



The Global Peatland Initiative

The Global Peatland Initiative (GPI) started in April 2001 with seed funding (Euro 707,000) from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS/DML). The GPI is managed by a Steering Committee involving Wetlands International, Alterra, International Peat Society (IPS), International Mires Conservation Group (IMCG) and IUCN-Netherlands Committee. The programme's aim is to support and enhance the participation of countries in transition and developing countries in international conservation and wise use of peatlands. The GPI supports and complements the *Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands* (GAP) currently under development by Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP).

The GPI is focused on conservation and restoration of peatlands, and integrated development planning of peat-based agriculture, forestry and industry, within an ecosystem-based approach. It is supporting innovative global land-use planning and decision making methods, co-operation between sectors, stakeholder participation, valuation and certification, management auditing systems and the implementation of new approaches to secure wise use of peatlands in relation to their potential for poverty alleviation.

GPI Phase 1 Objectives:

1. Support and enhance the participation of developing/transition countries in the global peatland initiative on the future use of *all* peatlands in the world.
2. Identify future sectoral needs for peatland, and reconstruction opportunities in developing/ transition countries.
3. Contribute to the IMCG/IPS and Ramsar global guidelines and prepare national and sector guidelines for the wise use of peatlands.
4. Raise awareness of the functions and benefits of peatlands, and assess the full public and direct values of peatlands.
5. Identify, in co-operation with the economic and banking sector, global and national transfer mechanisms to provide peatland owners and other stakeholders with income from public values.
6. Assess standards of performance for certification of sustainable peatland management for the various sectors that use peatland.
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8. Provide grants to support the management of some of the most threatened peat ecosystems
9. Identify key peatland areas and sectoral needs in S. America, Africa and China.

PROGRESS REPORT

Period: This progress report covers within GPI phase 1 the period 1 December 2001 – 30 April 2002

Announcement/call for proposals:

The GPI was announced and a call for proposals issued via the web-sites and newsletters of the five GPI lead-partners, as well as via the Ramsar Forum, Ramsar web-site and at a large number of international meetings and conferences.

Reactions to announcement:

- The GPI has been welcomed by the Ramsar Convention and CBD.
- Many government agencies, NGOs and scientific institutions welcomed the GPI and have either submitted proposals or endorsed proposals by other parties.
- By 30 April 2002 a total of 48 project ideas (concepts) and proposals have been received, mainly from S.E.Asia and central and eastern Europe, but also from China, southern Africa and South America.
- Several western European agencies welcomed the GPI and have provided information about their programmes/projects

GPI Steering Committee:

The GPI Steering Committee has met on 30 November 2001 and 17-18 April 2002, and kept in between closely in touch with progress of the programme via intensive email communication in relation to individual projects, development of the GPI proposal portfolio, GPI promotion events as well as on strategy development for phase 2 of the GPI. With regard to the individual projects much managerial time was required to ensure that all project proposals fulfilled the necessary administrative requirements. In addition, much effort was put in ensuring that all projects were addressing the highest priorities and involving the most appropriate experts as well as all main stakeholders.

The GPI phase 1 management structure has remained in place. W. Ferwerda (IUCN-NC) has indicated that he would like his position to be taken over by Wim Bergmans of IUCN-NC. The Structure for GPI phase 2 still needs further review.

