



60th GEF Council meeting
GEF Consultations with Civil Society
Friday, June 11, 2021, 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EST (UTC-4)

**Enhancing Climate Resilience: The role of Civil Society, and
Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities**

**Draft Concept Note
May 24, 2021**

**Prepared by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration and consultation with
the GEF CSO Network, IPAG, the GEF SGP and STAP**

Introduction

Adjacent to the GEF 60th Council meeting in June 2021, a virtual GEF Consultations with Civil Society is scheduled for Friday June 11th from 7:00 to 11:00 a.m. EST (GMT-4). This consultation is organized collaboratively among the GEF Secretariat, the GEF CSO Network, the GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG) and the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) with support from the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP).

The topic for this consultation is *Enhancing Climate Resilience: the role of Civil Society, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities*. The GEF Council members recognized the importance of the role civil society play in climate resilience and adaptation and selected this topic at its 57th meeting in December 2019. The consultation will include roundtable discussions with civil society on experiences from GEF projects including from the GEF Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the GEF Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), the GEF SGP and other similar projects around world. One objective with the roundtables is to showcase the valuable role of civil society organizations and indigenous people and local communities in building resilience and adapting to a changing climate at the local level.

Background

Climate change presents a significant threat to life on earth. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that “climate change will amplify existing risks and create new risks for natural and human systems” and “risks are unevenly distributed and are generally greater for disadvantaged people and communities.”¹ Since 2010, the GEF’s Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) has highlighted that many GEF focal area objectives and expected outputs are prone to risks associated with climate change through both direct and indirect effects on project interventions². The GEF has endeavored to mainstream climate risk and resilience to climate change into its overall operations, recognizing that building resilience to climate risks is an important factor that may determine the durability of a project’s outcomes and the project’s long-term impacts.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has upended human lives and has damaged economic systems. The impact of the pandemic has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable, women, the poor, indigenous peoples and local communities and peoples with disabilities. The fallout of the pandemic will reinforce the need for rebuilding back a green and blue economy in a manner that is more resilient to climate change as well as more inclusive and sustainable.

The GEF recognizes that adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change is urgent and indispensable to safeguard development gains and to address the needs of the poor and the vulnerable, and that it is part and parcel of any integrated approach to solving complex environmental issues. Healthy systems that are resilient to disruptions, shocks, and stressors are critical in achieving not only environmental benefits but also serve as a foundation for economic and human development. Climate resilience is a key component of any healthy system, particularly in vulnerable countries that depend

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2014, Summary for policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of IPCC*, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

² (Ravindranath et al., 2010).

heavily on climate-sensitive natural resources and traditional agricultural practices for subsistence and livelihoods.

The Paris Agreement was adopted at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015 and entered into force in November 2016. For the first time, the importance of adaptation action was recognized on par with mitigation in Article 2 of the Agreement for sustainable development. The Paris Agreement also introduced a long-term adaptation goal, as well as the temperature goal, to be achieved based on mitigation action.

The GEF, through its two funds dedicated to financing adaptation action – the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), is designated as part of the operating entity of the financial mechanism for the Paris Agreement and UNFCCC. It is entrusted with continuing to play a key role to strengthen developing countries' resilience to climate change, with a renewed focus on implementation. It places a strong emphasis on the local communities, indigenous people, and civil society, who are at the front lines for implementation, and which, in developing and least developed countries, play a critical role in safeguarding high value global environmental and resources. This is particularly true in LDC, where civil society and community-based organizations provide services to hard-to-reach populations and also serve an important link between vulnerable populations and rural communities to markets and services. Civil Society and local actor will thus play an important role in supporting “building back better” initiatives in the global response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the LDCF and the SCCF, the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) has, since 2009, been implementing the Community Based Adaptation Programme (CBA) in partnership with and financed by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The CBA Programme is implemented in 41 countries, including 37 SIDS and aims to build the adaptive capacities and resilience of local communities and CSOs to better adapt to climate change. The SGP CBA Programme also complements the climate mitigation strategies financed by the GEF. Furthermore, several projects financed by the GEF's main trust fund are blending LDCF/SCCF resources to deliver integrated solutions with adaptation and global environmental benefits.

