



Global Environment Facility

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STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ENHANCE CAPACITY BUILDING

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PREFACE

The GEF Council approved the Strategic Approach to Enhancing Capacity Building in November 2003. In approving the strategy, the Council requested the GEF Secretariat, in collaboration with the Implementing Agencies and the monitoring and evaluation unit, to undertake further work to operationalize it. This will include the development of:

- (a) targets and indicators for measuring results and impacts of capacity building activities;
- (b) operational modalities and project criteria for the implementation of the strategic approach, including for the enhancement of capacity building components within GEF projects and for country capacity building programs for LDCs and SIDS; and
- (c) proposals for Council consideration for a technical support program.

The Council also requested the GEF Secretariat to report regularly to the Council, on the development and implementation of the strategic approach.

Council Members also made the following comments during the Council discussion:

- (a) The council requested the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies to facilitate assistance to all eligible countries for the preparation of national capacity needs self assessments (NCSA) given their importance in assisting countries to identify priority capacity building activities.
- (b) The Council agreed that whenever possible capacity building should be integrated with other GEF project activities.
- (c) The Council stressed the need for the development of indicators to measure results and impacts, including the sustainability of the capacity built.
- (d) The Council underlined the importance of capacity building across focal areas as a means of promoting synergies among the conventions. It was also noted that capacity building should be provided to strengthen policy planning and project cycle management.
- (e) It was agreed that the level of support for capacity building should not be preset or anticipated in the strategy but rather should be determined on the basis of country needs and the evolving approach to country-based allocations.
- (f) Several Council Members noted the importance of capacity building in implementing the environmental initiative of NEPAD and urged the GEF to be a partner in these efforts.

- (g) One Council Member requested the GEF to provide clear guidance to assist countries to develop and implement free standing capacity building projects.
- (h) It was noted that co-financing of capacity building projects by governments and Implementing and Executing Agencies would increase ownership of the project, and it was recommended that minimum co-financing ratios for capacity building projects be defined.
- (i) The capacity building strategy should include a participatory approach to ensure that the priorities and capacity building needs of civil society are addressed.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The issue of capacity building has become a major priority within the global conventions, the GEF and the international community. Recent events such as the WSSD and the Second GEF Assembly reaffirmed the priority of building the capacity of developing countries. The GEF Secretariat, in consultation with the Implementing and Executing Agencies, is developing a strategic framework to give greater focus to capacity building in the GEF.

2. In May, 1999, the GEF Council, aware of the growing importance being assigned by the conventions to capacity building as well as the fragmentation of efforts to address this need, approved the 18-month Capacity Development Initiative (CDI) as a strategic partnership between the GEF Secretariat and UNDP, for the preparation of a comprehensive approach for developing the capacities needed at the country level to meet the challenges of global environmental action. The CDI was undertaken to: (i) make a broad assessment of capacity building needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition; (ii) take stock of earlier and ongoing efforts to assist national capacity building; and (iii) prepare a strategy as a basis for strengthening the GEF portfolio.

3. The CDI was undertaken in a highly consultative manner, based on national inputs, regional expertise, contributions by NGOs and bilateral/multilateral agencies, and the discussions of the global conventions on climate change, biological diversity, and desertification. The findings of the CDI, and the actions proposed were presented to the GEF Council in May 2001.¹

4. The Council took note of the proposed strategic elements and framework and requested the GEF Secretariat to consult further with the Conventions, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations participating in capacity building activities related to the global environment and sustainable development. It also requested the GEF Secretariat, in collaboration with the Implementing Agencies and Executing Agencies, to initiate processes for expedited funding of one of the proposed activities - the self assessment of capacity building needs - in countries that request such assistance. Finally, it requested the GEF Secretariat to present to the Council revised strategic elements and framework for GEF action that take into account the views expressed by the Conferences of the Parties and others consulted, pursuant to this decision as well as lessons emerging from the national assessments.

National capacity needs self assessments

5. The National Capacity Needs Self Assessment (NCSA) program is now fully operational, and guidelines² to assist countries in preparing their NCSA's have been prepared by the GEF Secretariat with the assistance of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and in collaboration with other partners. Under an NCSA, funding is provided to assist countries for preparing self assessments of their capacity needs and priorities to manage

environment,' GEF/ C.17/Rev.1, May 2001.

² A Guide for Self-Assessment of Country Capacity Needs for Global Environmental Management, September 2001

global environmental issues. Once countries identify gaps in capacity building, they are encouraged to develop a plan of action for overcoming the gaps. NCSAs are intended to be entirely country driven, undertaken in accordance with country priorities and situations. To date, approximately 50 countries have launched NCSA projects. In addition, over 100 countries have expressed an interest in conducting an NCSA.

