

## **Guidelines for the Implementation of the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement**

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## Background

1. The international community has long recognized the importance of open and transparent engagement of stakeholders in efforts to support protection of the environment and sustainable development, and in decision-making processes related to multilateral environmental agreements.

2. As indicated also by the GEF's experience, it is vital to extend this engagement to all sectors of society, including civil society organizations (CSOs), Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women and men, and the private sector, among others. The challenges facing environmental degradation are so daunting that no one sector or part of society alone can do the job.

3. Individuals or groups with a stake in the outcome of a project - particularly those who may be affected by it – have valuable knowledge, expertise and opinions to shape the design, implementation and monitoring of project activities, and support their long-term sustainability. They also have rights to participate in actions that affect them. Effective stakeholder engagement builds opportunities to participate in consultations and decision-making, reduce potential conflict, and achieve better and more lasting results.

## **GEF Instrument and Evolution of Policy – Stakeholder Engagement**

4. The work at GEF highlights this background. Since its beginnings in the early 1990's, the GEF has recognized that effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement is essential to its work and fundamental to the success of its efforts to help protect the global environment.

5. The Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF (1994) states in paragraph 5 that with respect to GEF-financed projects, GEF's operational policies "*shall provide for full disclosure of all non-confidential information, and consultation with, and participation as appropriate of, major groups and local communities, throughout the project cycle.*" In 1996, the GEF Council approved the *Policy on Public Involvement in GEF Projects* (1996).<sup>1</sup> This policy set out guiding principles and requirements for consultation, participation, and information disclosure in GEF projects and operations.

3. Building on these early steps, the [GEF 2020 Strategy](#) (2014) included stakeholder engagement as a core operational principle and indicated ways to enhance this engagement. That same year, the Secretariat developed Guidelines to implement the 1996 Policy on Public Involvement. These 2014 Guidelines provided further detail on steps to achieve and implement the principles in the 1996 Policy. They also incorporated updated practice pertaining to engagement of CSOs and other stakeholders, and reflected many comments from stakeholders, including suggestions in the GEF CSO Network's report to the GEF Secretariat.<sup>2</sup>

4. At its 53<sup>rd</sup> Session in November 2017, the Council took a major decision to update the 1996 Policy on Public Involvement. This was done to provide more clarity on key aspects of policy, to reinforce and enhance stakeholder engagement in GEF's work and operations, and to reflect the evolution of other GEF policies, principles and practices regarding stakeholder engagement, including among many GEF Agencies. This is the new [GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement](#) (2017) (hereinafter, the Policy).

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<sup>1</sup> The draft policy was presented in Council Document GEF/C.7/06, *Public Involvement in GEF Projects*. For ease of reference and use, the GEF Secretariat posted the policy as a stand-alone GEF Policy (PL/SD/01), which can be found at: <http://www.thegef.org/gef/content/public-involvement-policy>.

<sup>2</sup> During 2013-2014, the GEF CSO Network conducted a review of the Public Involvement Policy to provide input and recommendations to the GEF Secretariat for the formulation of guidelines for agencies and governments on public participation in GEF project development and implementation.

5. The present Guidelines provide guidance and information on how to implement the Policy, including best practices and useful tools that can be used to conduct meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the GEF program and project cycles. They are not meant to create new requirements, but to provide further guidance on its implementation to the entire GEF partnership, including to GEF Agencies, Operational Focal Points and Stakeholders.<sup>3</sup>

6. Like the Policy, the Guidelines should be considered together with other inter-related GEF policies and guidelines that address key aspects of stakeholder engagement, and may be updated as these evolve. These include: the [\*GEF Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples\*](#); the [\*GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards\*](#) (PL/SD/03) (hereafter referred to as “the GEF Safeguards Policy”); the [\*GEF Policy on Gender Equality\*](#) (PL/SD/02), the [\*GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy\*](#) (GEF/ME/C.39/Rev.01)<sup>4</sup>, and the GEF’s system for responding to complaints and concerns about GEF projects and operations from affected people and communities.<sup>5</sup>

7. The Guidelines are presented below.

## Introduction, Purpose and Scope

8. Paragraphs 1 – 6 of the Policy set out its purpose, application (scope), objective and core principles. These provisions are **guideposts to implementation** of the Policy. They can be seen in the Policy, [here](#).

