

GEF National Dialogue Initiative Workshop

JAYPEE RESIDENCY MANOR, MUSSOORIE, INDIA

FEBRUARY 15 - 17, 2006

DRAFT WORKSHOP REPORT

Executive Summary

The first GEF National Dialogue provided an effective opportunity for India to analyze and discuss its performance and future national strategy to not only access but also to effectively utilize more than USD 100 million expected allocation to the country under GEF 4 (2006 – 2010). There was a general consensus that MOEF in partnership with other central ministries, state governments, private sector and civil society should drive the GEF process in India. In this light, an action plan was discussed to strengthen GEF processes in the country. The main recommendations were: a) there is a need to strengthen GEF Cell and GEF Empowered Committee at MoEF with GEF support; b) a brainstorming session at MoEF to deliberate on and develop a National GEF strategy; and, c) regional dialogues to be conducted across the country to promote and popularize GEF in India.

Background/ Objective

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) National Dialogue Initiative (NDI) aims to strengthen country ownership and involvement in GEF co-financed projects as well as to build capacity of GEF national focal points through a multi-stakeholder dialogue process. The NDI is a collaborative process between the GEF national focal points, the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies. It is being implemented by UNDP based on strategic guidance provided by the GEF Secretariat. As part of this initiative, Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), which is also the GEF Operational Focal Point in Government of India (GoI), organized the first GEF National Dialogue Initiative Workshop at Jaypee Residency Manor, Mussoorie, India from February 15 to 17, 2006. The workshop provided a forum for multi-stakeholder country level consultations with the aim of:

1. Promoting in-depth understanding of the GEF's strategic directions, policies and procedures;
2. Strengthening country coordination and ownership in GEF operations and sharing lessons learned from project implementation; and,
3. Achieving greater mainstreaming of GEF activities into national planning frameworks and coordination and synergies amongst the GEF focal areas and convention issues at the national level.

Participants

More than 100 participants, including senior officers from GoI, State Governments, NGOs, Academic and Research Institutions, Private Sector, UNDP, UNEP, World Bank and GEF Secretariat participated. The list of participants is enclosed as Annexure: 1.

Sessions

DAY ONE (February 15, 2006)

INAUGURAL SESSION

CHAIR: Mr. Naresh Dayal, Additional Secretary, MOEF, GoI

Mr. Sudhir Mital, Joint Secretary, MoEF and GEF Operational Focal Point India welcomed the participants and highlighted that the presence of large number of stakeholders from within India and resource persons from abroad in the workshop in itself indicates the importance which everyone attached to this first GEF National Dialogue Initiative Workshop. While providing a broad overview of the goals and structure of the workshop he expressed hope that this workshop would come up with concrete recommendations to enable India to not only access more GEF resources but also to improve its performance in terms of implementing GEF projects, particularly in context of the forthcoming RAF.

Dr. Maxine Olson, UNDP Resident Representative, New Delhi in her opening remark mentioned that UNDP is committed to promoting environmental sustainability and poverty reduction through building upon people's capacities. In India UNDP is working in four GEF focal areas, climate change, biodiversity, land degradation and persistent organic pollutants (POPs). These projects include full size and medium size projects, Small Grants Programme as well as capacity building and enabling activities. In general UNDP GEF projects aim at achieving environmental sustainability through capacity building. UNDP's primary role is to ensure the development and management of capacity building programs and technical assistance projects based on global and local knowledge. Through its global network of field offices, UNDP draws upon its experience in human resources development, institutional strengthening and non-governmental and community participation.

Mr. Alan Miller, GEF Coordinator, IFC/ World Bank, Washington in his opening address informed that the World Bank is expanding its role to work with GoI in the new areas, which are being introduced by GEF especially in urban transport, energy sector and POPs. While supporting GoI efforts to be more strategic with GEF resources, he suggested it would be better to move from narrow and small-targeted projects into larger country initiatives like Country Program Partnership on Sustainable Land Management being developed in India.