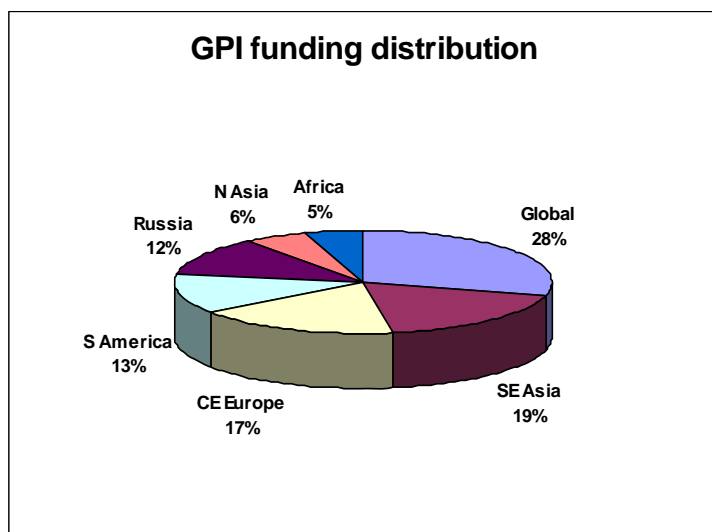
The GPI SC also explored possibilities for programme funding from other donors. So far this has not resulted in any contracts. However, many donors have contributed co-financing to individual GPI projects. The GPI Steering Committee is also actively seeking to expand interest of the private sector to support the Initiative with core funding. To this end a presentation will be made at the IPS Annual Assembly, which will be held in Manchester on 26 May 2002.

One of the main ideas behind the GPI is that the projects joint under the umbrella of the GPI will be able to bear more weight on the global agendas of relevant conventions and international organisations, than if the projects were to be implemented separately. The GPI SC to this end has in April 2002 implemented under leadership of IUCN-Netherlands Committee a GPI side event at the CBD CoP6 in the Hague. In addition, it has held a side event at the triennial Board of Members meeting of Wetlands International (Nov 2001), involving a key-note speech by the Deputy Secretary General of the the Ramsar Convention regarding the key role the GPI can play in implementing the Guidance on Global Action on Peatlands (to be adopted at CoP8 of the Ramsar Convention in Valencia, Nov. 2002). The GPI is now recognised as a major activity under the joint workplan of the Ramsar Convention and CBD.

Approved projects:

From the 48 proposals, a total of 23 projects have been finally selected for for support under the current DGIS funding. A number of other good project ideas/concepts have been put into the pipeline for possible support from future GPI funding (but these have not yet been fully evaluated). Contract agreements have not yet been finalised for all approved projects, as certain administrative conditions (e.g. budget in approved format) were not yet fulfilled. These had, however, already been given permission to start in view of the implementation schedule.

The following pie chart provides an overview of GPI funding allocation.



The chart on the left provides a quick overview of the distribution of the current DGIS seed funding. In addition, it should be noted that this money is successfully leveraging over EUR 3,5 million in co-funding, particularly in SE Asia where several projects have already been able to generate commitments from donors, including CIDA (Canada) and the GEF. We expect this to increase during the course of the projects, both in SE Asia and in other regions where discussions with donors have also started.

A total of 9 projects were required to submit a mid-term progress report, and all had provided these in time by the end of March. The technical reports were reviewed by H. Diemont and M. Silvius. All projects showed satisfactory progress. Some minor questioning was needed for a few projects. All technical reports were subsequently approved. Financial reports required some more questioning, but answers have been satisfactory and all reports have now been fully approved and the mid-term financial instalments have been transferred.

One project has already been completed (GPI 26), Jakarta Symposium on Peatlands for People, Natural Resource Function and Sustainable Management, of which the Proceedings have been received.

Policy development:

Co-operation between sectors using peatlands and stakeholders is a pre-requisite to reconcile perceptions and to achieve "wise use" of natural resources including peatlands. The GPI represents both stakeholders and sectors, thus facilitating rapid achievement of tangible results.

Sustainable or "wise" use of peatlands can be achieved through:

- international agreements
- national legislation
- certification
- awareness
- management/restoration

Inter-sectoral reconciliation:

So far, the GPI has supported several policy development oriented workshops. It facilitated in 2001 the discussions between IPS and IMCG on a wise use agreement. The resulting Joint Statement on Wise Use of Peatlands is a benchmark and a baseline for integrated management of the global peatlands. It proves that agreements can be reached between nature conservation organisations such as IMCG and the peat industry represented by IPS. The Statement has been further edited and is available on the websites of IMCG and IPS in English since December 2001. Other language versions will be made available on the web by August 2002, including Spanish, French and Russian, as well as in printed format (English, French and Spanish) for distribution at the Ramsar CoP8.

