Independent Evaluation Office
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

EVALUATION OF THE GEF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION NETWORK

Full Report
Unedited

May 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations and Acronyms iv
Executive Summary vi
Background vi
Evaluation Methods vii
Major Findings vii
Results vii
Credibility viii
Capacity ix
Connectivity ix
Membership x
Structure and Governance xi
Resources xii
Conclusions xiii
Recommendations xiii
Structure of the Document xiv
I. Introduction 1
II. CSO Network Profile 6
Network Objectives 6
Membership 7
Structure & Governance 8
CSO Network - GEFSEC Working Relationship 10
CSO Network Website 11
III. Question One Findings: CSO Network Role, Relevance and Results 12
Role and Relevance 12
Motivation to Join 13
Assessment of Benefits 13
Assessment of Network Role at Council 14
Assessment of the Space in GEF for Network Participation 14
CSO Network Capacity 18
Member Assessment of Progress 20
Skills/Experience Inventory 22
Skills Development 23
GEFSEC and Network Capacity Building 25
Connections within the Network 25
Connectivity between RFPs and CSO Members 25
Connectivity amongst CSO Members 28
Results 29
Ratings of Progress 30
Commentary on Policy Contributions 32
GEF Work Program Review 36
IV. Question Two Findings - Factors Affecting Network Function 37
CSO Network Membership 37

Snapshot of CSO Network Member Survey Respondents 37
Membership Application Process 39
Membership Trends 39
Membership Distribution 41
Member Identification with the GEF CSO Network 43
Membership Proposition 43
The CSO Network in a Changing Structure 44
CSO Network and Council 44
CSO Network and Governments 46
CSO Network and GEF Agencies 48
GEF CSO Agencies as Network Members 49
CSO Network and the Small Grants Programme 50
CSO Network Website Connections 50
Issues Arising from a Changing Structure 51
A shared vision for the CSO Network in the GEF Partnership 51
CSO Network and GEFSEC Working Relations 51
Clarity of the CSO Network's Value Proposition 52
The pivotal role of the RFP/IPFP in the CSO Network 53
CSO Network Governance 54
Guidelines Development 54
Elections Management 55
Terms of Office 55
Network Leadership 55
Complaints Procedures 56
Strategic Planning 57
Resources for the CSO Network 58
Assessment of Resource Availability 58
Assessment of Resource Use 59
Network In-Kind Contributions 60
Onus of Funding Responsibility 60
V. Conclusions and Recommendations 62
Conclusions 62
Recommendations 66

FIGURES, TABLES AND BOXES

Figures

Figure 1: Historical Timeline 3
Figure 2: CSO Network Membership by Region 7
Figure 3: GEF CSO Network Membership by Organization Type 8
Figure 4: Governance Structure of the GEF CSO Network 10
Figure 5: Network Effect on Ability to Partner with Other Organizations 14
Figure 6: Network and non-Network CSO executors by GEF Phase 16
Figure 7: Type of CSO Project Executors by Share of GEF Grant Amount 16
Figure 8: Major CSO Project Executors by Share of GEF Grant Amount 16
Figure 9: RFP-CSO Collaborations within the Network 26
Figure 10: CSO Collaborations within the Network 27
Figure 11: Connectivity between CSOs members within and outside the Network 28
Figure 12: Member rating to progress against Network Objectives 30
Figure 13: Stakeholder rating of extent of value add of the GEF CSO Network to the partnership 31
Figure 14: Stakeholder rating of Network's interventions at Council 31
Figure 15: CSO Network Members Self Identification 37
Figure 16: GEF CSO Network Membership Scope of Work 38
Figure 17: GEF CSO Network Membership Areas of Work 38
Figure 18: Network Membership - 2010-2015 40
Figure 19: Percent variation in Membership - 2010-2015 40
Figure 20: Number of Network Members in Countries 41
Figure 21: Number of Network Members in Countries by Region 42

Tables

Table 1: Distribution of CSO Network Membership 7
Table 2: CSO Network Execution of SGP Projects by Operational Phase 18

Boxes

Box 1: Impact of RAF and STAR Allocation Systems on CSO Engagement 17
Box 2: Initiatives identified in the Management Response to Support Network Member Capacity 19
Box 3: Factor Analysis 22
Box 4: Glimpse of Network Capacities 23
Box 5: Small Grants Program and CSO Network Collaborations 24
Box 6: GEF Principles and Guidelines for the Engagement with Indigenous Peoples 33
Box 7: Trends in Network Membership 40
Box 8: Membership Accreditation – Comparisons 41

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AF	Adaptation Fund
AfDB	African Development Bank
BOAD	West African Development Bank
CAF	Development Bank of Latin America
CBO	Community Based Organization
CFP	Central Focal Point
CI	Conservation International
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
EA	Enabling Activity
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECW	Expanded Constituency Workshop
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FECO	Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, Ministry of Environmental Protection of China
FSP	Full Sized Project
FUNBIO	Fundo Brasileiro para a Biodiversidade
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEFIEO	Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office
GEFSEC	Global Environment Facility Secretariat
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IPAG	Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group
IPFP	Indigenous Peoples Focal Point
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MSP	Medium Sized Project
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OFP	Operational Focal Point
PFP	Political Focal Point
PIP	Public Involvement Policy
PMIS	Project Management Information System
RAF	Resource Allocation Framework
RFP	Regional Focal Point

SGP	Small Grants Programme
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environmental Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WB	The World Bank
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) evaluation of the GEF Civil Society Organization (CSO) Network responds to a request from the GEF Council at its 47th meeting in October, 2014. Technical Notes and Annexes to the evaluation are included in the Information Document GEF/ME/C.50/Inf.02.

2. The evaluation addresses the two key evaluation questions included in the Approach Paper (Annex A). (1) *To what extent is the CSO Network meeting its intended goals and strategic objectives and adding value to the GEF Partnership and its membership?*; (2) *How are Network features contributing to the effective and efficient functioning of the Network?* The evaluation covers the period from the last evaluation of the Network in 2005 to the present.

Background

3. The GEF CSO Network[1] began in 1995 as a group of NGOs accredited by the GEF as eligible to attend Council meetings. In these early days, any accredited NGO was automatically a member of a "GEF NGO Network". Over time the Network has become a voluntary, self-organized collection of almost 500 environmental and sustainable-development oriented CSOs spread across 122 countries. Over two decades, the Network's program has responded to Council's mandate of 1995 that NGOs attending Council meetings "prepare for and report back on those meetings to the wider CSO community in their countries and regions."

4. The Network is organized according to different geographic regions. The structure consists of 16 elected CSOs, or Regional Focal Points (RFPs), each of which represent a region encompassing more than one country, to make a constituency. Indigenous Peoples' representation is formally established in the governance and structure of the CSO Network through three focal points. Together, these organizations make up the Coordination Committee. Up until October 2015, Network leadership was provided by a Central Focal Point (CFP) elected from among the RFPs. Currently, a Chair, Vice-Chair and Network Secretariat share duties formerly carried out by the CFP. The Coordination Committee meets twice a year, prior to the Council meetings to discuss Network business.

5. In addition to its Council derived mandate, the Network has set objectives for itself. These pertain to enhancing the role of civil society in safeguarding the global environment, strengthening GEF Program implementation through partnership with civil society, and building the capacity of the GEF CSO Network.

[1] The Network was formerly known as the GEF NGO Network and changed its name to the GEF CSO Network prior to the 5th GEF Assembly.

6. Consistent with its mandate, the Network is most active just prior to and after Council meetings. A report is submitted to the Council itemizing Network activities each year, and a report is prepared following each Council for distribution to the Network. A quarterly Network newsletter also goes out to members. Since 2011, the Network has organized a meeting of regional CSOs on the day prior to the Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs) to promote the CSO Network, exchange project-based knowledge and to prepare CSO positions for presentation to the regional constituency during the Workshop. These meetings are supported logistically and financially by the GEFSEC.

Evaluation Methods

7. The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach encompassing qualitative and quantitative data gathering approaches and analysis (see Technical Note 1). Evaluation workshops with CSOs[2] were conducted in three regions to analyze the Network's relationships with other actors in the Partnership (see Annex D). A global online survey was also administered to gather responses from 112 countries and across CSOs, GEF Agencies, government representatives and Council members (Annex C); focus groups were also carried out at five ECWs in addition to over 75 stakeholder interviews (Annex E). Other tools used included a focused document review, a social network analysis and comparative analysis with analogous networks (Technical Note 2).

8. Based on a review of the literature describing relevant frameworks and methods for network evaluation, summarized in Technical Note 1, the evaluation team identified eight elements to serve in the analysis of the evaluation's key questions. These are: **results, credibility, capacity, connectivity, membership, structure & governance and resources**. Each of these includes characteristics that are understood to be vital to successful network functioning.

Major Findings

9. The evaluation's key findings are summarized below, organized according to the aforementioned network elements. The findings were used to arrive at the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations.

Results

10. From the majority of CSO members participating in the evaluation, the Network gets "good" to "excellent" marks regarding the Network's progress against its objectives. Progress

[2] The majority of participants were active CSO members. In countries without members, non-member organizations with GEF experience were selected. An effort was made to also include past RFPs in the workshops. All participants are listed in Annex D.

ratings are best for the Council mandated objective, particularly as it relates to knowledge dissemination about the GEF.

11. Others in the Partnership - Council, GEF Agency and Government - assess the Network's value addition to the partnership as generally "moderate"; lowest for reviewing project designs, and highest for influencing the policy agenda and increasing CSO's understanding about the GEF.

12. At the policy table, the Network's influence is acknowledged most on the review of the GEF Public Involvement Policy, GEF Policy on Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards, and Support to Indigenous Peoples. The Network's efforts before and at replenishment meetings were also noted as an important contribution of the Network to ensure robust replenishments, with strategic orientation. The CSO Network has infrequently commented on the GEF work program presented at every Council meeting.

Credibility

13. The CSO Network has expanded beyond the original informational mandate that it was given at its inception. Nevertheless, that core instructive function remains valued by CSO members today. Almost to the same degree, other functions of the Network that are associated with its own objectives, e.g. building relationships and exchanging knowledge, and strengthening project design and implementation within the Network, remain valued by CSO members.

14. For the CSOs, the GEF "brand" gives Network members credibility especially in those countries where the GEF identity is recognized. At the same time, affiliation does not automatically open doors or translate to the desired country-level engagement, dampening somewhat the value that could accrue.

15. All parts of the GEF Partnership maintain that the best way to earn the credibility to inform policy discussions and provide informed viewpoints is through direct experience with GEF operations. That said, the space for CSO project execution has shrunk in the evaluation period due, in large part, to the revised resource allocation system with its increased emphasis on execution by government agencies. However, other potential auxiliary roles, for example, as secondary executing agencies and project collaborators are opening up.

16. CSO Network members, making up about 15 percent of survey respondents, registered displeasure with the Network primarily over the lack of transparency and communications over Network governance and the remoteness of the global-policy information flowing to them. Those dissatisfied tend to be detached from Network activities, i.e. not engaged with information flow or not interacting with fellow members on Network business, perhaps disenchanted with the way the Network operates.

17. Although the face of the Network to Council is clear, the depth of the Network's reach at a country level is not visible; credibility hinges on this. GEF projects are operationalized at the country level. Country-informed perspectives, and in particular those gained by CSO experiences with GEF operations, are necessary to the strength and value of Network deliberations.

Capacity

18. The Network's capacity development has largely been dedicated to information sharing about the GEF. To date the Network has been unable to muster the resources to advance a skills building agenda for its members. In addition, the reach of the Network's capacity building initiatives across the membership has been partial. Those who feel like they are contributing to Network business, who are engaged at Council and in ECWs, and/or who enjoy a close working relationship with RFPs, are more likely to see capacity gains than those who are not.

19. Internally, the Network does not have an assessment of the knowledge, skills and experience resident within its membership. As such, it has not been able to leverage the resources that it may have for strategic entry into roles concerning focal area objectives or related to the GEF project cycle.

20. There is observable impetus for enhancing Network capacity: a) reinforcing the RFPs outreach capacity with the addition of Country Contact Points; b) pursuing the Medium Size Project (MSP) modality as a vehicle for piloting capacity building initiatives; and c) working with the Small Grants Programme in the implementation of the Communities Connect initiative and a CSO - Government Dialogue.

Connectivity

21. Social network analysis (SNA) indicates that opportunities for information exchange and interactions are highest amongst core members (focal points) as compared to the rest of the Network. There is variation in the extent to which different RFPs are connected to the rest of the Network. Most of the member CSOs (including RFPs, CFP and Indigenous Peoples Focal Points) report collaborating more with organizations outside the Network (i.e. non-members) than those inside, and some of the member CSOs are simultaneously part of other networks, in effect widening the reach of the GEF CSO Network beyond its membership.

22. International CSOs, such as IUCN and WWF show relatively more ties and centrality within the network due to their multiple field locations across various countries. The prominence of these international organizations in the network suggests a potential role in facilitating connections and building capacities of the other network members.

23. The Regional Focal Point role is instrumental to the CSO outreach task, but it is a big "ask" for a volunteer role. To varying degrees, across countries, it remains for the Network to define and communicate its "value proposition".

24. The CSO Network website is sufficient for important information exchange, however it does not engage member CSOs more deeply than that, e.g. inviting CSOs to post their stories/experiences or providing them a platform for networking with the option of contributing to GEF policy discussions. Web analytics indicate that the majority of website sessions last a short time and about 20 percent of visitors return (Annex I).

25. Overall, the readiness of the Network at Council is appreciated. Over time, the Network has become progressively better prepared. Position statements on almost every Agenda item are perceived across the Partnership as appropriate and thoughtful, though scripted. CSO Network interventions at Council are necessary but not sufficient, in themselves, to optimize the CSO connection to Council. The message from several Council members is that there is scope and licence to be more influential at the policy table by engaging earlier, in less formal ways, and with country perspectives.

26. The CSO Network - Agency connection remains largely unexplored, in both directions, to date. The exception here are the linkages with CSOs now also operating as GEF Agencies. Overall, Agency representatives in the partnership described having their own institutional arrangements and/or CSO networks already in place and note that their contacts are often not members of the CSO Network.

27. Despite Council approval in 2010 of proposals to build bridges between the CSO Network and national governments, today, the OFP-CSO Network connection is relatively weak in the array of relationships within the GEF partnership at the country level.

28. Generally, the CSO Network's activities continue to focus more at the regional and global level and not enough at the country level.

Membership

29. The CSO Network's membership system has become more coherent over the evaluation period. It has developed application requirements and verification protocols that have curbed against the inclusion of ineligible CSOs and kept it possible for serious applicants to enter. At the same time the process is still critiqued by some as complex, slow and unresponsive.

30. Expressed interest by non-members is not fully converting into a membership. The process is reported to be time consuming. Member identification with the CSO Network and the GEF brands appear variable, at least as portrayed on their websites.

31. Most of the Network's members are NGOs. The profile suggests under-representation across the other types, namely: indigenous peoples, community based organizations, academic organizations and institutes. The Network does not categorize organizations as women's or youth members

32. At a systemic level, membership distribution remains uneven across countries (Annex F). Contributing factors include the willingness of the country government to accommodate CSO activity in general, the extent of GEF funded activities, and the presence of CSO leadership acting as a champion for membership. Some leaders in the Network would prefer to pace growth such that it does not exacerbate structural vulnerabilities, while others seek acceleration. There is no targeted membership development strategy per se.

Structure and Governance

33. The essential regional/central focal point structure of the Network has remained unchanged for most of the evaluation period. The Network undertook a re-structuring in October 2015, replacing the role of CFP with a Chair, Vice-Chair, and a Network Secretariat.

34. Under concerted leadership, the Network's Coordinating Committee has paid attention to several areas of organizational development including: building a membership system, setting in place a strategic planning orientation, and refining the function of a Coordinating Committee with revisions to its guidelines. It has also added indigenous constituencies into its structure and, most recently, is attempting to reduce the burden on the RFP to undertake outreach activities at a country level by institutionalizing the Country Contact role (Annex G) and by encouraging greater connectivity at a country level with the SGP. The membership, overall, is satisfied with the structure of the Network.

35. Leadership of the Network has been strong, focused and steadfast, by most accounts. Some members have perceived it as domineering. Major contributions and relationships have been consolidated through a few people, leaving the Network subject to the risk of personality differences. Process disagreements and personality conflicts have arisen within and across the Network, though to a lesser degree than has been the case in the past.

36. The Network's complaint procedure (Annex J) does not delineate the trigger point for external intermediaries to act, in the best interests of the Network, should internal systems prove insufficient or compromised. Where Network disputes have arisen they have, by many accounts, distracted from day to day business and posed risks to the Network's reputation.

37. One of the biggest external factors bearing on the Network's structure has to do with vision. Across the Partnership, from Agencies, government focal points, Council members and

CSOs, the evaluators were told that the GEF Partnership is without a shared, contemporary understanding for the CSO Network in the new architecture.

38. Another factor is the relationship between the Network and its members that are now GEF CSO Agencies. The latter show potential to support linkages that could help shift the Network's locus of activity closer to the country level. The dual identity has raised questions within both systems including how best to leverage shared values and interests while avoiding conflicts of interest associated with a CSO entity as simultaneous GEF Agency and field office as Network member. At this stage there are no guidelines to manage this risk.

39. Internally, the terms of office for the IPFP/RFP has, in some instances, emerged as a constraint to member participation in the Network. While there are pros and cons to having a once-renewable four year term of office, the balance of opinion from all parts of the partnership, is that it is too long and is detrimental to voter participation and network building.

Resources

40. The GEF's funding commitment underwrites Network member participation in Council, Assembly and, recently, ECW meetings. There are inadequate resources in place to sustain outreach at the country level as per the Council's objective.

41. Over the past five years, the average cost of bringing CSOs to Council meetings has been about US$140,000/year. Costs associated with CSO participation in ECWs are about US$330,000/year of which US$90,000/year is for Network members. Collectively, the costs for CSO Network activities are on the order of approximately one enabling activity/year.

42. Between 2009 and 2014 the GEFSEC allocated US$50,000 per annum from its Country Support Program budget to the Network to be used for administrative functions and some regional outreach. The use of the annual grants were reported on in the Network's reports to Council and are backed by audited reports for each year.

43. Among those in elected positions as focal points in the Network, performance expectations are high and the outlay of volunteer resources considerable. It is implausible to expect much more activity from the Network without guided financing.

44. What has intensified in the evaluation period is a public management focus on results accountability; this puts the onus on the Network to be results focused in its program/service offerings.

Conclusions

45. Drawing upon the major findings, the evaluation conclusions are organized according to the two key evaluation questions. Concerning key question 1, *To what extent is the CSO Network meeting its intended goals and strategic objectives and adding value to the GEF Partnership and its membership?* the evaluation of the GEF CSO Network reached the following conclusions:

- Conclusion 1: The GEF CSO Network continues to be relevant and is delivering results to the GEF Partnership.
- Conclusion 2: The CSO Network's activities are distant from the country level where GEF projects make their mark and from where the majority of Network CSOs operate. As such, the Network's is compromised in its ability to inform Council with country perspectives and in servicing its members.

46. Concerning key question 2, *How are Network features contributing to the effective and efficient functioning of the Network?* the evaluation of the GEF CSO Network reached the following conclusions:

- Conclusion 3: The CSO Network today is operating in an expanding GEF Partnership without a shared contemporary vision of the role the Network can play within the changing architecture and the resources that it needs to be effective.
- Conclusion 4: Within the context of an increasingly complex operating environment, the Network has strengthened itself organizationally over the evaluation period but governance challenges remain.

Recommendations

47. Based on the above conclusions, the evaluation formulated the following four recommendations:

(a) A contemporary vision for the CSO Network should be created within the new GEF architecture. The vision should inter alia a) clarify the Network's role, b) set out a shared understanding amongst all parts of the Partnership of the Network's contribution in guarding the global commons and c) identify a modality to appropriately finance Network activities.

(b) The GEFSEC and CSO Network should develop clear rules of engagement that guide cooperation and communications. This could be adjusted as needed.

(c) The CSO Network should continue to build itself as a mechanism for strengthening civil society participation in the GEF at the global, regional and national levels, paying particular attention to: membership development, capacity building and value-added working relationships across the Partnership.

(d) The CSO Network should strengthen its governance, with particular attention to: annual work plans, cooperation with IPAG, terms for the Network's Regional Focal Points and the complaints process.

Structure of the Document

48. The evaluation document is divided into five parts. Part I is an introduction to the CSO Network and its place in the GEF Partnership. The introduction also includes a summary of the key evaluation questions and the methods employed. Part II profiles the Network in more detail describing its objectives, membership, structure and governance, and communications. Part III tackles the first of the two key evaluation questions; it provides findings related to CSO Network results to date. Part IV tackles the second of the two evaluation questions; it provides findings on Network features that have helped or hindered performance in the GEF Partnership. To close, Part V draws conclusions on the basis of the findings and provides recommendations. A separate volume contains the Report's Technical Notes and Annexes.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This evaluation responds to a request from the GEF Council at its 47th meeting in October 2014 for an evaluation of the GEF Civil Society Organization (CSO) Network. It also responds to a recommendation in the 2005 Review of the NGO Network which requested the then-office of Monitoring and Evaluation in the GEF to include an evaluation of the Network in the Overall Performance Studies of the GEF. This evaluation is a key input to the future Sixth Comprehensive Evaluation and covers the period from the last review of the Network[3] to the present. The evaluation addresses the key performance questions below:

(a) To what extent is the CSO Network meeting its intended goals and strategic objectives and adding value to the GEF Partnership and its membership?

(b) How are features of the GEF CSO Network contributing to its ability to meet its objectives?

2. A third general question concerning lessons and learning for the development of the Network ran across all the elements examined in the evaluation and form the basis for the conclusions and recommendations to the GEF Council:

(c) What are the implications for the next phase of the development and evolution of the CSO Network?

3. The GEF has a long-standing history of engaging with CSOs. Since the pilot phase in 1991, CSOs have held consultations in sessions prior to the GEF semi-annual Council Meetings at which time they exchange their views about GEF activities and have a dialogue with the Partnership about GEF projects and policies.