Ms. Anna Tengberg, Senior Program Officer, UNEP/GEF, Nairobi while introducing UNEP and its various activities particularly in context of India, stated that UNEP's primary focus is on projects related to environmental assessments, development of action plans at regional level, management of trans-boundary natural resources, capacity building and support to environmental conventions. She concluded by saying that UNEP is looking forward to strengthen its initiatives with India.

Mr. Ravi Sharma, Senior Operations Officer, GEF Secretariat, Washington DC stated that it is important to recognize that the majority of the Indian population is much more dependent on natural resources, which are under increasing threat due to global environmental problems GEF as a financial mechanism has been providing significant funding to 176 member countries to addresses global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. GEF grants support projects in developing countries in the areas of biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer and POPs. He informed that to date USD 6.1 billion has been committed by GEF with additional USD 20 billion leveraged as co-financing. He said that "the diversity of participating stakeholders in this workshop provides a good potential for building a sustainable GEF strategy for India.

Mr. Frank Pinto, UNDP/ GEF Executive Coordinator, New York emphasized that the need to fully incorporate convention inter-linkages is recognized and fully supported by the GEF and its partners and in future it would be required to incorporate such inter-linkages into project design and implementation.

Mr. Naresh Dayal, in his inaugural address informed that India was implementing an impressive range of GEF projects and was proactively involved in the implementation of GEF initiatives. Yet, the full potential is far from tapped, he noted. This is linked to deficient national capacity to develop what he described a GEF-able project. Mr. Dayal said addressing climate change, POPs, biodiversity conservation, arresting land degradation are not merely global concerns but important imperatives for India's Draft National Environment Policy that is currently under discussion. Besides the implementation of policies and programs relating to the conservation of natural resources at the national level, the MOEF also serves as the nodal agency in the country for UN programs and MEAs pertaining to the environment. He opined that "the environmental scene of the country today is of both concern and hope. The concern arises from the various environmental problems / issues, which require immediate attention. The hope for environment arises from the fact that country is till one of the world's richest in terms of biological diversity and other natural resources". GEF like many other multi-lateral institutions has been a valuable partner in India's quest for a sustainable future for the benefit of generations of Indian society yet to come. He said, "India seeks a spirit of partnership and cooperation that emphasizes equality and the removal of disparities for the benefit of the entire human race, as the world enters the 21st century. It is these partnerships and alliances forged on the basis of equity and shared common interest that would define and ensure a sustainable future for all of us. And, this workshop is important to develop future steps".

FIRST SESSION (1100 – 1330 hours)

CHAIR: Mr. Sudhir Mital

OBJECTIVE: Raising the general awareness of global environmental issues and the policies and procedures of GEF.

Mr. Stephen Gold, Global Manager, GEF NDI, UNDP, New York gave a brief overview of the workshop (workshop agenda enclosed as Annexure: 2) and the facilitation material distributed to the participants. (workshop reading material list enclosed as Annexure: 3) This was followed by a comprehensive presentation on "Overview of the GEF" jointly done by Dr. Sultana Bashir, Regional Technical Advisor (Biodiversity), UNDP/GEF, Bangkok, Ms. Anna Tengberg, Senior Program Officer, Sustainable Land Management, UNEP, Nairobi and Mr. Ravi Sharma, Senior Operational Officer, GEF Secretariat, Washington D C. The presentation gave participants a detail overview of the GEF governance, history and partners; GEF focal areas, operational programs, strategic priorities and links to International conventions; GEF project cycle and project eligibility criteria. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 4a) Mr. Ravi Sharma made a detailed presentation of GEF Resource Allocation Framework. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 4b) Mr. P S Sodhi, National Coordinator of UNDP/ GEF SGP made a presentation on "UNDP/GEF Small Grants Program India". (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 5) The final presentation during this session was made by Mr. Bibhu Kalyan Mohanty, representing an NGO namely Sambandh from the state of Orissa on the UNDP/ GEF SGP project being implemented by them in the Simlipal Biosphere Reserve. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 6) Mr. Mohanty gave a detailed overview of the project objectives, the activities and the impacts that the project has had on the environment and on the livelihoods of the local community.

