

# Role of NGOs in the GEF Regime

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November 2001

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The Global Environment Facility (GEF), founded in 1990, is likely to be the primary financial mechanism for the implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). In order to meet the conditions of transparency, democracy and universality, the GEF underwent a restructuring process that was completed in the first half of 1994. Much of the criticisms of the GEF during the pilot phase focused on the issue of participation of wider section stakeholders of the recipient countries and the integration of the GEF programmes with national concerns and priorities. The present paper deals with the first part of the criticism mainly on the 'People's participation particularly of the Non governmental Organisations (NGOs) of the recipient countries.

The observations that follows on the 'Role of NGOs in the GEF regime' emanates from a recent study undertaken by a team of independent experts appointed by the GEF Council of the GEF's overall performance in India. Similar studies are also being conducted in other countries - Brazil, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Poland and Russia by the team.

In the description of different actors involved in the GEF project cycle and their (GEF Doc: the GEF Project Cycle) roles, it concentrates on the official actors in the entire project cycle and does not mention the roles of civil society groups including NGOs. This needed to be amended to include the specific roles of the NGOs and the Civil Society in the GEF project cycle.

However in the subsequent Council meeting in April 1996, the GEF Council approved the principles presented in the document: "Public Involvement in GEF - Finance 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. All GEF - financed projects will also provide full disclosure of non-confidential information and ensure participation as appropriate of major groups and local communities throughout the project cycle.

### Effective NGO and local stakeholders involvement

Effective NGO and local stakeholders involvement is critical to the success of GEF - Financed projects. When done appropriately, public involvement improves the performance, shortens the project time, brings down costs of projects increase their sense of ownership by their active participation. Such a measure improves performance of GEF projects by making use of skills, experiences and knowledge in particular of NGOs, community and local groups and the private sector in the design, implementation and evaluation of project activity.

Stakeholder's participation is where stakeholders collaboratively engage in the (1) identification of project concepts and objectives, (2) selection of sites, (3) design and implementation of activities, (4) monitoring and evaluation of projects, (5) developing strategies for increasing stakeholder's participation throughout the project cycle.

Particularly in projects which impacts the incomes and livelihoods of local groups, especially disadvantaged ones in and around project sites. In fact effective public involvement should enhance the social, environmental and financial sustainability of projects.

Responsibility for assuring public involvement rests within the country, normally with the government, project executing agencies; the IAs should be supportive to this end.

### Roles

1. To popularise renewable technologies through education programmes
2. To fulfil the socio-economic objectives of the countries (India), rapid economic growth is imperative within the policy sustainable development. The success of these plans and programmes both in the areas of environment and sustainable development necessitates is systematic effort to develop human resources at the grassroots level and their meaningful participation. To make it effective, empowerment of women is essential.  
In India the NGO movement particularly on environment issues at both local and national levels has been very successful and effective in resolving various related issues.

### Monitoring

3. A monitoring committee consisting of NGOs and stakeholders like the local community, social workers, etc. should be formed to oversee and monitor the expected outputs and goals set at different stages of a GEF project.
  - NGOs are very effective in breaking the market inertia and achieving the GEF project target. 'Monitoring' the objectives and goals of the project must be integrated with the project.
4. NGOs can play also other important roles  
NGOs can actively collaborate with the Project Authorities to fulfil some of the STAP criteria such as:
  - plans for dissemination of results and knowledge;
  - preparation and implementation involving close collaboration with local community wherever possible;

- satisfying environment impact assessment that examines all potential adverse consequences in the conceptualisation and design of projects;

They can also act as an interface between the people living in and around forests (protected etc.) and forest authorities for avoid delays in the implementation of a project and explaining the welfare aspect of a particular project.

Some of the Govt. officials in the concerned Ministry thought people's participation in the preparation of GEF project proposal need not be mandatory who and when NGOs to be involved should be left to Government.

In social, economic and environmental impact analysis NGOs involvement is considered crucial. They have the best expertise.

They can also organise exhibitions in different sectors e.g. energy etc.

[NGO and Community participations](#) at the project preparation stage for projects like decentralised wind for rural people and enterprises for sustainability and for replicability must be ensured for bringing the desired results to the society.

## 5. Eco-development projects

A recent case study by an NGO (Asish Kothari and his Group) has shown that a dialogue between the project affected people in and around the eco-development project and the forest authorities organised by the NGO helped them to resolve much of the people's apprehensions. Such interventions by an NGO with considerable networking with the grassroot workers in and around a forest/eco development site(s) may help in the timely completion and success of such GEF Projects. On the other hand a majority of the eco-development projects in India have practically come to a halt due to lack of understandable communication process between the people in the project area and the project executing authorities. NGOs role is not only important but absolutely essential.