4. As part of the restructured GEF, the Secretariat presented to the Council, at their first meeting in July 1994, the "Technical Note on NGO Relations"[4] which stated that "with the restructuring of the GEF, it is timely to consider a more systematic relationship between the GEF and NGOs". It recommended that the Council or the Secretariat approve a list of "accredited NGOs" whose purposes and activities are related to the GEF.[5] In February 1995, at its 3rd meeting, the Council was presented criteria for the selection of NGOs that were to be a part of its semi-annual deliberations. The NGOs would be chosen from the GEF's "Network" of accredited NGOs with the roles and responsibilities, "to communicate with the wider NGO

[3] Review of the Non-Governmental Organization Network of the GEF (GEF/C.27/Inf.5). The Review was requested by the then-CFP and managed by GEFSEC who contracted a consultant for the Review. Elements of the Network were also reviewed in OPS2, 3 & 4 and OPS5 conducted a Technical Study (#14) on engagement.

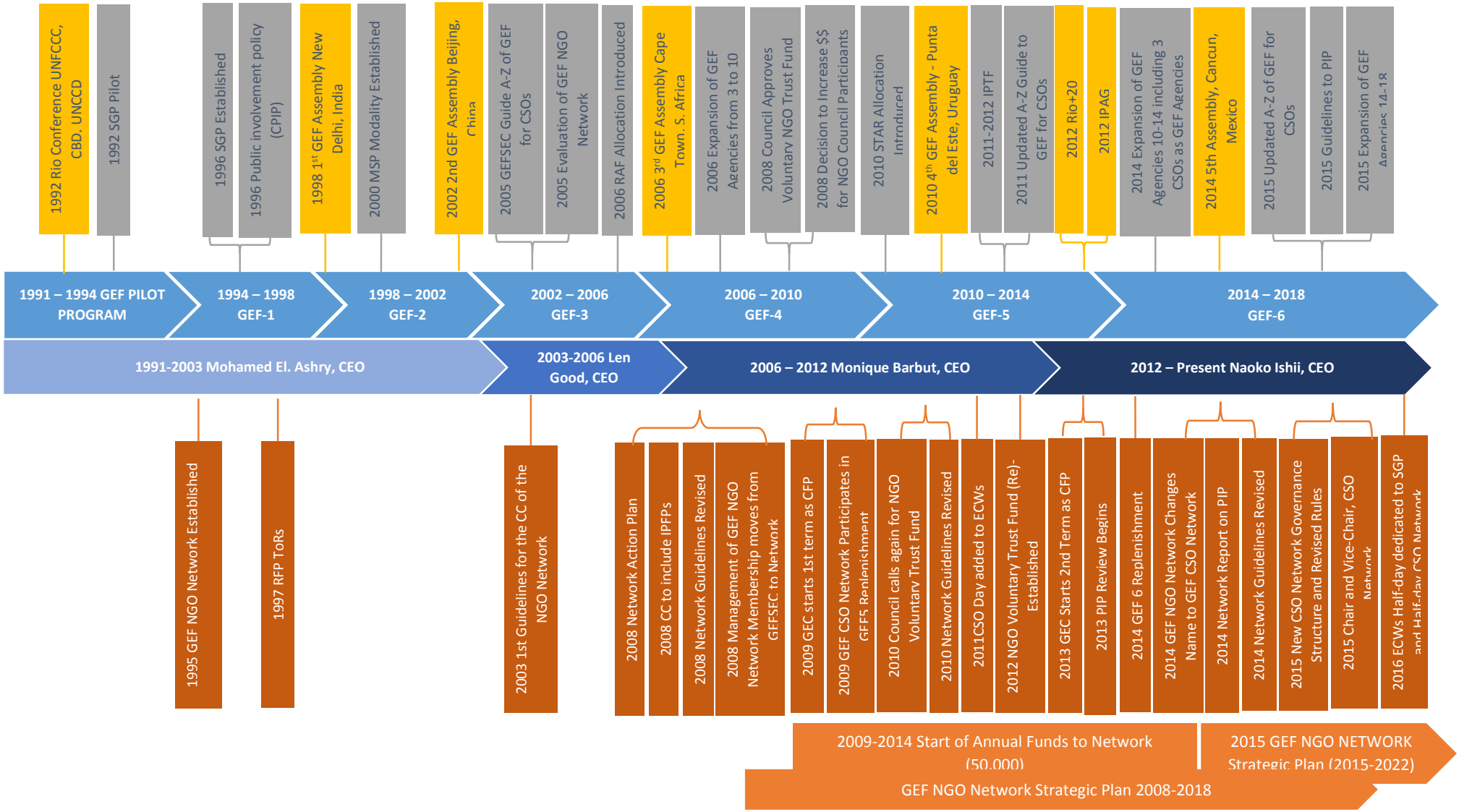
[4] Technical Note on NGO Relations with the GEF (GEF/C.1/4).

[5] To be accredited, NGOs submitted a request to GEFSEC, stating interest and identifying its relevance to the GEF.

community, including responsibility for preparing for and reporting on, the Council meeting and NGO consultations, should be determined by the NGOs".[6]

[6] Criteria for Selection of NGOs to Attend/Observe Council Meetings and Information on NGO Consultations (GEF/C.3/5).

Figure 1: Historical Timeline



5. In 2001, CSOs began to formalize the structure and responsibilities of the Network and in 2003, the Network's Coordination Committee, adopted the Guidelines for the Coordination Committee of the GEF-NGO Network. One of the motivations for developing the Guidelines was to better clarify the responsibilities and process of election of the Central Focal Point and Regional Focal Points and to render more effective performance by the Network.

6. Figure 1 above presents a historical timeline of key milestones in the evolution of the CSO Network and GEF.[7] The timeline shows the introduction of a number of recommended organizational reforms related to membership, governance guidelines, strategic planning and funding in the years following the 2005 Review.

7. This evaluation's execution structure, consistent with GEF IEO guidelines, included a peer review committee, a reference group and an evaluation team, including independent evaluators, consultants and research assistants. Annex A presents the evaluation's Approach Paper. The evaluation was conducted in five phases: pre-evaluation literature review; data gaps identification and methods selection; data collection and consultation; triangulation and verification and report writing and consultation.

8. A complete description of the methods is provided in Technical Note 1. This was a mixed methods evaluation which included:

(a) A literature review (Annex B)

(b) A review of all Council documents

(c) A review of CSO presentations at ECWs

(d) An online survey (Annex C) to:

(i) CSO Network members (466).[8] The overall response rate was 22 percent.
(ii) CSO non-Network members that participated in Council, Assembly or ECW meetings (1,036). The overall response rate was 16 percent.
(iii) GEF Agencies. The overall response rate was 56 percent.
(iv) Regional and Indigenous Focal Points. The response rate was 79 percent.
(v) Government Focal Points (Operational and Political). The response rate was 14 percent.
(vi) Council and Alternate members. The response rate was 32 percent.
(vii) A follow-up survey to CSO Network members. The overall response rate was 19 percent.[9]

(e) Critical Systems Analysis at three regional CSO evaluation workshops[10] - (55 CSOs):

[7] The historical timeline was built and validated at the regional evaluation workshops
[8] At the time of send in October 2015, 466 CSOs were registered as members.
[9] Thirty eight (38) CSOs responded to both the first and second survey to Network members.
[10] See Annex D – Guidance Note: Regional Workshop for the GEF CSO Network Evaluation.

(i) Asia/SE Asia (Kuala Lumpur)
(ii) Southern Africa (Zambia) and
(iii) Mesoamerica (Mexico)

(f) Focus group discussions with CSOs attending ECWs - 112 CSOs in total:

(i) Central Eastern Europe (Georgia)
(ii) East Africa (Uganda)
(iii) Central Asia (Belarus) and
(iv) Pacific (Cook Islands)

(g) Social Network Analysis using UCINET visualization software

(h) Comparative Network Analysis[11]

(i) Key informant interviews with:

(i) All Network Focal Points of the Network (Central, Indigenous and Regional), in addition to former Focal Points and current and former network members (35).
(ii) CSO Network members (25)
(iii) GEF Agency staff (11 interviews with 13 agency staff)
(iv) GEF Secretariat (8) - six current staff, previous CEO, and previous CSO Liaison officer
(v) Council Members & Operational Focal Points (8)
(vi) WB trustee and Legal counsel (2)
(vii) SGP HQ and regional staff (3)

9. The large amount of information collected through all these means provides a rich picture of the CSO Network and its operations. Some limitations were encountered, however. In particular:

(a) The CSO Network, over time, has had numerous players enter and exit the Network, many more than could be reached by the evaluation.

(b) There was a paucity of evaluative data on the CSO Network. It has been 10 years since the last evaluation of the Network with no systematic monitoring in between.

10. Throughout, the evaluation team encountered considerable goodwill and willingness to participate. A complete list of all stakeholders interviewed is presented in Annex E.

[11] Technical Study 4: Comparative Network Analysis

II. CSO NETWORK PROFILE

11. The GEF CSO Network is a voluntary structure of environmental and sustainable-development oriented CSOs whose work parallels at least one of the GEF focal areas.

Network Objectives

12. The Council mandated objective for the Network has remained in place throughout the evaluation period: "to prepare for and report on the GEF Council meetings and NGO consultations to the wider CSO community at the national, regional and international levels".

13. The Network has presented to the GEF two strategic plans in which it laid out its vision, mission, objectives, and strategies for achieving them. The first was finalized in August 2008[12] for the period 2008-18 and the second in June 2015[13] for a seven year period (2015-2022).

14. In assessing the degree to which the Network has met its strategic objectives, the evaluation referenced the objectives (below) as they were defined in the August 2008 strategic plan. . The Network updated its objectives in the revised rules and procedures document in July 2014[14] and, again, in the June 2015 strategic plan[15].

15. The Vision and Mission of the Network, as defined in 2008, are as follows:

Vision: *"A dynamic civil society influencing policies and actions at all levels to safeguard the global environment and promote sustainable development"*

Mission: *"To strengthen civil society partnership with GEF by enhancing participation, contributing to policy and stimulating action."*

The Objectives of the Network as follows:

Objective 1: To enhance the role of civil society in safeguarding the global environment.

Objective 2: To strengthen global environmental policy development through enhanced partnership between Civil Society and the GEF.

Objective 3: To strengthen the GEF NGO Network capacity.

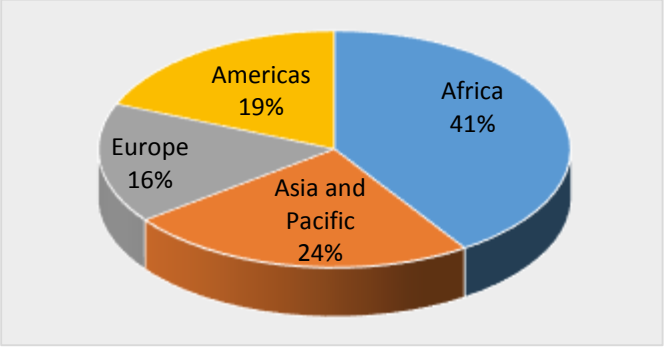
[12] GEF NGO Network Strategic Plan Overview 2008-2018
[13] GEF CSO Network's Strategic Plan 2015-2022 – June 2015.
[14] Revised rules and procedure for the Operation and Management of the GEF CSO Network – July 2014.
[15] 2015 Revised Objectives: (1) To enhance the role of civil society in safeguarding the global environment; (2) To promote effective engagement of Civil Society in GEF operations; (3) To strengthen the capacity of the Network and CSO members to participate in GEF-related activities.

Membership

16. The Network is comprised of organizations formerly accredited by the GEF and/or organizations whose membership, since March 2010, was approved through the Network's governance structure. All NGOs accredited by the GEF prior to handover were automatically members of the Network. At that time, accreditation hinged on whether an NGO aligned with the focal areas of the GEF. Early in 2010, the CSO Network received a list of 399 names from the Secretariat. The membership, as of November 1, 2015, is comprised of 474 member organizations distributed across 122 countries (Annex F).

17. As represented in Table 1, of these, 193 CSOs are in the Africa Region representing 38 countries; 114 in Asia and the Pacific representing 32 countries; 78 in Europe representing 28 countries; and 89 in the Americas representing 24 countries.

Figure 2: CSO Network Membership by Region



Source: CSO Network Membership Database

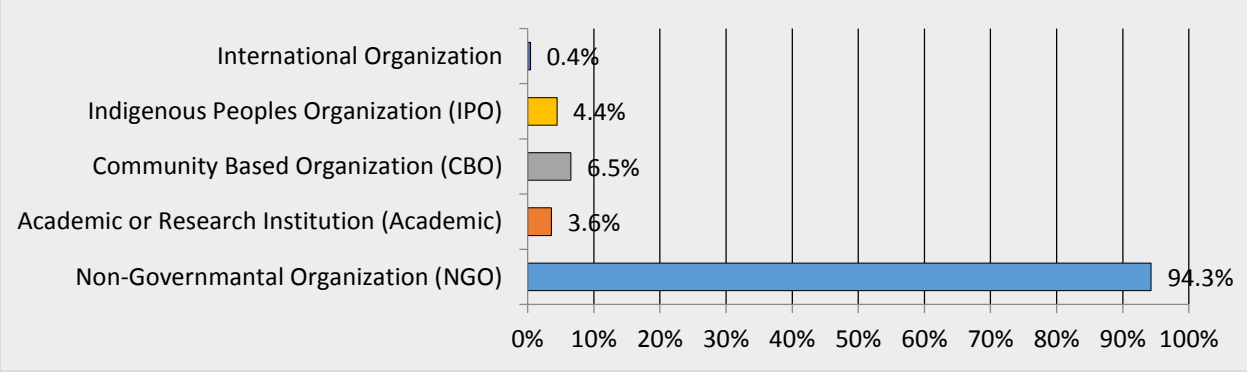
Table 1: Distribution of CSO Network Membership

Region	Number of CSOs in Region	Number of Countries Represented
Africa	**193**	**38**
Africa - Central	37	6
Africa - East	53	8
Africa - North	12	7
Africa - South	34	8
Africa - West	57	9
Asia and Pacific	**114**	**32**
Asia - North East	27	5
Asia - South	41	5
Asia - South East	21	7
Asia - West	18	8
Pacific	7	7
Europe	**78**	**28**
East Europe & Central Asia	36	13
Europe	42	15
Americas	**89**	**24**
North America	29	2
Mesoamerica	21	7
South America	26	7
Caribbean	13	8
Total	**474**	**122**

Source: CSO Network Membership Database

18. Members of the GEF CSO Network vary in type, area and scope of work. According to the Network's organization of groups, 94 percent of CSOs identify as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), while the minority of CSOs identify as Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) and Academic and Research institutions (6.5%, 4.4%, and 3.6% respectively). Figure 3 below shows the Network's distribution of membership by type of organization.

Figure 3: GEF CSO Network Membership by Organization Type



Source: CSO Network Membership Database

Structure & Governance

19. The structure of the Network has come about through successive cycles of self-regulating initiatives at national, regional and international levels to develop practice norms and standards. The structure consists of elected CSOs, each of which represents a region encompassing more than one country, or CSO constituency.

20. These organizations are called Regional Focal Points (RFPs) and are members of the "Coordination Committee" of the Network. The Coordination Committee is currently made of 16 RFPs,[16] one each from different geographic regions. In addition, three Indigenous Peoples Focal Points representing Indigenous People's organizations (IPFP) are elected or appointed by the Indigenous Peoples' groups from three main regions – Asia Pacific, Africa and the Americas.[17] Indigenous Peoples' representation, i.e. IP focal points, were formally introduced to the governance and structure through CSO Network Guidelines in April 2008 and the Network Strategic Plan in August 2008. The Coordination Committee acts as the final ruling body of the Network and makes decisions on its behalf.

21. The GEF CSO Network revised its governance structure in October 2015. Until then, the work of the Coordination Committee was facilitated by a Central Focal Point (CFP) for the

[16] The Central Africa region is currently being represented on the interim by the RFP from West Africa

[17] IPFPs were formally introduced to the governance and structure through CSO Network Guidelines in April 2008 and the Network Strategic Plan in August 2008.

Network. The CFP was elected by the Coordination Committee for a four year term, eligible for re-election to a second term, from members of the Coordination Committee.[18] Since its beginnings, the Network has had eight CFPs. Two have been in this evaluation period, one for the period 2006-2008, the other for the period 2009-2015.

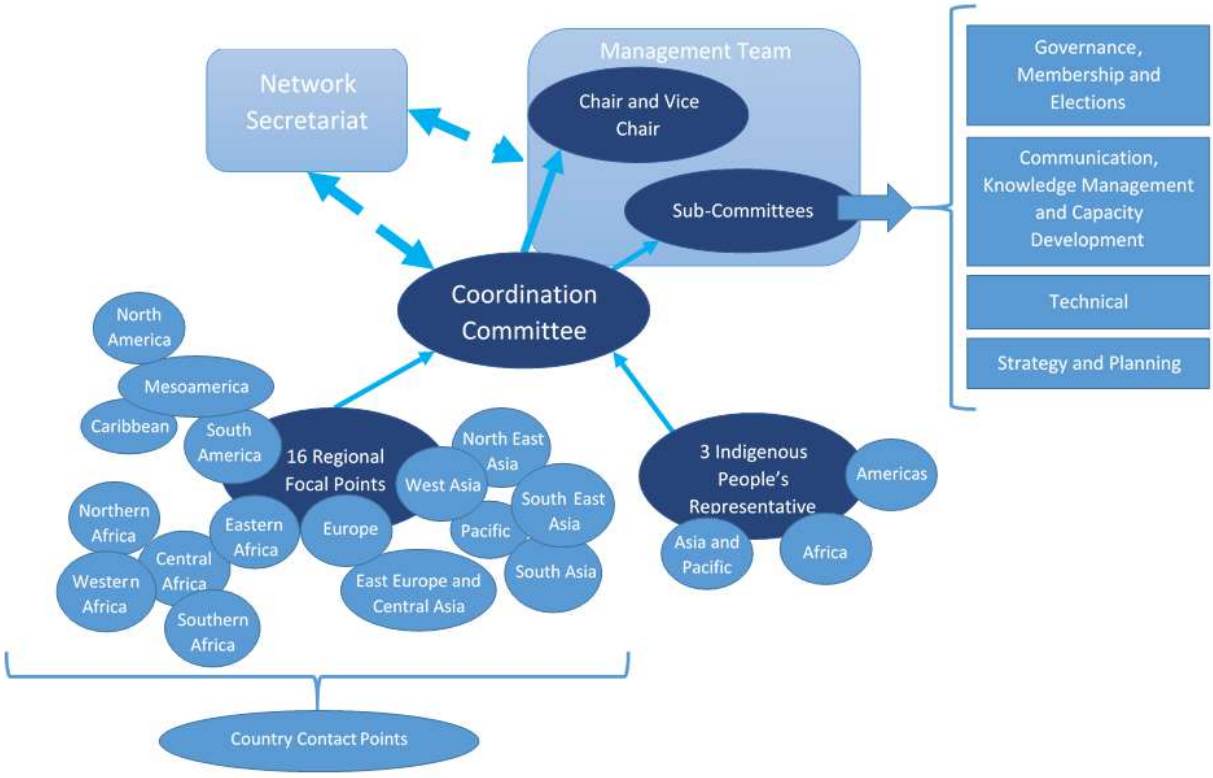
22. The CFP role is now undertaken through a Chair and Vice-Chair of the Coordination Committee. Sub-committees are established by the Coordination Committee to assist with its work or undertake work between meetings. The new governance structure streamlined the composition of the Network's sub-committees, as indicated in Figure 4. At the time of writing, the Chair, Vice-Chair and the heads of the four subcommittees make up the Management Team of the Network.

23. Further the Coordination Committee created a CSO Network Secretariat to manage and facilitate the work of the Network, both at the time of Coordination Committee and GEF Council meetings as well as to undertake a set of administrative and housekeeping tasks in the times between. The work of the Secretariat is overseen by the Management Team. Figure 4 below shows the current structure of the Network.

24. Over the last few years, the Network has been working to improve connectivity at the country level through identifying Country Contact Points (CCP), i.e. a CSO to assist with the CSO Network's national presence. Thus far 20 CCPs have been assigned. See Annex G.

[18] Revised Rules and Procedure for the Operation and Management of the GEF CSO Network – July 2014.

Figure 4: Governance Structure of the GEF CSO Network



Source: GEF CSO Network's Strategic Plan 2015-2022 – June 2015.

CSO Network - GEFSEC Working Relationship

25. The GEFSEC plays multiple support roles vis-a-vis GEF partners, including the CSO Network. It operates among regional constituencies and at the global level. As such GEFSEC is positioned to be an interlocutor. The Secretariat's annual corporate budget (approved by Council) includes provision for CSOs to attend Council and CSO Consultation sessions. Through the offices of the GEF Partnership Coordinator (formerly the CSO Liaison Officer) and the Country Support Program team, the GEFSEC handles the travel and accommodation for 30-40 CSO Network members to be at the Council meetings twice a year and 15-20 CSOs to attend each of the Expanded Constituency Workshops year round.

26. In 2008, GEFSEC and the Network collaborated on an Action plan to respond to the three main recommendations[19] of the 2005 Review of the Network. These were short term measures for the GEF to start implementing in order to strengthen the Network's management and increase its accountability. As it turned out, the Management Response and Action Plan was never discussed formally by Council due to competing Agenda items, but both GEFSEC and

[19] The Review recommended the GEF and the Network focus on: (1) increasing the network's accountability and effectiveness by strengthening the network's management, increasing accountability in the application of the network's Guidelines, re-focusing the accreditation process, and strengthening outreach to NGOs; (2) establishing an active partnership between the NGO Network and the GEF Secretariat and Council; and (3) providing support, financial and otherwise, to build the network's capacity.

the Network have since that time engaged in productive activities to address the recommendations.

27. GEFSEC makes room for both member and non-member CSOs at the ECWs which it organizes. The GEFSEC has a final say as to which CSOs are selected to ECWs on the basis of several considerations including country and gender considerations and the "need for rotation". The final list of selected CSOs is presented to the CSO Network for any objections. Regarding GEF Council meetings, the Network selects the CSOs to attend and presents the list to the GEFSEC for any comments on the final selection. Beyond the ECW and the Council gatherings, the GEFSEC also engages with specific CSO Network members through the Programs unit.

28. As part of its outreach and consultation with the Partnership, the GEFSEC organizes Working Groups and Task Forces. The GEFSEC includes the CSO Network in this engagement. Network representatives contribute CSO views to the working groups currently established on public involvement, knowledge management, and gender equality.

