

Discussion paper on GBEP facilitation of collaborative bio-energy field projects

Introduction

1. The GBEP Secretariat prepared a concept note for consideration by the Steering Committee at its 4th meeting on 12 November 2007 which included preliminary suggestions for how the Partnership might facilitate collaboration on bio-energy field projects. The Steering Committee decided to invite the Technical Working Group (TWG) to explore in more detail how to develop new project proposals and collaborative implementing modalities. This paper develops the Secretariat's suggestions further with a view to providing a focus for discussion by the TWG to inform possible next steps in this area by the Partnership.

Background

2. GBEP was established to implement the commitments undertaken by the G8 +5 countries in the 2005 Gleneagles Plan of Action to “promote the continued development and commercialisation of renewable energy by [...supporting] wider, cost effective biomass and biofuels deployment, particularly in developing countries where biomass use is prevalent”. This mandate was renewed by the 2007 G8 Heiligendamm Summit, which called upon GBEP to “continue its work on biofuel best practices and take forward the successful and sustainable development of bio-energy”. In addition, the Partnership's Terms of Reference establish that GBEP will “develop and encourage collaborative project activities in the bio-energy field”.
3. Well-conceived and targeted bio-energy field projects can make a major contribution to achieving these aims and those of the global community more generally. In particular, field projects can:
 - help to address gaps in knowledge;
 - provide valuable opportunities to learn lessons and develop best practices for wider application;
 - contribute to building the evidence base to support policy development and practical action at national, regional and international levels; and
 - provide a very useful means of delivering technology transfer where developing countries are involved.
4. Promoting collaborative projects is seen by other international partnerships in the renewable energy field, such as REEEP, the International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy and the Methane to Markets Partnership, as an essential part of their activities and vital to advancing their aims. GBEP has similar aspirations but currently no mechanism to facilitate collaborative project activities.

Possible collaborative activities and modalities

5. There are several ways in which GBEP could facilitate a collaborative approach to bio-energy field projects:
 - Given its unique position as an international partnership dealing exclusively with bio-energy issues, GBEP could play a very valuable role in **analysing issues and areas** which might benefit from bio-energy field project activities, and **identifying potential opportunities** for Partners and others to follow up through collaborative ventures. It could do this by occasionally **consulting Partners and wider non-partner interests**, including governments, industry, academia, international funding institutions (e.g. development banks and investors), civil society and other interested stakeholders. As part of these consultations, respondents could be invited to indicate the extent to which they would be interested and able to participate in, and contribute to (either financially or in kind), specific project activities. GBEP could use the information and views obtained through these consultations to agree on specific topics and themes that it would like to see taken forward, and outcomes achieved, through collaborative projects. An exercise of this kind could be undertaken at regular intervals, such as once every two years, i.e. one every biennium, with the themes/topics/desired outcomes for the particular biennium being agreed by the Steering Committee. GBEP could then invite **parties with common interests to work together** towards a common objective. It would be for the parties to agree the scope, funding and management arrangements of the actual projects, but it would be open to these parties to seek advice from the Secretariat or the Partnership on any aspects of the project.
 - There could be an understanding that projects developed through the GBEP process would keep GBEP informed of progress at a frequency to be agreed, and share their results with the Partnership and others. The Secretariat could keep in touch with projects as they unfold to obtain updates and report back to the GBEP family, either through regular update reports, which could be circulated by email, and/or through formal papers to the Steering Committee. The use of other GBEP meetings to disseminate such information could also be considered.
 - Any GBEP arrangements as described above should not inhibit Partners from entering into bilateral or multilateral arrangements on their own initiative to undertake bio-energy field projects. However, **Partners should be encouraged to share details and results of their projects** with the other GBEP Partners and other interested parties where appropriate.
 - Other valuable related functions that GBEP could undertake as part of its facilitating role, include:
 - acting as a **repository - or library** - of information on completed or ongoing bio-energy field projects to which Partners and others could refer as needed. In order to populate this library, **GBEP could undertake a one-off exercise** to gather information on such projects for publication (in summary) on its web site. Details of new projects could be added as they become available;
 - providing a useful **platform to facilitate information exchange** between Partners and others, to disseminate the results field projects, and lessons learned to aid international understanding, and encourage the adoption of best practice, as well as informing policy development.

- As part of its facilitation role, GBEP **could help developing countries or emerging economies** meet needs for particular bio-energy support through collaborative project activities. This might include, for example, putting these countries in touch with potential project partners to undertake the desired work.
- There are other international organisations and partnerships, such as development banks and the organisations previously mentioned in this paper, which are either active or interested in the bio-energy field and which could make a major contribution – including financial – to helping GBEP achieve its objectives. **GBEP should strengthen its ties with these organisations** in order to maximise the potential for closer co-operation, to avoid duplication of effort and to influence the funding decisions of these bodies in ways which would promote and accelerate the benefits of bio-energy. **Establishing such alliances should be a major priority for GBEP.**
- GBEP could consider establishing **an awards programme** to recognise achievements through collaborative bio-energy field projects according to certain criteria set by the Partnership. The awards programme could operate on a two-year cycle to coincide with each biennium, or to a different frequency in accordance with the Partners' wishes. Possibilities for including a financial component in such awards using funds contributed, for example, by an international funding institution, should be explored. In addition to acting as an incentive to drive and recognise excellence in the bio-energy field, an awards programme would significantly enhance the Partnership's international profile and standing.

Conclusion

6. Undertaken together, the activities described above could support the emergence of a more strategic and coherent international approach to project-related activities in the bio-energy arena, with GBEP playing a leading role.
7. While this paper focuses on field projects, the TWG might wish to consider whether the ideas outlined above could also be applied to GBEP facilitating research, development and demonstration activities around bio-energy.

Questions for consideration by the TWG

- How should GBEP develop these ideas further? Through a dedicated, ad hoc Task Force, through the Task Forces on GHG methodologies or, once established, the sustainability Task Force, or in other ways?
- Should involvement in collaborative field project activities be restricted to GBEP Partners and Observers, or should non-partners be allowed to participate? Non-partners, including governments, industry, academia, international funding institutions (e.g. development banks and investors), civil society and other interested stakeholders, could have much to contribute by way of experience, expertise and resources. Involving them would be very much in keeping with the Partnership's aim to promote global participation.
- It is presumed that GBEP should seek views and ideas from non-partners to inform its thinking on project topics, themes and desired outcomes. Does the TWG agree?

- What role should GBEP play in facilitating collaborative bio-energy field projects?
- How could projects facilitated by GBEP recognise the Partnership's contribution in that regard? For example, could such projects be labelled as being undertaken "in association [collaboration] with GBEP", or similar words?