

GEF UNDP SGP INDIA

Background:

Small Grants Program (SGP), funded by the United Nation Development Program, Global Environment Facility (GEF), seeks to support initiatives, which demonstrate community-based innovative, gender sensitive, participatory approaches and lessons learned from other development projects that lead to reduce threats to the local and global environment.

The GEF/SGP was launched in **1991 by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to assist developing countries in fulfilling their commitment towards the protection of the global environment.** The Program is sourced with a belief that global environmental problems can only be addressed adequately, if local people are involved in planning, decision-making and sharing roles and responsibilities at all levels. Even with small amounts of funding, communities can undertake activities, which will make a “significant difference” in their livelihoods and environment. UNDP GEF/SGP is currently offered in 83 countries worldwide. The program started in India since 1997.

The UNDP, Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India (GOI) administers small Grants Program (SGP). It is being implemented by Centre for Environment Education (CEE) as the National Host Institution (NHI) since **September 2000**. CEE is a national level institution supported by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India as a Centre of Excellence, and affiliated to the Nehru Foundation for Development, Ahmedabad. CEE has its presence felt in all the states & Union Territories of India through a local network of 7 Regional Offices and 23 Field Offices across the country. CEE is currently implementing **89** different projects from the total of **240 projects (151 completed) with an outreach to more than 500 villages** reaching a population of more than 550,000 people. An emphasis is more in establishing low cost, low external input & easy to manage technologies, with a greater emphasis on enhancing community capacities and social mechanisms for better livelihoods.

The India program the Annual grants disbursement has increased from *USD 300,000 in the year 2001-02 to USD 1,000,000 USD in the year 2005-06 and continues to deliver more than 1,000,000 USD each year. The Government of India has also put forward contributions of 100,000 USD every year since 2005-06.* The communities of practice are also raising an equal co financing in the program...

Project APPROACH:

The program is working through a more decentralized system of Regional offices of CEE the host NGO, in order to outreach the remote and inaccessible poor areas of the country, countrywide coverage and also address the local issues more appropriately, leading to better the livelihoods of the poor. While the strategy has been very effective in drawing out the NGOs to address the issues more sustainably, **it remains to see how we can involve the people's initiatives through the Community based organizations (CBOs).** This demands greater 'hand holding' at the grass root levels and at different stages within the SGP program. CEE has always been sensitive to the 'evolving processes within the SGP and reflect how it still can be better improvised'.

The Regional Committees are the **first level review process in overseeing the effectiveness of the project proposals under the SGP.** Given the increasing success of the SGP nation wide, CEE is increasingly looking at ways and means to mainstream the priorities of the state and central governments and private sector to create a better **interface between the governments, private sector and the responsive NGOs and CBOs.** Learning from the past, gives creditability to the SGP, in terms of how responsive it is to address the issues effectively. How in the SGP within the changing scenarios through its partners -would reflect in cutting the costs at various levels, leverage resources and raise community confidence and local ownerships.

Lessons learned in Implementation of SGP in India:

-Projects to adopt a more community based 'participatory approach' through the use of participatory rural appraisals (PRAs), informal meetings, exposure visits, kinship based informal groups, focus group discussions and SHGs with formal linkages to the banks and credit for greater **community ownerships, local empowerment and access to cheaper credit and resources.**

-During the 'planning stages' in the wide range of programs in a project grant emphasis is laid in negotiating - roles/responsibilities, sharing of costs and encouraging local communities to take decisions for greater **sustainability of actions.**

-The SGP grant leverages and facilitates linkages of projects with state, local government, private/public sector and other institutions to **enhance project resources** and its overall performance while building capacities of nascent NGOs/CBOs.

-SGP along with its project partners through formal/informal, meetings/discussions with GoI, donors, private and public sector and other stakeholders disseminates lessons learnt, widen the scope of the actions in the program for **resource mobilization and scaling up**.

-SGP's **monitoring and evaluation systems** are based on the principles of participation and focus on transparency and results based-outcomes, with a clear focus on the impact indicator assessments, with capacity enhancement process for the community.

-Effective **management systems** due to clear Standard Operating Principles (SOPs) created by SGP India ensure useful documentation, sharing of experiences and knowledge management.

- A more **decentralized approach** is the key to success. As NHI's (CEE) seven regional offices are working in **tandem with the NC** to promote balanced thematic and geographical coverage of the program. The SGP program needs further support from the NHI's in country capacity for its long term sustainability, resource mobilization and graduation policy through workshops/training programs, etc.

-SGP in its projects has a strong focus in building community consensus and creates local **conflict management strategies**. The projects in managing conflicts need to identify:

(a) Sources of conflicts:

-exclusion of relevant Stakeholders

-Respecting only a few stakeholders.

-Ignore traditional rights/privileges of local communities.

-Exclusion of women from ownership as well as decision making.

