

# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN GEF PROJECTS

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## RECOMMENDED DRAFT COUNCIL DECISION:

The Council reviewed document GEF/C.7/6, *Public Involvement in GEF Projects*, and approves the principles proposed therein as a basis for public involvement in the design, implementation and evaluation of GEF-financed projects. The Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies are requested to undertake the activities described in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the document so as to facilitate effective public involvement in all GEF-financed projects.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its February 1995 meeting, the Council requested the Secretariat to prepare a "document proposing GEF policies for information disclosure and public participation" (*Joint Summary of Chairs*, p. 3). An information paper, *Draft Outline of Policy Paper on Public Involvement in GEF-Financed Projects* (GEF/C.6/Inf.5), and two Background Papers were made available at the October 1995 Council meeting for comments. Since the release of the information paper, the Secretariat engaged in consultations using the electronic media and small group meetings involving Council Members, NGOs and regional NGO networks, and recipient governments.
2. This document builds upon the previous papers and incorporates comments from the consultations. Part II provides the rationale and definition of public involvement. The basic principles of public involvement are presented in Part III, together with an identification of how the principles will be applied by the Secretariat, Implementing Agencies, project executing agencies ([see endnote 1](#)), and others participating in GEF-financed projects.

## II. RATIONALE AND DEFINITION

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

## **Rationale**

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

(a) enhancing recipient country ownership of, and accountability for, project outcomes;

(b) addressing the social and economic needs of affected people;

(c) building partnerships among project executing agencies and stakeholders; and

(d) making use of skills, experiences, and knowledge, in particular, of non- governmental organizations (NGOs), community and local groups, and the private sector in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities.

## **Definition**

5. Public involvement consists of three related, and often overlapping, processes: information dissemination, consultation, and stakeholder participation. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, or institutions which have an interest or "stake" in the outcome of a GEF-financed project or are potentially affected by it. Stakeholders include the recipient country government; Implementing Agencies; project executing agency or agencies; groups contracted to carry out project activities and/or consulted at various stages of the project; project beneficiaries; groups of people who may be affected by project activities; and other groups in the civil society which may have an interest in the project.

6. **Information dissemination** refers to the availability and distribution of timely and relevant information on GEF-financed projects, including notification, disclosure, and public access to such information ([see endnote 2](#)).

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

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

## **III. PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

***To be effective, public involvement activities should be broad-based and sustainable. The Implementing Agencies will include in project budgets, as needed, the necessary financial and***

***technical assistance to recipient governments and project executing agencies to ensure effective public involvement.***

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

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

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

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

(a) Establish, in consultation with the Implementing Agencies, operational guidelines for assessing the effectiveness of public involvement activities in the project's design and implementation plan; subsequent monitoring of public involvement activities through the annual project implementation review; and evaluating the impacts of public involvement in terms of improving projects;

(b) Facilitate the exchange of good practices on public involvement among recipient governments, the Implementing Agencies, project executing agencies, and other stakeholders with a view to ensuring that lessons learned are incorporated into design of future projects;

(c) In collaboration with the Implementing Agencies, explore ways in which NGO roles can be strengthened in project preparation, design, implementation and evaluation and conduct periodic assessments of the effectiveness of NGOs, and other stakeholders, in promoting public involvement in projects; and

(d) Ensure that funding is available to recipient governments, executing agencies, and, as appropriate, NGOs for carrying out effective public involvement.

16. The Implementing Agencies are committed to promoting effective public involvement within their own institutional environment. In accordance with internal policies and procedures, and consistent with the principles outlined in Part III above, the Implementing Agencies should

develop guidelines for public involvement in their own GEF-financed projects, which may include the following:

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

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*Endnotes:*

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

2. Notification includes the announcement and availability of GEF-related information. Disclosure refers to the availability of non-confidential information, often through a public information center, library or office, or through various forms of media. Such information may include GEF project documents and reports and GEF technical papers. Access covers the ways in which information is disseminated to a broad range of groups through publications, workshops, electronic networks, popular media, vernacular translations, village information meetings, and others.