CSO Network Website

29. The CSO Network relies on communications through electronic means as one of the major ways through which it makes connections. The CSO Network website was established in 2008, on the heels of the 2005 Review, which had several comments on the needed changes for the, then GEF-maintained, website. The website offers information about the vision, mission and strategic objectives of the Network; existing governance and structure of the Network; procedure and eligibility criteria for membership application; profile of the existing members with regional distribution and reports on the main activities/events that Network participates at the global and regional level. The website is also used to disseminate information on the upcoming Council and ECW meetings (including registration details for the Network members) as well as to post its quarterly newsletter. The CSO Network website also accommodates for privileged access to certain pages, as certain procedures such as elections, require secure and confidential access to information.

III. Question One Findings: CSO Network Role, Relevance and Results

30. A strategic review of the literature describing relevant network evaluation frameworks and methods, is summarized in Annex B. From this review, the evaluation team identified eight Network elements as a basis to analyze the evaluation's key questions. The elements are: credibility, connectivity, capacity, results, structure, membership, governance and resources. Characteristics under each of these are understood to be vital to successful network functioning[20].

Role and Relevance

31. The focus of the Network has evolved from its early days. Its initial activities were centered on raising awareness within the NGO community about the often-complex processes of the GEF and less on strengthening CSO influence on policies and activities in the regions and countries, as is the case today.[21] At its formal inception, Council mandated the Network to assume the information exchange role of *"Preparing for and reporting on the GEF Council meetings and NGO Consultations to the wider CSO community at the national, regional & international levels"*. Over time, the Network has developed an independent orientation that accommodates the original mandate within a larger policy advocacy frame.

32. The Coordination Committee (CC), governing body of the Network meets twice a year, prior to the Council meetings to discuss Network business. A report is submitted to Council itemizing Network activities each year, and a report after each Council to the Network. Since 2011, a Network newsletter also goes out to members containing information related to:

- Key environmental issues/concerns in some of the regions;
- Updates on SGP, MSP, and FSP projects being implemented by the Network members;
- Brief reports on main issues that Network members worked on in during Council and other international meetings (COP, CBD meetings);
- Information on the upcoming ECWs;
- Updates on Council meetings.

33. Since 2011, the Network has organized a meeting of regional CSOs on the day prior to the Expanded Constituency Workshops (ECWs) to promote the CSO Network, exchange project-based knowledge and to prepare CSO positions for presentation to the regional constituency during the Workshop.

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[20] Networks are defined by Perkins and Court as "organizational structures or processes that bring actors who share common interests on a specific issue or a set of issues". There is no universal picture of network health, however, increased activity in network building is yielding new and practical knowledge about what "healthy" and "unhealthy" looks like for networks. (Networks and Policy Processes in International Development: a literature review. Working Paper 252. August. 2005).

[21] Review of the Non-Governmental Organization Network of the GEF. October, 2005.

Motivation to Join

34. In a survey, the evaluation asked members what motivated their organization to join the CSO Network. To the statement, *Increase understanding of the GEF*, 88 percent of respondents answered "very" or "extremely" important", while 85 percent attached this level of importance to *Building relationships within the GEF partnership including with Network members*. At the same time, 93 percent of non-member CSOs, indicated building relationships as "very" or "extremely" important, while 92 percent indicated the same level of importance to *Exchanging knowledge with Network members and Strengthening project design and implementation*. This data shows that while there have been shifts in the Network's intent, the original 'education' mandate remains valued today.[22]

35. In their open ended responses, the largest cluster of members indicated appreciation for the awareness gained about GEF processes and climate issues and for the opportunity to advocate at a global level, saying it, "opened many channels for knowing other actors in environment and sustainable development, not only from the GEF family but globally.

Assessment of Benefits

36. When asked to assess the benefit to a member from participation in the CSO Network, CSOs were varied in their views with 61 percent indicating the Network had *improved their level of awareness and understanding of the GEF* and 58 percent indicating that the Network had *added value to the organization's own research and activities* "more" than expected.

37. At the national level, through focus groups and regional workshops, CSOs observed several benefits associated with having a CSO Network. For the Partnership, the Network's existence legitimizes GEF's credibility by providing a platform for engagement with CSOs on projects and policy. For the CSOs, the GEF "brand" gives Network members credibility especially in those countries where the GEF identity is recognized. CSOs acknowledge though that affiliation does not automatically open doors or translate to the desired project level engagement.

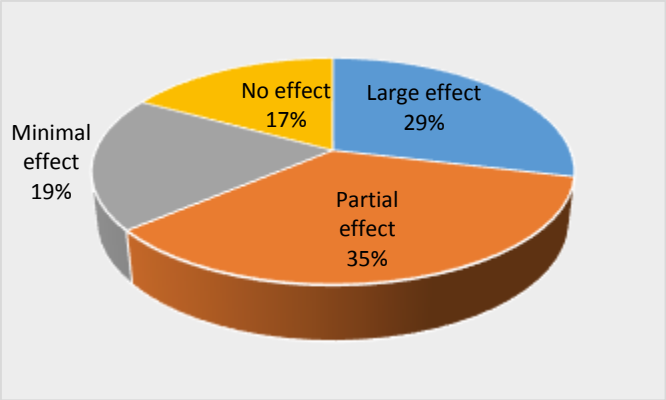
38. Most member respondents also felt that the Network had a role in their ability to work in partnership with other organizations. As indicated in Figure 5, 64 percent said that this effect was "partial" or "large". For the most part these respondents identified the benefit as an enhanced understanding of international fora and opportunities through GEF to engage with a variety of stakeholders.

39. Some Network members, representing about 15 percent of respondents, registered displeasure with the Network. Their comments clustered around the following: lack of transparency in the way members are selected to attend the Network meetings; lack of communication and interaction between members; lack of transparency in Network governance; and the general, global nature of the information flowing to them.

[22] Of the member respondents, 49 percent of organizations had been part of the Network for less than six years.

40. Most RFPs indicated little to moderate interest by member CSOs to engage in sending comments to the Council's Agenda, the Work Program or the Network's own business items.

Figure 5: Network Effect on Ability to Partner with Other Organizations



Source: Annex C – Member Survey Results and Analysis

Assessment of Network Role at Council

41. Preparation for the Council meetings is one of the main roles undertaken by the Network. Leadership in this falls to the CFP (former) and RFPs who attempt to gather feedback from constituents on the Council's policy and project related agenda items. They bring their feedback together in preparatory discussions on the day prior to the scheduled CSO consultation with Council. CSO member commentary on Council documents varies tremendously across regions.

42. During interviews, RFPs and IPFPs described constraints they face in carrying out this work: frustration with non-responsive CSO constituencies and insufficient resources to bring CSOs and RFPs together for consultation on Council documents as well as other important processes, e.g. strategic planning. At the same time, CSO members stated that the short period for comment on documents was unrealistic and a deterrent. Furthermore, those CSOs working at the local level find that the "global" nature of Council related documentation reduces its relevance. Some RFPs expressed a need to increase capacity to engage the membership to better explain linkages.

43. Another critical factor reported to be hampering contact and the flow of information between members is language barriers and the limited availability of resources to translate GEF documents for consumption in non-English speaking countries. This is a particularly an acute problem for engagement with indigenous peoples.

Assessment of the Space in GEF for Network Participation

44. All parts of the GEF Partnership maintain that the best way for the Network to earn the credibility to inform policy discussions is to channel viewpoints informed through members' direct experience with any modality of GEF operations, including design, implementation, secondary collaboration, and/or monitoring and evaluation.

45. As indicated in Technical Study 14 of OPS5,[23] currently, the GEF is best able to track CSO execution of projects through the PMIS. Information through this source provides a partial picture of CSO engagement, but it obscures CSO efforts (Network members or otherwise) as secondary executing agencies, project collaborators (in design, M&E), co-financiers, and beneficiaries.

46. In relation to this, the evaluation offers the following observations:

- Of the total number of CSO executed GEF projects (425 projects), 44 percent (163 projects) have been or are executed by CSO Network members (including 85 projects delivered by RFP organizations). If examining only the portfolio of CSO executed projects under implementation (198 projects), 47 percent are by Network members (including 50 projects executed by RFP organizations).

- In GEF-1, CSO Network member execution of GEF projects represented 60 percent of all CSO executed projects. In GEF-2 the number dropped to 26 percent of CSO executed projects but increased steadily to reach percent and 48 percent in GEF-4 and GEF-5 respectively (See Figure 6). On average, 44 percent of all CSO executed projects at the GEF are executed by GEF CSO Network members (See Figure 7).

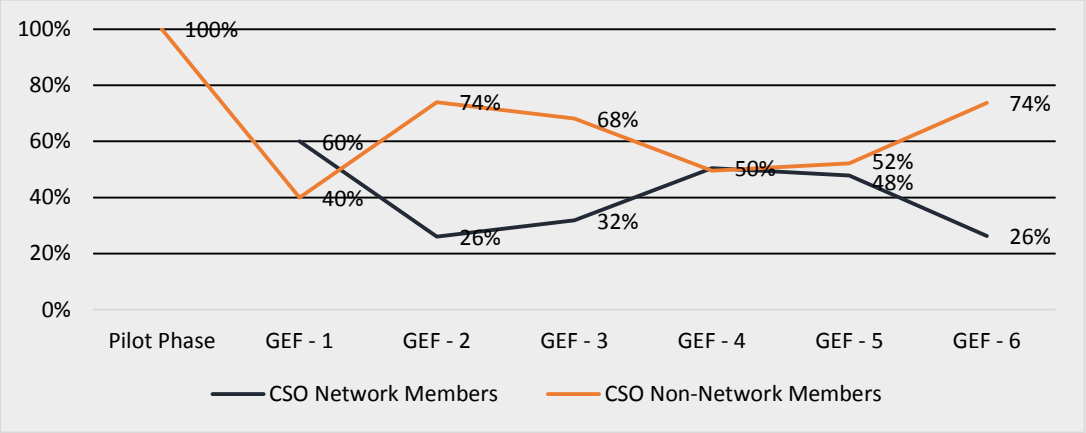
- Regarding performance, the OPS5 Technical Study 14[24] on GEF engagement with CSOs concluded that CSO-executed projects appear to be comparable to the non-CSO executed. The only perceivable difference lies in the scale of the CSO efforts. CSO-managed Medium Sized Projects appear to be slightly stronger performers than the larger non-CSO portfolio (89% versus 83%).

- Looking at CSO Network member executed projects more closely, 82 percent of total member executed projects have been or are executed by international CSOs such as BirdLife International, The Nature Conservancy, and the three newly accredited GEF Partner Agencies (IUCN, WWF, and CI). (See Figure 8). Relatively few execution roles have been played by national CSOs.

[23] Civil Society Organizations Engagement

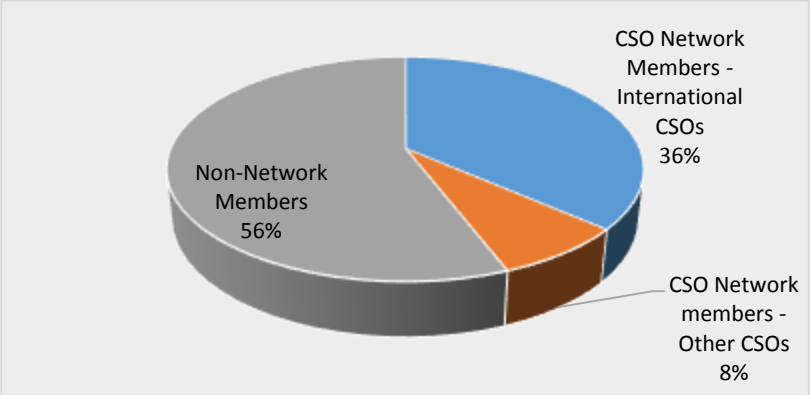
[24] OPS5 Technical Study 14 reviewed the portfolio of completed CSO-executed projects (111) in comparison to the non-CSO executed projects using terminal evaluations reviews.

Figure 6: Network and non-Network CSO executors by GEF Phase



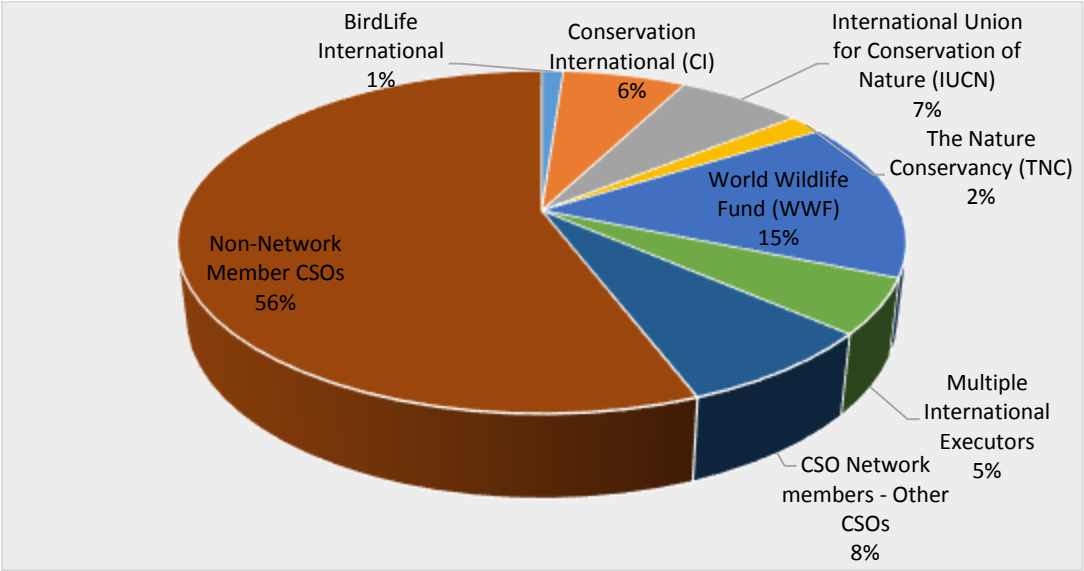
Source: GEF Project Management Information System (PMIS)

Figure 7: Type of CSO Project Executors by Share of GEF Grant Amount



Source: GEF Project Management Information System (PMIS)

Figure 8: Major CSO Project Executors by Share of GEF Grant Amount



Source: GEF Project Management Information System (PMIS)

47. The data shows that approximately half of CSO executed projects in the portfolio are delivered by non-Network members. In other words the Network is not benefitting from the implementation-informed contributions of about half of GEF's CSO partners.

48. At the same time, the opportunities for CSO execution roles are more constrained (as described in Box 1, below) and tighten the space for both Network and non-Network members to gain capacity with GEF operations. Several studies have discussed the various impacts of the resource allocation system. The IEO's Mid-Term Review of the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) observed that the shift to national allocations under the RAF and STAR may be contributing to a decline in the participation of CSO as lead executing agencies. [25] CSOs do participate in GEF projects in significant ways aside from lead executing agencies. More information from Review of the RAF and STAR systems is included in Box 1.

Box 1: Impact of RAF and STAR Allocation Systems on CSO Engagement

The RAF and STAR came about as an effort "to promote country-driven approaches, bring about greater transparency in the allocation of scarce resources, and provide greater predictability for recipient countries and other stakeholders within the GEF partnership".[26] Starting in 2001 and during the negotiations of the Third Replenishment of the GEF, replenishment parties agreed to establish a country and performance-based allocation system for allocation.

The Resource Allocation Framework (RAF)[27] was thereby approved by the GEF Council in 2005 and implementation started with GEF-4 in 2006.[28] The RAF was applied to the Climate Change and Biodiversity focal areas, which historically comprise the largest shares of the GEF funding. The RAF was later reviewed and the System for Transparent Resource Allocation (STAR) was introduced in 2010 for GEF-5. In addition to the Climate Change and Biodiversity focal areas, the STAR included allocation for Land Degradation.

The RAF locked country allocations for the largest GEF focal areas (biodiversity and climate change). By doing so, the RAF changed the use of the MSP modality, which was initially created as a funding modality to scale up small grant pilots and demonstration initiatives including with CSOs, and with it the methods of CSO and other stakeholder engagement.[29] The implementation of the RAF and STAR programs raised concerns among the GEF stakeholders, and CSOs observed that the shift toward national allocations reduced their scope for participation.

The GEF CSO Network presented to the Council in May 2009 document GEF/C.35/Inf.8, *Impact of the GEF's Resource Allocation Framework on Civil Society Organizations*, outlining that the RAF has caused the overall share of CSO-executed projects to significantly decline in GEF4, especially for MSPs.[30] An analysis of the GEF

[25] A review of GEF's project management information system (PMIS) indicates the number of GEF projects executed by civil society has declined from 17 percent of the total share of GEF projects (100 projects) – representing 13% of GEF's resource allocation – in GEF-2 to eight percent (94 projects) in GEF-5

[26] Midterm Evaluation of the System of Transparent Allocation of Resources. September, 2014.

[27] The GEF Resource Allocation Framework. October 2005.

[28] Mid-Term Review of the Resource Allocation Framework. May, 2009.

[29] Medium-Sized Projects Evaluation (GEF/C.18/Inf.4). December, 2001.

[30] The Impact of the Global Environment Facility's Resource Allocation Framework on Civil Society Organizations

portfolio indicated that the share of CSO executors for MSP projects decreased from 50% and 38% in GEF2 and GEF3 to 17% in GEF4 and 15% in GEF5.

In October 2013 the GEF IEO presented to the Council document GEF/ME/C.45/04, *Mid-Term Evaluation of the System of Transparent Allocation of Resources*.[31] The Evaluation indicated that while CSO participation as lead executing agency declined under the RAF and the STAR, the percentage of CSOs as project collaborators in other capacities has increased since the implementation of the RAF and STAR.

49. One important modality through which CSOs work with the GEF is the Small Grants Program (SGP). The GEF SGP program has over 20,000 projects in 128 countries worldwide. SGP projects are executed predominantly by non-governmental organizations (64%) and community based organizations (33%), while 3% are executed by other types of organizations.

50. Of the 20,114 SGP projects implemented since the inception of the program, 316 projects, two percent of the grant amount, have been executed by CSOs that are also GEF CSO Network members, as shown in Table 2. This proportion has been consistent across all operational phases of the SGP. These 316 CSO network executed projects have been executed by 143 organizations from the Network, roughly 30 percent of the Network membership.

Table 2: CSO Network Execution of SGP Projects by Operational Phase

	Pilot Phase	OP 1	OP 2	OP 3	OP 4	OP 5	OP 6	Total
Non-CSO Network Member	97.20%	97.80%	97.80%	97.70%	98.10%	98.40%	99.00%	98.10%
CSO Network Member	2.80%	2.20%	2.20%	2.30%	1.90%	1.60%	1.00%	1.90%
Total Grant Amount (USD)	**12,385,922**	**15,193,673**	**96,098,649**	**78,265,525**	**128,151,947**	**201,883,769**	**2,428,845**	**534,408,331**

Source: UNDP – SGP Database

51. Among Network members responding to the survey, 56 percent indicated that they have been involved with the GEF through the SGP. Another 53 percent also indicated involvement through GEF Enabling Activities.

CSO Network Capacity

52. Since 2008, building organizational capacity has been prominent in the CSO Network's statements of objective. Over this time, several dimensions of "capacity" have been identified.

- At a network level, the Network has sought to strengthen: nominations and elections procedures, a Network code of conduct and complaints procedures, RFP level planning and performance measurement, stronger representation from the national level, and fuller communication between RFPs and IPFPs and their constituencies on focal area topics as well as (operational and financial) governance aspects of the Network.

[31] Midterm Evaluation of the System of Transparent Allocation of Resources. September, 2014.

- At a partnership level, the Network has sought to develop network connections with the SGP, GEF Agencies, country governments, and the GEFSEC, at the same time strengthening its basis to access GEF activities and to contribute from the skills and experience resident in the Network.

- In deliberations leading to the newly launched Strategic Plan, the Network has given additional emphasis to the CSO member level - seeking to strengthen organizational capacities to engage in GEF activities including enhancing their roles as monitors/evaluators of GEF programs/projects.

53. The CSO Network has been cited for the challenges it has faced in building organizational capacity. In the 2005 Review, for example, RFPs and other NGO key informants of the day linked their difficulty in mobilizing memberships to a lack of capacity to "energize and motivate the NGOs in their respective regions" and to "learn to better conduct regional elections".

54. The 2005 Review broadly recommended, "providing support, financial and otherwise, to build the Network's capacity". The GEF Secretariat presented its Management response to the Council at its 28th meeting in May 2006 to address the recommendations of the evaluation (See Box 2).[32]

Box 2: Initiatives Identified in the GEFSEC Management Response for Network Support

Initiatives identified in the 2005 NGO Network Evaluation Management Response to support member capacity:

- An initiative by the CSO Network to use the Medium Sized Project (MSP) mechanism to build organizational capacities.
- Appointment of a GEF NGO Coordinator at the Secretariat to, among other things, implement a new strategy to strengthen GEF's engagement with civil society (including the Network)
- A GEF-NGO Knowledge Sharing/Learning and Outreach/Communications Initiatives:
    a. An NGO Knowledge Sharing Day at Council
    b. An NGO sub-site to include e-learning modules and other e-knowledge products
    c. Communications and outreach and communications strategy
- A support program for the NGO Network Coordination Committee, including:
    a. Linkages with the GEF Country Support Program
    b. Resources and tools for communicating more effectively with national and regional NGOs

55. In this evaluation period, many of the initiatives listed in the 2008 Action Plan have been taken up:

[32] *Action Plan to Respond to the Recommendations of the Independent GEF NGO Network Review* (GEF/C.28/16).

- The Network has made two as yet unsuccessful attempts to develop an MSP, one in collaboration with UNEP (2006) and the other with UNDP (2011); a third campaign is underway in GEF6 with UNDP[33].

- The GEFSEC has continued a staff liaison role with CSOs (including the Network) – featuring: funding; logistics in support of Network engagement at Council, Assembly and at workshops; and facilitated Network participation in working groups and task forces (e.g. Public Involvement Policy, Knowledge Management, Gender Equality action plan)

- Knowledge sharing platforms have been established - notably, the creation of the CSO Network's own web platform to support information exchange and the Network's own governance procedures; and venues to promote knowledge sharing, including the consultations with Council and at the CSO meeting the day prior to ECWs.

- Recently, the Network has established a formal partnership with the SGP to collaborate on the Communities Connect knowledge sharing platform and the CSO - Government Dialogue Platform.

Member Assessment of Progress

56. In the CSO member survey carried out for this evaluation, about two-thirds of respondents indicated that the Network has made "excellent" or "good" progress on the objective of maintaining or enhancing GEF CSO Network capacity, while about a third indicated that progress has been "fair" or "poor". About 50 percent of CSO member respondents expressed that their association with the CSO Network has improved their interaction with other CSOs.

