

51st GEF Council Meeting
October 25 – 27, 2016
Washington, D.C.

Agenda Item 13

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed document GEF/C.51/09, *Recommendations of the Working Group on Public Involvement*, welcomes the report and requests the Secretariat to present an updated policy on stakeholder engagement and access to information for consideration at its 53rd meeting in December 2017.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In the Policy Recommendations for the Sixth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-6), Participants “acknowledge[d] the positive and critical roles played by civil society organizations (CSOs), including Indigenous Peoples, in safeguarding the global environment and contributing to the work of the GEF” (GEF/C.46/07/Rev.01, *Summary of Negotiations of the Sixth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund*). Participants also appreciated the work by the Secretariat and the GEF CSO Network to “review the Policy on Public Involvement in GEF Projects with a view to formulating public involvement guidelines for information of the GEF Council in October 2014” (ibid.).
2. Following completion of the *Guidelines for the Implementation of the Public Involvement Policy* (SD/GN/01, hereafter referred to as “the Guidelines”) in October 2014, as well as a review of the *Policy on Public Involvement in GEF Projects* (SD/PL/01, hereafter referred to as “the Policy” or “the Public Involvement Policy”) carried out by the CSO Network in 2013-14, the Secretariat established a Working Group on Public Involvement (hereafter referred to as “the Working Group”) to promote the effective implementation of the new Guidelines, and to assess the need to update the Policy. The Working Group, which was formed in June 2015, includes representatives of the GEF Secretariat, the CSO Network, the Council, GEF Partner Agencies (hereafter referred to as “Agencies”), the GEF’s Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) and GEF Operational Focal Points.
3. This document provides an overview of the evolution of GEF policy and procedures relating to stakeholder engagement along with a brief description of the Working Group’s activities and recommendations to the Council and the wider Partnership. In particular, the Working Group recommends to the Council that an updated policy on stakeholder engagement and access to information be developed, superseding the 1996 Public Involvement Policy. More detailed analysis underpinning the recommendations of the Working Group is found in document GEF/C.51/Inf.05, *Review of GEF Agencies’ Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement*.

EVOLUTION OF GEF POLICY AND GUIDELINES ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

4. The need for stakeholder engagement, including access to information, consultation, and participation, is enshrined in the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility: “[the GEF] 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” (paragraph 5).
5. The GEF was among the first international organizations to formally recognize the crucial importance of stakeholder engagement for the performance and impact of its operations. Approved by the Council in 1996, the Public Involvement Policy states that effective stakeholder engagement “is critical to the success of GEF financed projects” and – when

implemented appropriately – adds value by “(a) enhancing recipient country ownership of, and accountability for, project outcomes; (b) addressing the social and economic needs of affected people; (c) building partnerships among project executing agencies and stakeholders; and (d) making use of skills, experiences, and knowledge, in particular, of CSOs, community and local groups, and the private sector in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities” (SD/PL/01, paragraph 2).

6. In addition to the Public Involvement Policy, the GEF has advanced stakeholder engagement and access to information through, *inter alia*, its *Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards* (SD/PL/03), *Minimum Fiduciary Standards for GEF Partner Agencies* (GA/PL/02), *Policy on Gender Mainstreaming* (SD/PL/02), *The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy* and *Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples*. In accordance with these policies and guidelines, stakeholder engagement and access to information have been mainstreamed across the GEF Partnership and operations, including through templates, as well as criteria for project and program review and reporting.

7. In its Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5, 2014), IEO recognized the GEF as a “leader in civil society engagement in the global environmental arena”, yet it found that the Public Involvement Policy is “outdated, not systematically implemented, and ineffective”. IEO further concluded that “[a]ny serious endeavor to further enhance CSO engagement in the GEF would be greatly assisted by updating the 1996 [Public Involvement Policy].

8. Concurrently with OPS5, the CSO Network reviewed the Public Involvement Policy (*Review of the GEF Public Involvement Policy*, 2014). The review provides “input and recommendations to the [Secretariat] for the formulation of guidelines for [Agencies] and governments on public participation in GEF project development and implementation”. Like OPS5, the review recommended an update of the Public Involvement Policy, particularly by broadening the scope of its application and strengthening the definitions and key principles of engagement.

9. The findings and recommendations of OPS5 and the CSO Network’s review were in part addressed in the 2014 Guidelines, which aim to provide more detailed guidance on the implementation of the Public Involvement Policy. In response to the call to review the Policy itself, however, and recognizing the need for a broad-based consultation on ways to further strengthen stakeholder engagement across the Partnership, the Secretariat agreed in 2014 to establish the Working Group on Public Involvement.

WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

10. The Working Group had its first in-person meeting in conjunction with the 48th meeting of the Council in June 2015. At this meeting the Group approved its terms of reference (See Annex I), agreeing, *inter alia*, to review the Public Involvement Policy and put forward recommendations to the Council and the wider Partnership on ways to achieve more effective

stakeholder engagement in GEF operations. Subsequently, the Group met both virtually and in person to discuss the opportunities and challenges related to stakeholder engagement in recipient countries as experienced by CSO members, Operational Focal Points and Agencies, and to identify possible gaps in the implementation of the Policy and Guidelines in GEF projects and programs.

11. In support of the deliberations of the Working Group, the Secretariat hired a consultant to review implementation of the Public Involvement Policy in GEF projects and programs. The purpose of the review was to: (a) analyze the compatibility of GEF Agencies' policies and procedures with the Public involvement Policy and Guidelines, as well as relevant aspects of other GEF policies; (b) propose actionable measures to enhance the current Policy and associated Guidelines, as well as their implementation by Agencies and other stakeholders; (c) compile Agencies' best practices pertaining to stakeholder engagement; and (d) provide recommendations for further improvement.

12. The Working Group met in August 2016 to review the initial findings of the consultant's review, and agreed – on the basis of the final report – to submit them to the 51st meeting of the Council. The full report of the review is found in document GEF/C.51/Inf.05, *Review of GEF Agencies' Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement*.

RATIONALE FOR UPDATING THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT POLICY

13. As mentioned above, both the OPS5 and the CSO Network's review of the Public Involvement Policy concluded that the Policy should be updated to reflect the evolution of other policies and guidelines related to stakeholder engagement both within the GEF and other international institutions, and to make it more authoritative. "An updated policy needs to embrace the current understanding of stakeholder relationships and their respective added value. It needs to be more authoritative and prescriptive. It needs to use bold terms and demand bold results" (OPS5, IEO 2014).

14. Based on these two studies and the review commissioned by the Working Group, there is a strong convergence that the Policy uses outdated and imprecise terminology and lacks the clarity and consistency of a policy document. It provides an unclear mix of aspirational guiding principles ("should") and affirmative policy mandates and requirements ("will").

15. The Working Group further agreed the Policy has not been kept up-to-date with policies and practices regarding stakeholder engagement, including among many Agencies. An updated Policy would contribute towards greater harmonization across an expanded Partnership, an issue highlighted by the review that noted differing practices among Agencies regarding stakeholder engagement in GEF-supported operations. An updated Policy is needed to clarify GEF's minimum standards for an increasingly diverse Partnership.

16. Updating the Public Involvement Policy would also allow for closer alignment with other, more recent GEF policies that address issues related to stakeholder engagement and access to information, such as the policies on environmental and social safeguards and gender mainstreaming, as well as with the GEF Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples.

17. In addition to updating the Public Involvement Policy, the Working Group agreed that there's a need to clarify the GEF's policy, procedures, and practices related to information disclosure, which are currently captured in the 2011 Council information document, GEF/C.41/Inf.03, *GEF Practices on Disclosure of Information*. Updating the Policy would offer an opportunity to address this recommendation through an integrated policy on stakeholder engagement and access to information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Based on the aforementioned report, as well as its deliberations over the past 15 months, the Working Group recommends that the GEF develop, through a consultative process, and approve an updated policy on stakeholder engagement and access to information that supersedes the 1996 Public Involvement Policy and consolidates, clarifies, and strengthens the relevant criteria and mandatory rules pertaining to information disclosure.

19. The proposed, updated Policy could in part address several of the other recommendations made in the report, including, inter alia, that (a) stakeholders have full access to project information at the Agency level, (b) each GEF-financed project and program develop a stakeholder engagement plan, and (c) policy requirements on stakeholder engagement apply to all projects irrespective of the level of potential social and environmental risks and impacts

ANNEX I: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The GEF Working Group on Public Involvement

Terms of Reference

Purpose:

The main tasks of the Working Group on Public Involvement (WG) are the following:

- Assess the existing baseline and barriers to the implementation of the existing Public Involvement Policy (of 1996). This will include a review of current policies and guidelines of the GEF Partner Agencies and working from the comprehensive data already provided by Agencies to the CSO Network's Survey exercise in 2013-14 as a starting point.
- Review the *Guidelines for the Implementation of the Public Involvement Policy* and discuss avenues for their effective application, as well as for implementation of the Action Plan.
- Review and make recommendations on how to enhance the monitoring and evaluation of public involvement in GEF operations and processes.
- Review the GEF Public Involvement Policy and propose recommendations, including changes, if necessary.
- Draft a report to Council on the recommendations of the Working Group.

