



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

A photograph of an elderly indigenous woman with a joyful expression, wearing a wide-brimmed brown hat and a vibrant blue knitted sweater. She is sitting on the ground in a natural, outdoor setting with mountains in the background. In front of her is a large pile of smooth, grey stones. A colorful, striped textile is draped to her right. The scene is captured in bright, natural light.

USER GUIDE
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
AND GEF PROJECT FINANCING

A photograph of two women in traditional attire walking through a rice paddy field at sunset. The women are wearing blue short-sleeved shirts, patterned aprons, and long, colorful skirts (one pink and one red). They are carrying large, woven baskets on their backs, which appear to contain wooden poles or tools. They are walking on a narrow dirt path that runs through the paddy field, which is filled with young rice seedlings. The background shows rolling green hills and mountains under a dramatic sky with orange and purple clouds. The text "WHO WE ARE" is overlaid in white capital letters on a dark red rectangular background in the upper right portion of the image.

WHO WE ARE



The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a unique international partnership of governments, international institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), Indigenous Peoples, and the private sector that supports actions to protect the global environment.

The GEF finances activities that developing countries undertake to address drivers of global environmental degradation and to fulfill their commitments under several global environmental conventions, including the United Nations (UN) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge and ecosystem management practices are recognized by the GEF as highly relevant for protection of the global environmental commons, environmental management, sustainable development, and increased resilience.

The GEF sees Indigenous Peoples as distinct communities whose identity and culture are inextricably linked to the land, territories and natural resources they depend upon.

Through its operations and policies, the GEF supports the realization of the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



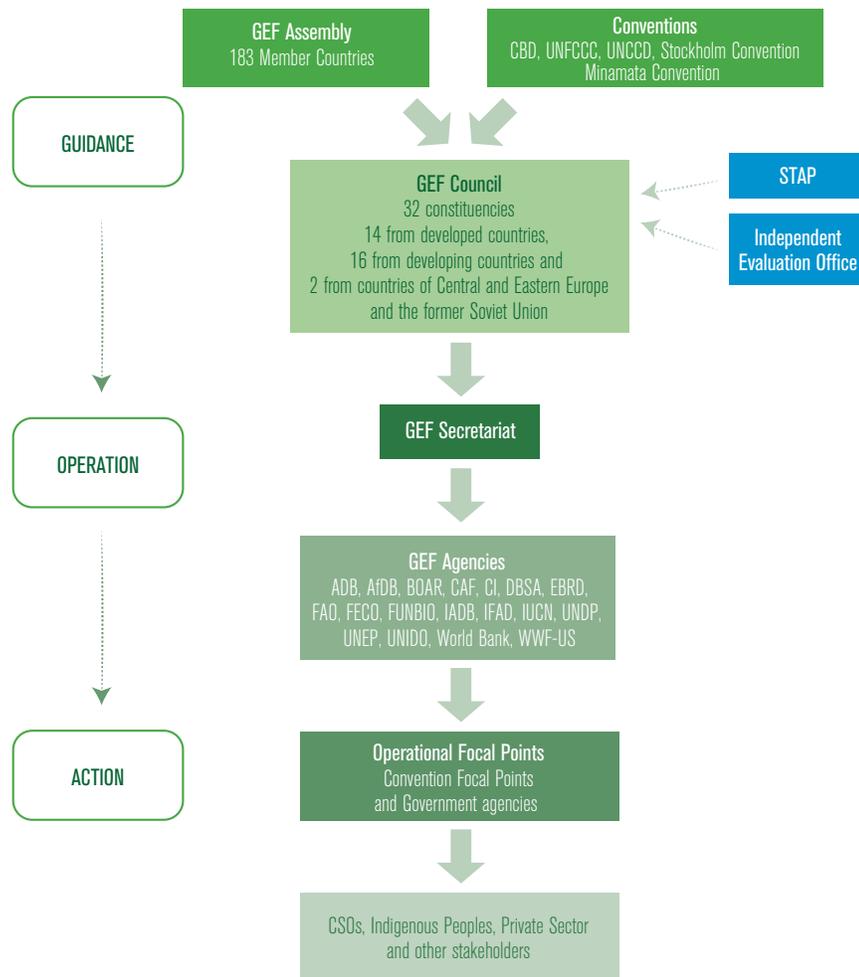
HOW WE OPERATE



To fulfill its mandate, the GEF partnership has a multi-part structure. It is composed of the Assembly, the Council¹, the Secretariat, the Agencies², the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), and the Independent Evaluation Office.