-Encroachments.

(b) Common ways of dealing conflicts.

-Avoiding-Withdraw from the conflict situation.

-Smoothly-Cover up difference and claim things are fine.

-Bargaining-Negotiate to arrive at a compromise.

-Forcing- Push a party to accept a decision.

-In the context of India's new **Tribal Bill (May 2006)**, the sustainable use of forest resources and access to markets through the state livelihood missions need to be promoted in the SGP in remote tribal areas. Needs of the tribal and indigenous community have to be addressed through benefit sharing of conservation methods and check bio-piracy concerns?

-Develop more responsive, localized projects in degraded and wasteland areas to combat desertification and **increasing productivity** through more community led approaches. This is also in conjunction to the climate change adaptation strategy of the GoI and the GEF Secretariat

-Intensive hand holding of small CBOs and NGO partners needs to be maintained, even after the completion of projects takes place. This helps to develop a **partnership way** of working, increasingly linking the knowledge of practices for a more holistic approach to community livelihoods and enterprise.

-Continual understanding is required in building capacities of stakeholders within a project on the **global and local**

Environment Benefits (GEFability). This is an evolving process and needs to be carefully addressed through the project interventions.

-**Pro active links** need to be established with a pool of consultants and institutions for the partners at all times, within and after the projects, to promote a more result based approach in a range of issues and actions, not all partners see the program with a greater vision and in a wider way.

-SGP enables learning a detailed analysis on the nature of co funding to its project partners for better leveraging of resources to achieve a maximum impact of the grant... **beyond the project period**.

-SGP India has developed with UNDP GEF and Government of India the **scaling up and replication strategy**, for scaling up successful and innovative projects which address local environment concerns and provide sustainable livelihoods while creating positive impact on the global environment.

-A **databank/resource base** needs to be created to meet enquiries of the existing partners and new organizations to share knowledge. More than 20 films on the projects have been telecast in the national network.

-NSC members, range of stakeholders and other donors, partners and institutions are becoming **actively involved** with SGP partners in the fields of their expertise.

-During the scaling up and replication exercises the grantees have been able to **network** with each other and other donors and exchange lessons, skills, practices and technologies to be implemented pragmatically. As the NHI it is felt that CEE needs to keep doing this effectively and this will be the turning point in the program performance.

-With multiple co financing aspects built in the SGP, it turns out to be a **cost effective** model in grants delivery and implementation of the project activities.

SGP Graduation Process:

-Graduation process in the SGP should be seen as a **'natural and sustainable process'**. The guidelines for graduation for any program need to be 'flexible, demand led and country specific' as is the process in any other program of the countries dealing with GEF UNDP SGP.

-The basic aim is to **'reduce the dependence'** of the SGP from GEF resources and make it an even more forceful, innovative and a 'process approach-driven program' wherein the program delivers, sustains and continues over time in link with local, state governments and private sector.

-The purpose is to ensure that it continues to **'deliver the results and impacts'** and the difference it makes to the lives of poor, unreached communities and to the global environment.

-The process therefore needs to be seen as a **'long term investment'** by the country governments, GEF Focal Points and various institutional departments both from the government, private sector and academic institutions.

-The Graduation Program needs to be **'built on conditions of sustainability'**; ensure how it continues to deliver and make 'impacts in the fragile environments'.

-Question needs to be asked that a **'Universal Approach'** for all countries and at all levels **may not** be beneficial. The diversity and complexity of each country varies and is different. This will create yet another path breaking process and a realistic time frame needs to be considered.

-How the **'private sector, banks and financial institutions'** can be brought into the link. The process should **'Lay Conditions'** and facilitate the continuity of the program both through the UNDP Country Office/ Similar Implementing and Executing bodies of the GEF.

-How can we facilitate through the main GEF Program that the NCs of the SGP countries can be mainstreamed within the **'RAF Empowered Committees'** of the countries.

-Ensure the local GEF Country Focal Points and the National Coordinators have more congenial roles to play vis-à-vis SGP. Have such officials as members on the NSC of the SGP.

-Ensure and encourage informal but focused **"exchange field visits"** for the Govt. officials to the SGP programs.

-Facilitate the local country **'governments' funds commitments'** and response through the respective country governments own funding mechanism for the related country specific GEF thematic priorities.

-GEF to develop a policy working with Donors through the CPMT to **'facilitate commitments for SGP'** for the country specific priorities. A more pro-active approach of involvements and a strategic partnership need to be developed by the NCs at country level.

-Highlight the **'Key issues of the SGP'** at the Decision-making / Policy Forums for Funds Generation at Country levels.

- Develop a common E- Mail exchange between country/region levels partners both for policy and funds stability and develop a **'Brand SGP'**.

-The roles of different **'Stakeholders Needs'** to be ascertained as to what they contribute and influence within the program.