A very old man once directed his gardener to plant a beautiful but slow growing tree. “Do you realize,” asked the gardener, “this tree won’t bear fruit for decades?” “Why then,” said the old man, “plant it right away, for there is no time to lose.” Protecting the environment for current and future generations is at the heart of sustainable development. And like a slow growing tree, it requires the initial spadework and continual care.
Increasing Participation by Women

Global population growth and fertility rates have begun to drop, in part due to increased participation by women in education and development activities. Case studies in Africa identify women as the “major keepers” of forests and home gardens, yet they are often excluded from government-supported agricultural programs. GEF experience has shown that enhancing women’s participation in biodiversity conservation and in delivery of renewable energy services enhances the intergenerational link.

A GEF project in Mozambique targets women’s groups as key partners in the conservation and sustainable use of 7,000 square kilometers of coastal and 2,500 square kilometers of marine areas inhabited by threatened and endangered turtles and dugongs. Social surveys showed that women’s groups were the primary caretakers of turtles that reach the shore and that women determined who had access and control. Women have long opposed illegal hunting safaris and have assisted the project in developing restrictions on marine harvesting. These women’s groups will now help manage the project’s community microenterprise program, identifying selection criteria and participating in the final selection and management of projects receiving microcredit. (Implemented by the Government of Mozambique/World Bank)

Malawi’s energy program is heavily biased towards wood fuel, accounting for more than 90 percent of the country’s total energy supply; just 4 percent of the population has access to grid-connected electricity. A GEF project in Malawi will reduce wood fuel dependence by introducing alternative forms of renewable energy such as photovoltaics (PVs) in rural and urban households as well as the commercial and industrial sectors. Microcredit loans will enable women clients of community banks to buy these technologies in bulk. Women’s groups will be represented in the project’s District Development Committees, which are the local units for delivery of PV systems. (Implemented by Malawi’s Department of Energy/UNDP)

Tapping Young People’s Conservation Potential

Over one billion people are between the ages of 15 to 24 years. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 850 million reside in developing countries and that some 500 million additional jobs will be needed in the coming decade for these new entrants into the workforce. With urban and industrial employment unable to absorb this new wave of workers, the burden will be felt in rural and agricultural sectors. This will mean increased demand for resource-based livelihoods and labor-intensive rural enterprises. Experience in GEF-financed projects has demonstrated that young people can be gainfully employed and serve as active partners in sustainable development projects.

Some 150 of the poorest communities in the Amazon region of Peru — roughly 200,000 people — are the beneficiaries of a promising rural energy program that addresses post-
conflict reconstruction while providing the energy necessary to power the basic infrastructure required for recovery. Diesel/photo-voltaic hybrid systems using energy storage batteries will help maintain a long-term energy supply for small-scale industries. Youth groups will operate the community-based diesel generators and teams of young employees will be recruited for the collection of agreed-upon energy maintenance fees. (Implemented by a local non-profit, ILZRO RAPS-Peru, which is contributing close to $12 million in cofinance, and UNDP)

An inventory of globally significant plants and animals in Bale Mountains National Park and nearby Harenna Forests in Ethiopia points to a wide diversity of medicinal plants. However, these plants are increasingly threatened by agricultural expansion, deforestation, and over-harvesting. A GEF project is supporting farmer-based cultivation trials of selected threatened and indigenous species in home gardens. Social surveys showed that elders provided the best advice in identifying and conserving medicinal plants, including their “safe and efficacious herbal remedies.” Traditional health providers are mostly elderly women who have used these herbal remedies in home health care. Youth groups were formed to cultivate similar gardens along the boundaries of the villages and market herbal remedies outside the villages. (Implemented by the Government of Ethiopia and the World Bank)

**Saving Biological, Historical, and Cultural Heritage**

The United Nations Social Summits in 1995 and 2000 underscored the importance of recognizing “the cultural dimension of development to ensure respect for cultural diversity and that of our common human cultural heritage.” There are over 5,000 indigenous or tribal groups worldwide with an estimated population of about 600 million. Indigenous groups are the caretakers of many of the world’s reserves of biological diversity and sites of historical and cultural significance. Recognizing the contributions of cultural groups not only corresponds to the World Heritage Convention, but also provides necessary support to people living under conditions of extreme poverty.

