

**REVISED PROFILE FOR THE RE-VITALIZATION OF THE
INFORMAL DISCUSSION GROUP FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (IDGE)**

(To be agreed by the group in October 2009)

On the basis of various IDGE discussions, suggestions and responses to the Oct. 2008 meeting, the following statements are put forward to be discussed, revised as needed, and agreed as the way forward for IDGE:

1. Title: “THE INFORMAL DISCUSSION GROUP ON THE ENVIRONMENT”

This name retains the existing acronym, IDGE. The name was changed in 2000 to mark an important departure from the emphasis implied by the old name, which referred to an informal “donor” group. IDGE is not a “donor group”. The donor group is represented by the Development Partner Group on Environment (DPG-E), which can participate in IDGE as a group, or as individual members, on a voluntary basis.

2. What is IDGE?: The IDGE is a neutral, informal, impartial, multi-sector, multi-disciplinary, multi-organisational, broad-based “discussion group”, that meet regularly. A group in which like-minded individuals and organizations interested in, and concerned about, current and pending national and international environmental and conservation issues, meet, share information, strategies, lesson learnt, and trade materials, training programs, etc.

The group is open to facilitate dialogue and understanding of any pressing environmental issue. This includes discussion of broader SWAp and JAST issues in environment, in a balanced way so as to raise the profile of relevant, current and cross-cutting environmental and conservation issues in Tanzania, in a regional and global context. It is a group of individuals or members of organization who attend in their own right, and not necessarily representing institutions! A venue to share tools, strategies and approaches to Tanzania conditions, to accelerate mass knowledge transfer.

3. IDGE Mission: To foster dialogue, communicating for better cooperation, coordination and harmony between programs, projects, institutions and networks, through individuals, aimed at synergy in synchronising efforts and sharing knowledge.

IDGE is not an advocacy group! Advocacy work should be taken forward on a case by case basis by the individual in their capacity as a member of an institution, a network, a group or organisation whom they represent. Advocacy will not be the aim of the IDGE as a whole, but of its individual members in their own right!

4. Who can be a member?: Membership of IDGE is open to anyone working in the related field of environment and conservation. It is open to program and project personnel, development workers, advisors, NGO, academic, central and local government offices, CSOs, development partners, consultants, private sector and the public.

IDGE is not a membership society nor a formal association! It is a loose forum, a venue to meet, but to help keep a track on members, mainly for e-mail purposes and sharing announcements and information, all joining individuals are expected to fill in a membership form and file it with the Secretariat, indicate their area of interest and project work.

5. Meeting Chairperson: In keeping with the informal nature of the group, the chair shall rotate and a new chairperson shall be appointed each meeting from members attending to keep the order of business.

The Chairperson is not a fixed position, but a rotating person! At each new meeting, the Chair for the day is elected at the start. The Chairperson has no status as a “representative or spokesman for the IDGE”. Instead, each meeting, it is the TORs of the Chair for that day, to simply keep order of business, follow the agenda and regulate discussions, taking questions in an orderly fashion.

- 6. The IDGE Secretariat:** Each year, members of IDGE will elect by a simple majority by show of hands, from amongst its members, representatives what was known as an “**organising group**”. The Secretariat is made up of a consortium of 3-4 volunteers who, in their own right (not of their institution, unless the institution offers to fund costs), will act as the IDGE Secretariat for a term of 1 year. They will assist to co-chair each meeting of the IDGE and take responsibility for record keeping, minutes, matters arising, forward planning, circulating notices of meetings, keeping the web-page, answer letters, etc, etc.

The Secretariat TORs will include: Minute keeping, arranging specific presentations, generation of a theme-based programme focusing on strategic policy related issues. The organising group will meet, as necessary, between bi-monthly meetings, meet at least once, to develop the agenda for the next meeting, to ensure presentations, hand-outs, etc are properly prepared, to screen articles to go on the web, etc. The organising group will be responsible for taking and disseminating minutes, as well as ensuring the circulation of any other documentation. The members of the Secretariat will amongst themselves divide up the work (ie Secretary, web-site manager, e-group moderator, meeting convenor). The organising group will amongst their members elect a Secretary, who shall represent the IDGE in any external communications, but only in the capacity as in the minutes as agreed by empowerment of its members.