The close interaction among these actors results in the development and management of projects and programs. These on-the-ground actions are implemented through collaboration between national and international stakeholders, under the coordination of the GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) in each country.

GEF Structure



- 1 The Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Conventions provide strategic guidance to the Council.
- 2 The GEF partnership includes 18 Agencies that work closely with government agencies, CSOs, the private sector, Indigenous Peoples, and other stakeholders, to design, develop and implement GEF-funded projects and programs.



OUR FUNDING APPROACH



The GEF supports developing countries by providing grants or concessional financing for measures to achieve agreed global environmental benefits. The GEF only funds the incremental—or additional—costs of activities that generate benefits to the global environment while promoting national sustainable development initiatives.

To enhance effectiveness, sustainability, and partnership, GEF-financed projects require co-financing. Co-financing is defined as the resources that are additional to the GEF grant and that are provided by various sources, including GEF Agencies, governments, CSOs, and the private sector, that support the implementation of the GEF-financed project and the achievement of its objectives. Types of co-financing include grants, loans, guarantees, and in-kind resources.³

The GEF provides project funding through the following modalities:

Full Sized Projects (FSP)—Over \$2 million: support projects that are proposed by various partners, including Indigenous Peoples, in line with national priorities and GEF strategies.

Medium Sized Projects (MSP)—Up to \$2 million: promote innovative initiatives by a range of stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples. They are typically smaller scale, and follow expedited procedures for approval.

GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP)—Up to \$50,000: provides funding for CSOs, including Indigenous Peoples organizations, in developing countries for small-scale community-based projects that contribute to global environment and sustainable livelihoods.

Enabling Activities: facilitate essential communication requirements to Conventions, including preparation of national reporting, strategies and action plans.

Programmatic Approaches: support large-scale, integrated partnership initiatives, with a coordinated set of FSPs and MSPs, for larger leverage and impact.

The GEF provides funding for the following areas of work, and multi-focal and cross-cutting issues and programs:

- Biodiversity
- Chemicals and Wastes
- Climate Change
- International Waters
- Land Degradation
- Sustainable Forest Management

³ Refer to Co-financing Policy (<https://www.thegef.org/gef/node/10527>)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES





Indigenous Peoples' involvement in the GEF varies, ranging from directly accessing GEF funds (e.g. leading a project or receiving benefits as a stakeholder) to participating in processes that influence how funds are distributed and implemented (e.g. through participation in relevant Conventions and GEF Council meetings or GEF policy development and strategic planning).

There are many possibilities for Indigenous Peoples to access GEF funding. The type of GEF funding that Indigenous Peoples may pursue depends on the size of the project, community or organization capacity, competing priorities within a country, previous and existing projects, and other considerations.

Most commonly, Indigenous Peoples pursue GEF project funding through the following channels:

Small Grants Programme (regular project grants \$25000-50000; strategic projects up to \$150000)

- Indigenous Peoples or organization can be the project lead.
- Indigenous Peoples can work in partnership with a national NGO for a project.
- All GEF focal areas covered.
- Indigenous Peoples' representatives are often part of SGP National Steering Committees.
- Implementing a pilot Indigenous Fellows Program.

Medium and Full Sized Projects

- Indigenous Peoples organization can be the project lead (Project Executing and Implementing Agency).
- Indigenous Peoples organization can be a sub-contractor for a component of a project.
- Indigenous Peoples can be a beneficiary of the project.
- All GEF focal areas covered.

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (small grants up to \$50000, large grants up to \$1 million; average size ~\$150000)

- Indigenous Peoples organization can be the project lead.
- Indigenous Peoples can be a beneficiary of the project.
- Projects focused in specific Biodiversity Hotspots.
- Designated Regional Implementation Team (RITs) coordinates projects in the identified hotspots.

Process for Medium and Full Size Projects

The development of a Medium Size Project (MSP) and Full Size Project (FSP) proposal for GEF financing has to consider several elements, including the drivers of the global environmental problem to be addressed, conformity with national strategies and actions, how global environmental benefits will be generated, the main stakeholders to be engaged, and how to ensure the sustainability of the proposed activities. A step-by-step process is provided below.

