



Conflict Resolution—Voice and Right of Recourse for Affected People

Efforts to address global environmental challenges require engagement with communities, stakeholders, and governments at all levels that are deeply invested in the outcome yet have profoundly different interests and perspectives. Experience shows that these efforts—even where focused on a common goal—can face unexpected challenges, create tensions, and leave some parties unsatisfied or some objectives unfulfilled.

ISSUE

Conflicts can stem from a variety of causes. These may include differences over access to resources, disputes about science and evidence, or conflicting visions of economic development and environmental protection. People affected by GEF-financed projects may have important and legitimate concerns over how critical environmental resources will be managed into the future, who bears responsibility should something go wrong, and the impacts of long-term change. They also have expertise and knowledge that is essential to good projects and successful outcomes.

Peoples, Gender Equality, or others, and perception of wrongdoing or mismanagement.

The GEF takes all such concerns seriously. For that reason, the GEF Council created the position of GEF Conflict Resolution Commissioner to receive and respond to complaints and concerns about GEF-funded projects and operations. The Commissioner works directly with complainants, member countries, GEF Agencies, and stakeholders to find an effective response and solution to problems that arise. The Commissioner's service is intended to complement the work of the independent accountability and grievance mechanisms of individual GEF Agencies.

SOLUTION

The GEF system for conflict resolution is designed to give people a greater voice over actions that affect them, and an avenue of recourse when things go wrong. Problems and complaints about GEF-financed projects and programs may include, among others, lack of consultation with interested stakeholders and communities, lack of compliance with GEF policies, including those relating to the rights of Indigenous

LOOKING FORWARD

A person concerned about a GEF-financed project or program may submit a complaint to a local or country-level dispute resolution system, a GEF Partner Agency, or the GEF Conflict Resolution Commissioner. A complaint to the Commissioner can be expressed in a simple email, letter, or other format, and in any language. Within three weeks of receiving a complaint



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the Commissioner reviews the issue with the complainant, answers any questions about the conflict resolution function, and may contact other interested parties to seek further information, all while respecting any request for confidentiality and anonymity of persons submitting complaints.

On this basis, the Commissioner determines if the complaint falls within the mandate of the GEF conflict resolution function. If so, the Commissioner works to develop next steps to seek resolution of the conflict in dialogue with the parties involved, taking into account the nature of the complaint, the requests of the person(s) bringing the complaint, and relevant information. The steps may include:

- Facilitation of dialogue to resolve the issues;
- Seeking appropriate responsive action by the responsible parties;
- Conciliation or mediation;
- Independent fact-finding; and/or
- Referral of the matter to the independent grievance mechanism of a responsible implementing agency (in the case of GEF-financed projects), among others.

The Commissioner will keep the involved persons and parties informed of status and progress in resolving the conflict, in keeping with the conflict resolution mandate. The work is underpinned by principles of independence, integrity, impartiality, and accessibility to all.

In the end, the intent of this system is to support the voice and rights of recourse of affected people and communities, and to improve the results GEF's work in support of its mandate. Experience shows time-and-again the very close connection between the two.

More information on the GEF's Conflict Resolution system, including summaries of past cases, is available at www.thegef.org/conflict-resolution. The GEF Conflict Resolution Commissioner, Mr. Peter Lallas, can be reached at plallas@thegef.org or +1 (202) 473-9732