9. In implementing the Policy, the Agencies and the Secretariat should, according to their respective roles, identify and adopt practical approaches to achieve these fundamental purposes and principles. Some specific guidance is noted below:

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<sup>3</sup> They also build upon, and supersede, the 2014 Guidelines developed under the 1996 policy.

<sup>4</sup> These documents are available on the GEF website, at [www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org), Documents, Policies and Guidelines. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also reflect the importance of stakeholder engagement and inclusion in multiple ways, including in their pledge to “leave no one behind” and in several goals and targets. See, e.g., Goals 4, 8, 9, 11 and 16 (referring to inclusive and equitable quality education; sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; inclusive and sustainable industrialization; inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements; and peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels). See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>5</sup> This system includes independent grievance response mechanisms at each of the GEF Agencies, and a Conflict Resolution function in the GEF Secretariat. For more information, see [here](#).

## Effective and inclusive engagement, meaningful consultation

- **Effective engagement, inclusive and meaningful consultation:** as indicated in its introductory sections, these are core elements of the Policy. They should be applied in all aspects of GEF’s work, including programming and governance (e.g., meetings of governing bodies, policy development). Further guidance on “meaningful consultation” is provided below.
- **Forge stronger partnerships, particularly with civil society, Indigenous Peoples, communities and the private sector:** this element - expressed in paragraph 2 of the Policy – reflects the importance of “partnership” in the Policy and the GEF more broadly. It requires ongoing work, based on transparency, engagement and dialogue, outreach, awareness building, listening, and respect for the importance and contributions of all stakeholders.
- **Harness the knowledge and expertise of stakeholders:** this element – also expressed in paragraph 2 of the Policy is based on the recognition that stakeholders and civil society, including local, indigenous and traditional communities, have essential knowledge, perspective, expertise on topics of importance to GEF-funded activities, as well as inherent rights to participate in actions that affect them. The Secretariat and Agencies, according to their respective roles, should identify and take practical steps to foster dialogue and communication to learn from and enlist this knowledge, perspective and expertise, in line with the elements of “meaningful consultation” set out below.

10. There are several key elements to “**meaningful consultation**”. As reflected in the policies of some GEF’s agencies, meaningful consultation and participation is a **two-way process** that:

- Begins early in the project identification and planning process to gather initial views.
- Encourages stakeholder feedback and engagement in the project development and design process.
- Continues during the development and implementation of a project
- Is based on the prior disclosure and dissemination of relevant, transparent, objective, meaningful and easily accessible information in a timely manner and culturally appropriate format.<sup>6</sup>
- Considers and responds to feedback.
- Supports active and inclusive engagement with project affected parties.
- Is free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination, and intimidation; and
- Is documented and disclosed.

11. It is the intent of the Policy to provide affected persons with opportunities to express their views on project risks, impacts, mitigation measures and opportunities for enhanced benefits.

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<sup>6</sup> See also Section on Information Disclosure and Transparency, below.

Thus, it is **important to reach out directly to affected and interested stakeholders and communities where they live**. Prior to engaging in consultations with stakeholders, it is important to map out the key stakeholders and identify their respective needs through the development of a **stakeholder analysis**<sup>7</sup>. This is the first step before developing a more comprehensive **Stakeholder Engagement Plan** (please see below).

## Gender equality and women's empowerment

12. Women and men use natural resources in different ways, and have unique skills, knowledge, and experiences as the primary users and stewards of many natural resources. The GEF Policy on Gender Equality states that stakeholder engagement should be conducted in an **inclusive and gender responsive manner**, so that the rights of women and men and the different knowledge, needs, roles and interest of women and men are recognized and addressed. For further detail on the practical steps and required actions to implement the policy please review the *Guidance to Advance Gender Equality in GEF Projects and Programs* (2018), [here](#).

## Culturally appropriate consultations and dialogue with Indigenous Peoples, FPIC

13. In projects involving or potentially affecting Indigenous Peoples, GEF is in the process of updating its Policy on Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards (which sets out core minimum requirements for the Agencies, including on **Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)** and **culturally appropriate consultations and dialogue**, to enable affected Indigenous Peoples to receive fair and equitable benefits and opportunities from a project. These Guidelines will be updated upon adoption of this anticipated policy (forthcoming).