57. In 80 open ended remarks, the top three capacity building contributions mentioned by member respondents, in order of frequency, related to:

- information/knowledge sharing,
- connections to other members and other partners, and
- access to council decision-making

58. Relevant to these, a correlation analysis of CSO member responses to the survey shows a strong association between being able to *contribute* as members (for example, providing

[33] The 2011 PIF design concentrated on building collaboration between CSOs and government agencies in support of convention implementation and knowledge sharing on CSO experiences to addressing global environmental issues. After submitting the PIF, factors eventually lead the Network to halt progress, most notably: a GEFSEC requirement of 1:1 co-financing, and a concern that the PIF, as drafted, was not closely enough aligned with the objective of the Cross Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) strategy under GEF5. GEFSEC encouraged the Network to proceed under the more flexible criteria of the CCCD strategy for GEF6. At the time of writing, the Network and UNDP are reformulating the PIF for submission under GEF6 understanding that 1: 1 co-financing can include some in-kind contributions.

feedback on Council documents, or participating in a project design or an M&E activity) and a positive assessment of Network capacity building (and *visa-versa*).

59. When commenting on CSO participation at Council meetings, Agency and Council members remarked on the wider cast of representatives now speaking for the CSO Network. This is consistent with an intent described by the CFP to expose CSO leaders to the policy development/advocacy process.

60. Along with Council meetings, ECWs were also cited by many for forging connections between Network representatives and OFPs. Overall, the evaluation heard consistently from CSOs that attendance at these venues contributes to knowledge about the GEF and how GEF projects are formulated. At the ECWs, the GEFSEC makes space for both Network and non-Network members in order to ensure broad outreach to CSOs.

61. On this point, the evaluation notes that:

- Between 2011 and 2015, 563 organizations have been represented at ECWs. Of those, 27 percent are CSO Network members

- To date, approximately 32 percent of the CSO Network members have been represented at ECWs with many occurrences of organizations being represented at one or more ECWs.

62. The evaluation does observe a line of distinction between those CSOs that have been exposed to CSO Network activities outside of their home country and those that have not. This suggests that participation in the Network is enhanced with engagement at Council and/or at the ECWs. When asked to rate the extent to which the CSO Network has maintained or enhanced CSO Network capacity, 54 percent of those who have never participated beyond their own borders indicated that progress has been “good” or “excellent”. By contrast, 73 percent of those who have attended one or more venues outside their home country indicated that progress has been “good” or “excellent”.

63. The evaluation also sees a difference between those CSOs that have more frequent interaction with their RFPs and those that have less. In the member survey, respondents who reported interaction with their RFP to be “frequent” (once a month) or “often” (once in three months) were more likely than those reporting their interaction to be “seldom” (once in every six months) or “never” to assess progress in Network capacity building as “excellent” or “good” (75 percent vs. 60 percent).

Box 3: Factor Analysis

The evaluation team performed Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to assess which variables in the survey responses can account for as much of the variability in the data as possible. Five factors emerged as a result of this analysis. The PCA indicates that organizations giving high ratings to these factors also gave positive responses to the survey as a whole. The factors are:

- Improved level of awareness and understanding of the GEF
- Value addition to your own research/organization activities
- Strengthened GEF program implementation through enhanced participation between Civil Society and the GEF
- Enhanced the role of civil society in safeguarding the global environment
- Prepared for and report on the GEF Council meetings and NGO consultations to the wider CSO community at the national, regional and international levels

64. Where championship of an RFP is missing, the capacity of the Network to attend to its mandate within any particular constituency appears diminished. When and where there is capacity - networking skill, active "championship" on behalf of the Network - RFPs and CSO representatives acknowledge positive results. Documented examples include: the organization by the East Africa RFP of a national meeting drawing together GEF agencies, the OFP and CSO Network members; appointments of RFPs (Caribbean and NE Asia) onto national environment steering committees, and dissemination by the RFP for Eastern Europe and Central Asia of GEF news in the Caucuses NGO Environmental Network (CENN) Bulletin – circulation 23,000.[34]

65. In the regional workshops, CSO participants talked about the power of small investments to build capacity, most notably, resources for country CSO meetings and for the translation of GEF related materials. Russia and China were cited as two locations where the introduction of home language materials has spurred a growth in membership. Coordination Committee minutes describe similar occurrences in North Africa.

Skills/Experience Inventory

66. To date, the Network has not systematically mapped the skill sets of its members. In the regional evaluation workshops, participants suggested that were this to be done, it would reveal a diverse pool of talent. When CSO members were asked whether their organization had been involved in various kinds of project activities, 66 percent of respondents indicated project design, 65 percent implementation, 54 percent consultation, and 53 percent of members suggested skills and experience in monitoring and evaluation. The talent pool is demonstrated in the collection of contributions in

67.

68. **Box 4** from recent ECWs and Council.

[34] See, http://bulletin.cenn.org

Box 4: Glimpse of Network Capacities

Network members have used the Council meetings and ECWs as a platform to share knowledge and learnings from implementation of GEF projects, reflecting some of the key areas of existing capacities in the Network. For example:

- A CSO member from South Asia working to conserve bird and biodiversity in Nepal shared its experiences on a project establishing a vulture safe zone in Nepal highlighting methods used for developing baselines for monitoring vulture populations and the techniques used in disseminating awareness about vulture conservation in Nepal.
- A CSO member from Eastern Europe and Central Asia - a leader in the area of environmental protection, sustainable agriculture and community development – has been involved in GEF projects since 2004. It has partnered with GEF Agencies like WB and IFAD to implement projects related to climate resilience, agricultural pollution control and a needs assessment of existing capacities for the implementation of three Rio Conventions, to name a few.
- A CSO member based in South Asia shared its experiences from the implementation of an SGP project on agriculture biodiversity and conservation,, presenting some of the main interventions used (e.g. soil management, tracking depleting crop species and regeneration of depleted crop species) as well as the project's impact on soil productivity.
- A CSO member from Central Africa shared some of the techniques used and the results of a GEF SGP project promoting low-cost technology for freshwater prawn farming by local communities, particularly by women, in the Cameroon coastal area of Kribi-Campo.
- A CSO member from South East Asia shared its experiences and achievements on an SGP project entitled, 'Building Climate and Disaster Resilient Communities through Micro Insurance'
- A CSO from South Asia, working on issues of food security and sustainable livelihoods shared its experience from a 'natural farming' project, commenting on various techniques used for preparing natural compost and pesticides for natural farming.

69. Workshop participants noted that with a systematic understanding of the capacities that do reside within the Network, both in relation to the GEF focal areas and on matters related to project management, the Network would be better positioned to build its own strength through peer learning, as well as to contribute to the work of others in the Partnership.

Skills Development

70. Regarding skills development, the Network has not taken up a regular training agenda citing the lack of resources to implement such. At the same time, Network leaders acknowledge that CSO members are asking for training support. The most frequently mentioned themes for capacity building attention were: grant writing/proposal development, research, monitoring and evaluation, and engagement/negotiation skills for use with Agencies and governments. For 2016, GEFSEC has partnered with UNOPS, to provide management related training for all participants, including CSOs (historically, most of which are non-members) at the ECW regional venues.

71. In discussing training methods, evaluation workshop participants stressed the importance of "learning by doing experiences", either through CSO execution of projects or components of projects or by pairing CSOs in mentoring arrangements to complement any standard training. As noted in the previous section, execution opportunities for CSOs in the GEF

project cycle have diminished, however other secondary and tertiary opportunities may have widened.

72. Some CSO Network members, most notably international CSOs now operating as GEF Agencies, have discussed their ability and desire to advance the Network's capacity building goals including offering up their experience in member strategy development. Signals from the CSOs present at the evaluation workshops, suggest that this would be welcome.

73. Two initiatives have come into play within the past two years that are showing promise as a means to reduce reliance on the RFP role while, at the same time, increasing network reach within each country. One is the formalization of the Country Contact Point role - a process wherein the RFP nominates a CSO to assist with Network development; the other is the formalization of the linkage between representatives of the Network and national SGP entities. Coordination Committee minutes describe movement in this direction at a regional and country level within more than twenty countries.[35] The newly developed Communities Connect and the CSO - Government Dialogue Platform are expected to feature prominently in this strengthening relationship (See Box 5).

Box 5: Small Grants Program and CSO Network Collaborations

CSO – Government Dialogue Platform In its current form under GEF6, the program is funded to cover 50 countries with one to three supported interventions each over the next three years; CSO training in engagement practices is envisaged as part of the package.

Communities Connect (CC+) launched in 2014/2015, curated global knowledge sharing repository that invites CSOs to upload content relevant to the GEF Focal Areas that is searchable by region, focal area, theme, priority group, cross cutting theme, or information format: http://www.communitiesconnect.net/portakb/?ccnet

74. As noted above, the Network has sought the MSP mechanism as a means of accessing resources for overall network capacity building. The current MSP proposal, being developed with UNDP, is at the PIF stage and will be submitted to the Cross-Cutting Capacity Development funding strategy of the GEF. This set-aside does not impinge on country STAR allocations. The evaluation team is also aware of an attempt by a CSO Network RFP to develop a MSP under this set aside for country-level CSO capacity building.[36] This application is still in process.

[35] Country Contact Points were approved for countries in Eastern Europe & Central Asia, Southern Africa, in May 2015 (GEF CSO Network, Coordination Committee Minutes for May 29-30 2015, Annex 7). Approvals were made for countries in Mesoamerica, West Africa, Northeast Asia and South America in October 2015; in addition ten new nominations were proposed (GEF CSO Network, Coordination Committee Minutes for October 17th, 2015, Annex 8) References to reported openings of relationships between the Network and SGP can be found in Coordination Committee minutes as follows: China, May 24th, 2014, p.22; Georgia, June 15th, 2013; Ethiopia, Kenya & Uganda, October, 2014, p. 27.

[36] GEF ID 5470: Improved Convention Coordination for Sustainable Growth in Uruguay (ECCOSUR)

GEFSEC and Network Capacity Building

75. On the question of GEFSEC's role *vis-a-vis* Network capacity building, 55 percent of CSO member survey respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the GEFSEC has supported the CSO Network member capacity to engage with the GEF; the remainder were evenly split between disagreeing and not knowing.

76. On the role that GEFSEC vis-a-vis the Network, more than half the responses clustered around "funding support". Other suggestions also surfaced: building membership at the national level; strengthening information flow to the CSO Network; building skills in areas like project development and fundraising; and encouraging other partners (Agencies and OFPs) to engage with CSOs. At the same time, about 10 percent of responses centered on the theme of "accountability", i.e. audit and supervision of Network activities and results.

77. As knowledge management initiatives in the GEF have gained momentum, the CSO Network and GEFSEC have discussed mutually reinforcing exchanges through the GEF Knowledge Management Working Group, in which the Network is a member.

Connections within the Network

78. Concerning relationships within the Network, the evaluation used a social network analysis and visualization software[37] to undertake a mapping and quantitative analysis of the level of interactions between various actors within the network. Data for this analysis was collected through the global online surveys sent to CSO Network members and other parts of the Partnership during the evaluation. The surveys provided the data to make a visual representation of the relationships and follow up interviews provided greater contextual information in order to understand the social network analysis findings.

79. The diagrams help depict the degree of collaboration and information exchange amongst different actors within the GEF CSO network. Using this methodology, CSOs with more ties to other network members, acquire a higher measure of centrality, illustrated through their relative size in the diagrams (

80.

81. **Figure 9**, Figure 10, Figure 11).

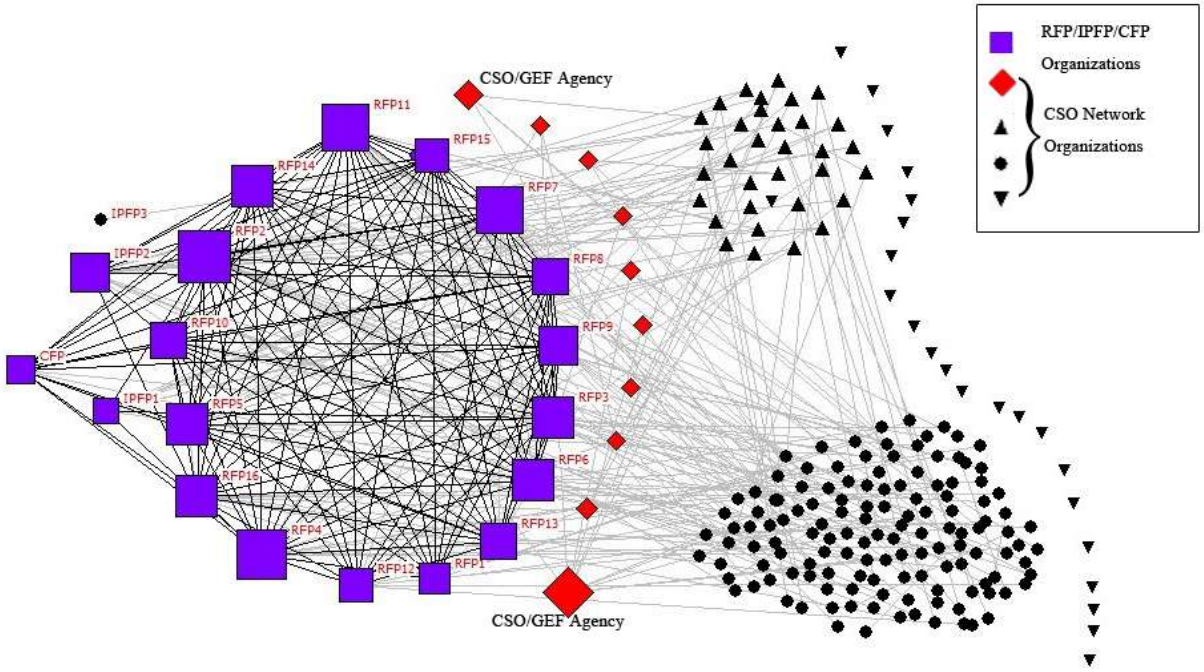
Connectivity between RFPs and CSO Members

82.

[37] Borgatti, S.P., Everett, M.G. and Freeman, L.C. 2002. Ucinet for Windows: Software for Social Network Analysis. Harvard, MA: Analytic Technologies.

83. Figure 9 RFPs, the CFP and two of the three IPFPs, have the highest degrees of centrality acquired due to opportunities for interactions amongst themselves. Relatively speaking, ties amongst RFPs, CFP and IPFPs are denser as compared to the ties between and amongst the CSOs of the rest of the Network. There is variation in the extent to which different RFPs are connected to the rest of the Network, as shown by their degree of centrality or, by the relative size of their nodes.

Figure 9: RFP-CSO Collaborations within the Network



84. From the member survey respondents, 76 percent know their RFP, 82 percent know the CFP and 28 percent know the IPFP. The evaluators observe that the frequency of interactions between members and their RFP is evenly distributed between “frequently”, “often”, “seldom” and “never”.

85. When asked about the main reasons that RFPs and IPFPs[38] contacted other CSOs in their constituency, responses were distributed equally amongst the following:

- invitation to meetings (Council/ECW/National Level/Convention meetings);
- invitation to contribute to project design or M&E;
- shared council papers, requested feedback, and /or provided update on activities at council;
- shared information on GEF issues relevant to the region; and

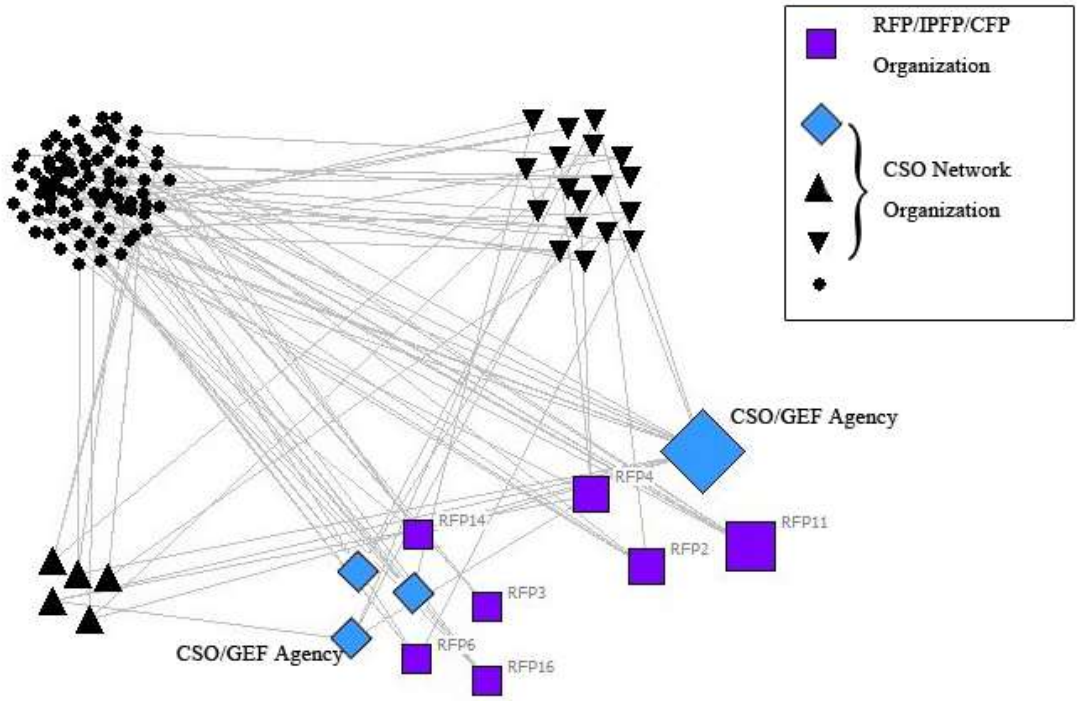
[38] It should be noted that the role of the IPFPs is primarily to liaise with IP organizations and networks and not primarily the general membership.

- provided an update on CSO Network activities

86. Figure 10 depicts connections that are only amongst GEF CSO Network members. In this view, collaborations between all Coordination Committee members are removed and so many of these RFPs no longer feature or they acquire a lower degree of centrality compared to

Figure **9** due to the lesser number of interactions that they have with other members. The RFPs emerging with prominent interactions in Figure 10 are also distinct from the ones in Figure 9 due to differentials in interactions with one another and with member CSOs. This illustration speaks to the variation in roles that different RFPs play as contact points and sources of information within the network and the challenge the Network continues to experience concerning country-level engagement.

Figure 10: CSO Collaborations within the Network



87. The perspective of most of the RFPs consulted during the evaluation is that country level engagement with other Network members and with indigenous people is perceived as crucial for galvanizing positions to the Council. While not ruling out connecting with each other through electronic media, RFPs expressed a need to meet face to face and build relationships with the CSOs in their constituency.

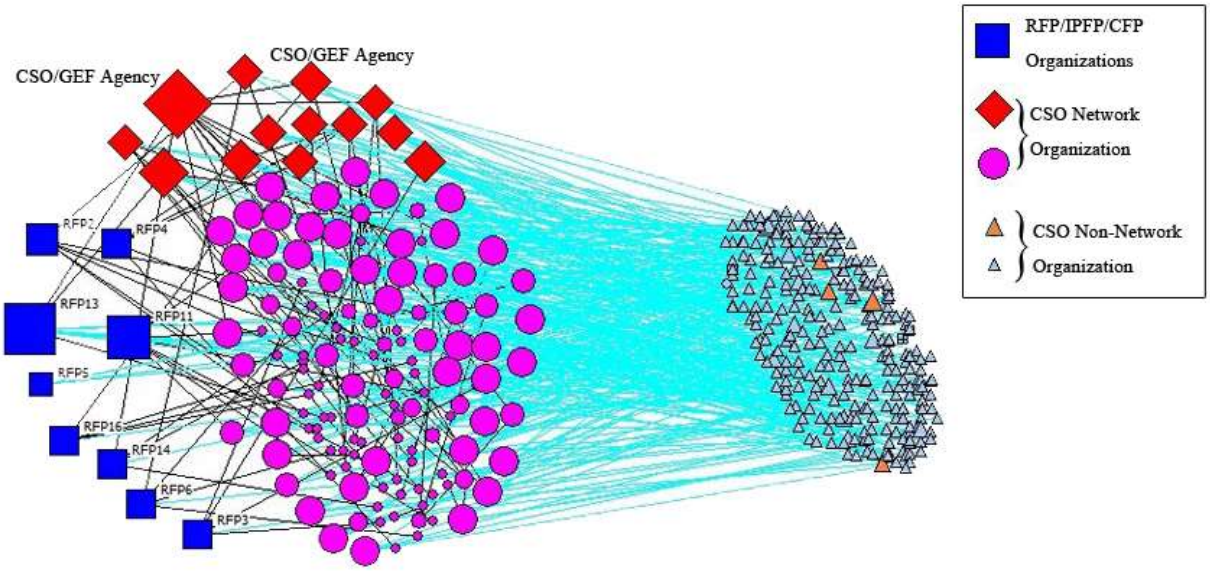
88. The Country Contact Points did not figure prominently in any of the SNA visualizations. This is not surprising as they are still in their infancy. It is too early to assess the effect of CCPs on building connectivity at the country level.

Connectivity amongst CSO Members

89. Figure 11 illustrates the collaborations between CSOs inside and outside the Network. The pattern shows a lower degree of centrality and density of ties amongst members. This is consistent with the finding through other sources that confirm variable though limited interactions amongst most of the CSOs within the Network.

90. When Network members were asked to list CSOs with whom they collaborated or partnered in the last five years, most reported more collaborations with CSOs outside the Network than inside. Amongst the CSO membership at large, a few CSOs that are international in their operations (organizations like IUCN and WWF having multiple field offices across various countries) reported better connectivity across the membership. On average, the ratio of outside to inside collaboration for CSO members who responded to the survey is 3:1.

Figure 11: Connectivity between CSOs members within and outside the Network



91.

92. Figure 9 and Figure 10, CSO GEF Agencies emerge as central CSOs in Figure 11. These international organizations are larger, better resources and so have a high degree of regional outreach - likely a contributing factor in these reported collaborations.

93. While the universe of potential collaborations with non-Network members will always be higher, these collaborations speak to their capacity and willingness to network/collaborate with other CSOs in their region. In indicating their motivations for joining the CSO Network,

respondents rated as “extremely” or “very” important to build relationships with the GEF Partnership, including Network members.