**6.The role played by NGOs in identifying and developing potential, GEF projects should be clearly understood. For this purpose there should be mechanism to understand how successful has that role been. Undertaking of some case studies in this respect may provide useful data and analysis. Other issues are:**

- involvement of NGOs and community groups in implementation of GEF projects? How successful has that involvement been?
- there is an urgent need for formulating full proof mechanisms for ensuring NGO participation in GEF projects, and for regularising and institutionalising such mechanisms.
- have the approach to NGO participation in GEF projects been applied to other government activities.
- environmental and social impacts must be addressed to by entrusting such studies to NGOs, who are well equipped to undertake such studies for integration in the project concept, planning and design. This will certainly bring down cost and time for project formulation and implementation.

## 7. The actors are supposed to be involved as promoters of the projects.

NGOs/Citizen's group must play the role of a 'watch dog' as well as to generate awareness among people about the usefulness, capacity, potential and welfare element to the project.

Though an effective participation of NGOs/Citizen's group/local communities could make the project more participatory, but during the evaluation team's interview of different actors, some opinions were expressed that only certain kinds of projects involving activities at ground level are benefited more from people's participation e.g. bio-diversity proposals of affected population in the designated areas..... Also some of the opinions expressed during the interviews brought out that all GEF or similar projects need not have uniform scale and nature of NGO/community participation.

Such expressions raised the issue of if the role of NGOs need to be decided on a project to project basis and then who decides.

Some climate change projects call for similar complex organisational and community participation from those concerned with carbon sequestration.

In the Alternate Energy Project (IREDA), besides participation through business meetings, workshops and print media, there is no visible and direct participation of the people/NGOs/local communities.

**NGOs participation throughout the project cycle must be safeguarded. For any lapse in this regard accountability must be incorporated in the present set of rules for the GEF project approval, implementation and its sustainability. The local IAs (UNEP, UNDP & World Bank) must design full proof checks to ensure**

## **involvement of NGOs to play their constructive role in the GEF Projects in India and elsewhere.**

To make the GEF projects real participatory there is need to involve larger groups such as:

- \* local communities to whom the project benefits directly accrue.
- \* local/grass root NGOs who act as intermediaries.
- \* national NGOs to actively participate through the project cycle and monitor the goals and objectives of the project as they relate to climate change, depletion of the ozone layer biodiversity protection and international works.

## **NGOs Role in Medium-Sized Grants (MSGs) GEF Projects**

NGOs role in GEF processes and projects have been discussed earlier. These roles shall be more or less uniform in the big, medium and small grant GEF projects.

### **Specific suggestions for the NGOs role in MSGs**

1. Large proportion of projects may come from non-governmental organisations.
2. To enable them (NGOs) to maintain their independent role, there should be minimum government control.
3. Even in the project cycles for MSGs, the entire activities including sanction etc. should be done by a national co-ordinating committee, in which government will be one of the members, and the chair should rotated among members.
4. There should be a National Co-ordinator appointed by the National Co-ordinating Committee for a period of not more than 2-3 years, and may be rotated among NGOs and other stakeholders.
5. The MSGs should encourage NGOs to take up case studies and even basic research where data from grass roots would bring better clarity to climate change/biodiversity issues.
6. NGOs should play a major role in training and education and generating awareness in the MSG regime.
7. NGOs should be encouraged to take-up preparation of awareness generation materials (audio-visual, visual displays, posters, small books in simple local language) particularly for projects where people are directly affected by a GEF project.

## **NGOs participation in the GEF meetings**

The Council agreed that

NGOs particularly from the developing countries have played an important and creative role in the GEF. NGOs role in GEF must continue with financial support for their participation. While inviting such NGOs there should be a regional balance from the developing world and in their selection.

## **Conclusion**

It is true that the GEF's document on 'Public Involvement in GEF - Financial Projects' has brought out the need and the benefits that could accrue from the involvement of people, society and NGOs in the GEF cycle, but from the GEF Evaluation Teams interviews with different stakeholders in India it becomes very obvious that it is not enough to have provisions in the GEF process for the participation of NGOs throughout the project cycle: there must be a way to enforce, ensure and pursue such provisions.

There should be a safeguard in the GEF against 'NON COMPLIANCE' of the provisions.

One of the most effective ways could be ensuring peoples and particularly of NGOs participation and involvement, is that the GEF grants under Block A, Block B and Block C are released only after the GEF/local IAs are convinced about the participation of NGOs/people/society etc. For ensuring that, all GEF financed projects should have full documentation of public involvement activities - involvement of people and particularly of NGOs (national and grassroots) all through the project cycle.