GEF is funding in-situ conservation and compatible ecotourism activities that benefit tribal communities living in and around five of the most important cultural and historical sites in Ecuador. These include: Sangay National Park, a World Heritage Site of more than 270,000 hectares in the provinces of Chimborazo, Tungurahua, and Morona Santiago, occupied by the Shuar and Quichua indigenous communities and some of the country’s most diverse species; Cotacachi-Cayapas ecological reserve, home to the pre-Colombian archaeological site of La Tolita and the Chachi and highland Quichua tribes; Machalilla National Park, a two-mile transitional zone between dry and humid tropical forests, under which lies the remains of the Machalilla, Mantena, and Chorrera cultures; Yasuni National Park, a World Heritage Site occupied by the Huaorani and lowland Quichua tribes, as well as more than 700 species; and the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador’s best-known World Heritage Site, which has been called the “living laboratory of Darwin’s...
Koprulu Kanyon National Park, in the Taurus Mountains of southern Turkey, is a World Heritage Site featuring international cultural heritage, including ruins of the ancient (400 B.C.) city of Selge and the Greco-Roman Theater. GEF’s project is encouraging 18 villages with a population of 25,000 people to adopt sustainable agricultural practices in the cultivation of traditional food crops, wheat and barley, and the harvesting of pine resin. In addition, the project hires local people for in-situ park conservation activities, and grants small loans for ecotourism. Conservation is directed towards preserving the world’s largest remaining pristine cypress (Cupressus sempervirens) forests and the Mediterranean maquis, the thick underbrush unique to the region. (Implemented by the Government of Turkey and the World Bank)

Poland’s Bialowieza Primeval Forest, a UNESCO-designated “Biosphere Reserve” and World Heritage Site, is shared with Belarus, and the Sudety Mountains are shared with the Czech Republic. A GEF project adopted a transboundary approach to ensuring forest conservation — setting up a Polish/Belarus scientific committee with the principle objective of promoting cooperation in the Bialowieza transboundary forest. This resulted in numerous scientific exchanges on biological issues, human uses of the forest, pollutants, and the development of collaboration in park management activities with international organizations. The project also set up a Polish/Czech scientific committee which tackled the common issue of dying forests in the Sudety Mountains by looking at the pollution impacts on the forests in the “Black Triangle,” an area with 16 large coal burning power plants and smelters. Polish and Czech researchers jointly produced the first ecosystem maps to enhance collaborative management of a transboundary forest area. (Implemented by the Government of Poland and the World Bank)
At the Earth Summit in 1992, it was agreed that most financing to achieve the goals of Agenda 21 would come from within each country’s domestic resources. New and additional external funds were deemed necessary, however, to share the costs — and benefits — of sustainability with developing countries and nations transitioning to market economies.

Finance: The GEF has been entrusted with channeling a major portion of these “new and additional” funds on behalf of current and future generations. In 1994, 34 nations pledged $2 billion to the GEF, and in 1998, 36 nations committed another $2.75 billion. Today, GEF’s portfolio encompasses close to 700 projects in 140 nations. GEF has allocated nearly $3 billion and raised another $8 billion in co-financing from recipient governments, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private industry.

Partnerships: GEF’s institutional framework, or cluster of partnerships, is many faceted. A total of 166 nations participate — and GEF’s 32-member governing Council balances the interests of all, developing and developed. Projects are fundamentally driven by country priorities related to sustainable development and the global environment. But they are also the primary means by which the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are put into practice on the ground. GEF-financed initiatives also support the goals of the Convention to Combat Desertification, extend the ozone layer protection of the Montreal Protocol to Russia, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe, and underwrite most international waters programs and projects worldwide.

Strategy: GEF is pursuing a new generation of projects that recognizes the systemic nature and inter-relatedness of environmental problems and their links to economic and social development, and the need to forge new and substantive alliances to address them.

Three issues are particularly important for ensuring positive intergenerational impacts in the context of achieving truly sustainable development:

* increased participation by women in environmental conservation and food production
* expanded interventions targeted to youth groups and people entering the global workforce, notably those with resource-based livelihoods
* improved protection of vulnerable cultural groups, including those residing in sites of cultural and historical importance.
The Global Environment Facility is a multilateral financial mechanism that assists developing countries and countries with economies in transition to protect the global environment in four areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, and ozone layer depletion. GEF has funded more than 650 projects in 140 countries, committing close to $3 billion in grants and raising an additional $8 billion in cofinance. These projects are implemented by the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Environment Program, and the World Bank on behalf of the GEF.

GEF and Sustainable Development

First coined by the Brundtland Report in 1987, “sustainable development” became the theme of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. GEF is a catalyst for sustainable development, combining forces for environmental protection and sound economic and social development. One means of linking these forces is by focusing on issues of gender, age, and culture—key elements of intergenerational impacts.

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