- 1) **Contact your country's GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP):** As a first step to pursuing a medium or full sized project, interested Indigenous Peoples should contact their country's GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP). This person is responsible for, among other activities, the coordination of GEF projects to ensure consistency with national priorities, clarifying possible GEF funding modalities and resources, helping frame the initial idea, and ensuring complementarity to avoid duplication of activities. A list of all eligible country's OFPs can be found on the GEF's website.⁴
- 2) **Participate in GEF programming and other events:** Learn about GEF policies, strategies, and approaches through national dialogues, Extended Constituency Workshops, and other GEF-organized events. Participate in the GEF's strategic programming exercises at the national level, as relevant, to identify national priorities for GEF-financed projects.
- 3) **Meet the eligibility criteria:** For a project or program to be considered for GEF funding, it must be undertaken in an eligible country, be country-driven and consistent with national priorities, address at least one of the GEF focal area strategies, be endorsed by the OFP, and comply with GEF policies and strategies.
- 4) **Choose a GEF Agency:** The GEF Agency is responsible for the projects and programs and supports project proponents throughout the

project cycle. This Agency will be the Indigenous Peoples' partner at all stages of the project, along with other stakeholders. GEF Agencies have different comparative advantages, so Indigenous Peoples may want to consult with several Agencies to determine the best fit. For a full list of each GEF Agency's comparative advantages, consult the GEF document *The A to Z of the GEF*.⁵

- 5) **Select a type of modality:** As described in the previous section, the GEF provides several project modalities. Indigenous Peoples may pursue small, medium and full size projects, depending on organization capacity and project scope.
- 6) **Initiate process for preparation, review and approval of project:** The process for developing a proposal for full and medium sized projects is similar; however, MSP can go through a simplified one-step approval process. For an FSP, the project proponent must first develop a Project Identification Form (PIF)⁶, and then a Project Document that is used to seek GEF CEO endorsement. Indigenous Peoples can find the project documentation templates and sample project forms on the GEF's website.⁷ The GEF's publication, the *A to Z of the GEF*, provides detailed guidance on the project development process.

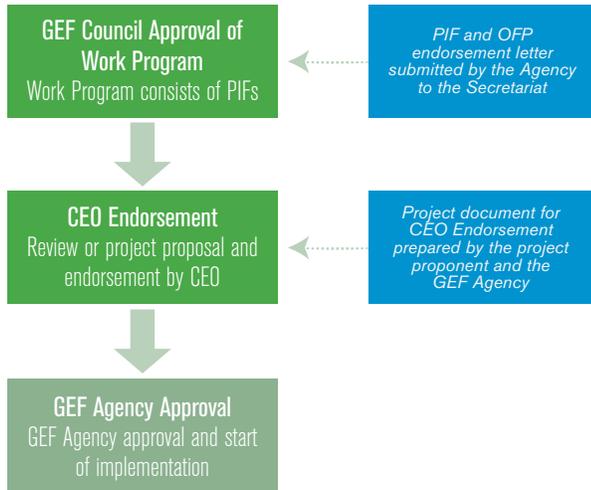
4 See https://www.thegef.org/gef/focal_points_list

5 See <https://www.thegef.org/gef/pubs/AZ>.

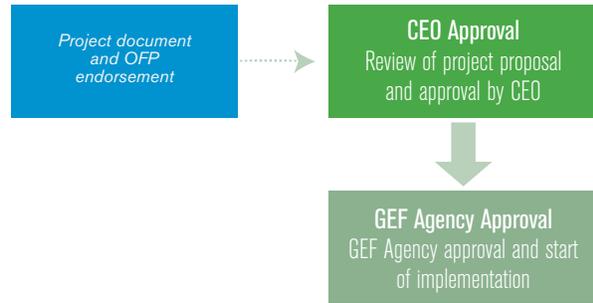
6 The PIF process is optional for MSP.

7 Templates can be found at https://www.thegef.org/gef/guidelines_templates

FSP Project Cycle



MSP Project Cycle*



* MSPs have the option of either a one- or two-step approach, i.e. with or without a PIF.