- 7. Proposed Frequency of Meetings:** Meetings shall be held at least every second month, 6 per year, on the first Wednesday of the month, but can be more frequent if members request, but never more than 1/month.

At the start of each calendar year, the Secretariat shall present to the first meeting, a program of events for the year, including meetings, themes, related events such as World Wetlands Day, World Environment Day, Bird Migration Day, etc. The first part of each new meeting will consist of introductions, reviewing ‘minutes’ and matters arising on the discussion of a previous strategic issue. The second part will consist of select thematic presentations by invited speakers or on pre-selected topics from members. The third part will include round the table news or short project presentations, if new, and leave room for AOB. The agenda will be brought to a close 15 minutes before each meeting is scheduled to close to allow for informal networking, perhaps over tea.

- 8. Proposed Services of IDGE:** The Secretariat shall establish for its members, a web-site and moderate an e-group for its members, call forum meetings organise seminars or outings to sites/projects/programs of interest, print circulars, publications, etc. It will post to the website articles sent in by members, as well as send out e-mail shoots of communications between members.

The aim is to post to the site, interested articles, publications, etc sent in by members. To set up a question/answer by circulating to members questions and information raised within the group for open group discussion, information sharing and general communication. Announcement of meetings, seminars, publications, etc, and organise first-hand experience trips to projects/programs where interesting case studies are will help communicate new ideas. There may be scope to also print publications.

- 9. Thematic Meetings:** The IDGE will continue to share information about specific programs, projects and individual studies of interest, during its meetings. It will also work through a theme-based discussions on current, key strategic policy matters, to understand better the extent to which environmental issues are being mainstreamed in order to reduce poverty, and ensure sustainable development.

Topic shall be selected by members, but anticipated it shall be cross-cutting, such as environment and the Tanzania Assistance Strategy (JAST), the PRSP (or MKUKUTA), the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD), local government reform (Decentralization by Devolution).

- 10. Thematic Groups:** The theme-based programme will depend on the organising group organising **theme groups** drawn from the body of the IDGE who will prepare for the next meeting presentations.

Theme groups, shall be smaller working groups of 3-4 “like minded individuals who share something in common”, who will meet, in advance of the next or the scheduled theme IDGE meeting, to prepare for that meeting, develop the meeting agenda, complete with presentations, audio-visuals and hand-outs, supplemented

where appropriate with examples from programs/projects/studies, and will during the next meeting, make presentations on specific issues. The group may dissolve after the meeting, or be re-elected to present again on the same theme at some time in the future.

11. Fund Raising: The IDGE may be housed and supported by benevolent member institution(s), but these institutions shall have no say in the IDGE agenda, nor influence it in any way.

The IDGE shall not have the status of an NGO! It does not have an account, and cannot (at this time) raise nor manage its own funds. However, a benefactor a donor, NGO/CSO may adopt the IDGE, host the Secretariat, hire staff, provide equipment/vehicles, host meeting expenses, support outings, cover cost of publications or training, etc, but the sponsor, shall not have a say on the IDGE as an institution, nor shall it influence nor decide the agenda of meetings nor policy of the group, other than to perhaps offer to sponsor a particular theme session. This will be as a solicited, voluntary donation for which due acknowledgement shall be given.

12. Network Links: The IDGE shall network with other like-minded fora, through joint activities, functions and web-links, but all the while remain with its identity as a discussion group, intact.

IDGE may affiliate with other networks, NGOs, etc (like TNRF, Climate Change Group, WCST, etc), but this shall in no way be taken as the IDGE to endorse the statements and publications or communications of its affiliates. This is purely for information sharing, not advocacy nor policy influence!

13. IDGE Meeting Agenda: The meetings shall have a fixed procedure, as follows:

- Opening Remarks/Welcome (Secretariat)
- Self Introductions (Members)
- Election of Meeting Chairperson (Members)
- Brief overview of aims and objectives of IDGE (Secretariat)
- Re-cap on minutes/Signing into record (Secretariat)
- Feedback on Matters Arising last meeting (Secretariat)
- Theme presentations (Speakers/Theme Group)
- Discussion session (Theme Group)
- IDGE Matters/Next Meeting/Issues, etc (Secretariat)
- Closing Remarks (Chairperson)