94. In summary, the SNA indicates:

- That, in general, opportunities for information exchange and interactions are highest amongst core members (RFPs, CFP and IPFPs) as compared to the rest of the network
- There is variation in the extent to which different RFPs are connected to the rest of network
- Most member CSOs (including RFPs, CFP and IPFPs) collaborate more with organizations outside (non-members) the network than inside
- Some members are part of other networks, in effect widening the reach of the GEF CSO network beyond its membership
- International CSOs, such as IUCN and WWF show relatively more ties and centrality within the network due to their multiple field locations across various countries
- These international organizations in the network offer potential to facilitate connections and building capacities among their fellow network members

Results

95. The CSO Network serves the GEF as a consultative body as well as an information channel to national civil society groups on policies and programs. Its Council mandated objective is “to prepare for and report on the GEF Council meetings and NGO consultations to the wider CSO community at the national, regional and international levels”.

96. The CSO Network’s self-declared mission and objectives are:[39]

Mission: ***“To strengthen civil society partnership with GEF by enhancing participation, contributing to policy and stimulating action.”***

Objectives (as stated in the 2008-2015 Strategic Plan):

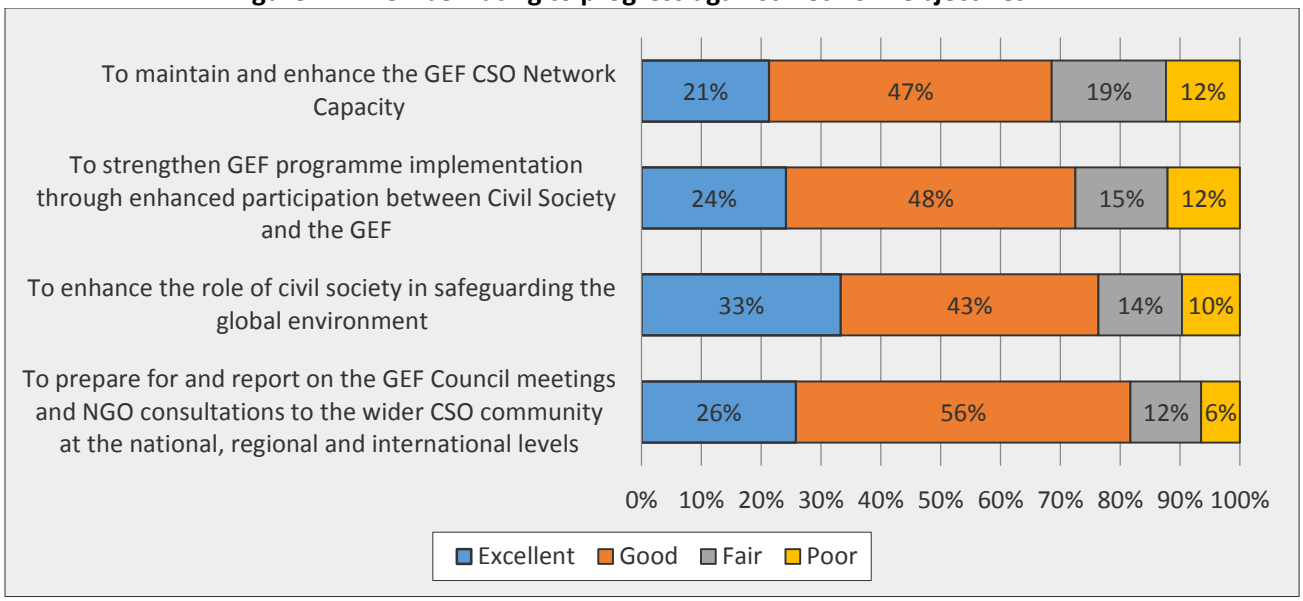
- To strengthen GEF implementation through enhanced partnership with Civil Society, and
- To enhance the role of civil society in safeguarding the global environment.

[39] GEF CSO Strategic Plan (August 2008).

Ratings of Progress

97. In rating progress against the full suite of objectives, the majority of respondents to the member survey agreed that the Network is making "good" or "excellent" progress. There is no statistical difference in responses across the objectives, as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Member rating to progress against Network Objectives



Source: Annex C – Member Survey Results and Analysis

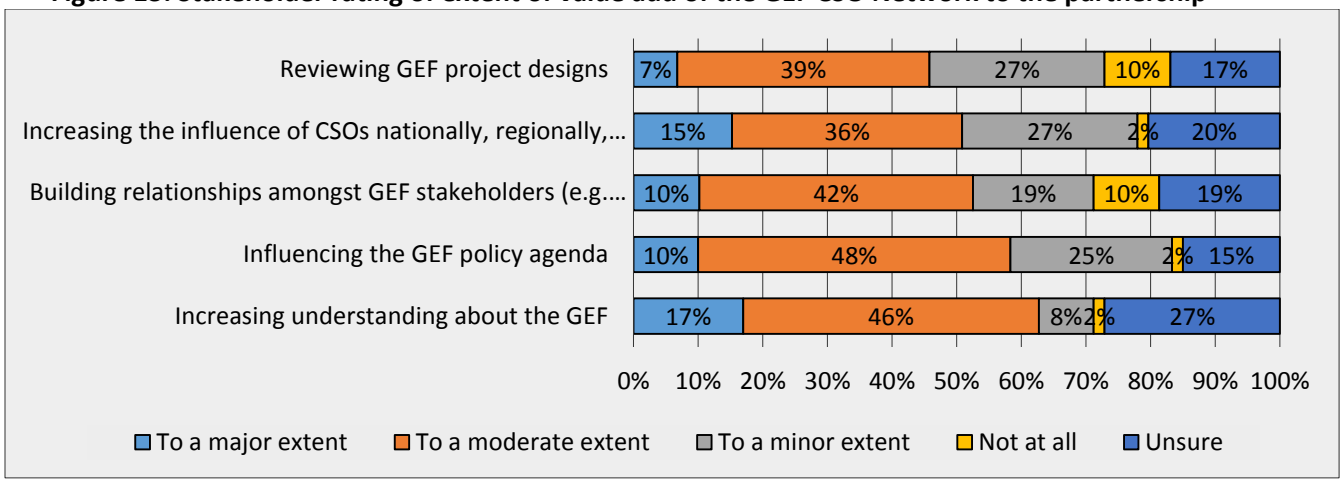
98. In the open-ended question concerning the Network's most valuable contribution to its members, the majority of member responses clustered around the benefits of an improved level of awareness and understanding of the GEF and its processes, and knowledge of other global actors in environmental and sustainable development matters. A few CSOs responded by pointing to partnerships forged with peer organizations. A few RFPs pointed to enhanced linkages with OFPs and other government offices as benefits. And a few respondents indicated that the Network made no felt contribution to their organization.

99. On the same question, approximately 26 percent of Council members rated the Network as "effective", 42 percent said "marginally" so, and the remaining 30 percent said that they were unsure.[40] Select Council members interpreted this range of opinions as a result of many Council members not having enough information on the Network's contributions to make a judgement or not having sufficient assurance that the Network is engaging with its constituents at a country level.

[40] Refer to Annex C Summary of Survey Results.

100. Combined, Council members, Agencies and government focal points judge the Network's contribution to the Partnership as outlined in Figure 13.[41] In all areas, the largest grouping of respondents assess the value added as "moderate" though the distribution of ratings is wide across the spectrum. Consistent with the member assessment of progress, the item with the highest contribution rating relates to knowledge dissemination about the GEF.

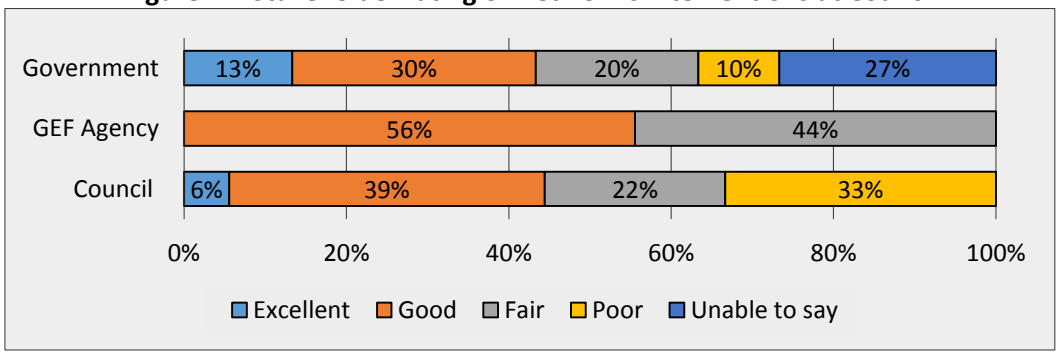
Figure 13: Stakeholder rating of extent of value add of the GEF CSO Network to the partnership



Source: Annex C – Agency, Government, and Council Survey Results and Analysis

101. Interview discussions with Council members, program staff at GEF Agencies, the GEF Secretariat and with CSOs at ECWs in the latter half of 2015 revealed that the Network has been a consistent advocate at the policy table. In separate surveys, government, agency and Council members rated the effectiveness of Network interventions made at Council. As shown in Figure 14, approximately 40 to 55 percent rated interventions as "excellent" or "good".

Figure 14: Stakeholder rating of Network's interventions at Council



Source: Annex C – Agency, Government, and Council Survey Results and Analysis

[41] The evaluation conducted an analysis of variance in response to determine whether there are significant differences between the different groups responding to the same questions. Based on the results, there were no significant difference between the Agency, Council, or Government respondents to the survey.

Commentary on Policy Contributions

102. The following were cited as the most important policy contributions of the Network, over time:

Support to the Small Grants Modality

Prior to the restructuring of the GEF and subsequent creation of the formal GEF NGO Network, CSOs were actively contributing to discussions by Participants for the creation of a GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP). The Pilot Phase of the SGP began in 1992 and the first operational phase in 1996. Since that time, through its participation at Council presenting statements/viewpoints - the CSO Network has strongly supported the continuation and expansion of the Programme.

Specifically, during GEF 5 and 6 replenishments discussions, the Network was noted for its advocacy for growth in the SGP budget, including to SIDS and LDCs, and for preventing limits to country allocation of STAR funds[42]. The Network also provided suggestions to modify the graduation policy of SGP, insisting that an appropriate mechanism be put in place to avoid any disruption of the ongoing programs and loss of the capacity and knowledge of SGP country operations[43]. The Network's request for a mechanism that could provide for a smoother transition from core funds in the upgraded countries was supported by Council members[44]. The CSO Network is represented today in the SGP Global Steering Committee. Some Network members have started an informal initiative to have Network representation on SGP National Steering Committees (NSCs). This, however, comes with issues such as that of conflict of interest that will prevent those members from submitting proposals for grants. Furthermore, as an important part of the country-driven nature of SGP, non-governmental members of the NSCs are selected through a consultative process with the country CSOs rather than by virtue of "organizational affiliation".

From surveys, 72 percent of Council and 75 percent of government representatives believe the Network has been moderately or highly influential in developing the SGP modality

Creation of a Medium Size Modality

The Network had an important leadership role in the creation of the Medium Sized Project (MSP) modality[45]. Network members were part of a working group established for promoting strategic partnerships between the GEF and the NGO community. In the

[42] GEF CSO Network Statement Agenda item 10: GEF Small Grants 46th GEF Council Meeting, Cancun, Mexico

[43] GEF-NGO Network Position Papers 38th GEF Council in response to GEF Council paper GEF/C.38/Inf.5: Update on Upgraded SGP Country programs Provided to GEF Council 1 July 2010

[44] Small Grants Programme: Execution Arrangements and Upgrading Policy for GEF-5. GEF/C.36/4

[45] Promoting Strategic Partnerships between the GEF and the NGO Community https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/C.7.Inf_.8.pdf.

second Council meeting of 1996, the GEFSEC presented to the Council the proposal for MSPs.[46] MSPs were initially introduced at the GEF as a funding modality to scale up demonstrations and pilot projects delivered by NGOs and other community based organizations into the broader GEF portfolio. By addressing the gap between the two funding mechanisms at the time (Full Sized Projects and the Small Grants Program), the MSP provided an expedited mechanism allowing a broader and more balanced representation of stakeholders to directly access GEF funds, including government agencies, international NGOs, national NGOs, academic and research institutions and private sector companies, among others.

From surveys, 44 percent of Council and 63 percent of government representatives believe the Network has been moderately or highly influential in developing the MSP modality

Support to Indigenous Peoples

The role of Indigenous Peoples (IP) in the Network has come about in an iterative way. GEF has met regularly with indigenous groups while attending CBD COPs and encouraged a dialogue between the Network and IPs on the terms by which IP representatives would join the Network. In the same way, that the GEF can point to the Network to avoid criticism from the donor community and others concerning CSO engagement, the presence of IP in the Network assuages criticism concerning engagement of these distinct and separate peoples. Over time, IPs and the Network agreed to include designated representatives in governance and in 2008, three Indigenous Peoples Focal Points were included in the Coordinating Committee of the Network.

IPFPs, with the Network, subsequently reiterated the importance of having a GEF policy on IPs to protect the rights of indigenous people. In 2011, these efforts were rewarded and with funding provided by the Swiss government, the GEF Secretariat created the Indigenous Peoples Task Force and began a consultation process. Here, the CSO Network played an important convening role contracting an external consultant and taking care of logistics and the facilitation of regional workshops with IPs. The result, the *GEF Principles and Guidelines for the Engagement with Indigenous Peoples*, were adopted in September 2012 to further enhance GEF's engagement with IPs.

Box 6: GEF Principles and Guidelines for the Engagement with Indigenous Peoples

The operationalization of the *Principles and Guidelines* paper is guided today by the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG), a group consisting of Indigenous Peoples, Experts and Representatives of GEF Agencies and the GEFSEC. [1] IPAG members are selected for a two year term, renewable once, for a maximum of four years. One IPAG member is also the IPFP representative to the CSO Network. As it stands, the Network is currently the sole mechanism for an official IP voice at Council.

[46] Proposal for Medium-Sized Projects. https://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/C.8.5.pdf

From surveys, 78 percent of Council and 62 percent of government representatives and 78 percent of Agencies believe the Network has been moderately or highly influential in developing the GEF's policy on Indigenous Peoples

GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards
Linked with Council's approval[47] to pilot a broadening of the GEF Partnership, the GEF introduced Safeguards and a Gender Mainstreaming Policy, applicable to both new and incoming GEF Agencies. The Safeguards Policy sets out the minimum standards on environmental and social safeguard systems that all GEF Agencies are expected to meet in order to implement-GEF financed projects.

A *Provisional Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguard Standards* was approved by the Council at its 40th Meeting in May 2011. In so doing, "the Council requested that the policy be kept under review and that the Secretariat submit a revised policy at the November 2011 Council meeting, taking into account comments, including those from civil society".[48] The revised policy submitted at the 41st meeting of Council:[49] a) ensured a system for monitoring the practices of executing entities to assess whether they are compliant with environmental and social safeguard policies to their projects, and b) strengthened provisions to prevent adverse impacts to indigenous peoples, including a commitment to "undertake free, prior and informed consultations with affected Indigenous Peoples to ascertain their broad community support for projects affecting them and to solicit their full and effective participation in designing, implementing, and monitoring measures". The CSO Network is acknowledged for its role in advocating for these changes.

From survey results, 83 percent of Council respondents, 61 percent of government representatives and 78 percent of Agencies believe the Network has been moderately or highly influential in developing the GEF's Policy on Environmental and Social Safeguards.

Policy on Gender Mainstreaming[50]
The impetus for the development of this Policy came primarily from the GEF Council. The CSO Network's support, adding their voice to that of government positions, is reported to have been an important and valuable addition, in securing GEF commitment to enhancing the degree to which the goals of gender equality are promoted in GEF operations.

CSOs as Accredited GEF Agencies

[47] Council Document GEF/C.40/09, Broadening of the GEF Partnership under Paragraph 28 of the GEF Instrument.
[48] Council Document GEF/C.40/Joint Summary of the Chairs; Paragraph 31.
[49] GEF Policy on Agency Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards
[50] GEF Policy on Gender Mainstreaming.

At its 45th meeting in November 2013, World Wildlife Fund, Inc. (WWF-US) and Conservation International (CI) were welcomed to the GEF partnership as new GEF Project Agencies. At its 47th meeting In October 2014, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) also joined the Partnership. Representatives from these organizations reported that the CSO Network was supportive of the applications of these still-Network members for accreditation as new GEF Agencies.

Review of GEF Public Involvement Policy

The PIP was approved by the GEF Council in 1996 and remains in effect today. At various Council meetings between 2009 and 2011, the CSO Network began to raise concerns on policy implementation and pushed for a review of the state of CSO engagement in GEF operations. In 2013, supported by a grant from the GEF NGO Voluntary Fund, the Network began a process to review the PIP for input and recommendations to the Secretariat.

In CSO interviews, focus groups and workshops, the review of the GEF Public Involvement Policy (PIP) was well received, for the most part. It was cited frequently amongst CSOs as a major recent Network contribution. A few sources did say that the study, itself, came up short in convincing on the need for a new policy. The findings of the Review were presented at the Civil Society Forum at the Fifth GEF Assembly in May 2014 and captured in a Final Report.

In the examination of the review, the evaluation noted a substantial attempt by the Network to capture data from multiple sources - CSOs, agencies, OFPs and GEFSEC - using mixed methods. At the same time, key research questions that would give structure and focus to the study appeared to be missing. The evaluators also noted that while qualitative and quantitative data was plentiful in the report, the rationale for the revisions was difficult to tie to it.

When asked about the Network's influence on a range of policy interventions, OFPs, Council members and Agencies assigned the highest percentages to the Network review of the PIP. In October 2014 the GEFSEC presented to Council new Guidelines[51] for the Implementation of the Public Involvement Policy, including an action plan for implementation and monitoring of the policy. A Working Group[52] was also established by GEFSEC on the Public Involvement Policy in June 2015 to achieve more effective implementation and improve clarity of the PIP.

[51] Guidelines for the Implementation of the Public Involvement Policy

[52] The Group is comprised of GEF Council members, Operational Focal Points, representatives of the GEF CSO Network, a representative of GEF Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group, GEF Partner Agencies, the GEF IEO, and key GEF Secretariat staff. The Working Group will present a draft report with recommendations concerning monitoring and evaluation of the PIP in October 2016. The CSO Network is also represented on GEF's Knowledge Management and Gender working groups

From surveys, 78 percent of Council and 66 percent of government representatives and 89 percent of Agencies believe the Network has been moderately or highly influential in Reviewing GEF's Public Involvement Policy.

GEF Replenishments

The CSO Network has been a participant at the GEF 5 and 6 Replenishment Meetings. While opinions vary concerning the degree of influence, Council members and CSOs made mention of lobbying efforts before and at replenishment meetings as an important contribution of the Network to ensure robust replenishments, with strategic orientation, although it was also noted that the initial amounts advocated were "not realistic" and "bereft of new supportive arguments". Network members, particularly those with offices in the United States and Europe, were recognized for their efforts with governments in urging for meaningful donor amounts.

From surveys, 44 percent of Council, 66 percent of government representatives and 50 percent of Agencies believe the Network has been moderately or highly influential in the GEF5 and GEF6 replenishment processes.

GEF Work Program Review

103. The CSO Network has infrequently commented on the GEF work program presented at every Council meeting. The projects in the work program are at the conceptual stage and information contained in the project information form (PIF) is discussed. Comments from the Network most often concern creation of space for CSO participation at the project level and have identified for GEF when and whether national, local CSO and CBOs are listed for engagement at various stages of project planning implementation and monitoring.[53] Less commentary is provided by the Network to the technical and scientific aspects of a project.

104. The Network has also participated in focal area strategy review and provided inputs to Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) for the GEF6 focal area strategy development. More substantial input, either in support of or by offering a contrasting view on, an initiative's technical merits for achieving its intended outcomes and contributing to GEB was reported to be desirable yet missing from the contributions put forth most often by the Network.

[53] GEF NGO Network Statement on the Joint Work Program for the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund, 43rd Council, November 15th, 2012

IV. Question Two Findings - Factors Affecting Network Function

105. Section III above assessed the relevance, role and results of the GEF CSO Network. Section IV continues with an examination of the Network's functions with emphasis on membership, structure, governance and resources.

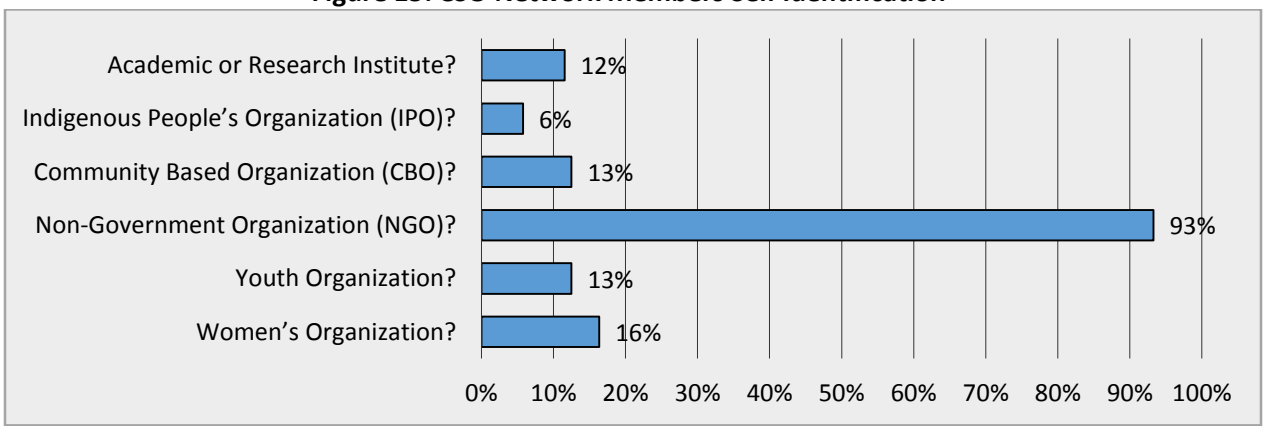
CSO Network Membership

106. In early 2010, the GEF shared information on 399 organizations they had accredited to the GEF NGO Network. In late 2015, 474 organizations were GEF CSO Network members.

Snapshot of CSO Network Member Survey Respondents

107. By far the majority of the 104 respondents to the CSO Network member survey identified themselves as "NGOs". The profile of the organizations responding is set out in Figure 15.

Figure 15: CSO Network Members Self Identification



Source: Annex C – Member Survey Results and Analysis

108. Sixteen percent of respondents self-identified as women's organizations. It is difficult to say if this number is representative of women's organizations in the Network as this category is not maintained by the Network. Respondents indicated that for 67 percent of their organization directors/presidents are Male.

