

Expanding access to modern energy services: replicating, scaling up and mainstreaming at the local level - Lessons from the GEF Small Grants Programme community climate change initiatives

About GEF SGP

Since its inception in 1992, the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (SGP) has been promoting grassroots action to address global environmental concerns. SGP aims to deliver global environmental benefits in the GEF focal areas of biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, protection of international waters, prevention of land degradation (primarily desertification and deforestation), and elimination of persistent organic pollutants through community-based approaches.

As a corporate Programme of the GEF, SGP channels funds directly to communities and non-government organizations in developing countries to support the efforts of local people to conserve and restore the environment while generating sustainable livelihoods. SGP currently operates in 96 developing countries in Africa, the Arab States, Asia, Eastern and Central Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in Small Island Developing States. To date over 6,900 grants of up to US \$50,000 or less have been provided to non-governmental and community-based organizations addressing global environmental challenges while generating local benefits. These grants seek to increase the capacity of local communities to address environmental concerns through a variety of bottom-up approaches.

Community Climate Change Initiatives

Since 1992 GEF SGP climate change activities have demonstrated that community-based energy initiatives offer an important mechanism for expanding access to energy services aimed at improved human development and achievement of the MDGs. Mainstreaming, up-scaling or replication of the established local level community energy initiatives within national development these processes provide local, and the international environment and development community in general, an important pathway for reconciling global environmental and development goals with pro-poor energy services and contributing to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The climate change portfolio has over 1,000 community energy projects implemented since 1992. Based on experiences from these projects, SGP has observed that local-level community energy initiatives have the potential to be scaled up, mainstreamed and replicated to contribute meaningfully towards meeting the national development targets of poverty reduction and human development.

Modern energy services are provided during the implementation of activities related to: removing barriers to energy efficiency and energy conservation, promoting the adoption of renewable energy by removing barriers and reducing implementation costs, promoting environmentally sustainable transport, and support community-based climate change adaptation initiatives.

Linking community-based approaches with expansion of the provision of modern energy services

A community-based approach emphasizes and acknowledges that poor people and their local institutions are important actors and assets to the development process, not merely aid 'beneficiaries'. In community-based approaches, investments and responsibility for decision making lies with local communities, who often work in cooperation with demand-responsive support organisations such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), central and local government agencies, multilateral development organisations, and the private sector.

In all stages of project implementation, SGP forges partnerships with development partners and this has played a key role to the programme's success in stimulating the processes of mainstreaming, scaling up and replication at the local level. While grantees (local NGOs and CBOs) are the core partners, other partners include: Foundations, bilateral donors, international NGOs, national and local government agencies, national environment funds, service organisations, universities and local private companies. From an operational point of view, the programme is essentially a partnership between the government, the civil society and the community.

The issue of scaling up, replicating and mainstreaming community-based initiatives is particularly relevant to energy, especially rural energy. Energy service delivery is still focused on meeting urban energy needs and commercial energy requirements, with little progress being made to address the rural energy and development needs of developing countries.



Scaling up, replicating and mainstreaming initiatives from community approaches may entail a formalized national policy to develop decentralised options to energy service delivery, coupled with institutional support to integrate both the community-based and central energy supply options, as an effective tool in addressing rural energy challenges

SGP's effective approach

Three ways that have proved effective for service delivery using the Small Grants Programme include:

- The provision of practical energy services to households, rural schools and health centres, community enterprises, water pumping, and micro-enterprises.
- To inform, stimulate and influence national and local policies toward energy service provision at the local level
- The support of activities that aid public awareness, education and dissemination of information & technology

In most cases the programme targets the development of community-based capacity and tools to respond to climate change, finance diverse community-based energy projects in countries and capture and disseminate lessons at the community level. The process results in the improvement of the livelihoods of communities by providing them with energy services in a range of areas. These include: agriculture, agricultural processing, health & education, water (irrigation and drinking), information and entertainment, job creation, support to micro enterprises, household lighting and heating and support of E-centers to bridge the digital divide. Ultimately, achieving the global environmental objectives of reducing GHG and resulting to livelihood benefits associated with local benefits to development sectors.

Example: Energy services for agricultural products in the West Bank of SGP supported community projects:

Prior to the implementation of the project "Utilization of solar energy for the drying of agricultural crops in 3 villages' and distribution of solar crop dryers for 60 women and run by the Union of Agricultural Work Committee, West Bank (UAWC-WB)" the women faced many challenges. The challenges included: lack of electricity, or where available, it was expensive; low income generating opportunities especially for women; difficulties in maintaining color and freshness of herbs sold by women in the markets; absence of the process of building technical and business skills of the local community; and the establishment of marketing channels for the products for sale throughout the West Bank.

The project implemented by the Union of Agricultural Work Committee, West Bank (UAWC-WB), involved 17 Small cooperatives that use solar drying for native fruits herbs and other produce for sale in local markets. The women pool the crops (thyme, couscous and vegetables) and use solar crop dryers for drying the products which are packaged and sold. The Income generated is shared amongst the women's cooperative members. During project implementation, workshops and training sessions were essential for introducing the technology, learning marketing skills, and packaging techniques

The project has helped empower women and increased family income. It enabled the cooperatives to directly connect with other farmers without middlemen and facilitate partnerships with the Red Cross and World Vision to distribute more solar dryers.

The project demonstrated that small scale loans should to purchase solar dryers generated sufficient additional income to quickly repay loans that could be repaid with the revenues from activities carried out with it. The project demonstrates that awareness is needed for the design and use of solar dryers as this is greatly facilitated by educational material distributed to the women. The project targeted women who have gained important technical and business skills and are now running cooperatives on their own. Local institutions support through the establishment of women's cooperatives was essential for removing institutional barriers and ensured the success of the project.

Source: National Coordinater, GEF SGP Palestine Authority, 2005