[The role of local actors in responding to global environmental challenges and adapting to a changing climate](#)

Local actors, including Indigenous People and local communities (IPLC) are at the frontlines of climate change. They are experiencing different forms of disproportionate burden of the impacts of a changing climate. Local actors and groups are often also more marginalized in top-down planning and decision-making processes supported the global climate governance architecture. The GEF recognizes the need to further improve the meaningful participation of local actors and has been supporting projects, for example, that include development of Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPAs) and other localized development plans that integrate adaptation into medium and longer-term planning, while placing local communities at the helm of adaptation action.

It is well known that a large majority of the environmental resources that the GEF aims to protect are in the hands of IPLCs – 80% of the Earth's biodiversity is found in areas managed by IPLCs and that

approximately 40% of lands listed by governments as under conservation is managed by IPLCs³. IPLCs can be skilled conservators of natural resources. For example, in many places community forestry and management has shown to be more effective than national parks in reducing deforestation. This makes civil society and IPLCs critical partners in reaching the 2030 targets and goals across the Conventions the GEF serves, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. These goals, targets and commitments address different aspects of multiple crises of climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, land degradation, and chemicals pollution, compounded by the health/socioeconomic crises from COVID-19. This framework serves as the blueprint for global sustainability by 2030 and beyond, with short and longer-term actions to be implemented.

Because climate change is interlinked with so many other root causes of environmental degradation, helping the most vulnerable communities to adapt to rapidly changing environments is central to the success of any forthcoming endeavors to safeguard planetary resources. Rural livelihoods often depend on multiple practices across different natural resources within shared social-ecological systems and adaptation actions related to one practice or resource affect the others. The ability of people to adapt to climate change is inextricably linked to both economic development and basic human rights and critical for sustaining the health of the ecosystems that people and communities depend on for their livelihoods and wellbeing. If environmental policies and programs are to be effective, in a changing climate, they must integrate adaptation elements into restoring and conserving ecosystem functions and promote human well-being. Therefore, climate adaptation is a key and critical component to any integrated approach attempting to address numerous complex environmental issues, beyond directly addressing climate change. Placing local knowledge, local communities and indigenous peoples at the center of GEF strategies going forward will help ensure that people and communities take center stage and guide a “vulnerability first” approach to adapting to climate change.

This consultation will thus focus on GEF’s experiences (and that of similar financiers) in financing community-based and community-led adaptation interventions, including Nature-based solutions (NbS) for adapting to current and anticipated impacts of climate change. It will also include discussions on important measures to address the urgent threats posed by a rapidly changing climate and to support IPLCs in adapting to climate change through activities that bolster the livelihoods of these people and communities⁴. The consultation will discuss best practices and progress and explore further technical efforts needed to be made for enhancing resilience. The consultation will showcase selected relevant projects financed by the GEF and the GEF SGP to provide an opportunity for CSOs to assess experience with community led approaches and models to adapting to climate change that effectively address these challenges and to draw out lessons for future application.

³ Stephen T. Garnett et al: *A spatial overview of the global importance of Indigenous lands for conservation* in Nature Sustainability (July 2018) and Indigenous peoples. The World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenous-peoples> (2017).

⁴ For further information on a useful framing of resilience in the context of climate change adaptation and development, please see: <http://www.edwardcarr.com/downloads/Carr%20-%202019%20-%20Properties%20and%20projects%20Reconciling%20resilience%20and%20transformation%20for%20adaptation%20and%20development.pdf>

Objectives

The main objective with this consultation is to facilitate a dialogue amongst civil society including IPLCs, GEF Council members, GEF Secretariat, GEF Agencies and the broader GEF Partnership. The Consultation specifically aims to:

- (1) Share, showcase and discuss experiences from GEF projects (across the GEF LDCF/SCCF and SGP portfolio around the world) on the important role of civil society organizations and indigenous people and local communities play in building resilience and adapting to a changing climate at the local level.
- (2) Identify successful mechanisms, best practices, and experienced challenges across community-based and community led adaptation projects.
- (3) Distill recommendations to improve approaches to better support and measure local resilience and community led adaptation, including elements to help improve project impacts, durability and sustainability.