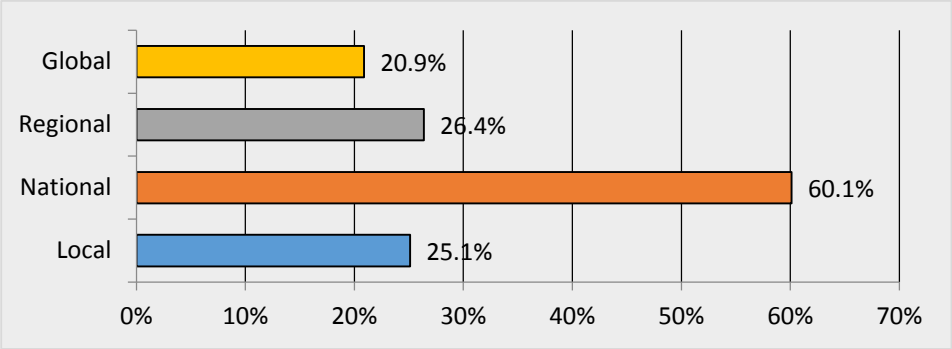
109. When asked about the variety of organizations in the Network, 58 percent agreed that there "is a sufficient variety (e.g. farmers, indigenous peoples, NGOs, women, youth). Further, 63 percent agreed that gender equality is reflected in the decision taken by the CSO Network. At the time of writing, the gender composition of the Coordinating Committee is fifty-fifty.

110. By the way their organizations are formalized, Indigenous Peoples' may not easily meet the Network's membership eligibility requirements. Of the member respondents, six percent self-identified as IP. Indigenous Peoples' Organization members make up just over four percent of the membership. IP networks have traditionally informed GEF through associated meetings of the UN environmental conventions, so it has followed that individuals and organizations have

been nominated from these existing networks for both CSO Network and GEFSEC focal area Indigenous People's engagements.

111. The majority of member organizations work primarily at the national level. The breakdown from global to local levels of operation is in Figure 16.

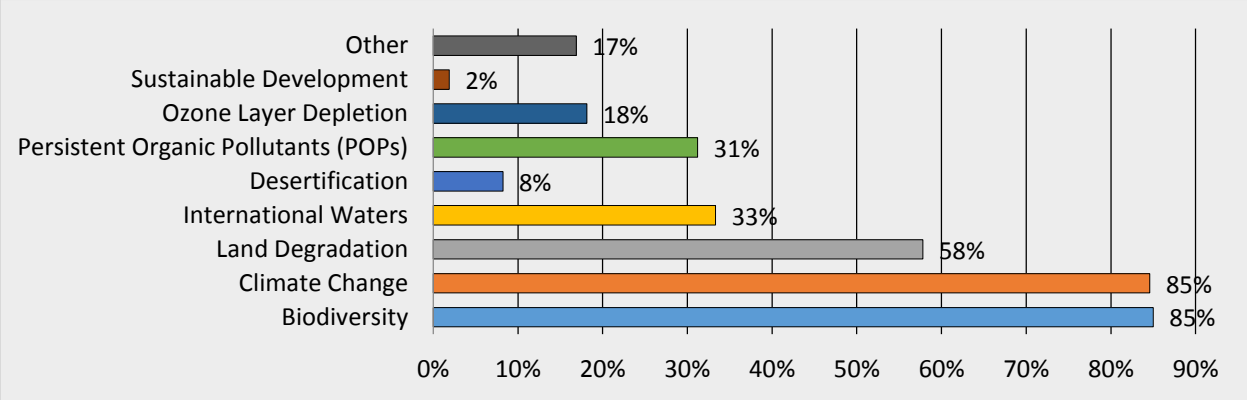
Figure 16: GEF CSO Network Membership Scope of Work



Source: CSO Network Membership Database – November 1, 2015

112. Figure 17 shows their areas of work are climate change (85%), biodiversity (85%) and land degradation (58%). Network members however also work on issue pertaining to International Waters and POPs (33% and 31% respondents respectively).[54]

Figure 17: GEF CSO Network Membership Areas of Work



Source: CSO Network Membership Database – November 1, 2015

113. Approximately 60 percent of survey respondents indicated that their organizations focused "a lot" on development of environment policies. Member respondents also indicate focus on community building/mobilization and on environmental awareness generation. Almost 80 percent of Network member respondents joined the Network after 2005 and nearly half since 2010, around the time that the Network officially took over the accreditation role from the GEF Secretariat.

[54] CSOs could have multiple scopes and areas of work.

Membership Application Process

114. Believing that having the ability to self-manage membership is strategically vital to Network success, the Coordination Committee established a membership process with additional checks. These included a stipulation that organizations signed on as members prior to 2007 update their credentials. The Network also clarified membership rules for international NGOs with multiple country offices. These rules were put in place before some international NGOs were GEF Agencies.

115. In addition, the membership process became more rigorous requiring, for the first time, that applicants provide:

- a cover letter signed by the organization's CEO/Authorized Senior Officer confirming interest to be a member and willingness to comply with rules, procedures, etc.;
- a copy of the most recent annual report (or report on activities);
- a financial statement for the most recent fiscal year;
- a registration certificate or evidence of non-profit status; and
- a letter of support/reference from an existing member of the Network or GEF Agency.

116. Today, the Network estimates an application turnaround process of two to three months, on average, although interviewees suggest a much longer process. As well, members are asked to refresh their membership information, now, every five years.

117. The most common complaint about the membership system is that it takes too long for the application process to conclude. Several times, the evaluation heard of instances where organizations were awaiting word, sometimes up to one year on the status of the application. If denied, CSOs also expressed frustration that the reason for refusal was not a part of the Network correspondence. Applications are batched for vetting by the relevant RFP before being reviewed again and approved at Coordination Committee meetings - in this process, time can easily accumulate.

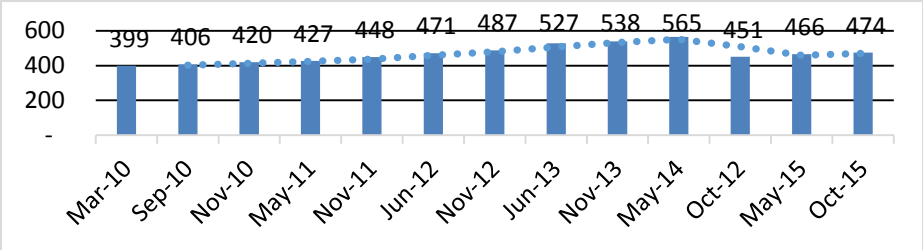
Membership Trends

118. A historic overview of membership is set out in Box 7. It shows an initial drop in membership following the transfer of the accreditation process from the Secretariat to the Network. It then shows a recovery with a monthly recruitment rate that is greater on average than was the case prior to 2010. This is notable, given that the Network's screening process is causing it to eliminate about 70 percent of its applicants (variable by country).

Box 7: Trends in Network Membership

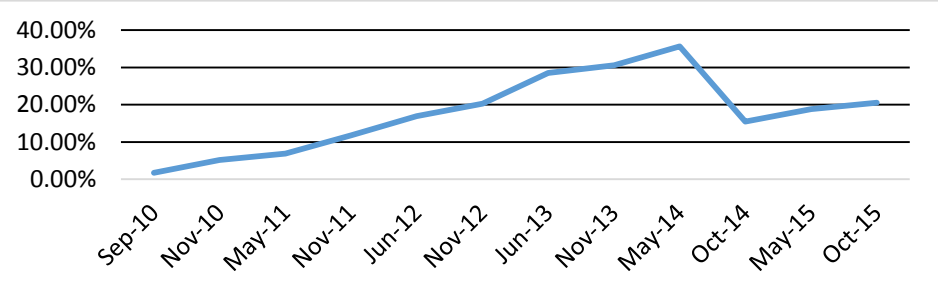
Beginning of 2010, the CSO Network received a list of 399 names of accredited organizations from the GEF Secretariat. The Network has increased its membership by an average of 3.7% every 6 months since it took over the Membership database. However, in October 2012, the membership decreased by over 20% due to over 100 organizations electing not to renew their membership in the Network or the contact information being provided by GEFSEC in the transfer process being inaccurate or out of date.

Figure 18: Network Membership - 2010-2015



Source: CSO Network Membership Reports

Figure 19: Percent variation in Membership - 2010-2015



Source: CSO Network Membership Reports

119. Most CSO members with a historical understanding of the CSO Network express satisfaction with current efforts to develop the membership system. They agree that processes have stemmed from incidents of so called “briefcase” organizations becoming members. In the member survey 90 percent of member respondents felt the “criteria for membership are appropriate”.

Box 8: Membership Accreditation – Comparisons

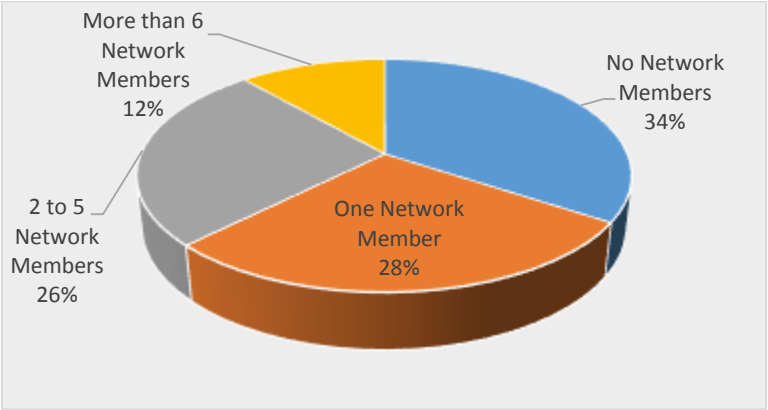
Accreditation systems vary across comparative networks. For example, UNEP's engagement with non-government stakeholders involves a process whereby UNEP grants accreditation structured according to the nine UN major groups, via a budgeted unit in Nairobi, to all organizations participating UNEA and its subsidiary body meetings. The Climate Investment Funds (CIF) uses two firms to facilitate the process for accreditation/selection of observer status, one for CSO observers and another for private sector representatives. In total the CIFs across the four funds select 16 observers and has one community based organization seat. The Adaptation Fund NGO Network, which is composed of ten financially supported NGOs in developing countries and coordinated by a German NGO, currently receives core funding through the German government. NGOs are active in national adaptation discussions around the Adaptation Fund projects and beyond. The network is also present at each Adaptation Fund Board meeting. Besides the financially supported partners, the AF NGO Network has more than 165 associated members.

Membership Distribution

120. There is less agreement (60 percent) among member respondents over whether the Network has yet drawn into the membership a sufficient variety of organizations. In interviews and during the regional workshops, CSOs, OFPs and Agency representatives questioned the degree of coverage across the focal areas and the organizational types, particularly women's and indigenous peoples' organizations. The Network's profile (Figure 15 suggests underrepresentation across all types though it may be the case that the clustering of "NGO" members obscures the actual diversity in the Network – e.g. the presence of indigenous peoples, community based organizations, academic organizations and institutes. The profile does not include categorization for women's and youth organizations.

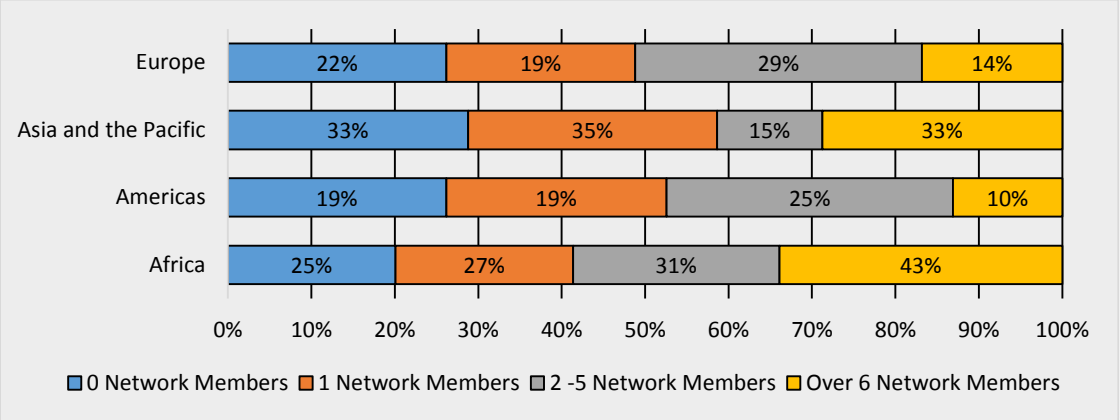
121. A review of the membership profile reveals that there are 129 recipient countries and 18 donor countries currently with two or fewer members: 63 countries have zero Network members; 52 with one Network member; 48 countries with two to five members and 21 countries have six or more Network members.

Figure 20: Number of Network Members in Countries



Source: CSO Network Membership Database

Figure 21: Number of Network Members in Countries by Region



Source: CSO Network Membership Database

122. At a systemic level, membership distribution remains uneven country to country. See Annex G. Contributing factors include the willingness of the country government to accommodate CSO activity in general, the extent of GEF funded activities and the presence of CSO leadership acting as a champion for membership. Agency representatives noted that CSOs they know and work with are not necessarily members of the CSO Network and that CSO Network members mentioned to them are not always known.

123. The membership landscape is also complicated by the presence (or absence) of national networks standing as members. Though formally registered as networks, these entities can easily appear undifferentiated alongside other member organizations masking the actual country coverage that the Network enjoys.

124. The leadership of the Network is aware of the unevenness of its membership from country to country. Maintaining and strengthening the membership base has featured as a strategy for the Network since at least 2008.[55] The evaluators encountered RFPs expressing the need to build, while others suggested that the membership structure, globally, has a carrying capacity - an as yet undefined threshold beyond which current Network functions (governance, communications, and systems of representation) will be over stretched. They say, it should find ways to complement existing networks to the extent that these exist from country to country. Beyond this, there does not appear to be a strategic orientation to membership development, at least for now. One leadership perspective on this is that such an orientation is hampered by the lack of resources and that with a budgeted programming focus, it would be easier for the Network to identify priorities from among such variables as: location, organization type and technical competency.

[55] GEF NGO Strategic Plan Overview 2008-2018 and GEF NGO Network's Strategic Plan 2015-2022.

Member Identification with the GEF CSO Network

125. As one gauge of the level of member identification with the CSO Network and the GEF, the evaluation randomly selected 100 network members, representing 21 percent of the total registered membership and visited their websites, looking for mention of GEF and/or CSO Network affiliation. The evaluation found that:

- 35 percent of the websites are inactive, changed, or non-existent, and;
- Of the 65 percent with active websites, 28 percent made mention of GEF or GEF SGP and three percent of the GEF CSO Network.

126. The evaluation also visited the websites of the Regional Focal Points and found that seven of 19 organizations made mention of the GEF or GEF-SGP, while two out of 19 organizations made mention of the organization's role as an RFP with a logo and links to the GEF CSO Network website included. Arriving at the link to the Network website/logo also involved clicking more than twice to arrive at the information. Three RFP organizations no longer have active websites.

Membership Proposition

127. RFPs and CCPs (where they exist) are consistent in how they pitch CSO Network membership within their own regions. Proposed benefits include: knowledge of how the GEF system works, a chance to network with other CSOs, the prospect of greater access to Agencies and government officials, and the possibility of being able to help influence policy at a global level. As one RFP puts it "the Network can help CSO navigate and approach the GEF multilateral agencies. Non-members have no idea about GEF".

128. Outreach to a prospective and existing membership is a cornerstone for success and is carried out with varying degrees of success across the Network. As reported earlier, about half of the CSO executed GEF portfolio is delivered by non-Network members, and the Network does not benefit from potential implementation-informed contributions to Network capacity and credibility from these CSOs. By most accounts, to varying degrees, country to country, it remains for the Network to communicate its "value proposition". Several RFPs cited that knowing funds were not readily available for CSO execution of projects and given a lack of fora to systematically address country and regionally relevant issues, "making the pitch" for membership is not an easy thing to do.

129. Part of the explanation relates to the extent to which, across the globe, the champions of the Network have an opportunity to make their case. Interview respondents cautioned that the Network tends to rely heavily on volunteer inputs and as such may lack the capacities to engage new members in the Network.

130. In Europe and North America, CSOs described the same challenging task of engaging CSOs, many of whom are international NGOs, as advocates in the Network's goals. That said, the Network's European and North American membership is recognized among Council

members and the Network's Coordination Committee for their advocacy work with a broad spectrum of CSOs and donors in recent replenishment exercises.

131. In a survey of non-members, carried out for this evaluation, 95 percent of respondents (all of which had had some level of exposure to GEF activities in the past) said that they were interested in joining the CSO Network; 43 percent also said that they were familiar with the application process, but only 26 percent said that they had applied for membership. Nearly half of the non-member CSOs polled, said that among their peer CSOs, the Network is "generally not well known". Fifty percent of these respondents noted that they themselves "simply didn't know enough about the Network to make a decision about joining". And a third of respondents noted that they are "already benefiting sufficiently as non-members". This could be through attendance at regional meetings such as ECWs at which 73 percent of CSOs attending are not members of the Network.

The CSO Network in a Changing Structure

132. Across the Partnership, key informants described the changing space in the expanded GEF Partnership. Council has also taken numerous measures to significantly increase country ownership within the GEF, notably the introduction of the resource allocation system and the expansion of GEF Agencies which has firmly rooted program and project activity at a regional and country level with national governments.

133. Several informants also pointed to changes in the larger realm of climate finance wherein global ODA is stretched thin on many pressing agendas and where, at the same time, new financing actors and mechanisms are coming into play. The first is challenging CSOs, including the Network, to find their contemporary niche in the GEF Partnership in support of environmental benefits, while the second is challenging CSOs, including the Network, to be savvy to the changing global finance architecture, to partner across traditional lines, and to be innovative.

134. The evaluation identified several relationships that bear on the development of the CSO Network's structure. These are set out below:

CSO Network and Council

135. Through key informant interviews and an on-line survey, GEF Council members weighed in with their assessment of the CSO Network. Overall, the readiness of the Network for Council is appreciated. Over time, the Network has become progressively better prepared. Position statements on almost every Agenda item are perceived as appropriate and thoughtful, though scripted.

136. For some, a full picture of the CSO Network's role in the Partnership was obscured because they are relatively new to Council, they lack information or are crowded out by busy agendas and limited time, or combination of all the above.[56] In the survey, more than half said

[56] Fifty percent of the respondents to the Council survey had served as members for less than one year.

that they were unable to provide an assessment, and in interviews explained that the Network is most visible to them at the global level.

137. The CSO Network having the last statement, as a result of Council tradition, has led to a style of intervention remarked on by several interviewees as “a bit static and stiff” when delivered as prepared written statements read at the end of what is often dynamic dialogue among the members of Council. The evaluators were told this tendency to read out the scripted statements disengages the audience. Some Council members also commented that they are “expecting the Network to be more vocal” within Council rules.

138. For Network members the inability to participate in the Council discussion is a frustration. Yet, there is general acknowledgement that observer role at the decision-making table comes with restrictions. These show in a review of comparative networks (See Technical Note 4). Consistent with the GEF CSO Network, most of the cases examined engage accredited CSOs as "observers". With this status, CSOs are usually permitted to submit and to speak at the table upon the invitation of chair of deliberations. Informal engagement - i.e. outside of formal deliberations - is also usually allowed. There are exceptions, however. The Climate Investment Funds and the Adaptation Fund stand out for offering greater latitude for engagement with CSOs at the highest levels of decision-making. In the case of the CIFs, observers may request the floor to speak during committee discussions; request that CIF committee co-chairs add items to the provisional agenda and recommend external experts to speak on a specific agenda item.[57] And, the Adaptation Fund (AF) Board meetings have, since 2011, included a regular Agenda item of approximately 90 minutes dedicated to “CSO Dialogue”, wherein the AF NGO Network presents on various topical themes to the Board. From the perspective of the AF NGO Network, the regular dialogue of civil society with the Board members is usually one of the highlights of the Board meeting.

139. As reported to the evaluators, CSO positions are prepared by the Network in the days just preceding Council. According to Council members, this is “too late” to influence Council positions. Indeed, they suggested that, the intersessional time between Councils is actually more important for CSO Network influence. Presentations at Council, while important in themselves, are perceived as only marginally influential.

140. Council members were asked about the relevance of the Council mandated task to prepare for and report on the GEF Council meetings and NGO consultations, the majority of responses were “somewhat” suggesting that there are other additional roles to be filled. Council members remarked on the role they thought the CSO Network should play in GEF7. Ideas included:

- providing ground level insights to Council regarding project impacts on local stakeholders

[57] 2009 Guidelines for Inviting Representatives of Civil Society to Observe Meetings of the CIF Trust Fund Committees

- informing Council positions through participation at regional constituency meetings. This would create a means of involving Network perspectives in Council discussions in advance of Council

- acting as partners with government in the design and execution of projects

- engaging with larger CSOs while also strengthening the voice of local level CSOs

CSO Network and Governments

141. For the purposes of Council representation (seats), countries have self-organized into constituencies. Some countries are sole constituents (Donor and recipient), while the CSO Network organizes its members according to sub-regional classifications. Annex H lists countries by Council constituency and ECW meetings and CSO Network sub-regional classifications

142. In this arrangement, many countries (for example: Mauritania; Sudan; Pakistan; Indonesia; Mongolia; Philippines) have regional classification in the Network which do not align with the ECW constituencies determined by the GEF countries. Additionally, four regional ECWs sometimes combine two or more constituencies: South Asia, East Asia and China; Southern Cone, Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia; Central Asia, Russia, Belarus and Armenia; West Asia, North Africa, Iran and Turkey (which is part of an EU donor constituency).

143. Representatives of small island states mentioned a difficulty they have faced in the CSO Network in being grouped with other countries that are not themselves small island states. The uniqueness of small island ecosystems can put them at odds with their fellow members within their constituencies, reducing the appeal of membership.

144. The above-mentioned alignment issues create a wrinkle in the desired connections sought to be created by and within the GEF Partnership. For CSOs, the missed opportunity for necessary government dialogue is described most often as an "unfortunate consequence" of the misalignment.

145. Throughout the evaluation period, the CSO Network has consistently sought an enhanced role at the country level. Network members have raised the topic at various Council meetings since 2006.[58] In 2010, Council considered the document "Enhancing the Engagement of Civil Society Organizations in Operations of the GEF"[59] and welcomed the proposals contained therein including 'that Operational Focal Points program at least one yearly meeting with the members of GEF NGO Network in their country to enhance cooperation".

