

GEF COUNTRY EXPERIENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

How the country developed or managed coordination and/or setting process?

The GEF Operational Focal Point, through the Office of Foreign Assisted and Special Projects Office (FASPO) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has developed the coordination mechanism with the Multilateral Environmental Focal Point Agencies (FPAs) for Convention on Biodiversity (i.e. Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau attached to the DENR), Convention to Combat Land Degradation (i.e. Bureau of Soils and Water Management attached to the Department of Agriculture), Convention on Climate Change (i.e. Environmental Management Bureau attached to the DENR).

The GEF OFP also engages participation of the Forest Management Bureau (also attached to DENR) for land degradation; Environmental Management Bureau for chemicals and ozone depleting substances; and Coastal and Marine Resources Management Office (CMMO), PAWB and EMB under DENR for international waters.

In 2005, the GEF OFP through the assistance of UNDP endeavored to hold a Strategic Planning exercise to define the vision, mission, goals and priority programs for GEF Philippines. This was participated by the government agencies mentioned above. As a result of the exercise, the GEF Strategy for the Philippines was documented, although admittedly, still in broad strokes. The GEF Philippine strategy tried to address the need to set clear program thrust and direction and need to streamline the preparation and review of projects at the national level and improve the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of GEF projects in the country.

Project Proposals for endorsement to GEF Secretariat for consideration are referred to those government agencies for technical comments and determination whether they are aligned with the sector's programs.

The implementation of the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) provided an opportunity to strengthen the existing coordination mechanism. In an effort to identify the specific projects to be lined up under RAF, a consultation meeting was held not only with the MEA FPAs but also with the implementing agencies and executing agencies. The MEA FPA for CBD has tapped a "core group" composed of several NGOs to review the pipeline projects. This group arrived at certain recommendations regarding the parameters for determining prioritization and priority projects on biodiversity and protected areas.

The MEA FPA for Climate Change convened the Inter-Agency Committee on Climate Change which is mandated by an Order from the President to provide guidance and direction regarding programs on climate change. The Committee also proposed parameters as basis for prioritization and specific project to be endorsed given the limited resource allocation for Climate Change.

The consultations resulted to the formulation of GEF Circulars issued by the GEF OFP. These Circulars define the parameters for

prioritizing GEF proposed projects under biodiversity and climate change.

In January 2007, the first GEF Country Dialogue was held with MEA FPAs, GEF Political Focal Point and NGOS. The Country Dialogue served as venue to echo the highlights of the discussion in the December 2006 GEF Council meeting. During the dialogue, a discussion was made regarding the status of the proposed projects under RAF including cancelled projects under GEF3. The workplan for 2007 under the GEF Country Support Program was also presented to inform the stakeholders of the GEF activities.

Who are the key actors and agencies that have been involved in this process?

The MEA Focal Point Agencies (FPAs) are basically the key actors who have been involved in the coordination process of the thematic activities of the GEF. Among them are the Protected and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB) of Department of Environment and Natural Resources for biodiversity; Environmental Management Bureau of DENR for Climate Change and POPs; and Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) under Department of Agriculture (DA) for Land Degradation and Forest Management Bureau (FMB) under DENR.

Under each FPA are multi-agency committees that oversee implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEA) related activities, including implementation of GEF projects, in compliance to our obligation to the international conventions. PAWB, for example, has a Review Committee (REV COM), composed of the same group from the subcommittee of PSCD¹ for biodiversity that reviews GEF biodiversity proposals for endorsement of the GEF-OFP. The Subcommittee of PCSD for Biodiversity Conservation is comprised of representatives from DA², DOST³, DILG⁴, DOH⁵, NCIP⁶, National Museum, academe and civil society groups. The subcommittee coordinates activities involving implementation of biodiversity conservation; oversees implementation of country's obligation to UNCBD; and formulates positions for the Conference of Parties (COP).