14. Agencies may need to draw upon **specialized expertise** to help understand the social context to achieve best-practice consultations. This may be true, for example, to achieve culturally appropriate consultations and dialogue with Indigenous Peoples, and balance and inclusion on gender.

## Transparency and access to information

15. Paragraph 6(a) of the Policy states that “. . . *transparent Stakeholder Engagement is critical to the success of all GEF-financed activities*”. Paragraph 6 (e) further states that effective stakeholder engagement in GEF governance and operations “. . . *is supported by appropriate documentation and easy and timely access to relevant information*”.

16. These principles are in line with paragraph 5 of the GEF Instrument regarding full disclosure of non-confidential information. They are important operationally for the realization

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<sup>7</sup> The stakeholder analysis provides a map of the human and institutional landscape as well as the connections and relationships between the different stakeholders, their interest and needs.

of the purposes, principles and requirements of the Policy, and consistent with long-standing GEF practice for transparency and disclosure of information. One of these is the principle of a **presumption of disclosure** unless there is a compelling reason for confidentiality, as set out in [\*GEF Practices on Information Disclosure \(October 2011\)\*](#).<sup>8</sup>

17. In line with this, the GEF Secretariat will ensure that relevant documents and information received from Agencies related to GEF programs and projects, such as approved Project Identification Forms (PIFs), CEO requests for Endorsement/Approval, Mid-Term Evaluations and Terminal Evaluations, become **publicly available** on the GEF's website in a timely manner.

18. In addition, the GEF Agencies, in line with their own policies and procedures, will make relevant GEF project documents and activities available to the public in a manner that is accessible to CSOs and other stakeholders. This should be based on the prior disclosure and dissemination of relevant, transparent, objective, meaningful, and **easily accessible information in a timely manner and culturally appropriate format, in relevant language(s), and that is understandable to stakeholders**. It should include accessible and relevant information on websites about projects and programs for which they are implementing agency.

19. Notes and summaries of consultation meetings should also be prepared and made available (e.g., on public websites).

### Stakeholder meetings led by national Operational Focal Points

20. The GEF promotes as best practice that the GEF's Operational Focal Points (OFP), within governments hold at least one meeting every year with interested stakeholders (including the members of the CSO Network in the country). A key purpose of these meetings is to inform stakeholders of, *inter alia*, the work being carried out with GEF support and project ideas that are in development. The meetings also provide information on opportunities for stakeholders to participate in or contribute to project development and implementation, the opportunity to participate in GEF workshops, opportunities to participate in the [GEF CSO Network](#),<sup>9</sup> and other information.

21. OFPs are also advised to invite stakeholders to National Dialogue convened by the GEF. Where a country has a GEF National Steering Committee or similar arrangement, which is good practice, adequate stakeholder representation should be assured.<sup>10</sup> More generally, OFPs, in coordination with the GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat, are encouraged to keep and

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<sup>8</sup> Paragraphs 4 and 5 state that “. . . *There is a presumption in favor of disclosure in the GEF's approach to information disclosure, unless there is a compelling reason for confidentiality.* For very limited cases, where disclosure could have a negative impact on the GEF, the implementation of its programs and projects, or more simply, could contrive the legal obligations pertaining to privacy or intellectual property, information is retained as confidential. Where there are such exceptions, justifications are provided. . . In principle, all relevant information regarding the organization, its projects and operations are made available to the general public with the intent of full disclosure.” (italics in original).

<sup>9</sup> Additional information about the GEF CSO Network is available on its website, at <http://gefcsso.org>.

<sup>10</sup> For more information on National Dialogues and the GEF Country Support Program, see [www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org), Our Work, Country Support Program.

regularly update a list of interested stakeholders and other organizations in the country, and share necessary information and consult with them, including those who may not be able to attend meetings.

## Stakeholder meetings led by the Secretariat; information sharing

22. The Secretariat invites stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples' representatives and other potentially interested stakeholders to GEF workshops. These include **Expanded Constituency Workshops** (ECW), **National Dialogues** and other events organized under the [GEF's Country Support Program](#). These sessions provide opportunities to promote understanding of the new GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement and these Guidelines, and other relevant GEF policies, and thereby to support capacity-building for implementation. For more information on these, see [www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org), under Our Work, Country Support Program.

