

I wonder what is Global Public Goods?

### 1. What are Global Public Goods?

A simple way to define what a Global Public Good (GPG) is as follows: GPG is any good that provides benefits to all people and regions of the planet.

BPGs are characterized by:

- Improve the quality of life of human beings.
- Be freely accessible.
- Cross national borders.
- Its use by one individual does not restrict others from accessing it.

Natural and cultural heritage of humanity. An example of BPG.

The natural and cultural heritage of the planet is made up of a set of unique and diverse places, such as the pyramids of Egypt, the great barrier reef of Australia, the tropical forests and the baroque cathedrals of Latin America and Europe.

The sites that are World Heritage Sites belong to all the citizens of the world, regardless of the territory where they are located. Likewise, they offer global benefits, for example, the benefits and environmental wealth that the Amazon forests represent for humanity are undeniable.

UNESCO seeks to protect these GPGs through the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

The text of the Convention is accessible at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

In recent years, with the advance of globalization, the existence of concerns that affect all countries equally and people regardless of where they live has become clear: migration, terrorism, environmental deterioration, etc. These new global problems demand equally global responses.

For this reason, the BPG concept has been expanded to encompass global actions that tend to correct these new challenges. As an example we can cite the policies of preservation of peace and protection of biodiversity.

### 2. Are Global Public Goods produced by the public sector?

The word BPG can lead to the mistake of believing that these goods are produced exclusively by the public sector or by the States. However, is not like that. The public nature of BPGs refers to the capacity that everyone should have to enjoy them (and not to the public origin of their production).

There are BPGs generated by private sources that are vital to humanity. People who benefit from these assets have advantages over those who do not. Some examples are:

- Technology and Internet access.
- The new drugs that are born from research by multinational companies.

The challenge in this case, as noted below, is to be able to democratize access to these BPGs. And in this field, international development cooperation has an important role to play. In the case of technology, it is important to underline that there is a huge disparity in its access and

enjoyment. This deficit that separates those who have access to technology from those who do not is called the digital gap

Digital gap: some relevant data.

- Communication and information technology is produced by approximately 15% of the world's population.

- While 70% of workers in the United States resort to intensive use of technology, more than 50% of the world's population has not yet made a phone call.

- While in the United States and the EU the proportion of telephones is one in two people, in all of Africa there are less than 14 million for a population of 739 million people.

- Internet users represent just over 5% of the world's population. 88% of these are in rich countries.

- 75% of the information on the Internet is in a single language: English.

### 3. Importance of BPGs nowadays.

As we have indicated, in recent years humanity has become aware of problems that transcend the borders of countries. The BPGs are important today because they help us transform these challenges into opportunities and well-being for all.

In other words, having access to global goods improves people's quality of life.

No one today would think of patenting the wheel, fire, or the number zero for their exclusive use. These are goods that belong to everyone and that have allowed humanity -throughout history- to make a qualitative leap towards progress.

Likewise, the advances that come to transform our societies today must be available for general enjoyment, because they were not created in a vacuum: they were created in a social environment. That is, they are not the product of the effort of a single person or group, but arise thanks to the conditions generated by the collective contribution.

### 4. Different types of BPG.

At first, few BPGs were considered to exist. Today there is an extensive list of them, a list that is constantly growing. In this section, it is important to consider the following data:

- The BPG begin to take shape at the end of the 20th century, when the challenges and opportunities posed by the globalization process are verified.
- Three generations of BPG can be indicated, which reflect the evolution that they have experienced:

**First generation.** Those generated by public investment by the States are considered GPG. They serve to mitigate inequalities and maintain a social balance, reducing migration and conflicts.

Second generation. The BPG concept is expanded to other spheres and natural and cultural resources are beginning to be included.

Third generation. It expands further and goes on to contemplate global policies that seek to address the challenges that affect the entire world.

## EVOLUTION of the BPG

### 1st generation of BPG

- Public infrastructure
- Education
- Social Security
- State Institutions
- Road networks
- Civil protection

### 2nd generation of BPG

- Oceans
- Biodiversity
- Mineral resources
- Atmosphere
- Historical monuments

### 3rd generation of BPG

- Internet
- Air corridors
- Information technology and communication
- Biogenetic information
- Economic stability

#### 5. Global Public Goods: challenges at the beginning of the third millennium.

Although there is an idea of universality attached to the concept of BPG, we must recognize that, in daily practice, millions of people are excluded from its benefits. We pointed out, lines above, the example of the digital divide.

Verifying this exclusion is serious. But more serious is realizing that little is being done to resolve this situation.

In this sense, the main challenge that BPGs currently face is to establish democratic mechanisms to guarantee their supply to all human beings.

There is also another challenge, which has to do with the degradation of the quality of BPG, a challenge that mainly affects two types of goods:

- Natural assets: ecosystems, air quality and climate stability of the planet.
- Goods generated by the States: social services of health, education, political and economic stability.

