



66th Council Meeting: GEF Consultations with Civil Society
Friday, February 2nd, 2024
07:00 – 9:00 am. EST

The Role of CSOs in building sustainable, resilient, and inclusive cities

30 January 2024

Introduction

Adjacent to the GEF 66th Council meeting in February 2024, a virtual GEF Consultations with Civil Society is scheduled on February 2 (Friday) from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. EST. The consultation will include simultaneous translations in French and Spanish and opportunities for participants to engage via the chat which the GEF Secretariat will help to moderate.

The topic for this consultation is the role of CSOs in building sustainable, resilient, and inclusive cities. The GEF Council members recognized the importance that cities play in achieving global environment benefits and sustainability goals and approved this topic in 2023. The Consultation aims at fostering a dialogue between GEF Council members, GEF partners and civil society. The consultation will showcase the valuable contribution of civil society organizations in cities and include moderated discussions with them on experiences gained from GEF projects and other projects around world. The consultation will explore a range of practices and lessons learned on generating global environmental benefits and improving climate resilience and well-being of the people around the cityscape from diverse perspectives. It is expected to inform the GEF partnership and create a space for discussing ideas on strengthening engagement of CSOs in GEF's urban sustainability investments.

Background

Today, some 56% of the world's population – 4.4 billion inhabitants – live in cities. This trend is expected to continue, with the urban population more than doubling its current size by 2050, at which point nearly 7 of 10 people will live in cities. The unprecedented scale and pace of urban development is driving global economy with 80% of GDP generated from cities. Cities are characterized by proximity which makes them cohesive societies and leads to resource efficiency. However, the rapid urban growth, especially in developing countries, is often unplanned leading to high vulnerability of urban population to the impacts of climate change, and degradation of environment with loss of biodiversity and land productivity, rapid increase in waste and pollution, and high emissions of greenhouse gases.

The people, economy, and environment dynamics in cities is complex, yet very promising in addressing complex environmental and development challenges. The local governments and their

autonomy (even if limited) in decision making provides a great opportunity for cities to develop integrated plans, innovate and take actions which are bottom up and locally-led. They have the potential to localize global issues such as climate change and develop local solutions and benefits for the people with direct contribution to global goals. For this reason, there is a dedicated SDG target for cities, they are quite at core in global climate action and have emerged as highly important in meeting global biodiversity targets.

Recognizing that cities are key to achieving global environmental and sustainability goals, the GEF launched the Sustainable Cities Integrated Approach Pilot program in 2016. Building on the experience and lessons learnt from this pilot, the Sustainable Cities Impact Program in the GEF-7 cycle is advancing the integrated approach of urban planning and implementation under its brand name UrbanShift. The program is supporting total 50+ cities in 17 countries, and focuses on integrated urban planning, low-carbon infrastructure, sustainable waste management and nature-based solutions for urban sustainability. It brings together global, national, and local stakeholders, and engages with city-based organizations and the private sector to work towards common sustainability visions. The GEF-8 Sustainable Cities IP will advance the GEF's integrated approach to additional cities and a strengthened global platform to enable cities take leadership with greater ambition in tackling climate change and biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution.

In addition to the sustainable cities program, the GEF also supports sustainable urban development through its adaptation funds LDCF and SCCF with focus on urban resilience, and through its flagship Small Grants Program which directly engages with local organizations in promoting innovative and impactful sustainability solutions for citizens and the environment.

The local and people-centric aspects of cities make the role of civil society organization central in supporting sustainable urban transformation. Their role is multi-faceted and at multiple levels and key to ensure a whole-of-society approach for sustainable growth of cities. First, they play a very important role in influencing political leadership to be more ambitious on policies related to inclusion and environment. Second, they are the key conduit to create awareness and sensitivity among citizens regarding environmental concerns and opportunities. Third, they are the voices of citizens in various global forums and platforms elevating and connecting cities and their populations. Finally, CSOs are also key implementing partners of the government and private sector in often delivering last mile services.