23. The GEF website catalogues and describes a wide range of GEF meetings, activities, and opportunities for engagement by civil society stakeholders. See [www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org), Partners, Civil Society Organizations. The Secretariat will continue to provide information about GEF activities and stakeholders through its website, ongoing publications, and other means of communication.<sup>11</sup> The Secretariat remains available to respond to any inquiries regarding GEF initiatives, work programs and related activities at telephone +1 202-473-0508 or by email inquiry at [gefcivilsociety@thegef.org](mailto:gefcivilsociety@thegef.org) or [secretariat@thegef.org](mailto:secretariat@thegef.org).

24. GEF partners, including GEF Agencies, the GEF CSO Network, and national non-governmental organizations, are encouraged to disseminate relevant information through their own communication channels.

## Mandatory Requirements

25. The Policy outlines a set of mandatory requirements for stakeholder engagement throughout the GEF project cycle. These are addressed below.

## Stakeholder Engagement throughout the GEF Project Cycle

27. The image below shows the three main phases of the GEF project cycle in simplified form: project design, preparation and implementation. This is illustrated with the example of a GEF "Full-Sized Project."<sup>12 13</sup>

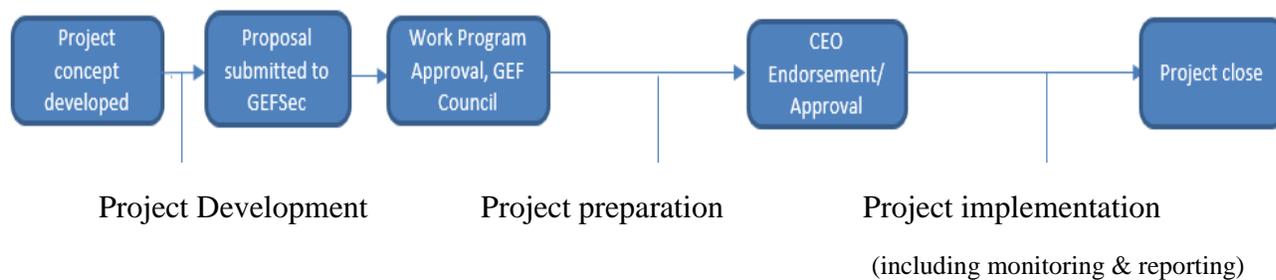
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<sup>11</sup> For example, the A to Z Guide to the GEF and others.

<sup>12</sup> The GEF supports several types of stand-alone projects, including FSPs, Medium-Sized Projects (MSPs) and Enabling Activities (EAs). These latter projects have somewhat simplified review procedures compared to FSPs. The GEF also supports programs which follow the procedures of GEF's programmatic approach. These consist of an overall thematic framework, known as a Program Framework Document (PFD), implemented through subsequently developed "child" projects under the program.

<sup>13</sup> A more circular representation is presented in Annex A. This reflects the idea of continuous learning embedded in GEF programming, i.e., the finish of one project provides lessons for the ones to come.

**Image 1: GEF Project Cycle – Full-Sized Project (main phases)**



## Stakeholder Engagement in Project Development

28. Paragraph 8 of the Policy states that in submitting project proposals to the GEF Secretariat (as PIFs or PFDs),<sup>14</sup>

*“... Agencies provide a description of any consultations conducted during project development, as well as information on how Stakeholders will be engaged in the proposed activity, and means of engagement throughout the project/program cycle.”*

29. The main product of the project development (or design) phase is the PIF or PFD (see above), which the GEF Agency submits to the GEF Secretariat for review and possible inclusion in a Council Work Program. OFP endorsement of projects is also required prior to submission. As described in the project and program cycle guidelines, the OFP Letter of Endorsement confirms that the project is consistent with national priorities, and OFP ratifies that the project “has been discussed with relevant stakeholders.”

30. Effective engagement of stakeholders at this early stage helps to ensure that project concepts demonstrate country-ownership and support from civil society, local communities and other stakeholders. It allows identification of potential impacts on stakeholders in the project’s area of influence, the roles that they may play, and the flagging of issues, gaps and opportunities in project design at a time when adjustments are most easily made.

31. At this early stage, the focus is in developing a project “concept”, and not a fully-prepared project (see image above). Stakeholder engagement should be tailored to the relevant issues and needs in this early stage in the project cycle. To this end, the following steps should be taken:

- **Dialogue, outreach and consultations:** GEF Agencies and OFPs should raise awareness of project preparation and find tailored ways to mobilize key stakeholders and approaches for their effective engagement at this stage.