SECOND SESSION (1415 – 1515 hours)

CHAIR: Dr. Maxine Olson

OBJECTIVE: Raising the level of awareness of GEF National Coordination in India, including the role of GEF focal points, the convention focal points and civil society.

Mr. Stephen Gold made a presentation on “Country-level coordination and the GEF: An Overview”. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 7) This was followed by a presentation on “Country Coordination and GEF: India’s Experience” by Mr. Sudhir Mital. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 8)

THIRD SESSION (1530 – 1615 hours)

CHAIR: Mr. Frank Pinto

OBJECTIVE: Briefing the participants on the status of India’s National Capacity Needs Self Assessment (NCSA) UNDP/GEF enabling activity currently implemented by MoEF.

Ms. Usha Rao, Program Analyst, UNDP-GEF, New Delhi made a presentation on “The status of NCSA in India”. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 9). MoEF and UNDP-GEF have appointed three institutions – Winrock International India (WII), New Delhi (climate change), Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bangalore (biodiversity) and Institute of Economic Growth (IEG), New Delhi (land degradation) for thematic assessments under NCSA. As per the work plan all these institutions have recently completed the first step of NCSA assessment i.e. “Linkage Study”, which aims at identifying past, on-going and planned national convention related and national environmental management initiatives and how the NCSA could be linked with them. This session concluded with brief thematic presentations from these three institutions on linkage study. (Copy of these presentations is enclosed as Annexure: 10, 11 and 12)

FOURTH SESSION (1615 – 1730 hours)

CHAIR: Mr. Stephen Gold

OBJECTIVE: Highlight the potential role of the private sector as a partner in GEF co-financed projects.

Mr. Alan Miler made a presentation on “GEF engagement with the private sector”. (A copy of this presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 13) This presentation focused on the need and strategy to involve private sector in GEF projects through a number of examples from all around the globe. The presentation tried to highlight the critical role of national governments as well as of GEF in successfully engaging private sector by providing an enabling environment particularly in the context of RAF. Mr. Miler emphasized that the future for private sector projects will now depend very much on the GOI's approach to making endorsements consistent with the new procedures.

Side Event on Small Grants Program (1915 – 1945 hours)

The side events provided an opportunity for SGP partners to make interactive presentations and inform the interested stakeholders about their projects. Mr. S R Mania from Industry and Community Cooperation Research and Analysis Consultants, Orissa made presentation on their UNDP/GEF SGP on “Sustainable Local Environment and Resource Management” along with another SGP partner Mr. Yogeshwar Kumar from Gram Vikas Panchayat Samiti, Uttaranchal who presented on his project titled “Enhancing Livelihoods and conserving mountain environment in marginalized areas of the Himalayas”.

DAY TWO (February 16, 2006)

FIFTH SESSION (0915 – 1000 hours)

CHAIR: Mr. Sudhir Mital

OBJECTIVE: Question and Answer session (Details of this session given under ‘Discussion’ section of the report)

SIXTH SESSION (1000 – 1045 hours)

CHAIR: Mr. Sudhir Mital

OBJECTIVE: Highlight the national development plans, strategies and priorities linked to the GEF focal areas.

Mr. S K Joshi made a presentation on “An Overview of National Priorities”. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 14) After touching on a three-tier approach of addressing environmental concerns in India he broadly outlined the national priorities under biodiversity, climate change, land degradation and POPs, as perceived by MOEF, GoI.

FOUR PARALLEL WORKING GROUP SESSION (1100 – 1700 hours)

OBJECTIVE: Four thematic working groups (biodiversity, climate change, land degradation and POPs) were formed with the aim of linking national development plans and priorities to the GEF’s strategic priorities while identifying broad priority areas for GEF intervention.

Biodiversity group was chaired by Mr. A L Arrawatia, CCF (WP) to Government of Sikkim. On a general consensus, the group agreed that the best way to address the objectives of the session would be for each group member to identify the most important national priority from their perspective. These would then be matched with global benefit and GEF priorities. Based on this, a long list of issues was generated which were subsequently consolidated and “clustered” under five broad headings.