146. On their interactions with OFPs, 48 percent of member respondents to the survey indicated that they have "never" interacted and other 20 percent reported interactions at least once in six months. Conversely, in response to a survey question concerning the level of

[58] GEF NGO Consultations, 31st Council, July 2007; GEF CSO Consultations, 36th Council, November 2009; GEF CSO Consultation, 38th Council, November 2010

[59] Enhancing the Engagement of Civil Society Organizations in the Operations of the GEF

familiarity with the operation of GEF CSO Network, 16 percent of OFP respondents indicated that they were 'very familiar', 72 percent indicated 'somewhat' and 12 percent stated 'not at all'.

147. Government Focal Points were also asked through a survey to list up to five environmental organizations with whom they have partnered or consulted in their country/constituency in past five years. Approximately 20 percent of the organizations named are Network members, with WWF, CI, IUCN and Birdlife emerging as the most popular organizations from amongst the membership.

148. In interviews and through responses to a survey, Operational Focal Points provided a full range of opinion about the adequacy of CSO Network - OFP relationships reflecting, perhaps, the uniqueness of each country setting - i.e. the in-country presence of the Network, the disposition of government and CSOs to engage with each other, the presence of implementing agencies and the level of GEF project activity. Half of the OFPs (13 respondents) described the relationship as "very adequate" or "adequate", while about 30 percent (8 respondents) described it as "inadequate" or "very inadequate". Five OFPs (20 percent) stated that they were "unsure".

149. Greater unanimity was reflected in OFP remarks on the role they see for the CSO Network in GEF7. Most of the 19 statements pointed to a stronger CSO Network at the country level with one or more of the following: an increase in accredited members, engagement in project development and in monitoring and evaluation, more public involvement, and strengthened organizational capacities - both institutional and technical. Connectivity between OFPs and the Network is reported to be improving. The organization of the ECWs is named as a key contributing factor.

150. Through dialogue with CSO participants at the regional evaluation workshops, the evaluation identified the following determinants of a healthy Network presence at a country level:

- active portfolio of GEF projects
- amenable socio-political government conditions
- network communications customized for country stakeholders
- an active local or regional contact
- relations with the SGP
- a critical mass of Network members.

151. When asked about the presence of those determinants, none among the 12 CSOs in 10 countries were able to show that all were in place. In explaining their specific country conditions, CSOs shared with evaluators the challenges which included limited support for participation of civil society, lack of transparency concerning local GEF projects and limited access to Agency and government officials as barriers.

152. For their part, lack of financial resources were cited by RFPs as the major constraint to meeting with government officials within their constituencies and encouraging country level engagement. A 2015 budget need to remove an, albeit underutilized, item in the Country Support Program for national stakeholder consultations exacerbated the difficulty of finding resources for country and regional engagements.

153. The evaluation did uncover a few instances of CSOs making connections at country level, mostly in their own countries. For example, RFPs have been invited by OFPs to participate in in national steering committees for monitoring and evaluation of GEF Projects, national steering committees of the SGP, and to develop GEF project concepts and dialogue platforms.

CSO Network and GEF Agencies

154. The number of GEF agencies in the partnership has increased in the evaluation period. From three Agencies at the time of the Network's creation, there are now 18. At the global level, the CSO Network has created opportunities for discussion with GEF Agencies and has the history of robust engagement through and with the new GEF CSO Agencies. Examples of collaborations include Agency participation in thematic panels during the CSO Council consultation day and exchange of perspectives on the Network's recent review of the PIP.

155. More CSOs respondents reported their interactions with Agencies to be "seldom" (once in three months) or "never" than they reported them to be "often" or "frequently". Members report higher frequencies of interaction with the following Agencies: UNDP, IUCN, UNEP, FAO, World Bank and WWF, with a marginal increase or variability in interactions since 2010.

156. A similar response came from Agencies. When Agency informants were asked about the extent to which the Network served as a mechanism for their engagement with CSOs, none of the respondents indicated "fully" or "partially"; all of the responses were either "minimally" or "not at all". And 50 percent were unable to comment at all on the adequacy of the CSO Network's relationship with Agencies or any of the other actors in the GEF Partnership at the country level.

157. In interviews, Agency contacts (representing about half of the 18 GEF agencies) echoed the impression that Network strength has up to now resided more at the regional and global levels and less within countries. Most often they described there being little or no connection between themselves and the Network at the country level. Without being resistant, Agency representatives in the partnership described having their own institutional arrangements and/or CSO networks already in place and note that their contacts are often not members of the CSO Network so they as one representative put it, "don't particularly use the Network for country level analysis". Partnerships or collaborations that were reported with Network members tend to occur with the larger international groups such as WWF, The Nature Conservancy, World Resources Institute, IUCN and RARE.

158. Some Agency representatives were of the view that the Network had not approached them in any systematic way to "pitch their value add to Agencies" or discuss synergies to

develop concrete actions for regional or country level cooperation. Agencies perceived the CSO Network's focus on GEF policy issues to be important and improved. Some suggested they could be bolstered further and be of higher value to them were they to be enriched by engagement on substantive topics related to focal areas. In this vein, Agency respondents observed that often interventions are presented but "without much response from Council". According to them, greater emphasis placed by the Network on the focal area content would be more pragmatic, less political and by extension, more credible.

159. Most of the Agency contacts consulted during the evaluation welcomed the idea of strategic dialogue establishing closer association - or at least a future exploration in that direction. Several representatives cited the access the Network could provide to a wider pool of CSOs in those countries where it does have membership depth as source of additional value. Overall, Agencies expressed openness to be approached by the Network.

GEF CSO Agencies as Network Members

160. As indicated by the SNA and recounted in workshops and interviews, the CSO Network has relatively stronger linkages with the CSO GEF Agencies. These CSO Agencies and the Network have played an important mutual advocacy role over the years. Coordination Committee minutes dating back to 2009 discuss options for enhancing the role of international CSOs in the Network. CSOs now in Agency roles are readily seeing synergies and encouraging dialogue between themselves and their CSO local partners, on the one hand, and members of the CSO Network, on the other. Their interest, as described to the evaluators, is in building credible CSO platforms that can add to country level analysis, share best practices on matters like public involvement, and exert constructive influence on national governments vis-a-vis GEF projects.

161. In interviews, the representatives of the agencies involved, described "firewall" practices to ward against conflict of interest situations. Within the organization, staff roles are delineated, information and budget flows are made discreet and decision-making is compartmentalized in order to preserve the integrity of execution and advocacy functions. In the aftermath of their accreditation, some Agency representatives and Network leaders observed a distancing of CSOs Agencies from the Network. Indeed, many of these agencies used to play leading roles in the Network.

162. The dual identity of these CSOs as Network members at the country/regional level and as implementers at the global level has raised concerns within both systems over how best to leverage shared values and interests while also avoiding potential conflict of interest situations[60] associated with the CSO entity being a GEF Agency and member, with field offices who are also members. At this stage there are no guidelines to manage this risk.

[60]Potential for conflict of interest could arise from an entity being both a GEF Agency implementer and a Network member scrutineer.

163. One complicating factor is that the NGOs now acting in GEF Agency roles operate as separate legal entities at a country level, and in each case it is only the HQ entity that is accredited as a GEF agency. Network rules allow country offices of agency NGOs to participate freely in Network activities. This includes being able to act as fiduciary agents where members wish to fundraise within their own borders. What makes this complicated, the World Bank's Legal Advisor to the GEF notes, is that there are optics and reputation to contend with, not just legal substance.

CSO Network and the Small Grants Programme

164. At the country level, away from the CSO Network's global-regional center of gravity, the Small Grants Programme (SGP) has engaged the Network in two initiatives: normalizing CSO – government dialogue and knowledge sharing (See Box 5). Across the Partnership including from CSO members, the evaluators heard these are two very important growth areas for the Network. Both are reflected in the Network's newly minted strategic plan.

165. The Network has traditionally been limited in what it can do at a country level to engage CSOs and other stakeholders across the partnership. With financial and technical resources in hand SGP has been able to "seed" these innovations in GEF. Moving beyond to implementation, the SGP is looking to the Network, with the infrastructure that it has in place, to be the main driver of both programs. For its part, the Network recognizes its complementary role *vis a vis* SGP, as evidenced in the minutes of Coordination Committee and the new strategic planning document.

166. All three initiatives mentioned above are born from a shared desire to, as one SGP official put it, "bring civil society into the fabric of the GEF partnership at the country level". The SGP, it is argued, expands its service coverage to civil society beyond grants with strong CSO Network participation. influence

CSO Network Website Connections

167. The CSO Network relies heavily on communications to maintain connections with its members. Survey results indicate that most member respondents visit the CSO website at least on a monthly basis with 37 percent, indicating a weekly basis. Respondents visited the website primarily to obtain information about the Network and its activities, including Council meetings; how to get involved with a GEF project and information about Network members. Over 90 percent of the member respondents agree that the CSO Network website is easily accessible and provides them with valuable information. The visitors ease of access to the Network website can also be attributed to the option of viewing the webpage in 100 plus different native languages.

168. Concerning the length of time spent on the website, web analytics shows that the majority of website sessions (69%) last between one-ten seconds. As the time spent on the website increases the pages viewed increase, however the number of sessions decrease as the

time spent increases, implying that less visitors spend a longer time on the website, but when they do, they tend to go through the website more thoroughly. Of the total visitors to the CSO Network Website, 21 percent visit the website a second time. For more information from web analytics see Annex I.

169. The evaluation observes that the messaging on the GEF CSO network website does not upfront articulate the 'mission' and 'objectives' of the network as well as the value proposition and associated 'call for action'. Comparative network websites have more clearly presented opportunities and results from member contributions.

170. While the website is sufficient for important information exchange, it fails to engage the member CSOs; for instance inviting them to post their stories/learning experiences or providing them a platform for networking with the option of inputting into GEF policy discussions at the global level. This was confirmed through the surveys and interviews with different stakeholders. Some CSOs expressed interest in use of social media for more focused and regional group connectivity and called for a more centralized approach to coordinating a social media strategy. A CSO in Mesoamerica introduced a twitter hashtag as a first attempt to continue dialogue between participants.

Issues Arising from a Changing Structure

171. The GEF partnership is a complex structure involving autonomous organizations, each with their own missions, governance bodies and sets of stakeholders. Faced with this the CSO Network is challenged to interact in diverse ways and align at many levels of organization. Currently issues for the CSO Network include:

A shared vision for the CSO Network in the GEF Partnership

172. Across the partnership, the evaluators heard the view that the GEF Partnership is without a shared, contemporary vision for the CSO Network in the Partnership. The 2005 review of the Network concluded the same. Respondents identified positively with the metaphor advanced by the first CEO of GEF at the inception of the Network that CSOs are to be, "the eyes and ears of the GEF on the ground", but they wondered how that should be interpreted given today's dynamic global environment policy and programming context. Motives observed in the partnership today for including CSOs (including the Network) in GEF activities range from that of a pragmatic desire to satisfy donor requirements to an authentic desire to engage in the program/project cycle, as the metaphor suggests.

CSO Network and GEFSEC Working Relations

173. The CSO Network views itself as an autonomous entity operating within the GEF partnership; the GEFSEC acknowledges the Network's level of autonomy. GEFSEC has provided funding to the Network in addition to funds related to participation in formal meetings; the Network has used that funding, as intended, in its role of policy advocate.

174. The Secretariat is clearly familiar with the Network's numerous appeals for funding. The Secretariat has taken on initiatives to address this chronic problem. Examples include:

- launch of the Voluntary NGO Trust Fund
- creation of a CSO meeting day prior to the ECWs

175. The 2005 Review pointed to "a lack of strategy for engaging the Network". As presented earlier, in 2008, GEFSEC and the Network collaborated on an Action Plan to respond to the Review and identified long range strategies including dedicating a full-time staff position at the Secretariat to develop the working relationship between the Partnership and CSOs.

176. Although GEFSEC and the Network have since that time engaged in productive activities to address the recommendations, today, key informants in different parts of the Partnership point to a working relationship that has sometimes been affected by the absence of a formal agreement on areas of cooperation, roles, accountabilities and communication protocols.

Clarity of the CSO Network's Value Proposition

177. From across the Partnership, including from Network members themselves, the evaluators heard the view that the Network has not sharpened its "value proposition" message to internal and external audiences; most notably: Council, GEFSEC, prospective CSO members, OFP/PFPs, Agencies. Clarifying this is an essential step in the process of forging new relationships within the Network and the larger Partnership. Value propositions are strengthened when there is evidence to back the claims made, a call of sorts, then, for greater results accountability from the Network.

178. Regarding evaluation practices, the fourth and fifth Overall Performance Studies (OPS') have reported on the importance of stakeholder consultations[61]. To that end, the CSO Network has not explored how it could be more engaged in supporting evaluations of GEF's projects and programs. Similarly, the Network and STAP have had limited engagements. In the member survey, 90 percent of respondents indicated they "never" or "seldom" interact with STAP while almost 80 indicated the same for the IEO. All parties seem open to dialogue and collaboration in support of GEF policies or implementation.[62]

179. The evaluation interviewed representatives from several comparative networks. Key informants had varying degrees of awareness of the CSO Network but, in the main, agreed on the merits of doing a more intensive mapping of overlapping issues, sector expertise and programming interests, etc. to see where productive lines of interaction may lie. A preliminary cross-referencing of information is presented in Technical Study 2.

[61] OPS 4 - Progress towards Impact; OPS 5 - Civil Society Organizations Engagement

[62] Network comments to Report of the Chairperson of Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) to the Council. GEF.C.41.Inf.15

The pivotal role of the RFP/IPFP in the CSO Network

180. The essential regional and central focal point structure of the Network has remained unchanged for the evaluation period. In the GEF CSO Network, the RFP and IPFP acts as the conduit between the global policy domain and country level networking activities. Increased membership at the country level puts some additional pressures on the role.

181. The survey results and SNA indicated a mixed record of achievement on the part of the RFP/IPFPs in servicing their CSO constituencies. The RFP-CSO interaction apparently has been a longstanding problem, highlighted in the 2005 Review as well as previous OPS'[63]. In some constituencies, the presence of the RFP is not felt and members feel disconnected. The most frequent and somewhat critical remarks focused on the perceived "fall-off" of Network engagement at the country level. Some expressed their concerns about the lack of engagement at a country level, less as a criticism of the Network and more as an acknowledgement of a resource constraint.

182. Within this structure, IP organizations shared concerns with evaluators about the process by which IPFPs are appointed from three main regions – Asia Pacific, Africa and the Americas. A concern is that they may not have the "moral authority" to represent them as they were not selected by the membership. In interviews and at the Regional Workshops, IPFPs and IPs also both shared concern about the enormous geographic scale of IPFP's representational role, especially given current patterns of resourcing.

183. Regarding the role of Country Contact Points (CCP) in supporting the RFP, there is an assumption that CSOs in this role can exercise the knowledge of the country landscape to review and make a tailored membership pitch among CSOs, establish relationships with official government Focal Points and Agency representatives and identify opportunities to build a country presence. Early indications from the regional evaluation workshops suggest potential for success.

184. The Coordination Committee has exercised some control on the expansion of the CCP role. Assignment of the role to a CSO member is based solely on the recommendation of an RFP, not an election. The selection process requires that RFPs justify the introduction of a CCP in any given country and provide substantive information on the candidate organization and proposed representative. At the moment, the term for the CCP is one year renewable, with role, results and reporting expectations[64]. As one Network leader put it, "we have to be realistic; country contacts must have a certain blend of capacity, experience and incentive to play this role". In a more general sense, the Network's leadership described to the evaluators a danger it sees in growing too fast and, in turn, undermining the structure's capacity to deliver on its membership promises.

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[63] OPS2 -Second Overall Performance Study of the GEF

[64] Coordination Committee Minutes - 2/2014, 24th and 25th October 2014, Annex 5, Page 32

CSO Network Governance

185. Good practice research suggests that formal networks are well governed when they are characterized by collaborative leadership, democratic governance and coordination of management through communication and decision making systems. Such systems should also include fundraising and financial management strategies that draw from a network's human and financial resources and reflect collaborative relationships with donors.[65]

Guidelines Development

186. In May, 2003 the Network adopted the first iteration of the "Guidelines for the Coordination Committee of the GEF NGO Network". These guidelines described the function of the Coordinating Committee, elections procedures for Regional Focal Points (RFPs), and roles and responsibilities of RFPs and Central Focal Point (CFP). The 2005 Review identified questionable accountability to these Network Guidelines. Incidences noted in the evaluation were:

- allegations of electoral violations lodged by members and members of the Committee
- under-performance of some RFPs as per their Terms of Reference
- policy revisions made without member consultation

187. The evaluation recommended that the Coordination Committee, "put in place a structure of accountability, for a designated period of time". This structure was to include: an ombudsman, a regimen of work plans with oversight provided by the Secretariat, measurement and reporting of work achievement. This, specifically, was not acted upon. However, the urgency of the message in favor of increased accountability was reportedly instrumental in what followed.

188. In 2009, the incoming CFP took up the task (already started) of refining the Guidelines. Sub-committees of the Coordination Committee were set up, including one dedicated to the task of addressing governance issues. The Network's current *Revised Rules and Procedures* has grown" markedly from the 2003 set of guidelines – i.e. from 10 to 37 pages, including annexes. Beyond having more specific elections procedures, the October 2015 edition of the Revised Rules and Procedures document contains items that were not explicit in the 2003 Guidelines:

- Elections task force and associated revisions to procedures for managing elections - *2008*
- description of membership benefits and obligations – *2008, refined 2014*
- provisions for sub-committees and task forces - *2008, refined 2014 & 15*
- provisions for the inclusion of Indigenous Focal Points - *2008*
- Country Contact Points - *2008, refined 2015*
- membership criteria - *2014*
- a complaints procedure - *added 2008, refined 2014, 2015*

[65] Nunez and Wilson-Grau "Towards a Conceptual Framework for Evaluating International Social Change Networks"

Elections Management

189. When asked about the efficacy of the new elections procedures, the outgoing Central Focal Point noted that there had been no complaints lodged over the previous three to four years. This assessment corresponds with the member perceptions of the CSO Network's elections procedures. The majority of member survey respondents (69%) "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the Network's election processes are fair and transparent, while 12 percent disagreed and 19 percent didn't know. Regarding voter participation in the CSO Network, poor turnout was mentioned by many RFPs and other CSOs as a chronic challenge. A few CSOs suggested that the Network should institute a mandatory voting requirement. In the survey, just 58 percent of respondents had participated in elections (note: all of this non-voting group of respondents had been members for four or more years).

Terms of Office

190. The term of office for the IPFP/RFP was mentioned as a constraint to member participation in the Network. While there are pros and cons to having a renewable four year term of office, the balance of opinion is that it is too long and is detrimental to voter participation and network building. Reasons most frequently given include that:

- the arrangement doesn't allow for leadership rotation around the constituency,
- there may be communication "bottlenecks" and stifled Network development when RFPs underperform in their roles.

191. The evaluators did hear arguments favoring the four year term - the most prominent being that good leadership curtailed by a term of less than four years would weaken the Network. When terms of office for RFP/IPFPs were discussed at the Network Coordination Committee in May 2011, it was this continuity argument that prevailed.

Network Leadership

192. Leadership of the Network has been strong, focused and steadfast, by most accounts. Some, a minority, have described it as domineering. Major contributions and relationships have been consolidated through a few people subject to risk in personality differences.

193. The concerted leadership has been very much focused on giving the Network structure that it didn't have previously. The Coordinating Committee has paid attention to several areas of organizational development including: opening membership to a wider group of non-state actors and building a membership system, setting in place a strategic planning orientation, and refining governance functions with revisions to its Guidelines. It has added indigenous constituencies into its structure and, put more emphasis on interacting with the GEF Partnership at the constituency level.

194. Regarding administrative aspects, the evaluators had access to the full suite of Coordination Committee minutes with annexes stringing back to 2008. Documents are well

organized and comprehensive. The same is true with reports on grants received. Here, the narratives are thorough and matched to grant objectives.

195. In line with internal CC decisions on governance, in October 2015 decision was taken to establish a Chair and Vice Chair and that the CFP role by Global Environment Centre (GEC) would cease to be, but that GEC would act as an interim Secretariat, pending elections, until early 2017 to ensure effective transition to a new Secretariat.

196. The evaluators observe that terming the administrative unit of the Network as Secretariat is confusing in the Partnership as the GEFSEC has been perpetually known as the Secretariat.

Complaints Procedures

197. Partnerships between organizations and networks experience disputes and, so, often have in place dispute mechanisms. Such is the case among the comparator organizations examined for this evaluation.

198. The GEF CSO Network's governance structures are periodically challenged. In the evaluation period, process disagreements, misunderstandings and personality conflicts have arisen between and amongst CSOs, the CFP and the RFPs, though to a lesser degree than has been the case in the past. Several RFPs reported in interviews that when it occurs, the pre-occupation on conflict resolution distracts Network energies away from operational tasks. At the time of writing, the Network is in the midst of addressing such a conflict.

199. The Network's complaints procedure is set out in Annex J. It shows a four step process in effect between 2008 and the middle of 2015. Each step progresses to a different authority, as required - from RFP, to the Central Focal Point, to Chair of the Governance, Membership and Elections Sub-Committee (with automatic discussion at the Coordination Committee). The procedure is open to members. The procedures do not accommodate prospective Network members who may wish to raise a complaint to the Network over the application process. The procedure has provisions for a "future" independent arbitrator, should the Coordination Committee deem this necessary. As part of the procedure, RFPs and the Chair and Vice Chair are to report to the Coordination Committee on all complaints received and the actions taken to address them.

200. As part of the 2015 organizational re-structuring, the Network has made a few adjustments to the complaints procedure, most notably that at the second stage, the complainants submit directly to the Network Secretariat; the Secretariat then refers it onward to any of the following: the Chair, RFP/IPFP, or to the Governance, Membership and Elections Sub-Committee.

201. Coordination Committee minutes back to 2008 show the record of complaints lodged within the Network.[66] On a couple of occasions, complainants have made their cases outside the Network's complaints procedure. This occurred in 2011 and in 2014. In both instances the complainants appealed either directly or concurrently to the GEF Secretariat. In the more recent of the two, the process has continued for over two years without a durable resolution, at the time of writing. The evaluators observe a layering of concerns over time, without a mutually satisfactory way of establishing the veracity of the claims being made. Furthermore, the complaints procedure, in its current form, does not delineate the trigger point for calling upon external intermediaries, when internal systems prove insufficient or compromised.

202. The Network has provisions for expulsion along similar lines as comparative networks, however because the membership and funding process vary across networks, authority for review of breaches of by-laws and/or codes of conduct varies between internal network control and an administrative unit's intervention.

