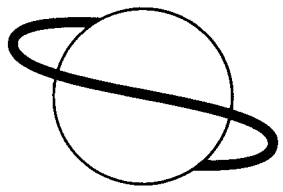


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PUBLIC
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IN
GEF-FINANCED
PROJECTS



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**Public Involvement
in GEF-Financed Projects**

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
I. Rationale and Definition.....	2
Rationale.....	3
Definition.....	3
II. Principles of Public Involvement.....	5

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) policy on public involvement in GEF-financed projects. At its meeting in April 1996, the GEF Council approved the principles presented herein as a basis for public involvement in the design, implementation, and evaluation of GEF-financed projects. The Council stressed that when applying the principles, there should be emphasis on local participation and local stakeholders; specific conditions in-country should be taken into consideration; and public involvement should be consistent with the provision of the Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF.

1. At its February 1995 meeting, the Council asked the Secretariat to prepare a "document proposing GEF policies for information disclosure and public participation" (*Joint Summary of Chairs*, p. 3). An information paper, *Draft Outline of Policy Paper on Public Involvement in GEF-Financed Projects* (GEF/C.6/Inf.5), and two background papers were subsequently made available for comments at the October 1995 Council meeting. Since the release of the information paper, the Secretariat has engaged in consultations and small group meetings with Council Members, NGOs and regional NGO networks, and recipient governments.

2. This document builds upon the previous papers and incorporates comments from the consultations. Part I provides the rationale and definition of public involvement. The basic principles of public involvement are presented in Part II, together with an identification of how the prin-

1

principles will be applied by the Secretariat, Implementing Agencies, project executing agencies¹, and others participating in GEF-financed projects.

I. RATIONAL AND DEFINITION

3. The need for public involvement—information dissemination, consultation, and stakeholder participation—is set forth explicitly in the *Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility* (or Instrument). As stated in the basic provisions of the Instrument, all GEF-financed projects will “provide for full disclosure of non-confidential information, and consultation with, and participation as appropriate of, major groups and local communities throughout the project cycle”.² The Secretariat is “in consultation with the Implementing Agencies, [to] ensure the implementation of the operational policies adopted by the Council through the preparation of common guidelines on the project cycle. Such guidelines shall address project identification and development, including the proper and adequate review of project and work program proposals, consultation with and participation of local communities and other interested parties”.³ The Implementing Agencies also have their own policies, guidelines, and procedures on public involvement which are consistent with the above provisions.

¹ The term “project executing agency or agencies,” as used throughout this paper, refers to the institutions or range of institutions, which are directly responsible for project preparation, design, implementation, and evaluation. These may be recipient government agencies, United Nations specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other bodies. The term “project executing agency” is not synonymous with “executing agency” as used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In UNDP, only recipient governments, organizations of the U.N. system (including U.N. specialized agencies and the U.N. Office for Project Services (UNOPS)), governmental agencies not part of the U.N. system, and UNDP itself may be referred to as “executing agencies,” although NGOs and other bodies may provide extensive services to project preparation, design, implementation, and evaluation.

²Instrument, paragraph 5.

³Instrument, paragraph 21c.

Rationale

4. Effective public involvement is critical to the success of GEF-financed projects. When done appropriately, public involvement improves the performance and impact of projects by:

- enhancing recipient country ownership of, and accountability for, project outcomes;
- addressing the social and economic needs of affected people;
- building partnerships among project executing agencies and stakeholders; and
- making use of skills, experiences, and knowledge, in particular, of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community and local groups, and the private sector in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities.

Definition

5. Public involvement consists of three related, and often overlapping, processes: information dissemination, consultation, and “stakeholder” participation. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, or institutions that have an interest or stake in the outcome of a GEF-financed project. The term also applies to those potentially affected by a project. Stakeholders include recipient country governments, implementing agencies, project executing agencies, groups contracted to conduct project activities at various stages of the project, and other groups in the civil society which may have an interest in the project.

6. *Information dissemination* refers to the availability and distribution of timely and relevant information on GEF-financed projects. Aspects of dissemination include appropriate notification and disclosure of project information⁴ and proper public access to it.

7. *Consultation* pertains to information exchanges among the government, the Implementing Agency, project executing agencies, and other stakeholders. Although decision making authority rests with the government, the Agency, and project executing agencies, periodic consultations throughout the project cycle help managers make informed choices about project activities. Consultation further provides opportunities for communities and local groups to contribute to project design, implementation, and evaluation.

8. *Stakeholder participation* is where stakeholders collaboratively engage, as appropriate, in the identification of project concepts and objectives, selection of sites, design and implementation of activities, and monitoring and evaluation of projects. Developing strategies for incorporating stakeholder participation throughout the project cycle is particularly necessary in projects which impact the incomes and livelihoods of local groups, especially disadvantaged populations in and around project sites (for example, indigenous communities, women, and poor households).