<sup>14</sup> PIF refers to Project Information Document, which is the form used by Agencies to submit proposals for stand-alone projects (full-sized or medium-sized) to the GEF Secretariat. PFD refers to Program Framework Document, as noted above.

- When considering project and program ideas, OFPs should consult stakeholders on their willingness and availability to participate actively in the project (design, execution, monitoring etc.).
- Dialogue, outreach and consultations should reflect the purposes of the Policy, including on engagement with indigenous and traditional communities, and equal opportunities for both women and men to engage in consultations and decision-making
- **Identification of roles:** During this process, GEF Agencies should raise awareness of project preparation and find tailored ways to mobilize key stakeholders and approaches for their effective engagement at this stage. The potential roles of different stakeholders and project beneficiaries, including civil society organizations and local communities, in each stage of the project should be identified. The project concept should reflect the roles that different stakeholders may play in project design and implementation.
- **Consultations:** Consultations should be organized to reach out to engage relevant stakeholders in an inclusive and gender-responsive manner, as appropriate to the project concept under consideration, to seek feedback on the proposed approach and on adapting it to local conditions. For these to be effective, they should:
  - Make available relevant information to interested stakeholders and create an appropriate means for dialogue and/or consultations.
  - Provide advance information on the project concept(s) under consideration and the issues for discussion, in a format and manner that is easily accessible according to the context.
- **Contact points for Stakeholders.** Main points of contact include the GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) in the government and the GEF Implementing Agencies. A full list of GEF Agencies and OFPs is here: [GEF Agencies](#) and [GEF Focal Points](#). In addition, the GEF Project Identification Form (PIF) (project proposal) also indicates the project contact person for each project. These are available in the [GEF project database](#).
- **Project Preparation Grant:** During project development, GEF Agencies may assess the need for a Project Preparation Grant and include this as a request in the PIF. Stakeholder consultations is an eligible activity under this phase.
- **Description of consultations required in the PIF:** As per the Policy, the PIF submitted to the GEF Secretariat should provide a description of any consultations conducted during project development, as well as information on how Stakeholders will be engaged in the project preparation and implementation phases.

## Stakeholder Engagement in Project Preparation

32. Paragraph 9 of the Policy addresses stakeholder engagement at the next stage in the project cycle, during project preparation. It states that

*“[a]t CEO Endorsement/Approval, Agencies present Stakeholder Engagement Plans or equivalent documentation, with information regarding Stakeholders who have been and will be engaged, means of engagement, dissemination of information, roles and responsibilities in ensuring effective Stakeholder Engagement, resource requirements, and timing of engagement throughout the project/program cycle.”*

This provision applies to the period of project preparation, shown in Image 1, above.<sup>15</sup>

33. This period of project preparation is a major opportunity for direct and effective engagement of stakeholders in GEF programming activities, as required by the Policy. In the GEF project cycle, this is the time in which an initial project concept-proposal is more fully designed and developed into what will be implemented. Meaningful participation, including effective consultations and stakeholder engagement, is essential to this process and its success.

34. Building on stakeholder engagement that may have taken place during the earlier stage of project design, the following guidance is provided for the period of project preparation. These steps should also be reflected in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, or equivalent, noted further below.

- **Continuation of dialogue and outreach:** Agencies and OFPs should raise awareness of project preparation and find tailored ways to mobilize key stakeholders and approaches for their effective engagement at this stage, building upon consultations and contacts developed previously.
- **Stakeholder engagement process:** Consultations and workshops should be organized to reach out to stakeholders and communities where the project would be implemented, including those identified during project development, to seek their inputs and feedback on the approach and design of the project. This includes consultations associated with the preparation of required safeguard documents and other information, including as applicable:
  - Social and Environmental Impact Assessments
  - A Gender Analysis or equivalent Socio-Economic Assessment
  - Engagement and participation of Indigenous Peoples

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<sup>15</sup> According to GEF Policy, a period of 18 months is allowed (for regular FSPs) between the time a project proposal in the Work Program) is approved by GEF Council, and the time it is submitted to the GEF Secretariat for CEO Endorsement/Approval. Timelines are different for other types of projects, including MSPs, and child projects under PFDs. See Guidelines to Implement GEF Policy on Project Cycle [here].

