



**The Global Environment Facility
The 6th Biennial International Waters Conference
Raising the Bar: 20 Years of GEF Transboundary Water Results**

**Lessons Learned
GEF Project Managers Celebrate Results and Mull Challenges**

Dubrovnik, Croatia, October 2011 – Ultimately, the professionals at the 6th *GEF Biennial International Waters Conference* traveled to the coast of Croatia from the four corners of the globe to share ideas and learn from each other's experiences.

Though the hallways and meeting rooms of the conference continually buzzed with conversation, two sessions in particular were dedicated to hashing out the details of projects' successes and challenges.

The first teased out the results from the 20 years of funding by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The second synthesized those results and pointed to main concerns for the project managers who do the work.

When boiled down, two main issues arose from the conversations: The political will and stability required to achieve goals, and the future continuity and sustainability of the work.

"I think it is important to get people talking about their experiences, challenges and results and share them with their colleagues from different regions of the world and the participants did exactly that," said GEF Senior Environment Specialist Christian Severin.

"Following up on these two intense session we need to go home and make some analysis," he added. "But I believe we have received some important guidance from the portfolio, which is good."

The discussions were an essential part of GEF's International Waters Conference in Dubrovnik. The conference brought together project stakeholders so they could share knowledge, best practices and experience. It is also evaluated each of the 71 active projects in GEF's International Waters portfolio.

The organized discussions about project results started the first afternoon of the conference. In this part of the process, small groups convened around tables to discuss their work.

From those discussions, 11 challenges were identified that were common to managers working projects from on large marine ecosystems in Mexico to lakes in Africa or wastewater in the Caribbean.

The list included continuity, political will of participating countries, capacity building, harmonizing of policies across sectors and borders, private sector involvement and the need for coordination between different organizations.

On the third day of the conference, the discussion results were aired in an open forum facilitated by a team of moderators from UNESCO-IHE Institute of Water Education. Participants used green and red cards to vote on the issues that were most pressing for them.

With the two main issues identified, participants offered tips and aired concerns about practices and policies. Some offered suggestions on how to best network and lobby for political involvement and community engagement.

Others tossed out suggestions about GEF requirements and shared experiences about their projects.

“The process was very helpful in that project managers have to focus on results rather than processes,” said Simbotwe Mwiya, project manager based in Zambia for the Lake Tanganyika Integrated Management Project. “Processes are there but they are just leading you to something.”

The two days of discussions with different formats also kept participants on their toes, said Laurent Ntahuga, the Burundi-based regional project coordinator for the United Nations Development Programme/GEF Project on Lake Tanganyika.

“It was important that it was innovative,” he said.

“I suspect now that the seventh international waters conference should bring another mechanism to keep people active, awake and participating,” he added.

PHOTO CREDITS

Max Gudczinski/gudpicture.com







ABOUT GEF

The Global Environment Facility is an independent financial organization that provides grants to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to address global economic problems. It unites 182 member governments that work in partnership with 10 agencies, non-governmental organizations, international institutions and private companies. The partners are the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, The World Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Inter-American Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development and United Nations Industrial Development Organization. GEF-funded projects target six focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, the ozone layer, persistent organic pollutants and international waters. Since it was founded in 1991, GEF has invested \$9.2 billion in grants, leveraged \$40 billion in co-financing. It has supported more than 2,700 projects in 168 countries.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL WATERS FOCAL AREA

The GEF International Waters (IW) focal area targets transboundary water systems including river basins, lakes, groundwater and large marine ecosystems. Since its founding in 1991, the portfolio has comprised about 170 projects in more than 149 countries worldwide. IW grants have amounted to more than \$1.2 billion. The investment has led to \$7 billion in co-financing.

CONTACT

Mishal Hardenberg Hamid, International Waters: Learning Exchange and Resource Network, 095 844, 9273, +1 202 657 5290, or mish@iwlearn.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information visit http://iwlearn.net/abt_iwlearn/events/iwc6