

Improving Public Involvement and Governance for Transboundary Water Systems: Process Tools Used by the GEF

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This paper focuses on the tools and processes used by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in promoting public participation and improved governance in managing transboundary water resources in the developing countries and countries with economies in transition. It is argued that the challenges facing shared water resources provide an opportunity to foster cooperation and joint sustainable development between riparian countries. Partnership can simultaneously contribute domestic, regional, and global benefits in reducing the local problems that result from unclean water and environment, securing the livelihoods for poverty reduction, resolving transboundary water conflicts, and restoring coastal biomass and biodiversity as global public goods, as well as sustaining the natural resource capital upon which economies are based. Partnerships need to be developed for instigating reforms, developing capacity, and fostering investments that can help to balance conflicting basin uses and support the transition to sustainable development. To accomplish this, public involvement, stakeholder participation, and reforms in governance are essential first steps. Emphasis is placed on transparency in information sharing and learning across various initiatives. The paper draws upon the experiences gained during the first decade of GEF in promoting environmental protection and sustainable development around international waters and their drainage basins. Many of the conclusions are drawn from evaluations and studies carried out under the Facility's auspices. It is argued that, if addressed correctly, the development of transboundary water resources will provide opportunities for cooperation between the countries sharing the resource. These cooperative opportunities have the potential of alleviating the tensions and potential conflicts between the riparians.