Climate Change group was chaired by Ms Sharwaree Gokhale, Principal Secretary to Government of Maharashtra and co-chaired by Dr. Kalipada Chatterjee from Winrock International India, New Delhi. The group discussed national priorities both in mitigation and adaptation sectors and overlaps of the same with GEF 4 strategic objectives. Energy sector contributes about 60 % of the total GHG emissions in India and about 50 % of the households especially in rural are yet to have access to electricity. Therefore, the group considered that the national priorities in this sector needed to be urgently addressed.

Land Degradation group was chaired by Ms Anna Tengberg. The important issues that came during discussion were: a) NAP could be the starting point but we need to go beyond it as it identifies priorities but does not specify action plan to implement those priorities. Moreover, NAP was prepared for a context and it lacks mention of a robust land use policy b) land degradation issues in urban areas need to be addressed c) landscape planning could be adopted d) need to involve NGOs and private sector e) CPP is an innovative approach f) regions for implementations could include - Dry lands (rainfed), Coastal and wetland ecosystem, Forest ecosystem (Shifting Cultivation), Mountain ecosystem and Mining areas g) inter-linkages between land degradation and POPs are becoming critical h) capacity building projects are required I) need to curb knowledge gaps j) integrated farming approach k) India is 15% of total global land mass – the scale of the land degradation problems and opportunities are of global significance.

POPs group was chaired by Mr. K Jude Sekar, Director and Environment-cum-Special Secretary to Government of Orissa. The group identified the barriers and ways to overcome these barriers by interlinking national priorities with GEF ones. The important issues that came during discussion were: a) need for capacity building b) strengthen risk assessment mechanisms c) creating awareness among the masses and d) preparation of NIP.

Side Event on Small Grants Program (1915 – 1945 hours)

Mr. Jose from Wayanad Social Service Society, Kerala and Mr. Aman Singh from KRAPAVIS, Rajasthan presented their work. The side events generated a lot of interest and discussions among the participants particularly from the state governments.

DAY THREE (February 17, 2006)

SEVENTH SESSION (0930 – 1130 hours)

CHAIR: Mr. Siddhartha Behura, Additional Secretary, MoEF, GoI

CO-CHAIR: Mr. Sishir Sinha, Secretary, Government of Bihar (for biodiversity group), Mr. Avani Vaish, Principal Secretary, Government of Madhya Pradesh (for climate change group), Mr. Ranbir Singh, Secretary, Government of Uttaranchal (for land degradation group) and Mr. Samir Mathur, Secretary, Government of Haryana (for POPs group).

OBJECTIVE: The four working groups reported back to the workshop on their discussions to develop a framework for a national GEF strategy.

Dr. Sejal Worah, WWF India, New Delhi presented the findings of the biodiversity group. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 15) The group identified following five major themes on which India should focus under biodiversity focal area:

1. Strengthening management for effective biodiversity conservation;
2. Agro-biodiversity and the conservation of other economically important plants;
3. Research and training for biodiversity conservation;
4. Capacity building for effective biodiversity conservation; and,
5. Access and benefit sharing.

Ms Sharwaree Gokhale presented the findings of the climate change working group. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 16) The group looked at the following issues not purely from an energy efficiency perspective but also from an ‘availability of energy’ perspective.

1. Improving the electricity and quality of rural electricity supply;
2. Improving efficiency in existing coal based power plants;
3. Decentralized distributed power generation based on renewable energy sources for rural electrification;
4. Improving energy efficiency in SMEs;
5. Integrated sustainable transport management;
6. In-situ coal gasification; and,
7. Adaptation to climate change.

Ms Anandi Sharan Meili, Women for Sustainable Development, Bangalore presented the findings of land degradation group. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 17) The group identified five major themes on which India should focus namely:

1. National Action Plan should be strengthened;
2. Need to increase the scope of areas of implementation to include dry lands, coastal and wetland ecosystems, forest ecosystem, mountain ecosystem and mining areas;
3. Need to develop projects through integrated agricultural system approach for each ecosystem;
4. Promoting cross-focal areas synergies and integrated approach to natural resources management; and,
5. Generation and dissemination of knowledge related to sustainable land management.