Projects through GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP)

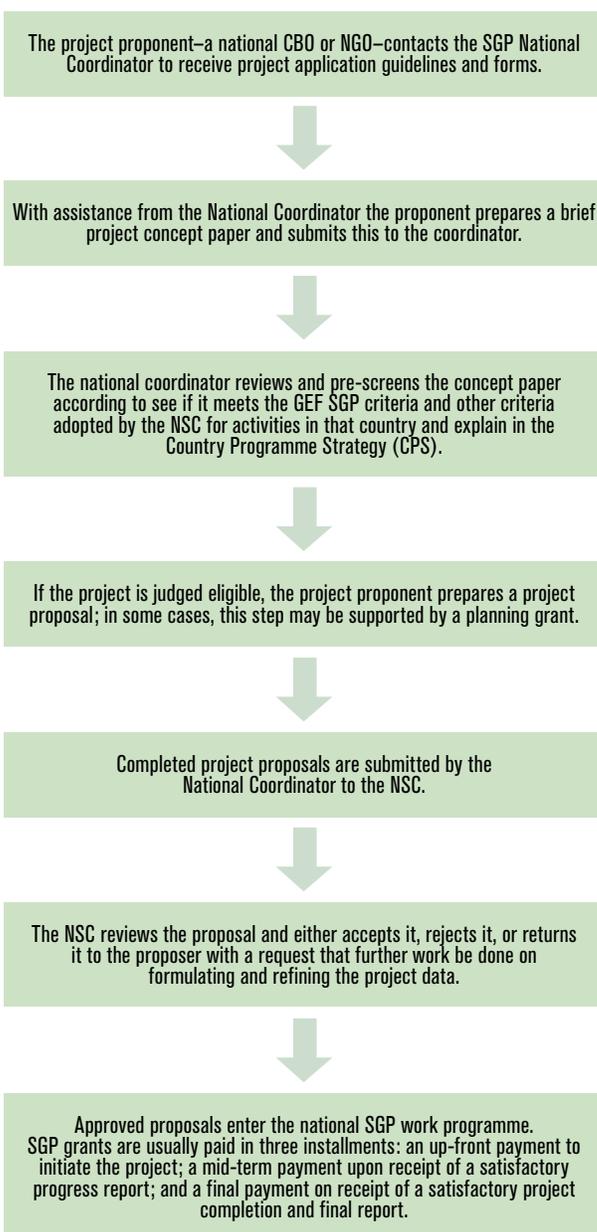
The GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP), implemented by UNDP, is an important GEF corporate program where Indigenous Peoples have been actively involved. The GEF SGP provides financial and technical support to projects that conserve and restore the environment, while enhancing people's well-being and livelihoods. The GEF SGP grants are managed at the country level and made directly to CSOs, including Indigenous Peoples organizations. The regular maximum grant amount per project is \$50000 but averages around \$25000. Through a specific call for proposals, the GEF SGP can also support strategic projects up to \$150000. More than 15% of the GEF SGP projects are accessed and managed by Indigenous Peoples organizations.

The GEF SGP funding can be accessed directly by an Indigenous Peoples organization or with their CSO counterparts. The call for proposals and decision making process of GEF SGP grants are initiated at the country level, where the program is managed by the respective UNDP Country Office or national host institution (which can be a national NGO or environmental trust fund) with a designated SGP National Coordinator.

Proposals submitted to the GEF SGP need to demonstrate: a) how the proposed project meets the GEF SGP criteria by articulating how project objectives and activities would have an impact in the relevant GEF focal areas and strategic initiatives; and b) how the project is aligned to the targets and objectives of the GEF SGP Country Programme Strategy (CPS). More information can be found on each country page of the GEF SGP website.⁸

As a means to increase the ability of *indigenous peoples* to access SGP grant funding, the programme has developed flexible project preparation and design processes, such as giving small planning grants to communities to support proposal development, accepting proposals in local languages as well as in participatory video and photo formats that build on oral traditions (in lieu of written project proposals).

GEF SPG Project Development Process



⁸ A list of countries and links to their strategies can be found here: https://sgp.undp.org/index.php?option=com_countrypages&view=countrypages&Itemid=219

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund is a global program that provides grants to CSOs and other private sector partners to protect critical biodiversity. The GEF is one of the seven contributors to the fund, along with l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. CEPF invests in biodiversity hotspots, the Earth's biologically richest and most threatened areas. CEPF works in developing countries and strategically targets priority areas for conservation within these hotspots for maximum impact. From 2009 until 2015, almost 14% of CEPF's projects involved Indigenous Peoples.

