CSOs need to assistance with capacity building, promotion, reporting and monitoring, collaboration and building partnerships.

3. CONCLUSIONS OF MEETING

3.1 The Strategic Plan, in its current form would benefit from improvement.

3.2 Many countries have limited engagement with the GEF, which is currently mostly through the National Coordinators of the Small Grants Programme

3.3 Membership in the CSO Network in the Caribbean region should be expanded, beginning with all organization represented at the meeting

4. RECOMMENDATIONS:

4.1 Develop an addendum to the current Draft CSO Network Strategic Plan - a plan for Strategic ACTION

4.2.1 CSOs should be consulted before the STAR allocation is finalized

4.2.2 Incentivize and support those representatives and stakeholders who are intimately involved in the management and implementation of projects (particularly at the Small Grant Programme level):

1) National Coordinators through Program Associates/Assistants or others

2) CSO Network, especially to assist the Regional Focal Point, to support:

- current operations of the RFPs, as the time committed is substantial; and
- implementation of several new activities including:
 - Election of a Country CSO Focal Point to serve as conduit between CSO's, GEF, GEF – SGP and the government focal point.
 - Initiation of a regional drive to expand CSO membership in the network in the Caribbean;
 - Establishment of an annual meeting of the Regional CSO Network; and
 - Establishment of ongoing activities for capacity building and organisational strengthening through peer-to-peer learning.



Global Environmental Facility Extended Constituency Workshop

Meeting of Civil Society Organisations

May 4th, 2015 - Freeport, Bahamas

Strengthening CSO Engagement at the Country/Regional Level

Actions which have led to increased CSO engagement:

- It was unanimously agreed that the offices of the GEF-SGP National Coordinators have a very positive effect on increasing CSO engagement at the country level with the GEF. The National Coordinators have played an important role in reaching out to CSOs and sharing information about the GEF, encouraging strong CSOs to apply for relevant funding opportunities and connecting CSOs with appropriate partners to assist their efforts and develop their capacity to access such opportunities.
- The GEF-SGP Grantee Network has been formed in a few countries and is viewed by the CSO Network as a very positive resource for Grantees. The Network helps to connect grantees, facilitates knowledge sharing and promotes partnering among them, which reduces duplication of effort and increases project impacts. The Network also helps communicate information about Grantee activities which can then be promoted by other Grantees to the public. Additionally, in some countries, the Grantee Network serves as a mechanism to assist Grantees in being more efficient and effective in the implementation of their projects, by providing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning in project design and implementation, record keeping and monitoring and evaluation. The Grantee network can also be used as a clearing house for information dissemination by the CSO network.
- The development of the GEF SGP Country Programme Strategy for utilization of funds is a positive means by which CSOs are engaged with the GEF. The Country Programme Strategy provides a clear guide for CSOs to assist with development of projects and helps them increase chances of funding, by aligning their project concepts SGP National Programming.

Opportunities for action which could increase CSO Engagement:

- It was unanimously agreed that there is a need to incentivize those representatives and stakeholders who are intimately involved in the management and implementation of projects (particularly those funded through the SGP), as follows:

- Given their importance in increasing CSO engagement with the GEF in their role as the acting point of contact, it was recommended that National Coordinators be provided with additional support to bolster their efforts, where needed. In some countries, National Coordinators are assisted by Programme Associates/Assistants, whom we similarly commend for their efforts in not only providing support to the National Coordinator, but also to CSOs. The provision of such support to the National Coordinator is highly recommended in countries where this positions is not formally established.

- It was agreed by all present that additional support is needed for the CSO Network, especially to assist the Regional Focal Point. Additional funding would be used to support current operations of the RFPs as the time committed is substantial, but also to support the implementation of the following activities which are now viewed as important to building the capacity of the Network:
 1. Electing a National Focal Point for the CSO Network to serve as conduit between CSO's, GEF, GEF – SGP and the government focal point. This is particularly important as CSOs agreed that the current level of communication between Country Focal Points and CSOs could be improved;
 2. A regional drive to expand CSO membership in the network in the Caribbean;
 3. Establishing an annual meeting of the Network; and
 4. Implementing additional activities for capacity building and organisational strengthening. Part of the current limitations of CSOs is that they operate with limited resources, communication and information. It was recommended that support be provided to the CSO Network to allow it to, in turn provide support to CSOs through peer-to-peer learning.

- It was similarly recommended that within projects funded by the Small Grants Program, incentives be provided at every level for persons to engage in the project, i.e. for both community members and technical experts (consultants), as these groups are often expected to provide their time and expertise in-kind

- CSOs throughout the region are diverse. The highly technical and lengthy documentation required for GEF-SGP projects, can act as a deterrent for interested CSOs and be prohibitive to engagement.

- CSOs have recommended that further support be provided by the GEF-SGP for project implementation in terms of completing reporting and monitoring and evaluation requirements. While inception workshops provide a solid basis, there could be more, in-depth guidance provided regularly throughout the year to CSOs for things like reporting requirements – especially in-kind financing as this is an element emphasized by GEF

- Caribbean based CSO Network members as well as non-members have agreed to develop an addendum to the current CSO Network Strategic Plan now in draft - a plan for Strategic ACTION which will recommend specific activities and associated timelines and budget for these activities. The addendum will be completed within the next 90 days.

Agenda	<u>GEF CSO Caribbean Regional meeting-ECW-LAC- Bahamas</u>
<p>9:00 – 10:00</p> <p>10 minutes per topic</p>	<p>Introduction – Patricia Turpin- Caribbean RFP-CSO Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome- Mr. Peter Lallas- Advisor to GEF CEO • Self introductions- Attending CSO’s • Objectives of meeting • Agenda of CSO meeting • Agenda of the ECW meeting • Introduction/overview of the GEF & GEF_CSO Network and Network Strategic Plan
<p>10:00 – 10:30</p>	<p>Coffee break</p>
<p>10:30 – 13:00</p> <p>30 mins per topic and case studies</p> <p>Q & A -30 mins</p>	<p>GEF6 and CSO engagements-</p> <p>Moderator- Herman Arthur Green-Jamaica</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options for CSO engagement in the implementation of the GEF PIP(Public Involvement Policy) and the guidelines prepared by the GEFSEC • Discussion about GEF6 and options for CSO engagement in GEF 6 projects • Seeking feedback from regional CSO’s on GEF 6 engagement in med/large projects submitted by PFP’s/OFP’s of the various countries in the region. • Case studies • Q & A.
<p>13:00 – 14:00</p>	<p>Lunch</p>
<p>14:00 – 15:00</p> <p>10 mins per topic. To be extended into coffee break if necessary for Q & A</p>	<p>Strengthening CSO engagement at country/regional level</p> <p>Moderator-Cosbert Manchestor- St.Kitts & Nevis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions of options to enhance CSO engagement in GEF programmes at country and regional level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual meetings with GEF OFP/GEF CFP’s and SGP. ○ What are the country needs and aspirations in relation to sustainable development-Country strategic plans- GEF/SGP etc ○ How can Civil Society increase engagement in international forums of the CBD, Climate forums, Ramsar conventions, desertification, chemicals,SIDS. ○ What Activities in line with Network Strategic plan can CSO’s use to increase engagement. ○ Q & A

15:00 – 15:30	Coffee break
15:30 – 17:00 20 minutes per topic 50 minutes for statement preparation	The Way Forward- Moderator –Natasha Leader-St.Kitts & Nevis Capacity strengthening needs and opportunities for CSOs at country level. Enhancing CSO engagement in GEF CSO Network in the region. Moderator- Erecia Hepburn- Bahamas Development of CSO Statement to the ECW CLOSING