- **Inclusive participation:** The dialogue and consultations should follow the same principle of inclusiveness as in the earlier stage, including the full range of potentially interested and affected stakeholders (see definitions, below).
- **Review of proposed activities:** Information on a draft of the proposal should be circulated to relevant stakeholders, and dialogue should be conducted particularly with those who will be directly affected by or involved in the project.
- **Identification of partners in project execution:** Once needs and proposed projects/ elements have been validated or redesigned as a result of consultations, appropriate partnerships may be sought to execute the proposed activities. The selection of partners to execute the different components of a project, which may include CSOs or others, should be based on their background and experience in the area that the project is addressing as well as other relevant factors.

### Stakeholder Engagement Plan

35. A key Policy requirement at this stage is the development of a **Stakeholder Engagement Plan, or equivalent document**, to be included with the project at the time an Agency submits it to the CEO for Endorsement or Approval. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan is a basic tool to catalyze and organize stakeholder engagement and assure that it takes place in line with the purposes and requirements of the Policy.

36. The scope and details of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan may vary according to the nature of the project, the number of stakeholders and the potential impact of the project and its risks. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan can build upon existing information on the context and characteristics of stakeholders and on past consultations.

37. The Plan, or equivalent document, reflects and clearly describes actions on Stakeholder Engagement. Building on the above, these include the following **minimum elements**:

- The stakeholders, their relevant interests, and why they are included
- The steps and actions to achieve meaningful consultation and inclusive participation, including information dissemination
- Roles and responsibilities for implementation of the Plan
- The timing of the engagement throughout the project cycle
- The budget for stakeholder engagement throughout the project cycle and, where applicable, for related capacity-building to support this engagement
- Key indicators of stakeholder engagement during project implementation, and steps that will be taken to monitor and report on progress and issues that arise

38. The Plan should involve different stakeholders and communities as relevant to the project and situation. These may include, for example, private sector engagement in introducing sustainable livelihoods and associated value chains; academia involvement in developing new technologies; and communities involved with forest protection and rehabilitation or other

project-related issues. Opportunities for communication and awareness-building in support of project purposes and objectives, including in partnership with CSOs.

39. The Plan should also **carefully document the public engagement during project development and preparation**, including summary reports of stakeholder consultations and of data on stakeholders and beneficiaries. This should include, among other things, summaries of consultations in the preparation of required safeguard documents referred to in paragraph 34 above, as applicable. The Plan should be made publicly available by the Agency in a form and language appropriate to the relevant stakeholders and disseminated proactively to them. It should also be posted by the GEF Secretariat on its website as part of the project documentation.

40. Annex 3 contains an example of the elements of a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, drawn from a project implemented by a GEF Agency (Conservation International). It is intended to offer an illustration in more specific terms of best practice to meet this core requirement. An additional annex is planned in the future with concrete illustrations of stakeholder engagement in specific situations, including examples where practice fell short of what it should have been to meet the purposes and provisions of the updated Policy.

## Stakeholder Engagement in Project Implementation

41. This period of project implementation is a third major opportunity for effective engagement of stakeholders in GEF programming activities, as required by the Policy. In the GEF project cycle, this is the time when projects are implemented on the ground, managed and monitored. **It is a critical period when things may go right and wrong in a project**, and when new circumstances and opportunities may arise that indicate a need for adjustment and course correction to fully achieve the objectives and best results of the project.

### Implementing the Stakeholder Engagement Plan; Continued Engagement

42. Stakeholder engagement is essential at this stage. It is integral to the success of project implementation, as set out in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. In addition, it is critical to help identify issues and opportunities that may arise, and to identify the best way to address them.

43. During this stage of the Project, the Agency oversees implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (see Policy, paragraph 11). In practical terms, the Agency and executing partners should:

- Continue outreach, dialogue and consultations with stakeholders, in line with the Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Plan or equivalent document
- Identify the role of stakeholders in project execution
- Indicate how will concerns be addressed, including how stakeholder input will be built into project implementation (and FPIC where applicable)
- Establish partnerships to support project implementation; and

- Ensure Stakeholders are engaged in respect to environmental and social issues related to the project, and are informed about actions taken in response to their input

#### Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

44. **Project implementation reports.** Paragraph 11 of the Policy also provides that the implementing Agency should – in addition to overseeing implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan - - include information on progress, challenges and outcomes in their annual project implementation reports as well as mid-term and terminal evaluations.