"Notification" includes the announcement and availability of GEF-related information. Disclosure refers to the availability of non-confidential information, often through a public information center, library or office, or through various forms of media. Such information may include GEF project documents and reports and GEF technical papers. Access pertains to the ways information is disseminated to a range of groups through publications, workshops, electronic networks, popular media, vernacular translations, village information meetings, and other activities.

II. PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

9. Based upon provisions contained in the Instrument, policies and procedures of the Implementing Agencies, and experience gained from the pilot phase, the following principles will apply in the design, implementation, and evaluation of GEF-financed projects.

Effective public involvement should enhance the social, environmental, and financial sustainability of projects.

10. Public involvement activities should be designed so that they contribute to the environmental, financial, and social sustainability of projects. By improving project performance and sharing accountability for project outcomes, public involvement contributes to the environmental and financial sustainability of projects. Further, to be socially sustainable, projects should, as appropriate, address the social, cultural, and economic needs of people affected by GEF-financed projects. As mentioned in the *GEF Operational Strategy*, relevant social issues will be taken into account in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects. Such issues may include the socio-economic needs of affected people, the special needs of vulnerable populations, and access to project benefits.

Responsibility for assuring public involvement rests within the country, normally with the government, project executing agency or agencies. The Implementing Agencies should be supportive to this end.

11. Public involvement activities should strengthen ownership of projects by recipient countries. Governments should ensure that all GEF-financed projects are country-driven and based on national priorities for sustainable development. Governments should promote public

involvement in the identification of project concepts which are consistent with national priorities. The Implementing Agencies will assist and collaborate with recipient governments and project executing agencies, as appropriate, in developing projects that employ and promote public involvement throughout the project cycle. The Implementing Agencies will work closely with governments and project executing agencies to involve stakeholders at the earliest phase of project identification and throughout design, implementation, and evaluation.

Public involvement activities should be designed and implemented in a flexible manner, adapting and responding to recipient countries' national and local conditions and to project requirements.

12. Differences in requirements for public involvement exist across focal areas and types of projects, and, therefore, all public involvement activities should be based on local needs and conditions. For example, biodiversity projects affecting indigenous communities may require more extensive stakeholder participation than global projects which focus on technical assistance and capacity building at the national and regional levels. There will also be varying approaches to design of public involvement activities that respond to country conditions, such as cultural, political, and project-specific factors influencing project development and implementation.

To be effective, public involvement activities should be broad and sustainable. The Implementing Agencies will include in project budgets, as needed, the financial and technical assistance necessary for recipient governments and project executing agencies to ensure effective public involvement.

13. The Implementing Agencies will work with governments and project executing agencies to ensure that public involvement activities are designed in a manner that is representative of a range of stakeholder groups and effectively conducted over the long term. The Implementing Agencies will support project executing agencies in: (a) providing relevant, timely, and accessible information to as many stakeholders as possible; (b) facilitating broad as well as project-specific consultations, especially at the local or sub-national levels; and (c) promoting the participation of stakeholder groups throughout the project cycle. This promotion includes awareness raising and capacity strengthening activities.

Public involvement activities will be conducted in a transparent and open manner. All GEF-financed projects should have full documentation of public involvement activities.

14. Consistent with provisions in the Instrument, there should be transparency in the preparation, conduct, reporting, and evaluation of public involvement activities in all projects. The format for documentation of public involvement will be developed by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Implementing Agencies. Such a format should be brief and concise, and when being developed, those involved should consider good practice formats currently in use by the Implementing Agencies, NGOs, and project executing agencies.

15. The Secretariat will undertake the following to facilitate effective public involvement in all GEF-financed projects:

- Establish, in consultation with the Implementing Agencies, operational guidelines for assessing the

effectiveness of public involvement activities in the project's design and implementation plan; subsequent monitoring of public involvement activities through the annual project implementation review; and evaluation of the impacts of public involvement in terms of improving projects;

- Facilitate the exchange of best practices on public involvement among recipient governments, the Implementing Agencies, project executing agencies, and other stakeholders with a view to ensuring that lessons are incorporated into design of future projects;
- In collaboration with the Implementing Agencies, explore ways in which roles of NGOs and other stakeholders can be strengthened in project preparation, design, implementation, and evaluation, and conduct periodic assessments of the effectiveness of public involvement in projects; and
- Ensure that funding is available to recipient governments, executing agencies, and, as appropriate, NGOs for conducting effective public involvement.

16. The Implementing Agencies are committed to promoting effective public involvement within their own institutional environment. In accordance with internal policies and procedures, and consistent with the principles outlined in Part II above, the Implementing Agencies will develop guidelines for public involvement in their own GEF-financed projects, and should include the following:

- Modalities for incorporating public involvement in projects, and addressing social issues, starting at the earliest stages of the project cycle, and recognizing the difficulties and long-term nature of cultivating local participation; and

- Financing options during project preparation, and within project budgets, to facilitate design and implementation of public involvement activities, as appropriate, including allocation of project funding to encourage participation of NGOs, local groups, and the private sector.

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