Dr. Gopichandran, Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad presented the findings of POPs group. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed as Annexure: 18) The group identified 12 major issues on which India should focus namely:

1. Characterization of POPs;
2. Stocks of obsolete pesticides - where and how to handle?;
3. Information on chemicals with comparable characteristics;
4. Identification and application of safe alternatives/ substitutes;
5. Technical and technological capacity to produce alternatives;
6. Illegal production and trafficking g) poor awareness on impacts h) implications of ban for different stakeholders;
7. Should 'essential use' continue?;
8. Convention mandate risk assessments requiring comprehensive plans;
9. Information needed on cause effect relationships specific to Indian context; and,
10. Synergize with existing institutional, regulatory and fiscal mechanisms.

Feedback Session

CO-CHAIR: Mr. Lalit Mehra, Secretary, Government of Rajasthan. (Evaluation forms filled by the participants have been compiled and enclosed as Annexure: 19)

Ms Lina Krishnan, CISED representing the NGO sector said that this workshop provided a chance to meet different stakeholders and to exchange ideas. All the presentations were quite clear and the presentation made by Mr. S K Joshi on national priorities was very helpful. She felt that the discussions didn't touch upon international waters. The resource pack could have been sent in advance. **Dr. Taej Mundkur**, Wetlands International also representing the NGO sector said that he appreciated the chance to interact with representatives from government and GEF. He felt that GoI has enough resources however it needs to see how to best utilize these resources. Although most of the information is available on the GEF website still such consultations make it is easy to understand the basics and get additional information. Therefore, such workshops should be organized at regular interval and it would be even better if these are organized at the regional level. He said there is need to shorten the processing timeline both at the national and GEF level.

Mr. Alok Kumar, Director, Ministry of Power representing the Central Government Ministries said that this workshop was a good learning exercise. He felt that "although we now know how much could be leveraged from GEF and our areas of priorities but the clarity on GEF ability is still lacking". **Ms Sharwaree Gokhale** representing state governments said at the state level the environment is dealt between different departments. GEF provides an important opportunity, which India should take seriously and in all this MoEF has a major role to play, she opined.

Mr. Purohit, G B Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development representing the academic and research institutions said that this workshop was a learning experience. He felt that the donors should not be allowed to change the mandate of GEF. GEF projects should be developed around ecosystems as India is a mosaic of ecosystems and ecosystems could adapt to change in an integrated manner, he opined.

Ms Chitra, Ernst and Young representing the private sector said that the GEF funds could help in developing sustainable development projects and the private sector could emerge as a major stakeholder provided the processing timelines are streamlined and made competitive.

CLOSING SESSION (1130 – 1250 hours)

CHAIR: Mr. Siddhartha Behura

Mr. Sudhir Mital started the session by highlighting the major findings of this workshop to improve the delivery mechanisms. He said first we need to strengthen the GEF Cell in MoEF with UNDP support. Moving on to larger issues, he said that the overwhelming participation from the state government in this workshop should translate into the ownership of state governments in GEF projects as well. “Take it up with your state governments. We need ownership of states and not individuals alone”, he suggested. He said that even the central government ministries need to take ownership. He said, “MoEF need partners from other ministries to strengthen India’s ability to access GEF resources. Government of India should drive GEF process in India”. Mr. Mital suggested that we could list down priorities and advertise call for proposals to develop a robust GEF pipeline for India. MoEF would also develop information dissemination material on GEF to generate and strengthen awareness and understanding of GEF processes in the country.

