REPORT

MANAGEMENT MISSION TO REVIEW SGP-MOLDOVA GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT PROCESS AND RE-LAUNCH SGP-MOLDOVA

10-13 November 2014

Background

The GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) was launched in Moldova, following the start-up mission during October 31 – November 2, 2011. In September 2012, was recruited the first National Coordinator. In February 2013, the National Steering Committee (NSC) was formed with eleven members. The country program strategy was developed in alignment with SGP strategies and priorities, and was approved in March 2013. As of today, nine projects have been approved by the NSC, and are under implementation.

Objectives of the Mission

- To assess SGP's achievements, challenges and lessons learnt in Moldova, with a view to strengthening its operations for the next operational phase;
- To evaluate the governance structure and management process of SGP-Moldova, in particular the composition of the National Steering Committee in view of the new Operational Phase's policies and priorities;

Findings & *Recommendations*

The mission hold meetings and consultations with the SGP stakeholders including the Government, UNDP CO, NSC and SGP grantees regarding the results and performance of the programme and the challenges and issues impeding successful implementation of the programme.

Summary of recommendations on functioning of the National Steering Committee

- ***Consistent memberships of the NSC***. It should be noted that only Ministry of Environment and the UNDP-CO are institutional members of the NSC, meaning these two organizations will remain within the NSC permanently. Other members of NSC are acting as NSC members on individual capacity, hence should not be allowed to designate alternate members. To ensure program consistency and institutional memory, it is recommended that Ministry of Environment and UNDP-CO will also designate the same staff member attending NSC meetings. When it is not possible for all members to participate in the meetings, then a quorum should be established to ensure timely convening of the NSC meetings.
- ***Consensus-based decision-making process and conflict resolution***. Each individual NSC members should be allowed to contribute to the decision-making process on equal terms. No member or institution should be allowed to dominate the decision-making

process. It should be emphasized that SGP decision-making process should be based on consensus.

- **_Reducing project screening/reviewing workload of the NSC_**. Some project proposals were of low quality. A large number of project proposals were rejected because of the low quality of the proposals. There is a need to establish a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to conduct technical review and prescreening of project proposals, and only technically cleared proposals by TAG will be presented to NSC for consideration. TAG members will be proposed by the National Coordinators in consultation with UNDP-CO, and endorsed by the NSC. TAG members may be added on *ad hoc* basis, and can be endorsed by the NSC as needed.
- **_Neutrality and confidentiality of the NSC decisions_**. Each member should sign the neutrality statement. It is important to have members that will be seen as not tending to favor a certain group or network. Hence it is better not to have network leaders or coordinators in the NSC. NSC decisions are made on consensus, hence NSC members' comments should be presented as group comments, and should not be disclosed as individual members' comments.
- **_A more balanced structure_**. It is recommended to reduce the central government representation and the size of NSC to improve its functioning, at the same time inviting independent experts, CSOs representatives as well as international donor partners
- **_Grantmakers+ functions of the NSC_**. The NSC has functioned as a "project evaluation committee". This is only one aspect of the NSC functions. The NSC should also provide "Grantmakers+" functions, such as strategic guidance, policy directions, networking, advocacy and resource mobilization to support SGP country program.

Civil Society Organizations (grantees and potential grantees)

- **_Capacity development_**. There is lack of good quality proposals presented to NSC. There is a need for capacity development exercise in helping CSOs in project development, implementation and management as well as reporting. Three capacity development mechanisms available to enhance CSO's capacity in project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including: _1) planning grant_ of $2,000 can be issued to potential grantees to further develop the concepts to full proposals; 2) _organization of stakeholders' workshops or proposal writing workshops_, in which potential grantees can be invited to participate in a proposal development training targeting SGP funding. Experts and even some TAG members and successful project implementers can be asked to provide support. The workshop should either end up with revised and very acceptable proposals or with proponents very clear on how to improve and be able to submit their proposals fast; 3) _capacity development grant_. Up to 10% of the country program grant allocation can be used to fund capacity development project which can target at proposal writing, training, knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, communications and outreach as well as other capacity development work.

- **_Networking and exchange for grantees' and CSOs_**. Grantees should meet and share experiences and lessons learnt. Email list should be created to facilitate sharing and

information exchange. It is recommended upon the approval of projects, a grantees' meeting should be organized to clarify on implementation and reporting requirements. An annual grantees' meeting should be convened to promote knowledge and experience sharing and exchange. As the country program becomes more experienced with more projects completed, a national Knowledge Fair may be organized to promote sharing and learning.

- ***Poor and vulnerable communities as SGP priority targeted beneficiaries***. SGP should target its activities in poor and vulnerable communities. The project should have three elements including environment, poverty reduction and community empowerment. Where communities' capacities are low, capable NGOs can serve as "assisting NGOs" to help remote communities to access SGP fund and implement project activities.

- ***Co-financing***. 1:1 co-financing requirement (half in cash, and half in-kind co-financing), especially the cash co-financing requirement, has placed a barrier to potential CSOs to develop and implement projects. Given the fact that SGP targets poor and vulnerable communities, such requirement may hinder low capacity community-based organizations to access SGP funding. However it is noted that co-financing will ensure the commitment and ownership of SGP grantees. The NSC will review and consider the policy further, and could allow a certain degree of flexibility for CSOs working in poor and vulnerable communities in the country

Next Steps

- Review and revise the composition of the NSC memberships based on members' commitment and availability for volunteer work, balance of memberships in terms of expertise areas, and maintaining the majority of non-governmental members.
- Establish a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) which includes technical experts for all SGP focal areas, and each member will be requested to conduct the technical review of project proposals for quality assurance.
- Rules and procedures as well as the TORs for the NSC and TAG should be clearly defined and understood by stakeholders.
- The SGP documents, guidelines, information should be reviewed and updated, the requirements should be clearly stated and translated into Romanian. SGP technical guidelines on focal areas should be available for the stakeholders.
- A "Call for Capacity Development Proposal" will be issued to help SGP to develop foundational capacity in project development, implementation and management. "Call for project proposals" will not be issued before the establishment and institutionalization of NSC and TAG.
- A stakeholders' workshop will be organized to re-launch the SGP-Moldova.