



67th Council Meeting: GEF Consultations with Civil Society

Friday, June 14th, 2024

07:00 – 9:00 am. ET

Conversation on GEF initiatives and approaches to Civil Society

Introduction

Prior to the GEF 67th Council Meeting in June 2024, a virtual GEF Consultation with Civil Society is scheduled on June 14th (Friday) from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. EST. The consultation will be facilitated by the GEF Secretariat, include simultaneous translations in French and Spanish and allow participants to openly engage and converse with the event’s panelists.

For this consultation, the GEF Secretariat will convene a conversation between civil society organizations, the GEF CSO Network, GEF Council members and GEF partners on GEF initiatives and approaches to broader civil society engagements currently under implementation. Serving as a stocktaking exercise of current approaches and initiatives supported through GEF financing, it aims to showcase a range of good practices and lessons learned and stimulate a conversation around these. This consultation will seek to inform the GEF partnership on efforts to enhance support to and meaningful engagement of civil society and to initiate a consultative process on broader social inclusion and civil society engagement in preparation for GEF-9.

Background

The GEF has long acknowledged the importance of engaging with CSOs, promoting meaningful stakeholder consultation and engagement with civil society in its operations and through projects and programs: from consultations in the formulation of GEF strategies, policies and guidelines to consultations and direct participation in project identification, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The GEF has increasingly strengthened and will continue to expand its engagement with civil society, in particular IPLCs, women, youth, groups representing other gender identities, and people with disabilities, among others.

The GEF-8 Programming Directions recognized the vital contribution that civil society makes to all areas of sustainable development, human rights, policy making and social services. An important characteristic of a well-functioning state is synergy between government, civil society and the private sector. This “whole-of-society” approach lays at the heart of GEF’s mandate and renewed ambition in GEF-8 and beyond. The GEF recognizes the important role that empowered civil society groups play in influencing and setting national and global agendas and delivering conservation outcomes. They bring citizens’ voices to national and international debates, initiate and implement local solutions, and elevate local needs in national and global strategies.

The GEF Partnership firmly believes that local actions conceived and executed by civil society organizations (CSOs) including community-based organizations (CBOs) and Indigenous Peoples’

Organizations (IPOs), provide bottom-up approaches critical to conserving and restoring the environment. They generate a sound complement to government and private sector actions while enhancing well-being, livelihoods and resilience at the community level and beyond. Empowered civil society groups play important roles influencing and setting national and global agendas, delivering global environment benefits, as well as supporting domestic policy coherence and sustainability. Recent GEF IEO Evaluations corroborate that bottom-up approaches guided by community priorities are linked to sustainability and that good project design focused on participatory planning and meaningful integration of communities in resource management was a key factor in sustainability¹.

Consequent to this wider ambition, several GEF-financed projects and programs place civil society at the heart of their strategic approaches. These include:

The Small Grants Programme (SGP), a flagship GEF Corporate Program which for the last 30 years has served as an essential piece of the GEF's larger and increasing efforts to support inclusion and strong engagement of civil society stakeholders and partners, providing financing as well as technical and capacity building support to Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth and people with disabilities. Currently, the GEF Secretariat is leading efforts towards implementing several of the key features of the "SGP 2.0 Implementation Arrangements for GEF-8", as part of a broad agenda for change to the size, objectives, governance structures and implementation of the SGP.

The Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI), which aims to enhance Indigenous Peoples' and Local Communities' (IPLCs) efforts to steward land, waters and natural resources to deliver global environmental benefits.

The Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), which helps recipient countries address their short-, medium-, and long-term resilience needs and reduce climate change vulnerability in priority sectors and ecosystems.

The Fonseca Leadership Program (FLP), which supports the professional development of promising young conservationists from developing countries.

Objectives of the session

The session will bring together members of the GEF partnership, civil society representatives and GEF project and program beneficiaries to discuss their experiences, lessons learned and evolving, and future opportunities to enhance further civil society engagement and action. The discussions will build on the findings of the IEO on the evolving context of civil society engagement through its Evaluation of Community-based Approaches at the GEF² and the valuable experiences gained from several GEF projects and programs including the GEF Small Grants Programme, The Inclusive Conservation Initiative (ICI), the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Fonseca Leadership Program (FLP). The consultation will also build on dialogues held with civil society, particularly Indigenous Peoples, women and youth, during the Seventh GEF Assembly held in

¹ For example, please see: GEF/E/C.59/02; and GEF/E/C.66/02 (GEF IEO Evaluation of Community-based Approaches at the GEF)

² GEF/C.66/15: Management Response to: Evaluation of Community-based Approaches at the GEF

Vancouver in August 2023. Following on from this stocktaking exercise, a conversation will be facilitated in preparation for GEF-9, around the means to enhance GEF's further and meaningful engagement of civil society actors.

The consultation is expected to deliver the following outcomes:

1. A heightened understanding of the GEF's current approach to enhancing civil society engagement and current initiatives.
2. Leveraging participants' experiences and knowledge to inform the GEF partnership on pathways towards greater civil society engagement with a view to GEF-9 and beyond.