In his closing address, **Mr. Siddhartha Behura** expressed happiness that the discussions were productive and there is a renewed enthusiasm among different sectors to strengthen GEF projects in India. India’s access to GEF resources has been dwindling and we not only need to develop a robust pipeline of GEF projects but also improve our national coordination mechanisms while also asking GEF to simplify its own procedures and timelines. He suggested that we could have a brainstorming session at MoEF to develop a list of priority areas for GEF funding based on the report submitted by the working groups during this workshop. Thereafter, MoEF plans to call for proposals from different stakeholders to develop a strong pipeline of GEF projects. We plan to develop a GEF India website, information brochures and use different for a for information dissemination, he said.

Mr. Ravi Sharma in his closing statement said it has been a good meeting with good amount of discussion taking place. It was an important meeting from GEF perspective as well as we also came to know about India’s priorities. “GEF’s role is to assist you in what you are doing. India is not driving the GEF process unlike China. Under RAF, India has a very important role, if large developing countries are not part of GEF, it would not exist”, he said.

Speaking on behalf of all the GEF Implementing Agencies, **Mr. Frank Pinto** expressed his pleasure with the multi-stakeholder consultations during this workshop. “India has to drive the GEF process now, which was earlier being driven by the Implementing Agencies”, said Mr. Pinto. GEF projects are not just about accessing money and anyway money offered by GEF to countries like India or China is too small. China does not need GEF resources and is yet coming to GEF because GEF funds provide them an opportunity to take up projects that otherwise won’t come by leveraging funds from other sources. He appreciated the fact that the participants were able to discuss the importance of inter-linkages between different focal areas during the course of this workshop. “Inter-linkages are highly critical and should be an integral part of your program as well”, he said. He assured the participants that agencies would work towards simplifying and streamlining their processes and as per MOEF request UNDP India would assist the country in developing a database on GEF projects and strengthen the GEF Cell and Empowered Committee on GEF at MOEF. The workshop concluded with a vote of thanks given by Mr. S K Joshi.

Discussion Highlights

On Resource Allocation Framework (RAF): On the question of need for introducing RAF, Mr. Ravi Sharma explained that earlier the GEF resource allocation was being done sectorally on first cum first serve basis without much emphasis on country performance or the potential global benefit. However, to improve the system it was decided by the GEF Council in October 2002 that a framework for resource allocation needs to be established to prioritize allocation as per the

Global Environmental Benefit Index and Country Portfolio Performance Index. On the issue of regional projects, he informed that although under RAF 5% of the resources under climate change and biodiversity could be allocated for regional/ global projects however, two or three interested countries, who want to address a single issue, would be allowed to use their respective country allocation for implementing a regional project. Further, he clarified that adaptation has not been included under RAF as calculating global benefits under adaptation are much more difficult as compared to mitigation. Performance matters as after two years GEF's independent office of monitoring and evaluation would conduct a review of RAF and depending on their performance each country's placement under the respective RAF band may be realigned. He emphasized that if India wants to access more resources from GEF then it is required to develop a robust pipeline of projects and ensure that projects are implemented effectively and successfully.

Raising supplementary questions on RAF, the participants wanted to know how RAF would benefit India. Mr. Sudhir Mital explained that India along with China, Brazil and Indonesia has been kept under Individual Country Allocation because of the high potential global environment benefit and past performance. Though the negotiations on GEF 4 replenishment are still on however, India could access up to 10 % and 15 % of the GEF 4 funds available under biodiversity and climate change focal area respectively. In other words, whereas in the last 15 years, India could access about USD 180 million now we have the opportunity to access more than USD 100 million under GEF 4 (2006 – 2010).

On GEF Project Cycle: A number of queries were raised related to long and complicated GEF project cycle. Mr. Frank Pinto informed that both the GEF Secretariat and GEF Implementing Agencies have introduced various measures to speed up the funding process besides helping countries to strengthen their capacities to speed up the process.

On National Endorsement: On the issue of time frame, Mr. Mital replied that it takes about 6 to 7 months for the national endorsement and almost a year to get GEF approval. On the issue of three projects dropped from India's portfolio in 2005, Mr. Mital clarified that these were national projects and the decision to drop these projects was taken by MoEF in agreement with DEA, concerned state government, project proponent and concerned GEF IA. He also mentioned about the three-year shelf life GEF policy for projects, where if the project has either not started or is not performing well for three years it could be dropped by GEF.