The Jakarta Symposium on Peatlands for People, Natural Resource Function and Sustainable Management, also resulted in a Statement (see <http://www.imcg.net> - in the IMCG newsletter issue 2001/3).

In terms of national policy, it should be noted that in Russia the GPI has contributed to national legislation responding to the demands of the Ramsar Wetland Convention.

Peat certification:

GPI timely facilitated through its steering committee discussions between importers and exporters on certification of peat substrates for horticulture on a voluntary base. The discussions started in 2001. Funding was also used to assess the possibilities of peat certification in 2002 by experts from conservation and industry. The results of these activities will deliver further guidance to the Ramsar Convention and CBD.

International agreements:

Ramsar: GPI provided funding for global maps on distribution of peatlands and Ramsar peatland sites. The results demonstrate clearly that in many regions peatlands are underrepresented in the sites network of the Ramsar Wetland Convention. GPI also funded the development of Guidelines for designation of peatlands as Ramsar sites, which are up for adoption at Ramsar CoP8.

CBD: In April 2002, the GPI organised a side-event during the CoP6 of the Convention of Biological Diversity in the Haque. This side-event attracted interest of other donors to fund GPI. The IMCG was invited by The *Bundesanstalt für Naturschutz* in Bonn to submit a proposal.

Climate Change: With respect to the Kyoto agreement on climate change, projects have been funded in China and Borneo. One of the outcomes of the research in Indonesia is that tropical peatlands in Borneo have a very low methane emission (as compared to temperate bogs).

The Jakarta symposium contributed to the identification of possibilities to rehabilitate tropical peatlands including the one million hectares of degraded peatland of former mega-rice project in Kalimantan, which will significantly reduce carbon emission and fire risk.

Research initiated in Poland by the Agricultural University in Poznan has shown that abandonment of agricultural areas in peatlands will both increase carbon emission and decrease biodiversity. These results are relevant for agricultural policy in Europe.

In Russia, a project is being implemented with the aim of establishing a Ramsar site in Russia's most extensive peatland in the Tomsk region (over 1 million ha).

The GPI has also provided seed funding for the design of a project on Climate Change, Forests, and Peatlands in one of Indonesia's Ramsar sites, the Berbak National park, which has resulted in funding by CIDA of this project. A proposal has been received from UNEP-GEF for co-financing a global project on peatlands and climate change.

Peat management and restoration:

Peatland conservation implementation and restoration projects and activities are ongoing with GPI funding in Belarus, China, Indonesia, Russia (Siberia), South America (focused on paramos -high altitude peatlands - of Ecuador, Columbia, Venezuela, Peru, Costa Rica, Bolivia and Argentina), Southern Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe) and Thailand. These projects involve all major stakeholder groups, and where possible or relevant include a poverty alleviation focus.

Awareness and GPI promotion:

The GPI has been promoted through the web-sites of the partners and the Ramsar Convention. Several posters have been produced providing general information on the GPI, information on the extent of peatlands per country, and peatland distribution all over the world. Several leaflets have been produced with funding support of the GPI, including a general information leaflet, a leaflet on the high altitude peatlands of the Andes, and a leaflet on the Identification and Mapping of Peatlands in Southern Africa (IMPESA).

A GPI Side event has been requested by Wetlands International for the Ramsar CoP8, which will take place in November in Valencia, Spain.

A concept proposal has been submitted by Wetlands International to DGIS for Phase 2 of the Global Wetlands Programme, including GPI has a component.

A written confirmation has been received from Wildlife Habitat Canada of co-funding for GPI 23 of C\$3,9 million (about 2.8 million Euro).

A GPI Web page has been developed (<http://www.wetlands.org/projects/GPI/>) providing the full list of projects in 4 continents.