Strategic Planning

203. In the evaluation period and in response to 2005 Review recommendations, the Network has introduced a formal process of strategic planning. Survey responses suggest that strategic planning is not an activity in which a great many members participated, with 38 percent answering a 'considerable' contribution but 23 percent indicating "minimally" or 'not at all".

204. The first strategy document, for the period 2008-2018, maps a conceptual link between the work of the Network, the "GEF Framework" and "Global Environmental Benefits". Interestingly, this is missing in the current strategy document. Organized by Network objective, the 2008-2018 Strategic Plan set out multiple strategies with accompanying key activities. It also sets out priorities for the Network's own capacity building in the form of a list of key activities under Governance and Network Communication. At the request of the GEFSEC, a two year operational plan was developed and presented to GEF Council in 2008.

205. The two year plan was intended to be a basis for raising and allocating resources for the Network and coincided with Council's November 2008 decision to establish the NGO Voluntary Trust Fund to support implementation of the plan. However, several years passed before the trust fund mechanism was established. The 2008-10 operation plan period ended with no resources for implementation. As described to the evaluators, the Network was "discouraged" and did not continue the practice.

206. The new strategic plan for the period, 2015–2022, is more specific and results focused than its predecessor. It summarizes the Network's operating context in 2015, lists strategies and major activities under the Network's three objectives and includes an action plan for the remainder of GEF6. RFPs are expected to extract from, and link to, the strategic plan their

[66] Between 2009 and 2014, the evaluation counts five complaints ranging from concerns regarding the selection of CSOs for the GEF Council, technical difficulties in an e-voting process to breaches of the RFP Code of Conduct.

reginal annual work plans. At the time of writing, the Coordination Committee is still developing a work program with metrics to accompany the Strategic Plan.

207. The evaluators observe that seven years is a long time for a strategic planning cycle. Changes internally and in surrounding landscapes dictate shorter planning horizons[67] as each GEF cycle comes with specific conditions and parameters that bear on what the entire Partnership, can accomplish. The Network acknowledges the importance of the GEF cycle, with a commitment to update the latest strategic plan in 2018 at the transition from GEF6 to GEF7.

Resources for the CSO Network

208. Whether framed as necessary for network health or network capacity, the literature on networks is consistent in the view that availability of resources is an essential element to network function. The 2005 Review of the Network concluded that a lack of resources has been a "major obstacle to the Network's achievements". The Review identified expanded funding as a focus for concentration in its recommendations.

209. In the 2015 evaluation survey of member CSOs, 58 percent of respondents "disagreed" that the CSO Network has sufficient resource to carry out its mandate and a sizeable percentage (~30%) said, they "don't know". The pattern of response is similar across agency, country focal point and Council respondents. Across each stakeholder group, less than 50 percent of respondents agreed that resources were sufficient, and in most instances the largest number of respondents indicated that they were "unsure". In open ended questions, the majority of member and agency respondents called for more resources "to achieve strategic objectives", to "build capacities of CSO to engage in GEF activities", or "to be better coordinated".

210. Respondents were divided between wanting those resources to be "provided" through Council and "raised" by the Network itself, including at the constituency and country levels. This spread of opinion was also evident in the regional evaluation workshop discussions. Some argued that if funding commitments to the Network are to be made by GEF, then it should be through a political process at Council, rather than through an administrative process at GEFSEC. Several respondents stressed that existing funds be distributed more widely and pushed more directly toward country level activities with greater emphasis on virtual meetings at the global level.

Assessment of Resource Availability

211. Between 1996 and 2008, GEFSEC spent approximately US$140,000 per year for CSOs to participate in Council Meetings; in a Council decision in 2008, this was revised upward to a maximum US$200,000 per year to allow additional participation of CSOs.

[67] The Free Management Library - http://managementhelp.org/strategicplanning/index.htm#anchor3323, a web resource referencing many sources on Strategic Planning methodology for profit and non-profit organizations.

212. In 2008 through a Council decision, the Voluntary NGO Trust Fund was also re-established. In 2010, Council's 2008 decision was reiterated, and in 2012 GEFSEC re-opened the account and added US$100,000 to be used in grants to the Network.

213. In May, 2013, GEFSEC disbursed US$65,000 to the Network to undertake study and stakeholder consultation in relation to the GEF's Public Involvement Policy. The remaining US$35,000 was disbursed for 2015/2016 activities. At the time of writing, the Fund is nearly depleted, and it remains to be promoted; the Network and GEFSEC have not agreed on the means by which to do this.

Assessment of Resource Use

214. Between 2009 and 2014 the GEFSEC allocated $50,000 per annum from its External Affairs and Communications budget to the Network to be used for the Network's administrative functions, including grants of up to $1,500 to RFPs/IPFPs to defray such costs as those associated with information dissemination, language translation, and input solicitation. Five grants have now been issued. After withholding funding to consider a Network dispute in 2014, GEFSEC re-started funding in late 2015.

215. Grants have been used by the Network to undertake the following kinds of activities:

- Creation and maintenance of a membership management system upon taking over the CSO accreditation role (2009-10)
- Facilitated interaction between GEF, the CSO Network and CSO's connected to the UNFCCC (2009-10)
- Network (CSO and IP) participation in GEF related conventions (COP 11 – CBD – 2011 and 2012)
- Civil society input to GEF-5 and GEF-6 strategies and replenishment (2009-10, 2012-13, 2013-14)
- Support to GEF Council - CSO consultations and GEF Council Meetings (2012-13, 2013-14, 2015-16)
- Promotion of IP participation and membership in the GEF CSO Network (2015-16)
- Creation of a country coordination mechanism in priority countries and collaborations with SGP (2015-16)

216. Beginning in 2011, GEFSEC extended support – at a rate of one per country (two or more sometimes in the case of the ECW host) to Network CSOs to participate in Expanded Constituency Workshops.

217. Costs associated with CSO participation at Council are comparable to current limits. Over the past five years, the average cost of bringing CSO members to Washington DC has been about US$140,000/year. This covers airfare, visas, food and accommodation as well as costs associated with venues. At the same time, costs associated with CSO participation in ECWs are about US$330,000/year of which US$90,000/year is for Network members. Collectively, the costs for CSO Network activities are on the order of approximately one Enabling Activity/year.

218. The use of the annual grants as well as the grants associated with the Indigenous Peoples Principles and Guidelines and the Public Involvement Policy Review, were reported on in the Network's reports to Council that are backed by Audited reports for each year.

Network In-Kind Contributions

219. In an effort to capture RFP offerings to the Network, the evaluation asked RFPs to estimate their in-kind contributions in terms of time and obvious expenses. About 60 percent of RFPs reported that they spend between 25 and 40 hours/week preparing for Council in the two weeks leading up to GEF Council; and a further 20 percent spend more than 40 hours/week. About 50 percent of them have people in their organization who also contribute time in excess of 25 hours/week in that same time period.

220. On the other side of Council meetings, the in-kind investment of time remains intense for the week following the meetings in Washington DC, before it drops off. About 50 percent of RFPs reported that they spend more than 25 hours/week doing follow up activities. In between Council meetings, nearly 30 percent of RFPs reported spending more than 40 hours/week on their duties, while another 50 percent reported spending less than 15 hours.

221. While it may not be possible to quantify the implicit value of RFP contributions, the average in-kind cost contribution to CSO Network activities, per RFP, was reported at approximately US$9,000.

Onus of Funding Responsibility

222. As noted at the outset, there is a range of opinion on the extent to which the GEF CSO Network should source its own funds. Some argue that if the Partnership wants a CSO Network, it should be prepared to invest in it. As one Agency representative put it, "the fact that CSO engagement is a 'must have' for the GEF is an acceptable basis to fund it". At the same time there is also considerable opinion supporting the idea that an independent Network should source its own support.

223. This range of opinion also bears out in the actual practices of international organizations and their associated NGO/CSO networks. For example, networks associated with the multilateral environmental conventions (UNFCCC, CBD and Stockholm Convention)[68] are each responsible to seek their own funding. So must each CSO engaging with the Green Climate Fund

[68] The associated networks are: Climate Action Network, CBD Alliance & International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, and International POPs Elimination Network respectively.

and the Adaptation Fund. By contrast, the Climate Investment Funds and UNEP are an example of a similar scenario to the GEF, where financing is available to cover CSO participation in meetings (Technical Study 4).

224. Sources of funding for the Network have included:

- Continued core support through GEFSEC to cover CSO representation
- Support through the Voluntary NGO Trust Fund managed by GEFSEC

225. Other funding modalities suggested during the evaluation include:

- Network initiated (global, constituency & national level) proposals including an MSP
- An NGO Trust Fund managed by an accredited group outside of GEFSEC
- A set aside for the CSO Network negotiated as part of the replenishment for GEF7

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

<u>Conclusion 1:</u> The GEF CSO Network continues to be relevant and is delivering results to the GEF partnership

226. The CSO Network is a credible and legitimate member of the GEF Partnership. It provides benefit to members and the Council on projects and policy. Consistent with the objectives set by Council, the CSO Network's main activities focus on disseminating information to members about the GEF, relevant policy discussions on the focal areas, preparing positions for Council meetings, and on consultations with Council the day before and participating in the Council meeting itself. This core educational function continues to be valued by CSO members though engaging the membership in positions and preparatory work remains a challenge. Uptake is lessened by the perceived irrelevance of Council's global content to local realities. In many places, language barriers get in the way; though in some places these have been addressed with small investments, and to good effect.

227. At the policy table, the Network's influence is acknowledged most on the review of the GEF Public Involvement Policy, GEF Policy on Minimum Standards on Environmental and Social Safeguards, and overall support to Indigenous Peoples. CSO Network interventions continue to be relevant but not sufficient, in themselves, to optimize the Network's Council mandated role. The Network could be more influential at the policy table by engaging earlier, in less formal ways, and with country rooted perspectives.

228. The CSO Network has ventured beyond the original informational mandate that it was given at its inception. Almost to the same degree, the functions of the Network associated with its own objectives, i.e. building relationships and exchanging knowledge, and strengthening project design and implementation within the Network remain relevant and valued for CSO members today. Progress in these areas has mostly been confined to information sharing about the GEF. At the same time, skills relevant to members and the broader GEF Partnership are evident but have not been categorized and systematic skill building has mostly been beyond the Network's capability, thus far.

229. On all objectives, those members who are contributing – i.e. are well connected to well performing RFPs, are attending ECWs and Council - are the most likely to be experiencing the gains. To date, the Network has been hampered in its efforts to engage members. Mobilizing country activities has been beyond the reach of all but the most enterprising RFPs. Most members report few collaborations within the Network and often these are associated with large international CSO members with field offices.

230. In the broader landscape at the country level, being a carrier of the GEF brand opens doors for CSOs, at least where GEF is a known quantity. At the same time, however, most CSO members identify weakly with the Network, even RFPs in some instances.

<u>Conclusion 2:</u> The CSO Network's activities are distant from the country level where GEF projects make their mark and from where the majority of Network CSOs operate. As such, the Network's is compromised in its ability to inform Council with country perspectives.

231. GEF projects are operationalized at the country level be they national, regional or global in nature. As such, country-informed perspectives add strength and value to Network deliberations, in particular those perspectives gained through CSO experiences with GEF operations. Over its history, the CSO Network has grown not from the ground upward, but from the global policy table outward.

232. At the country level, there is a wide cast of actors in the GEF Partnership with low frequencies of interaction with the CSO Network and a significant universe of relevant CSOs with whom to weave relationships that currently do not exist. Overall, the membership shows only low to moderate interest and is, overall, non-responsive to requests from the Network leadership for input on policy questions. The OFP-Network connection is among one of the weaker in that array of relationships, despite Council approval of proposals to build bridges between the CSO Network and national governments.

233. The Network's own structural arrangements directly affect the pace of its growth positively and negatively. Where ineffective regional leadership is in place for long periods of time, there is loss of member enthusiasm and potential stagnation at the country level.

234. The form Network membership takes, its presence and composition country by country, is a large strategic question that the Network has not yet been able to tackle in a substantive way. The Network is missing in some countries and in others is under represented across several sector and demographic categories. All the while, the space for CSO execution of projects has shrunk in the evaluation period in large part due to the revised resource allocation systems within the GEF. There are openings, however. These are in roles that are supportive of project implementation.

235. Indigenous People's participation at the GEF is complicated at the time of writing. Substantive discussions are taking place within IPAG while access to Council can only be gained through the Network.

236. The Network is paying attention to the need to shift the locus of activity by reinforcing the RFPs outreach capacity with: a) more fully defined performance expectations, b) the addition of Country Contact Points; b) an MSP to be used to pilot capacity building initiatives; and c) collaboration with SGP in the implementation of the Communities Connect and CSO - Government Dialogue initiatives.

237. The CSO Network - Agency connection also remains largely unexplored, in both directions. Opportunities and benefits are recognized for both parties. For Agencies, this includes access to an organized, widening pool of CSO inputs (e.g. country analysis and supports re: public involvement), and an additional source for constructive engagement with national

governments on GEF projects. For the Network, these relations would strengthen an ability to influence design, implementation and monitoring, where relevant.

238. With regard to CSO GEF Agencies and their field offices that are also Network members, there is simultaneously an appetite for collaboration and a wariness concerning competitions and potential confusion. CSO Network members have expressed interest to collaborate with the field offices of the GEF CSO Agencies, which also have their own CSO networks at a country level.

Conclusion 3: The CSO Network today is operating in an expanding GEF Partnership without a shared contemporary vision of the role the Network can play within the changing architecture and the resources it would need to be effective.

239. More than 20 years since its establishment, the GEF Partnership remains with the same vision for a functioning CSO Network. In the intervening period, much as changed in the global environmental commons and the Partnership has grown in size and complexity.

240. The Network's roles and responsibilities have moved away from exchanging information garnered from delivery of GEF projects towards advocating at global and regional settings for a greater role for CSOs in project design, delivery and policy consultations. The project execution "squeeze" for CSOs suggests a need for dialogue between the Network and the Partnership to clarify where the Network can add value to the work of the GEF. Clear indications are needed from the Council as to the future role and functions of the Network.

241. About half of CSO Execution of GEF projects is carried out by CSOs that are not members of the GEF CSO network. And, amongst the Network membership, implementation roles are primarily played by large international CSOs, including the new GEF CSO Agencies. With their execution/implementation experience, CSO GEF Agencies stand to leverage their learning for the Network. At the moment, however, the opportunity to take advantage of this insight is compromised by virtue of the dual identity of these CSOs as Agencies and as Network members. Hesitancy predominates in the absence of guidelines to manage potential conflict of interest.

242. Although significant CSO engagement also takes place through the GEF Programs unit and the Network has made contributions to focal area strategy development, the evaluation does not have a clear picture of the extent to which the CSO Network features in GEFSEC thinking about focal area programming.

243. In large part because of the lack of a contemporary Partnership vision for the CSO Network, links between the Network and other GEF actors are either under-explored or over-stressed. The CSO Network could, and should, play a more strategic role, one that is better articulated within the GEF Partnership within the context of a supply-demand dynamic to engender investment.

244. Beyond the funding commitment to underwrite Network member participation in Council, Assemblies and, recently, ECWs there are inadequate resources in place to sustain

outreach at the country level as per the Council's objective. Among those in elected positions as focal points in the Network, performance expectations are high and they are volunteering significant amounts of time and contributing considerable in-kind support. It is implausible to expect much more activity from the Network without guided financing.

245. What has intensified in the evaluation period is a public management focus on results accountability. This places an onus on the Network, indeed across the Partnership, to adopt a result-managed approach to all transactions and investments.

<u>Conclusion 4:</u> Within the context of an increasingly complex operating environment, the Network has strengthened, organizationally, over the evaluation period but governance challenges remain.

246. Attention paid by the Network to its own organizational development, i.e. work done on membership, strategy, reporting/communications, representation and governance have improved structural integrity. Quality control is up and despite the fact that the Network is currently pre-occupied with a process, complaints are minimal. Reforms have been well received, for the most part.

247. Regarding membership, the Network has developed checks and balances that have curbed against the inclusion of ineligible CSOs and kept it possible for serious applicants to enter, The process can be complex and slow and, as such, a disincentive to applicants. That said, with the application requirements and verification protocols in place, the data shows that the Network is reinforcing its membership base.

248. It is difficult to judge the merits of the latest version of the complaints process. The amount of testing with real cases has been minimal to date. In these instances, the evaluators have found nothing to suggest that procedures went awry. The evaluators note that it appears prospective members have no recourse should they have a grievance. The evaluators observe that when there is no clear way to judge the veracity of complaints, the costs in time, mental energy and reputation can quickly mount.

249. Regarding elections procedures, there are clearly pros and cons to having a renewable four year term of office for the RFP, but the balance of opinion is that it is too long and is detrimental to voter participation and network building.

250. The Network has developed a strategic planning orientation. In its second strategic plan, priorities are sharper and tied to tasks with expected results. On communications and reporting, the Coordination Committee has maintained a comprehensive body of minutes and reports. The GEF CSO Network website is used by its membership as a central "notice board" for CSO Network members, and as a means of maintaining secure transactions with Network leadership but without knowledge exchange features.

Recommendations

251. For the Network to develop as an effective CSO instrument within the GEF Partnership three enabling conditions are required. The first is a guiding vision (Recommendation 1) for the role of the Network. The second is clarity in the working relationship between the Network and the GEFSEC (Recommendation 2). And the third is a stronger Network with increased capacity and strengthened governance (Recommendations 3 and 4). These conditions are each required to give the Network the footing it needs to progress programmatically and organizationally.

> ***Recommendation 1:*** *A contemporary vision for the CSO Network be created within the new GEF architecture. The vision should inter alia a) clarify the Network's role, b) set out a shared understanding amongst all parts of the Partnership of the Network's contribution in guarding the global commons and c) identify a modality to finance Network activities.*

252. A shared intent for the Network within GEF's current and emergent realities in the global environmental commons central to the Network's long term development. There are several roles the Network could play under broad headings like: policy advocate, platform builder, knowledge convener, and monitor. Some ideas from Council members are listed in the section *CSO Network in a Changing Structure.* At the same time, there are ways in which the GEF Partnership could enable the Network that include, but are not limited to, funding.

253. Commensurate with the vision, the CSO Network should fall under a coherent global programmatic framework to optimize the Network's value proposition. The framework should look afresh at existing engagement protocols with all parts of the Network to assess utility, introduce innovation, increase participation and provide guidance to the type and level of support from the CSO Network. Particular attention should be focused in two areas: first, engagement with country governments through the GEF focal points, and second, on creation of guidelines for member CSOs (and their field offices) that are also GEF Agencies.

254. In the future, the CSO Network - GEF Partnership relationship should be influenced by a shared understanding of needs and yields across the Partnership so that investments in the Network more clearly contribute to excellence within GEF. The Partnership should encourage activities to be pushed more directly toward regional and country level activities without compromising global level encounters.

> ***Recommendation 2:*** *The GEFSEC and CSO Network should develop clear rules of engagement which guides cooperation and communications. These could be adjusted as needed.*

255. The GEFSEC and the CSO Network should clarify areas of mutual interest and cooperation[69]. Rules of engagement should guide cooperation with the means to evaluate against expectations on an annual basis. Possible areas to be addressed include

[69] The evaluation is aware of a 2009 draft Memorandum of Understanding developed by the Network to guide cooperation with the GEFSEC and suggest that it could inform more contemporary agreements.

communications guiding country level engagements, alignment of geographic regions and procedures for complaint resolution.

Recommendation 3: *The CSO Network should continue to build itself as a mechanism for strengthening civil society participation in the GEF at the global, regional and national levels, paying particular attention to: membership development, capacity building and value-added working relationships across the Partnership.*

256. The CSO Network has continued to be relevant and delivering results, however, there is a clear need to continue upgrading and building on acquired capacity.

257. The criteria for selection of membership should be informed by a membership strategy, by region and country with a particular attention to: countries with no membership, an under-representation of important CSO constituencies that are active in the GEF and connectivity with existing relevant regional and national networks. With the Network's shift to a call for renewal of membership every five years, more active scrutiny for changes or disappearances in member organizational presence is needed.

258. The Network should also develop a skills-building strategy informed by an inventory that maps organizational abilities such as policy advocacy; monitoring and evaluation; knowledge management; focal area expertise; project management among others. Development of country contact points for the Network should continue with attention to transparency in selection and communication when a CCP is selected.

259. The Network should continue its collaboration with SGP. On at least two fronts, this relationship shows great potential to accelerate country level engagement of CSOs with each other (the Communities Connect Platform) and with other GEF partners (the CSO-Government Dialogue Platform).

260. And on communication, healthy networks create pathways for members to interact. Web based technologies provide opportunities for doing this in low cost ways. The Network should explore new applications to complement the website's "notice board" function. Here, the evaluators acknowledge efforts already underway with the new Communities Connect platform.

261. In the changing environmental finance architecture, the Network should explore partnerships across traditional lines, for innovation and efficiencies. Strategic engagements should be developed with analogous networks of other international environmental negotiating and finance bodies

Recommendation 4: *The CSO Network should strengthen its governance, with particular attention to: annual work plans, cooperation with IPAG, terms for the Network's Regional Focal Points and the complaints process.*

262. The Network's strategic plan is a good foundation for results based management. To guide the Coordination Committee, further progress needs to be made on annual work plans and the methods and tools for gathering and using performance data.

263. Regarding the terms of office for elected Network representatives, reducing the length of time a member can hold office in the Network will lessen the potential for slow growth or no growth at the region/country level and (for RFPs) should enable a faster leadership rotation within each region. The evaluation suggests that the current terms of office be reviewed.

264. With the emergence of the IPAG, the IPFPs should endeavor to work more closely with this group so that both parties can mutually reinforce prominent issues; the Network through its observer role at Council and IPAG collectively can bring in more participation of important regional IP organizations. The geographic coverage of the IPFP role is unrealistic in its reach and should be buttressed by this greater cooperation with IPAG to fulfil the role of gathering the needed feedback to and from the Network's IP constituencies.

265. With regard to the handling of complaints, many of which have centered around elections or terms of office for RFPs, the Network's procedures should clarify the provisions under which a third party intervention be invited to establish the veracity of a complaint and arbitrate accordingly. Reference to an independent party is not to be taken lightly, however, the best interests of the Network may require activating such a resource, from time-to-time, when internal procedures fail to produce a resolution. The evaluation would also suggest a clarification on the provisions available to applicants who harbor a grievance about Network membership application procedures.