Key Functions

1. The members of the WG will participate and contribute with their experience and knowledge to the following:
 - i. Review the *Guidelines for the Implementation of the Public Involvement Policy* and discuss avenues for their effective application, as well as for the implementation of the Action Plan.
 - ii. Review the information and evidence available in terms of policies, guidelines, and practices related to stakeholder involvement in GEF projects and programs, including at the Agency level.¹

¹ This exercise will be done, based on the review of the existing stock of information, collected through the CSO Network surveys (in the context of the CSO Network's review of the PIP) and the information gathered by the GEF

- iii. Provide recommendations about the need to update the GEF Public Involvement Policy.
- iv. Provide recommendations on how to monitor and evaluate engagement of stakeholders in GEF operations.
- v. Draft a report to Council with the results and recommendations of the WG.

Composition and Modalities of Work

2. The WG will be comprised of Council members and Operational Focal Points from the different GEF regions, representatives of the GEF CSO Network, GEF Partner Agency staff, the Independent Evaluation Office, and key GEF Secretariat staff (refer to Annex I on the confirmed members).

3. The GEF Secretariat will chair the WG and facilitate the process, including the following: calling for meetings of the WG, preparing the agenda, providing background information, preparing working papers, taking notes, and drafting the meeting minutes.

4. The WG members are expected to commit to the following:

- i. Attend meetings regularly (including both in-person and virtually).
- ii. Prepare substantive inputs on activities outlined in the work plan agreed in the first meetings.

5. If necessary, the WG may form technical subgroups to discuss specific areas requiring more focused, technical analysis. The working group will devise a work plan to guide its work.

6. When the WG has completed its tasks or when participants deem it necessary, it is expected to cease its work.

Timeframe and Meetings:

7. It is anticipated the WG will operate between June 1, 2015 to October 2016, when the recommendations will be presented to Council.

Secretariat, as part of the Environmental and Social Safeguards policy exercise. The GEF Secretariat will collect other information related to policies and guidelines with support from an external consultant.

8. To ensure effective coordination and timely consultations, the WG will maintain regular communication, including at least quarterly virtual meetings and formal face-to-face meetings (in fall 2015 and spring 2016). The GEF Secretariat will make use of electronic communications technology, including video-conferencing and Skype to facilitate information sharing among the WG members.

Budget and Resource Allocations

9. The GEF Secretariat will have a dedicated budget to facilitate the participation of those members from developing countries (both CSOs and OFPs), if necessary. While it may vary, members of the WG are expected to spend on average two hours per month on tasks agreed on and included in the work plan for the WG, not including the two in-person meetings (which will require approximately six hours in total).

ANNEX II: LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Name	Position	Region
Developing Country Officers		
Ms. Ana Madalena Veiga	Political Focal Point	Africa
Mr. Do Nam Thang	Operational Focal Point	Asia
Ms. Anne Rasmussen	Alternate Operational Focal Point	Pacific Islands
Ms. Caroline Eugene	Operational Focal Point	Caribbean
Dr. Diana Celia Vega	Operational Focal Point	Latin America
Council Members		
Mr. Leonardo Martinez-Diaz (Rebecca Fisher)	Council Member	Developed Countries
Mr. Stefan Marco Schwager	Council Member	Developed Countries
GEF CSO Network		
Essam Nada	CSO Network Member	North Africa
Lisa Elges	CSO Network Member	Europe
Faizal Parish	CSO Network Member	Asia
Mrinalini (Tina) Rai	Indigenous Peoples	Asia
GEF Agencies		
Stephen Gold (Nancy Bennet)	UNDP	
Luisa Balbi (Marianna Wiedenbeck)	EBRD	
Brennan V Dyke (Kelly West)	UNEP	
Jeffrey Griffin	FAO	
Bruce Dunn	ADB	
Sheila Mwanundu	IFAD	
Dominique Isabelle Kayser (Jeannette Ramirez)	World Bank	
Michael Collins (Alexandra Ortega)	IDB	
Orissa Samaroo	CI	
Pamela Mikschofsky	UNIDO	
Herve Lefeuve	WWF	
Jean-Yves Pirot	IUCN	
GEF IEO		
Baljit Wadhwa		
GEF Secretariat		

Pilar Barrera Rey
Andrew Velthaus
Knut Roland Sundstrom
Peter Lallas
Yoko Watanabe
Seo-Jeong Yoon