On Co-financing Issue: The difficulty in arranging co-financing particularly from the state governments was an issue that was widely discussed. There was a general consensus that due to lack of understanding of the GEF and its processes and ownership, the state governments are not eager to entertain co-financing requests, as the finance required is smaller. There was a suggestion that in addition to government institutions the project proponents may try to approach the Indian private sector for co-financing. On the issue of determining baseline and co-financing, participants were informed that it varies with focal areas and type of projects. Another participant wanted to know if co-financing is also required under SGP to which Mr. Sodhi replied that it is required and it could be in cash or kind. Community involvement does not necessarily mean they have to put in money. Wage labor is also part of the co-financing. Addressing another though related issue Dr. Sultana Bashir said that while implementing a project sometimes both cost and time exceeds – in such cases the GEF resource component is fixed for project duration however the time component to utilize these funds is little more flexible. The project's annual work plan (AWP), which is revised in accordance with project performance, reflects the situation clearly and on the basis of AWP the decision to allow a project more time is taken by the GEF Secretariat in consultation with GEF Implementing Agency and project proponent.

On Synergies across conventions: There was a general consensus among the participants that there is a need to develop projects emphasizing greater synergies between different multilateral international environmental conventions.

On SGP: On the issue of how benefit sharing mechanisms works, Mr. Sodhi explained that these mechanisms are decided at the community level on a consensus basis and that capacity building activities in built into projects results in ensure sustainable institutional arrangements. On the time frame required to approve an SGP project, Mr. Sodhi said that it takes six months to develop and get projects approved in NSC, which meets on a quarterly basis. Representatives from the private sector and academic institutions inquired about their possible association with this project, which was welcomed. However, Mr. Sodhi clarified that organizations other than CBOs and NGOs cannot receive fund under SGP but this did not restrict these institutions to partner with SGP projects for technology and capacity building aspects. There was a suggestion that the SGP success stories could be compiled and placed in the 'Solution Exchange Network' for others to replicate. Another participant wanted to know, how much fund a state could access under SGP to which Mr. Sodhi responded that there is no limit. It all depends on the innovativeness of the project and is not funded under government's regular schemes.

On International consultants: Is it mandatory to appoint international consultants during the project proposal preparation? Dr. Sultana Bashir clarified that it is not mandatory. However, as GEF requirements are complex, consulting with people, who have GEF experience could help. Further Mr. Pinto informed that UNDP has streamlined the preparation of PDF A to three page document with one page on budget thus, making it simple for a project proponent to do it themselves. The GEF policy is to encourage use of local and regional consultants and international consultants are to be used when a country is unable to locate desired local expertise.

Major Recommendations

1. It was recommended to strengthen GEF Cell and Empowered Committee on GEF at MOEF with UNDP-GEF support for developing and implementing a GEF National Strategy to enable India to more efficiently access and utilize GEF funds to leverage opportunities for creating global and national environmental benefits.
2. Brainstorming sessions may be organized at MOEF to provide strategic direction, by discussing thematic and issue based approaches for developing projects in line with national and GEF priorities. Key relevant stakeholders from central and state governments, academia and research institutions, private sector and NGOs across the different GEF focal areas will be invited to participate in these discussions. This would result in revised GEF India guidelines for project development and final recommendations towards developing a GEF National Strategy.
3. Regional dialogues were recommended. with the following objectives: (a) to generate awareness regarding GEF (including GEF-SGP); (b) develop regional capacities and understanding of GEF (including GEF-SGP) criteria, national priorities and project development and implementation; and (c) to help incorporate regional perspectives into the GEF National Strategy discussions (the recommendations from the dialogues will feed into the second National brainstorming session for the drafting of the GEF National Strategy). As a follow-up of these dialogues, guidance to the regional counterparts for project development will be provided on an ongoing basis.

4. Information sources including database, website, brochures, popular publications, documentaries may be developed for greater awareness and dissemination.
5. It will be followed by another national dialogue to be organized with GEF support early next year.

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