Organization

The consultations will start with a one hour dedicated dialogue between GEF's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), GEF CSO Network, GEF Council Members, GEF Secretariat and other partners and participants. The consultation will also include two roundtables (see details below) and an open Q & A session. The consultation will include simultaneous translations in French and Spanish and opportunities for participants to engage via the chat which the GEF Secretariat will help to moderate.

Roundtables

Roundtable 1: Financing Climate Security: Adaptation Experiences in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations. This roundtable will feature LDCF and SCCF projects as well as GEF SGP projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations where the GEF has been working with local communities to combat the negative impacts of climate change. It will showcase successful mechanisms, best practices, experienced needs and gaps from different resilient projects. It will also include a moderated conversation with panelists and participants to distill lessons learned and generate elements for consideration in future GEF projects and programs in fragile and conflict affected areas.

Context: There is a significant overlap between countries which are characterized as fragile and/or conflict affected and those which are designated as LDCs. Seventy percent of fragile or conflict affected situations are also LDCs and approximately half of LDCs are on the World Bank's Harmonized List of Fragile Situations. It is important that projects and programs, including those financed by the LDCF, in these countries are conflict sensitive and take fragility into account. This is an important consideration for the GEF that has provided and will continue to provide financing for the urgent and long-term adaptation needs in these countries. Recognizing the multiplying impact of climate change on fragile situations is also an important consideration in the formulation of adaptation priorities. It is also critical to acknowledge that to effectively support climate resilience and adaptation efforts considerations must also take into account root causes of poverty, conflict and degradation. In addition, in areas prone to conflict and instability, adaptation strategies must be highly localized, with local communities at the

forefront to help avoid reinforcing existing social tensions and/or inadvertently fueling intergroup competition for increasingly scarce resources.

Roundtable 2: Inclusion in Community-based and Autonomous Adaptation for enhancing resilience.

This Roundtable will feature community-led and autonomous adaptation interventions financed by the LDCF and SCCF as well as GEF SGP projects focused on inclusion, local communities, pastoralists and and/or on the significance of gender mainstreaming in enhancing resilience. It will include a moderated conversation with panelists and participants to distill lessons learned and generate elements for consideration in future GEF projects and programs

Context: Community-Based Adaptation (CBA) is an important and well tested approach of GEF adaptation projects, particularly those financed by the LDCF for enhancing resilience. It integrates local people and communities in the management and avoidance of the negative impacts and pressures of climate change. This approach incorporates and builds upon existing coping strategies of communities in addressing the potential impacts of climate change, utilizing measures which are location specific and community managed. While, communities have been living and thriving in natural resource-dependent contexts, they often bear the brunt of climate variations. Autonomous adaptation can provide valuable lessons in how communities use local and traditional knowledges to adapt to climate caused challenges. Traditional knowledge generates important climate friendly innovative solutions specifically adapted to the local context and environment. It is an important element of the world's cultural diversity and the foundation for purposeful adaptation actions carried out without external inputs (policies, information, resources).

It is important to highlight and bring together the GEF's experiences with CBA with autonomous adaptation. Attention to autonomous adaptation facilitates project identification and design that bolsters existing successful practices with new technologies and methods to make communities stronger and more resilient to climate change, while integrating the highly localized knowledge and traditions held by these communities. At the same time, sensitivity to autonomous adaptation can help ensure that CBA interventions do not unintentionally undermine existing practices that provide safety and security in the face of a changing climate.

Criteria for Projects to be showcased in the two round tables

The selected projects should:

- have measurable results like sustained adaptation activities and its impacts - priority to be given to projects completed and phased out at least before 3 years (i.e. completed by 2018 or before)
- be relevant and/or correspond to at least one of the two roundtable themes (see above) - priority will be given to good examples illustrating nature-based solutions and approaches and scale up potential
- be led and implemented by CSOs, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and they should be either the main beneficiaries of the project and/or play significant roles in the design and implementation of the project activities.

Considerations will also be made to ensure good gender and regional balance (e.g. no more than 2 examples per region)