45. This monitoring and reporting requirement is important not only to track what is happening with projects, but to provide a basis for actions and adjustments that may be needed to address challenges that may arise, and ensure that a project is meeting its objectives. The reports also provide a window for stakeholders to better understand project activities during the implementation stage, in support of their more informed participation. To this end, Agencies should also develop user-friendly and accessible systems to make information available to stakeholders on stakeholder engagement during the course of the project, and project progress, changes and outcomes.

46. **Participatory Monitoring.** In addition, wherever feasible, the process of monitoring and reporting may include “participatory monitoring” by stakeholders. This is an important tool that can enhance both the independence, strength and accuracy of monitoring information. As indicated in the Policy, local communities and CSOs possess essential knowledge, expertise and capabilities relevant to project interventions. Participatory monitoring, which should be based on gender inclusion and other core principles in the Policy, may be one means to harness this for the benefit of the project and better results.

47. **Reporting to Council.** Paragraphs 20 of the Policy calls for the Secretariat to report annually to Council on Stakeholder Engagement across GEF-Financed Activities, including the number and share of projects that effectively engage Stakeholders, and using gender-disaggregated data where appropriate, at CEO Endorsement/Approval, during implementation and its completion.

48. The GEF Portal provides an updated tool to help implement this provision. The Portal is the on-line system for GEF Agencies to submit projects and programs proposed for GEF funding. It requires information and data aligned to GEF-7 programming strategies and policy requirements, including on Gender Equality and Stakeholder Engagement, and enables automated aggregation and reporting of this data and information. It is important to use this system as a tool to help ensure high quality data on projects and the portfolio, and the reporting and sharing of information as required by the Policy.

49. **Evaluation.** The GEF’s Policy on Monitoring and Evaluation sets out, *inter alia*, the roles and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation in the GEF.<sup>16</sup> It notes that monitoring and evaluation are a shared responsibility involving different levels, partners and functions. In line with the GEF Instrument, and consistently with the Policy on Stakeholder Engagement and these Guidelines, it states that both monitoring and evaluation processes must fully draw on the capacities and knowledge of scientific advisers, program governments, local stakeholders, and beneficiaries.

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<sup>16</sup> The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, November 30, 2010.

50. This inter-related provision is an important complement to the application of the present Guidelines.

## Knowledge Sharing

51. The GEF puts priority on the gathering and sharing of knowledge, information and best practices in the Partnership. Specific guidance on this priority is included, for example, in the policy agenda developed within the ambit of the GEF-7 Replenishment discussions.

52. The GEF Secretariat engages actively knowledge sharing and reports regularly to Council on actions and progress. For example, the Secretariat applies knowledge sharing practices in its programming work, including in the focal area of international waters under [IW learn](#), and in its Country Support Program. For information on these and other actions, please see the GEF website on [knowledge and learning](#) (at [www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org), About Us, Knowledge and Learning).

53. It is important that all partners, including stakeholders from civil society, contribute to this priority work. In this regard, the GEF Policy on Monitoring and Evaluation further provides that:

*“All GEF partners are responsible for actively and transparently contributing to knowledge and learning. Knowledge management and lessons learned dissemination strategies should be based on user needs and priorities and the latest technologies and approaches . . .*

*. . . In fulfilling their management functions, the Agency operational departments and the GEF Secretariat ensure monitoring of and reporting on progress and results at the project/program and consolidated portfolio levels, respectively. They also ensure the feedback of learning and lessons into strategies, project and program design, and implementation. In line with the GEF Instrument, both monitoring and evaluation processes must fully draw on the capacities and knowledge of scientific advisers, program governments, local stakeholders, and beneficiaries.”*

## Activities Led by the Secretariat

54. Paragraph 14 of the Policy states that “[t]he Secretariat engages with Stakeholders in all other GEF-financed activities, such as national and regional output activities executed by the Secretariat, following the principles in Paragraph 6.” Paragraph 15 states that “[t]he Secretariat provides for appropriate Stakeholder Engagement in the development of GEF Policies, guidelines and strategy.”