The Second Overall Performance Study of the Global Environment Facility

6. On the issue of capacity building, the Second Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS2) recommended that the GEF continue ongoing efforts to support capacity development of operational focal points, the national GEF coordinating structures, and the country dialog workshops.

Policy Recommendations of the Third GEF Replenishment

7. Participants of the third GEF replenishment process recommended that the GEF Secretariat and Implementing Agencies propose means to rationalize and coordinate activities in the field of enabling activities and capacity building to achieve effectiveness and efficiency. Participants also recommended that the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies give attention to the special needs of the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Beijing Declaration of the Second GEF Assembly

8. The Beijing Declaration issued at the conclusion of the Second GEF Assembly recommends that capacity building in recipient countries should be identified and addressed in a systematic manner, with medium sized projects playing an important role in capacity building, particularly in LDCs and SIDS.

World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

9. The WSSD (October 2002) also reconfirmed the priority of building capacity to assist developing countries to obtain their sustainable development goals. Over thirty-five references are made to capacity building in the WSSD Plan of Implementation. WSSD recommended that GEF resources be used to provide financial resources to developing countries to meet their capacity needs for training, technical know how and strengthening national institutions.

Convention Decisions

10. Convention Guidance to the GEF assigns growing importance to capacity building. Guidance from the Convention of the Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity and UNFCCC have requested the GEF to provide funding for country-driven capacity-building activities by developing country parties, in particular, least developed countries and small island developing States. The UNFCCC has adopted a framework for capacity building in developing countries and requested the GEF and other organizations to support its implementation. Within

the deliberations of the UNCCD as well as the Stockholm Convention, capacity building to assist countries to meet the objectives of the Conventions has been highlighted.

GEF Business Plan FY04-FY06

11. The GEF Secretariat has taken recommendations from these other forums into consideration in the development of this strategic approach. The GEF business plan³ states that capacity building is a strategic priority of the GEF that cuts across all focal areas. GEF resources during GEF-3 are to be directed towards capacity building consistent with the Council approved strategic approach.

III. STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ENHANCE CAPACITY BUILDING

12. Based on the consultations and feedback listed above, the GEF's proposed strategic approach for enhanced support for capacity building is guided by the aim of providing adequate support for nationally determined and prioritized capacity building needs consistent with the relevant Conventions and the objectives of the GEF in a cost effective manner, with clearly identified indicators of progress and achievement.

13. As the CDI clearly noted, the GEF is one of many institutions that can assist capacity building efforts in countries, in addition to what countries undertake with their own resources. Working within its mandate, the GEF clearly recognizes the need to leverage other resources and to assist countries to identify complementary sources of financial and technical assistance, both multilateral and bilateral, to meet capacity building needs. Valuable opportunities to do this will be available in countries that prepare an action plan for capacity building on the basis of NCSAs and/or countries for which country programs will be developed. Some activities identified in the action plans or country programs may be supported by the GEF, while others may fall outside the GEF mandate and convention guidance and will require other sources of funding.

14. Consistent with GEF practices for the past ten years, it is recognized that embedding capacity building components within projects is the most effective means for sustainable capacity development, and it is recommended that this approach continue to be the preferred pathway for capacity building. It is also recognized that the guidance from the Conventions and the deliberations of the international community have indicated that this approach has not always been sufficient to meet all capacity building needs, and that pathways for free-standing projects should be made available for activities not readily covered by regular projects and for countries where the pipeline of projects is weak. The strategic approach proposes that countries requiring special attention should be provided with an opportunity to address critical needs in a decentralized manner, and that technical support for capacity building should be available to all recipients.

15. In pursuit of this approach, the proposed strategic approach has the following elements:

³ GEF/C.21/9, April 2003

- (a) Operational principles to guide project formulation;
- (b) Modalities: strengthened capacity building in GEF projects, new pathways for focal area and cross focal area capacity building, and capacity building through country programs;
- (c) Enabling activities: collaboration with Conventions on redefining coverage of enabling activities;
- (d) Indicators: development of indicators to assess capacity built;
- (e) Over-arching technical support; and
- (f) Program management.

16. These elements are described below. They build upon the extensive work done during the CDI, further consultations on the proposals presented to the Council in May 2001, and the deliberation/ decisions in various international forums.

IV. OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

17. The CDI recommended the following broad operational principles for effective capacity building⁴:

- (a) Ensure national ownership and leadership
- (b) Ensure multi-stakeholder consultations and decision-making
- (c) Base capacity building efforts in self-needs assessment
- (d) Adopt a holistic approach to capacity building
- (e) Integrate capacity building in wider sustainable development efforts
- (f) Promote partnerships
- (g) Accommodate the dynamic nature of capacity building
- (h) Adopt a learning-by-doing approach
- (i) Combine programmatic and project-based approaches
- (j) Combine process as well as product-based approaches
- (k) Promote regional approaches

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