Facing these challenges (ensuring accessibility and improving the quality of BPGs) necessarily leads us to think that the management of BPGs requires a supranational structure. But we address this issue in the next point.

Global Public Goods and international development cooperation.

The challenges faced by BPG at the beginning of this third millennium must be approached from a joint perspective. In this field, international development cooperation becomes a useful option so BPG management can be efficient and democratic.

It is essential that the cooperation works to create a democratic structure that manages the BPG. Why? Because it is based on a basic premise: to manage global assets, global instruments are needed. There does not seem to be any other mechanism.

Now, building that global structure is not an easy task and involves risks. In addition, there are questions on the horizon that international development cooperation must address, such as the following:

- Who should manage BPGs?
- How and who should finance access to GPGs?
- Who decides when an asset becomes a BPG?
- Who guarantees equitable and participatory access to GPGs?
- Who will be in charge of sanctioning the abuses and processes of degradation and exclusion of the BPG?

BPG: some international cooperation activities.

#### Governance

- Defense of human rights
- Support for the operational capacity of the multilateral system

#### Knowledge

- Network support for the transmission of information
- Support for applied research on Global Public Goods

#### Financial stability

- Support for the establishment of international norms and standards
- Support for regional integration processes

#### Security

- Conflict prevention
- • Food safety programs

#### Healthcare

- Support for research on vaccination
- • Access to basic medicines

#### Environment

- Programs to combat climate change
  - Water source regeneration programs
6. What can I do?

There is much that citizens can do to contribute to the protection, improvement and expansion of BPG. Much of the solutions and opportunities to make this world a fairer and more equitable place are found at the local level and in changing our habits and attitudes.

we give you some clues:

#### LET'S GET INFORMED

The BPG issue is complex. In order to act with well-founded criteria, we must carefully study this reality.

Organization created through an agreement between Sweden and France signed in April 2003. Its mandate is to assess and prioritize GPGs and make recommendations to policymakers and investors on how to improve and expand their supply.

<http://www.gpgtaskforce.org/>

#### LET'S GET INVOLVED

Many organizations work to protect BPGs. We can investigate what they do and how they work.

“Global Campaign for deep Reforms in the International Systems of Institutions”. This campaign is promoted by many actors from global civil society, who seek to generate changes in international institutions through processes of negotiation and consensus with government sectors and civil society.

<http://www.reformwatch.net/>

#### LET'S CHANGE OUR HABITS

It is not necessary to belong to a formal organization to protect, improve and expand BPGs. We can also change our habits and attitudes to lessen the pressure on them. we suggest you:

- Consume certified products and support fair trade.
- Save water and energy in our homes.
- Recycle.
- Make responsible use of the resources that the State makes available to us.

The mission of the World Resources Institute (WRI) is to guide human society towards ways of life that protect the environment to meet the needs and aspirations of present and future generations.

<http://www.wri.org/>

#### Global Public Goods and Private Goods

Global public goods (GPGs) are better understood when compared to private goods.

Private goods are produced for exclusive and excluding consumption. They are associated with property rights. Their owners can determine how to use them, for example: consume them, rent them, or sell them.

Public goods are goods that belong to the public domain. It means, it is the set of things that are available for all people to access and consume freely.

Global public goods offer benefits that ripple across countries and regions, across rich and poor populations, and even across generations.

Some BPGs are global in nature (like the atmosphere). Others are intentionally globalized (for example, a global public policy for disease control).

Source: Kaul, Igne and Others (2005): Why are global public goods of interest today? Available at: [www.undp.org/globalpublicgoods/globalization/pdfs/spanish1.pdf](http://www.undp.org/globalpublicgoods/globalization/pdfs/spanish1.pdf)

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SUBJECT

BOOKS:

Alonso, José Antonio (2002):

Bienes Públicos Globales y Cooperación al Desarrollo.

En Intermón-Oxfam (2002): La Realidad de la Ayuda.

Barcelona: Intermón-Oxfam.

Capel, Horacio (2003): El Drama de los Bienes Comunes. La necesidad de un programa de investigación. Electronic magazine: Biblio 3W. Bibliographical Journal of Geography and Social Sciences. Universidad de Barcelona ISSN: 1138-9796. Depósito Legal: B. 21.742-98 Vol. VIII, nº 458, 25 de agosto de 2003.

Available at: [www.ub.es/geocrit/b3w-458.htm](http://www.ub.es/geocrit/b3w-458.htm) Kaul, Inge y otros (2005): Why are global public goods of interest today? Available at:

[www.undp.org/globalpublicgoods/globalization/pdfs/spanish1.pdf](http://www.undp.org/globalpublicgoods/globalization/pdfs/spanish1.pdf)

WEBSITES:

ATTAC Madrid: <http://www.attacmadrid.org/d/5/040528083423.php>