CEPF grant opportunities are communicated through calls for proposals on the website and in its newsletter.⁹ Projects are categorized in to small grants (up to \$50000) and large grants (up to \$1 million). For small and large grants, grantees must complete a Letter of Inquiry. Smaller projects have a streamlined process involving approval by the Regional Implementation Team, CEPF's on-the-ground representative in the hotspot. Larger projects develop a full proposal and are approved by the CEPF Secretariat.

Biodiversity hotspots that will receive CEPF funding, for all or part of 2016–2021 include:

- Cerrado
- East Melanesian Islands
- Eastern Afromontane
- Guinean Forests of West Africa
- Indo-Burma
- Madagascar and Indian Ocean Islands
- Mediterranean
- Tropical Andes
- Wallacea

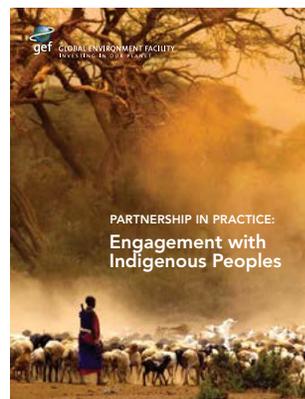
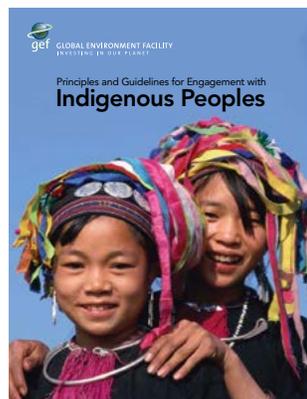
⁹ See <http://www.cepf.net/grants/Pages/default.aspx> for an updated listing of CEPF grants currently open.



INCORPORATING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INTO GEF OPERATIONS



The GEF has adopted a number of policies and guidelines to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are part of all relevant aspects of the GEF's work. Most relevant to Indigenous Peoples interested in the GEF's approach to engaging with Indigenous Peoples are the GEF documents *Principles and Guidelines for Engagement with Indigenous Peoples*¹⁰ and *Partnership in Practice: Engagement with Indigenous Peoples*.¹¹ These publications include policies and strategies for the participation of Indigenous Peoples at the GEF and an analysis of projects involving Indigenous Peoples including highlights and lessons learned.



The GEF's policies and guidelines have been developed in close consultation with Indigenous Peoples, CSOs, and other partners. As a key mechanism to implement these policies and principles, the GEF has established the Indigenous Peoples Advisory Group (IPAG). It consists of Indigenous Peoples' representatives, an independent expert, a representative from the GEF Agencies and the GEF Secretariat. The IPAG meets regularly to discuss and implement important elements of the *Principles and Guidelines*, including capacity development, financial mechanisms, and monitoring for Indigenous Peoples-related projects, among other issues relevant to enhancing partnership between Indigenous Peoples and the GEF. Indigenous Peoples are also actively represented in the GEF-CSO Network¹² through three Indigenous Peoples focal points.

¹⁰ Refer to <https://www.thegef.org/gef/pubs/principles-and-guidelines-engagement-indigenous-peoples>)

¹¹ Refer to <https://www.thegef.org/gef/epubs/engagement-with-indigenous-peoples>

¹² Refer to the GEF CSO Network website (www.gefcso.org)

FUTURE DIRECTION





The GEF supports the expansion of its project portfolio involving Indigenous Peoples and regular review of its policies and guidelines to maintain consistency with international standards. Several approaches have been identified through consultations with Indigenous Peoples, including:

- 1) Further facilitate Indigenous Peoples' participation in relevant GEF processes and projects by applying the relevant safeguards, public involvement, and other policies and guidelines in a consistent manner.
- 2) Strengthen Indigenous Peoples' capacity and their organizational capacity in the longer term, to enable management of relevant initiatives and projects on the global environment.
- 3) Further explore options for establishing new and/or strengthening existing programs and funds that support Indigenous Peoples projects.

The GEF will continue to pursue all of these approaches and looks forward to continued dialogue with Indigenous Peoples to expand its partnerships in the future.





ABOUT THE GEF

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, the GEF has provided \$14.5 billion in grants and mobilized \$75.4 billion in additional financing for almost 4,000 projects. The GEF has become an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector to address global environmental issues.

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