



STUDY

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IMPROVING CIVIL SOCIETY'S LIMITED ACCESS TO THE GREEN CLIMATE FUND

A report based on an analysis of GCF policies and lessons learned from five case studies

CIDSE POLICY DEMANDS TO THE GREEN CLIMATE FUND

April 2021

Introduction

The main objective of this study is to showcase ways in which civil society organisations (CSOs) could access GCF climate finance for climate action aimed at strengthening the adaptation and mitigation impacts of CSOs, such as CIDSE partners in developing countries, including small-scale community projects. It analyses barriers and entry points for CSOs. By combining policy analysis and empirical case studies, knowledge gaps can be closed, conclusions drawn and recommendations made, thus providing guidance to CSOs.

The problem to be addressed: Civil society's limited access to the Green Climate Fund (GCF)

Climate finance is delivered by a broad and expanding range of specialised climate funds, with the Green Climate Fund being generally considered as the flagship fund for providing climate finance. A total of 154 developing countries are eligible for GCF funding.

By the end of 2020, 103 Accredited Entities had been approved to apply for funding, most of them International Implementing Entities. Direct access for developing countries to National or Regional Implementing

Entities is still very limited. Although there is enormous interest among many CSOs across the world in partnering with the GCF, so far only six CSOs have achieved GCF accreditation as Implementing Entities (IEs); even fewer have had projects approved by the GCF. And so far, there is no documented evidence that GCF has supported small-scale projects run by community-based organisations (CBOs) for the benefit of climate-vulnerable populations.

Barriers for CSOs to access GCF funds are systemic, massive and evident in praxis, as a recent [study commissioned by CIDSE](#) shows. Addressing, reducing and overcoming these barriers will be essential for the Fund to fulfil its mission of transformative change-making. Barriers to CSO accreditation, limited direct access, complicated project approval processes, lack of local rootedness, weak national consultation processes and lack of all-of-society country ownership are major concerns, leading to a wide gap between what the Fund declares it aims to become and what it currently is.

At the political level CSOs represent the majority of accredited observers (296 out of 453), following and trying to influence GCF funding priorities and policies.

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Internationally, their main effort is on advocating for enhanced and simplified access to climate finance for vulnerable countries, such as Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and some African countries. At the national level, CSOs mainly promote inclusiveness, transparency, gender responsiveness, vulnerability focus and higher climate ambition in GCF country programmes. The demand for better access to projects for CSOs and community-based organisations has not yet been one of the top advocacy priorities for CSOs.

There is a need for reform and CSOs can contribute to that not only as watchdogs from outside but also as active project partners from inside, creating a stimulus for transformative projects, combining high climate ambitions, SDG co-benefits, gender sensitivity and locally-led action. Addressing, reducing and overcoming barriers will be essential to fulfil the Fund's mission of transformative change-making if we agree with the premise that the involvement of non-state actors in delivering the Paris Agreement commitments and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is paramount for achieving both adaptation and mitigation efforts to limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and achieve a just recovery and transition.

CSOs have the potential to make a real difference. To unlock this potential, CIDSE has the following policy demands on the GCF:

1. Provide a more enabling framework to the benefit of CSOs and vulnerable people

The very high barriers for accreditation and access to GCF climate finance remain unaddressed in the Updated Strategic Plan for the GCF 2020-23, adopted in November 2020. GCF is asked to remove these barriers and provide simplified access to funding for CSOs and community-based organisations (CBOs). One option is the creation of a funding window specifically for CSOs, e.g. a Small Grant Facility, taking the Private Sector Facility as a precedent.

2. Ensure appropriate participation of CSOs in country programming

Strong CSO participation contributes to making GCF country programmes more ambitious and more focused on vulnerability. CSO engagement reflects an all-of-society approach in transformative

climate action, as called for by the GCF. Whether this approach is followed is largely dependent on the political will of national governments and National Designated Authorities (NDAs). If the GCF takes its mandate seriously, it should constantly address concerns with regard to GCF country programming, for instance weak national consultation processes, lack of country ownership, low ambition and a lack of transformative character.

3. GCF Readiness & NAP support: respond more favourably to CSO expectations

GCF readiness and support programmes, as well as the GCF support for National Adaptation Plan (NAP) processes and other national adaptation planning and strategizing processes, offer entry points for national CSOs and even local CBOs in the Global South to become engaged in and to better understand the GCF and its transformative agenda. However, there is often a huge mis-match between high CSO expectations of the GCF and what the Fund is able to deliver for CSOs, due to the high barriers that exist. Bridging this gap should become a priority, in order to avoid frustration and discouragement. A first step is that GCF responds more favourably to CSO expectations on options to receive GCF support for their climate actions.

4. Simplify the accreditation as an Implementing Entity for CSOs

There are clear indications that CSOs have not been considered by the GCF as the type of project implementer to be accredited as a prime partner, as was the case with international organisations and private sector entities. CSOs, especially local CSOs from developing countries, are disproportionately disadvantaged in the accreditation process. This is well reflected by the fact that by the end of 2020, only six CSOs had been accredited, including only two entities accredited on the direct access track, one regional (Central America) and one national (Nepal). This is not only due to the fact that the GCF accreditation process is very complicated for CSOs for formal requirements. The costs to applicants of successfully completing the accreditation process also form a very effective barrier to accreditation, at least for smaller national NGOs, and the GCF Secretariat is a bottleneck with seemingly little experience of dealing with CSOs. These difficulties need to be addressed by the Fund.

This study was conducted by Climate & Development Advice on behalf of CIDSE .

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