

Report of the Regional Civil Society Dialogue with the GEF



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Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organization
SGP	Small Grants Programmes
IPs	Indigenous People
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEFSEC	GEF Secretariat
OFP	Operational Focal Point
RFP	Regional Focal Point
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources

1.0 Introduction

The GEF ECW brings together the GEF National Focal Points, Convention Focal Points and other key stakeholders, including civil society, to update on GEF strategies, policies and procedures and to encourage coordination on matters relating to GEF projects and programmes. The workshop also enables focal points to meet with their counterparts from other countries in the region to share experiences and lessons on effective implementation of GEF projects. Additionally, the workshop also allows other GEF partners, especially GEF Agencies, to discuss and review policies and procedures and to share experiences from GEF projects and their integration within national policy frameworks.

During the ECW, a regional civil society dialogue was convened aimed to create an understanding of the GEF CSO Network and the role CSOs play in the evolving GEF while identifying opportunities for CSO engagement. The dialogue was attended by CSO representatives, country OFPs, GEF Agencies, and SGP global manager and GEFSEC representatives, among others.

2.0 Proceedings

2.1 Welcome Remarks

Ms. Francoise Clottes, Director-Strategy and Operations welcomed participants to the dialogue and informed participants that the intention of the dialogue was to discuss practical application of policies and strategies related to GEF and analyze the different aspects of GEF. She noted that the meeting was the first ECW for GEF 7 and about 11 ECW will take place in the course of the period. She highlighted that 4.1 billion dollars has been raised for GEF 7. In addition, she informed participants that GEF 7 is more strategic, looking at new policies on stakeholder engagement, gender, environment and social safeguard and co-financing.

2.2 Presentations



Ms. Gabriella Richardson Temm making a presentation on Civil Society engagement within the GEF partnership

2.2.1 Civil Society Engagement within the GEF Partnership

Ms. Gabriella Richardson Temm, Coordinator-Gender and Social issues made a presentation on Civil Society engagement within the GEF partnership. She informed the participants that CSO engagement is intended to enhance CSO

participation in GEF, discuss the challenges and the opportunities for engagement. In her view she noted that CSOs should be considered as a first sector rather than a third sector due the role it plays in shaping the environment laws and policies.

She highlighted the value of CSO engagement in GEF and this included among others to; enhance recipient country ownership and accountability; Liaise with communities and other local stakeholders; Infuse skills, experiences, and knowledge. She noted that CSOs further play an advisory role to the GEF council where they share platforms with Council members to discuss CSOs engagement issues in GEF. She also informed the participants about the GEF Updated Vision to Enhance Engagement of Civil Society.

2.2.2 Understanding the GEF CSO Network

Ms. Christine Mbatuusa from EMLI- on behalf of the RFP Eastern Africa, CSO Network made the presentation on understanding the GEF CSOs Network and the role played by CSOs in the evolving GEF. She informed participants that GEF recognizes the role that CSO play in safe guarding the environment. She informed members about the network structure: governance and management, membership and achievements of the network. She noted that there is an updated vision to enhance CSO engagement in GEF which lays out the roles of CSOs.

She highlighted the evolving roles of CSOs in GEF and these included; advocacy, project implementation, resource mobilization, conveners of networks and dialogues, innovators and the watch dog role.

In addition, she highlighted a number of issues limiting CSO engagement in GEF. These included: reduced budget for country support program & cross-cutting capacity building in GEF 7 yet capacity building is a continuous process that equips CSOs through knowledge and understanding for effective engagement with GEF; lack of support for effective regional stakeholder engagements i.e. face to face meetings of regional representatives (RFPs) with Network members to seek input to inform Council Meeting, currently done remotely via online with few inputs; limited in-country action within CSOs and between CSOs and GEF Agencies, limited engagement with private sector in enhancing environmental sustainability.

She further made the following recommendations aimed at enhancing CSO involvement in GEF;

- GEFSEC should consider supporting **regional CSO workshops alongside the regular Constituency Meetings** to enable strengthen relations between CSOs, RFPs, Council Members and Country Focal Points. This will also enable effective regional consultations prior to Meetings of Council and improve accountability
- Increase the participation of CSOs in Expanded Constituency Meetings (ECWs) by supporting **4 representatives per country (women, Indigenous peoples, youth and NGO)**
- Support a special initiative **for CSO-Private Sector – Government dialogues in East Africa** to promote responsible business
- Revitalize the operations of the **NGO voluntary fund** to support GEF CSO Network activities so that the Network implement its commitments under the Updated Vision to enhance civil society engagement with the GEF

Following the discussion on the 2 presentations, participants recommended that the applications to participate in the GEF meetings such as the assembly should be opened up to the public. They were informed that the applications are public for all CSOs to attend the meetings and there is always a CSO panel during the GEF councils which discusses issues of CSO engagement in GEF matters.

Participants requested that audits should be conducted of the GEF projects and their contribution to environmental conservation. This should influence the selection of the best practice project and award CSOs that use the best practice.

Participants further requested to information on requirements for an organization to get accredited to the network. In this regard they were informed that the organization should be a non-profit organization, must have a constitution, and have a track record of addressing environmental management issues relevant to one of GEF Focal areas, willingness and ability to contribute to the work of the network, among other.

In addition, one of the government representatives from Uganda inquired about the level of engagement between CSOs and the government during the project implementation process. In this regard a case for Uganda was made where the CSO-Government dialogue project funded by GEF SGP has contributed to bridging the gap between CSOs and the government. It was highlighted that the government representatives are part of the project steering committee and their decisions influence the implementation of the project activities. It was further highlighted that the government and non-state actors are convened under dialogues to discuss environment issues.