As their role gets more important with increasing vulnerability of communities to climate change, loss of nature in cities, growing inequalities and shocks such as the COVID-19, it is critical to understand how they can be a vital partner, actor, and stakeholder in cities for the GEF to deliver its goal of healthy planet and healthy people.

Objectives of the session

The session will bring together members of the GEF partnership and leading CSOs active in the urban space across different domains to discuss their evolving role and partnership opportunities in a whole of society approach for sustainable urban transformation. The discussions will build on the valuable experiences gained from GEF's sustainable cities program, urban projects supported by the GEF Small Grants Program, the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and other notable initiatives by CSOs in developing countries. The discussions will cover a range of urban

sustainability topics including but not limited to urban planning, transportation, housing, waste management, nature-based solutions, resilient infrastructure, food security and others.

The consultation is expected to deliver the following two objectives and outcomes:

- 1) *Highlighting why and how civil society organizations matter for sustainable urban transformation and delivering environmental benefits; and*
- 2) *Sharing good practices of CSOs supporting inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities, including policy influence and behavioral change,*
- 3) *Distilling lessons learned to guide GEF towards greater stakeholder engagement.*

Each session will be moderated by an expert in their respective field and draw together 3-4 speakers from CSOs and other partners. The moderator will help to set the scene around each session topic and the sessions will draw on experiences from a range of CSOs and other stakeholders who are engaged directly or indirectly through GEF's investment in cities.

Agenda

Opening

7:00-7:15

- 7:00 – 7:15 **Welcome:** Gabriella Richardson Temm, Interim Head of Partnership Division, GEF Secretariat
- 7:05 – 7:10: **Opening remarks GEF Secretariat:** Claude Gascon, Director of Strategy and Operations, GEF Secretariat
- 7:10 – 7:15: **Setting the scene:** Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability

Session 1: **Civil society organizations' roles in sustainable urban transformation and delivering environmental benefits.**

7:15 – 7:55

The speakers will deliberate through case studies and experiences how they are engaged in GEF funded projects and playing a crucial role in project implementation.

Moderator: Charles Dixon, GEF Secretariat

Panelists:

- Tommy Garnett, Executive Director, Environment Foundation for Africa, Sierra Leone
- Lorenza Cordeiro, PES Project Manager, Nakau, Solomon Islands
- Maribel Gomez, Asociación de Desarrollo La Guápil, Alajuelita, Costa Rica
- Ram Charitra Sah, GEF Small Grants Program Grantee, Center for Public Health and Environmental Development CEPHEP, Nepal.

Q&A: Moderated discussion with participants (10 min)

Session 2 Good practices of civil society in engaging with communities and city governments for sustainability solutions.

7:55 – 8:35

The speakers will share specific examples of innovative, impactful, and community-led solutions in cities influencing behavioral change, policies, and investments.

Moderator: Ana Di Pangracio, Deputy Director, Fundación Environment and Natural Resources

Panelists:

- Alcides Ramírez, Former President of the Association of Urban Cyclists of Paraguay
- Veronica Ocaña Dominguez, GEF Small Grants Program Grantee, Motorcycle taxi cooperative Guerreras Fenix de Uman, Mexico
- Ronny Mbaisa, Zimbabwe Sunshine Group, GEF CSO Network member, Zimbabwe

Q&A: Moderated discussion with participants (10 min)

Session 3: Reflections from GEF program partners on importance of CSO engagement

8:35 – 8:45

- Eillie Anzilotti, Communications Lead, UrbanShift (GEF's Sustainable Cities Program), WRI
- Angelica Shamerina, GEF Small Grants Program, UNDP

Concluding reflection on lessons learned to guide GEF in achieving greater CSO engagement

8:45 – 8:55 AM

- Faizal Parish, Global Environment Centre, Malaysia, Chair, GEF CSO Network
- Alope Barnwal, Senior Climate Change Specialist and Coordinator Sustainable Cities, GEF Secretariat

Closing remarks

8:55 - 9:00 AM

- Baba Drame, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Alternate GEF Council Member, Senegal