For climate change proposals, EMB has Interagency Committee for Climate Change (IACCC) comprised by the ff. members: DFA⁷, DOE⁸, DOST², DA, DPWH⁹, DOTC¹⁰, DTI-BOI¹¹, FMB¹² of the DENR, NEDA¹³, PAGASA¹⁴, and Philippine Network on Climate Change. IACCC oversees the implementation of the country's obligations under the UNFCCC. It complies with the requirements of the convention by preparing national communication; country position on climate change issues; and formulates national climate change policies. Lately IACCC has expanded

¹ Philippine Council for Sustainable Development

² Department of Agriculture

³ Department of Science and Technology

⁴ Department of Interior and Local Government

⁵ Department of Health

⁶ National Commission on Indigenous People

⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs

⁸ Department of Energy

⁹ Department of Public Works and Highways

¹⁰ Department of Transportation and Communication

¹¹ Department of Trade and Industry- Board of Investments

¹² Forest Management Bureau

¹³ National Economic Development Authority

¹⁴ Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration

its concerns from purely scientific to include economics and adaptive mechanism. EMB is also reviewing proposals under Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS).

Proposals on land degradation on the other hand is being reviewed by an informal body of BSWM consisting of representatives from DA, DENR, DAR, DOST, academe, NGOs, and the private sector.

How has your coordination mechanism and/or process of setting priorities enabled or facilitated your work and the Philippines participation in the GEF?

The coordination mechanism has helped the process of determining projects to be prioritized under the RAF. The system has also served as venue for familiarization on national government's program for biodiversity and protected areas, climate change and land degradation. The coordination has also served as forum for information sharing among MEA FPAs.

What challenges/difficulties have you faced in this process?

The MEA FPAs and other stakeholders have yet to be fully oriented on the GEF strategies for focal areas to equip us on how to effectively develop and assess our program priorities vis-à-vis GEF identified priorities.

At present, we have yet to expand our coordination to include more NGOs. Coordination on project development in the area of international waters, biosafety and POPS have yet to be enhanced too.

Other challenges encountered include: inefficiency of reporting systems; lack of M&E database of GEF projects, within GEF-OFP office and within each agency; implementing lead agencies fail to submit regular report on the status of their on-going and completed projects to GEF-OFP; strong need to link existing monitoring mechanisms of IAs/EAs (i.e. APR/PIR) with the monitoring of GEF-OFP.

How are you resolving these problems?

The coordination mechanism has to be institutionalized and strengthened to be able to move forward in resolving the above mentioned challenges.

The GEF OFP also intends to maximize the utilization of the Country Support Programme (CSP) fund to address those challenges. Given the limited support under CSP, other avenues for capacity building on program strategizing and prioritization, on GEF programs and strategies for focal areas, project cycle etc. and database building are being explored through pipeline projects under GEF.

Participation in the training activities sponsored by GEF Secretariat is also being seen as a step to develop the country's capacity to improve GEF operation at the national level.

What are the lessons learned from this process?

Continuity of the GEF OFP is a key element to ensure effective and efficient operation of GEF at the country level.

GEF Secretariat's regional consultation mechanism is an important tool to assist GEF OFPs perform their functions.

GEF OFPs including MEA FPAs have to be capacitated at the early stage to be able to establish clear database, formulate program priorities in relation to national and GEF strategies, establish coordination mechanism, institutionalize monitoring and evaluation of GEF projects.

What changes/improvements would you like to make in the future?

To be able to make GEF Philippines responsive to the needs of the country in terms of project development and implementation, following activities shall be undertaken;

1. database building will be started;
2. systems and procedures for M&E of GEF Philippine projects will be developed;
3. coordination mechanism will be institutionalized and strengthened, with primary aim of defining specific national priorities vis a vis GEF programs and strategies;
4. capacity building for GEF OFP and MEA FPAs will be initiated;
5. knowledge and information sharing will be established, initially through the development of the GEF Philippines website.