Further still, a concern was raised by participants on how to strengthen the lessons and experiences on effective project implementation across the region since the network is working in different countries. It was noted that though face to face meeting are important, they are hampered by the limited resources. It was therefore recommended that the GEF CSO network website should be activated and updated to foster effective interaction within the region.

It was also noted that the same challenges for the network continue to manifest thence suggesting that mechanisms should be put in place to address the challenges.

Further participants requested for more understanding of the roles of the Regional Focal Points. On this note they were informed that the RFP play a coordination role of CSOs and provide update on GEF issues through information sharing and participate in the GEF council and assembly after which they provide updates to members of GEF. Participants were informed that such updates were majorly through emails.

2.2.3 Group work

The following were the guiding questions to the group discussions; 1) what are some key remaining challenges? 2) What could be done better moving forward?

Key remaining challenges	What can be done better
Limited private sector involvement in environment issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The selection process under SGP should be reviewed.2. RFP should develop quarterly news letters

Limited visibility of the GEF CSO network	to provide update on the network and GEF matters.
Limited access to information on GEF matters	3. There is need to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of the network. These should include the reporting obligation on national and regional issues.
Limited resources	4. There is need to develop the human resource capacity of the Network.
Limited sustainability of the projects	

3.0 Panel discussion about SGP and opportunities in GEF-7



Cross section of panel with representatives L-R: Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Mauritius and Tanzania during panel on SGP

During the SGP session, a panel discussion was convened composed of 2 GEF OFPs (Uganda and Sudan), a representative of the indigenous people, a CEO of FONERWA, national SGP coordinator from Rwanda and a CSO representative from Mauritius and Tanzania.

Mr. Denis Mugagga the representative of the GEF operations focal point from Uganda informed participants about the project on food security that is to be implemented in the Karamoja region, and noted that a call for proposals from CSOs operating in the region has commenced.

In regard to how SGP is being implemented in a non SGP country, the GEF OFP from Sudan informed the participants that Sudan has a policy for national banks to allocate 1% to microfinance activities. He highlighted that the CSOs in Sudan have the experience and capacity to implement projects under the climate change agenda which qualifies them to also be implementers SGP project implementers. He also highlighted that it is the mandate of the Ministry of Forest and Environment to build the capacity of the public in environment management.

The representative for IPs responded to the question of how to engage the CSOs, IPs and the experience of working with GEF. She informed the meeting that IPs are considered as the vulnerable or marginalized communities still practicing their traditional way of life. In regard to the level of CSO engagement, she noted that the CSOs engage with the GEF SGP coordinators and the government during consultations on GEF matters. She however, noted that IPs have not had an opportunity to participate in SGP due to the programme focus and they remain hopeful that they will be considered in GEF 7.

The panel further discussed how gender mainstreaming can happen in GEF SGP projects. The representative from Mauritius made a case on how she manages to mainstream gender in project activities and this included, working with women in green houses, women sell the herbal plants and make medicinal herbal infusion through the knowledge gained from the project.

Further still the panel discussed project scaling and defined it as a way of expanding and sustaining the project programmes and policy to meet a great number of people. It also highlighted the factors for project scaling which included among others, mainstreaming project proposals in to national plans and budgets.

The CEO of FENORWA highlighted that FENORWA is one of the financing opportunity for the private sector since they are considered as job creators in the region.

4.0 Outcome

The dialogue encouraged created awareness on GEF CSO, and the GEF CSO Network while noting that the civil society organizations make up the network. It also highlighted Small Grants Programme as the main GEF window for all CSOs to access funds.

5.0 Recommendations

The following were recommended;

- GEF CSO Network website be activated
- More effective way of information sharing with in the network be explored, apart from email list serves and google groups.
- RFP should develop quarterly news letters to provide update on the network and GEF matters.

6.0 Follow-up actions

1. Activation of the GEF CSO Network website
2. Provision of timely feedback to applicants who wish to join the network

7.0 Concluding remarks

Ms. Clottes concluded by informing participants that GEF had committed \$128 million under the small grants programme, to which she requested the CSOs to utilize by sending in bankable proposals under

the SGP. She encouraged CSOs to participate in the design and execution of the projects and emphasized that the GEF CSO network is a voice for the wider group of CSOs.

8.0 Program

Time	Session	Description
9:00 – 9:10	Welcome <i>GEF Secretariat</i>	Overview of dialogue
9.10 - 9:40	Understanding the GEF CSO Network <i>Christine Mbatuusa</i> <i>RFP – Eastern Africa, GEF CSO Network</i>	Overview of the evolving role of civil society, and the GEF CSO Network engagement within the GEF Partnership
9:40 – 10:40	Civil Society Engagement within the GEF Partnership <i>Gabriella Richardson Temm</i> <i>GEF Secretariat</i>	Overview GEF's updated vision on civil society, and group discussion about stakeholder and civil society engagement. What are some key lessons learned about GEF's civil society engagement at both policy and project level? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some key remaining the challenges? • What could be done better moving forward?
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee/Tea Break	
11:00 - 12:30	GEF Small Grants Programme <i>Yoko Watanabe, Charles Nyandiga, GEF SGP</i>	Panel discussion about SGP and opportunities in GEF-7
12:30-13:00	Future CSO engagement opportunities and wrap-up	What's coming up in 2019 and GEF-7. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country level engagement; Council meetings; GEF Monitoring Policy; Knowledge Management etc.
13:00	LUNCH	Radisson Blu Restaurant