

## **CORPORATE PROGRAMS FOR GEF-7**

### **Background**

431. The GEF has been implementing Corporate Programs, which are aimed at developing the capacity of its recipient countries and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to effectively protect the global environment. Under GEF-6, the following two corporate programs are being implemented – Small Grants Program (SGP) and Country Relations Program.

### **Small Grants Program (SGP)**

432. The SGP is aimed at financing community-led initiatives to address global environmental issues. It is currently being implemented by UNDP on behalf of the GEF partnership. It is specifically designed to mobilize bottom-up actions by empowering local civil society organizations, and poor and vulnerable communities, including women and Indigenous Peoples.

433. Since its launch in 1992, the SGP, through a decentralized national level delivery mechanism, has implemented more than 20,000 projects in 125 countries, at a total cost of USD 542 million (the average grant size per project under the SGP is USD 25,000).

434. SGP remains one of the GEF's most successful flagship initiatives and it enjoys strong and broad support from its stakeholders. A joint evaluation of the SGP by the GEF's Independent Evaluation Office and UNDP's Independent Evaluation Office from 2013-2015 concluded that the Program continues to play a key role in promoting the GEF's objectives. It specifically noted that SGP continues to support projects that are relevant, effective and efficient in achieving global environmental benefits, while addressing issues of livelihoods, poverty, gender equality and women's empowerment. The evaluation also reported evidence of strong replication, scaling-up, sustainability, and mainstreaming of SGP activities.

435. SGP Under GEF-7: Based on lessons learned during the last 25 years, and inputs from recent stakeholder consultations, including with governments, Convention focal points, and the private sector, the SGP will place greater focus in GEF-7 on promoting strategic and results-based investments at the local level in alignment with the GEF's proposed Impact Programs and Focal Area investments. SGP-financed projects could require greater focus on promoting and supporting innovative and scalable initiatives at the local level to protect the global environment in priority landscapes and seascapes. It could also support projects that would serve as "incubators" of innovation, with the potential for broader replication of successful approaches through larger projects supported by the GEF and/or other partners.

436. The SGP will give priority in GEF-7 to the following strategic initiatives, which complement the proposed Impact Programs at the community level: (a) Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries; (b) Low-Carbon Energy Access Benefits; (c) Community-based Threatened Ecosystems and Species Conservation: Land and Water; (d) Local to Global Coalitions in Chemicals and Waste Management; and (e) Catalyzing Sustainable Urban Development.

437. The SGP's Country Programming Strategy will prioritize critical landscapes/seascapes to focus its programming on globally recognized important ecosystems (including Key Biodiversity Areas). It will continue to seek synergies, implement multi-sectoral approaches by involving communities at the landscapes/seascapes level, and facilitating communities' innovative actions to effectively manage the complex mosaic landscapes/seascapes.

438. The SGP will also finance strategic services to the civil society and community organizations to enhance their institutional, technical and financial capacities; and to develop partnership platforms and networks for scaling up and knowledge management.

439. SGP's active engagement on knowledge sharing at all levels has enabled mutual learning among its grantees and beyond, as well as replication and upscaling of initiatives. SGP will act as a convener for civil society to enhance linkage with governments and private sector on key global environmental issues, particularly in transforming policies and practices for sustainability under the Impact Programs and other GEF programs. SGP's "Grantmaker Plus initiatives" would continue to cover: (a) CSO-Government-Private Sector Dialogues: for policy and practice transformations; (b) Social Inclusion: including gender, indigenous peoples, youth, and persons with disabilities; and (c) Citizen Based Global Knowledge Platforms: including digital library and south-south cooperation.

440. Special attention will be placed in GEF-7 in strengthening SGP's operations in the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. The SGP will enhance its decentralized approaches through its multi-stakeholder National Steering Committees and development of Country Programming Strategies, which are based on assessments and consultations with stakeholders in each country.

### **Country Support Program (CSP)**

441. The goal of the Country Support Program is to strengthen the capacity of the GEF recipient countries to fully participate in the GEF partnership to generate global environment benefits. As the major outreach vehicle for the GEF, the Country Support Program is being used by various GEF stakeholder groups in the partnership to advance the protection of the global environment (see Box 4).

#### **Box 4: Strategic Objectives of the Country Support Program by GEF Stakeholder Groups**

***The Secretariat:***

Meet with and explain the GEF evolution to recipient countries, including strategies, policies and procedures and how to develop a PIF;

Provide new training and tools to the GEF and Convention Focal Points and civil society representatives to be more effective in their work with the GEF and the achievement of Global Environment Benefits (GEBs) more generally;

Facilitate knowledge exchange and learning around GEF project design and implementation at both country and regional levels;

Follow up and monitor programmatic approaches, for example the Great Green Wall program;

Explain the relation between GEF and the SDGs; and

Discuss programming issues with the Operational Focal Points (OFPs)

The **GEF Focal Points** to understand and better carry out their responsibilities in the partnership, including to learn from other organizations best practices in areas such as project management, Knowledge exchange, national experiences and possible South-South cooperation.

The **Convention Focal Points** to better understand and appreciate the contributions of the GEF as a financial mechanism to the achievement of the Convention objectives and therefore provide more informed guidance through the Convention Conference of the Parties (CoPs).

**Civil society representatives** to meet and develop relationships with their Government counterparts, the Agencies and the GEF Secretariat to contribute better to the attainment of Global Environment Benefits.

**The Council members and Alternates** to meet with the focal points of the countries they represent to prepare for Council meetings, discuss regional projects, exchange information and views.

The **recipient Council members and Alternates** to meet prior to the Council meetings to discuss issues of interest on the agenda.

The **national governments** to meet national stakeholders to discuss and validate national objectives, strategies, policies, coordination, mainstreaming considerations relevant to the global environment in their decision making and specific GEF programming.

The **Convention Secretariats** to take advantage of the presence of Focal Points and civil society to pursue consultations and other GEF-related goals.

442. The Country Support Program, under GEF-6, comprises a variety of opportunities for meetings and workshops to promote dialogue among different GEF stakeholder groups, including the following: GEF National Dialogues; GEF National Portfolio Formulation Exercise; GEF Introduction Seminars; GEF Council Constituency Meetings; the GEF Workshops, especially Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs); Pre-Council Meetings of recipient Constituency Council members and Alternates and GEF Knowledge Days. Under GEF-6, a total of 39 ECW workshops were conducted in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

443. The Country Relations Program activities are strengthening countries capacity by informing, assisting and empowering relevant officials, including GEF Focal Points, Convention Focal Points, and Civil Society Organizations to enable them to engage on and contribute to the protection of the global environment.

444. **The Country Support Program in GEF-7.** The strategic objectives of the Country Support Program, as summarized in Box 4, will remain fully relevant under GEF-7. Countries have reported that the need addressed by the program remains high and the intensity of program engagement is not expected to decrease. The type of activities currently financed by the on-going program should continue to shape future offerings. However, greater emphasis could be placed in the

design of workshops and meetings on raising awareness about the unique features of the GEF-7 package offerings, with the view of helping countries to engage and participate in new opportunities. It is, therefore, expected that once the programming directions of GEF-7 are firmed up, the Secretariat will work with Agencies, countries and other stakeholders to design activities responsive to the need to facilitate effective participation of the GEF country stakeholders in the implementation of the program.