### National Dialogue

55. The GEF Country Support Program (CSP), noted above (including National Dialogues), is an important means to implement paragraph 14 of the Policy. This activity aims to provide targeted and flexible support for country-level multi-stakeholder dialogues so that information and experiences can be shared. National Dialogues are an open consultation forum between the OFP and key national stakeholders to exchange information about past and ongoing projects and share updates on project development within the country, including opportunities for stakeholder

engagement in these initiatives. Key partnerships in project implementation can also be built as a result from these meetings. Further information on the CSP is [here](#).

## Stakeholder Engagement in GEF Policies, Guidelines and Strategy

56. GEF policy proposals and, normally, guidelines and strategy documents are published in advance of GEF Council meetings on the [Council documents webpage](#). Stakeholders can contribute by providing inputs, feedback, suggestions and recommendations through their [regional CSO representative in the GEF CSO Network](#), through [GEF Council Members](#), or by directly sending their comments on the GEF website ongoing consultations tab.

57. There are also other means to participate in GEF events and activities. GEF Council meetings are webcasted live and their recordings uploaded onto the [GEF YouTube channel](#). Civil society stakeholders may also apply and be selected to attend these Council meetings, as per the [Updated Vision](#) of the GEF's Engagement with Civil Society adopted by GEF Council. Also, the [GEF Country Support Programme \(CSP\)](#) provides opportunities for stakeholder engagement and learning about the GEF's work and activities, including through Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs).

## Definitions

58. The Annex to the Policy, [here](#), sets out key definitions relevant to its application. Some of these definitions provide clarity to terms relating to GEF Agencies and the GEF project cycle (CEO approval; CEO endorsement; Enabling Activity; GEF-Financed Activity; GEF Partner Agency; Program Framework Document; Project Information Form (PIF); and Work Program). Other definitions provide clarity to what is meant by civil society, stakeholder and stakeholder engagement.

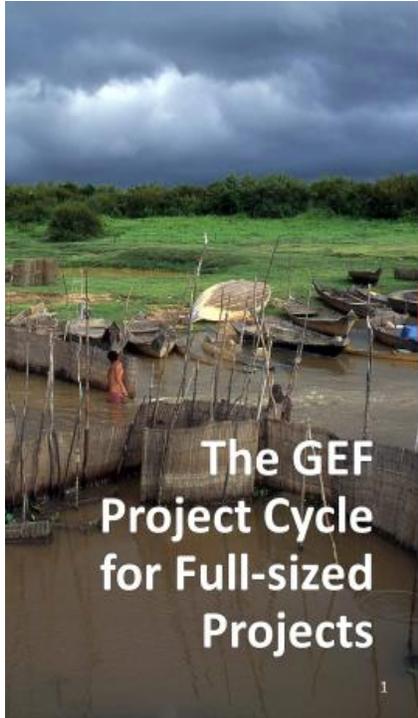
59. One important definition is the term "Stakeholders". As indicated in the Policy, a stakeholder is ". . . *an individual or group that has an interest in the outcome of a GEF-financed activity or is likely to be affected by it, such as local communities, Indigenous Peoples, civil society organizations, private sector entities, comprising women, men, girls and boys.*" They can include, among others, relevant ministries, local governments, and locally-affected people, national and local NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), Indigenous Peoples organizations, women's groups, private sector companies, farmers, and research institutions, and all major groups as identified, for example, in Agenda 21 of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and many times again since then.

## Annexes:

1. The GEF Project and Program Cycle – Circular Views
2. GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement and other Related GEF Policies
3. Example: Elements of a Stakeholder Engagement Plan

## Annex 1 – Circular View of GEF Project and Program Cycle

### GEF Project Cycle (FSP)



### GEF Program Cycle



## Annex 2 – GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement and Other Related GEF Policies

The GEF Policy on Stakeholder Engagement (November 10, 2017) is [here](#).

The GEF Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples is [here](#).

The GEF Policy on Gender Equality is [here](#).

The GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards is [here](#).

The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy is [here](#).

These and other GEF policies and guidelines can also be found on the GEF website, at [www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org), Documents, Policies and Guidelines. Information about the GEF system to respond to complaints about GEF-funded projects and operations from affected people and communities can be found at [www.thegef.org](http://www.thegef.org), Conflict Resolution.

## Annex 3 – Example: Elements of Stakeholder Engagement Plan

An illustrative Stakeholder Engagement Plan is found here [see separate attachment].