



NEW REPORT




How Conservation Trust Funds Are Driving Progress for Nature

For generations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities have been the stewards of their lands and waters, dedicated to conserving and protecting their environments, but they often face obstacles such as limited financial support. To bridge this gap, the GEF has helped build national institutional capacity through the establishment of and support to Conservation Trust Funds. As a result, CTFs are now vital to countries' work to meet the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.




WHAT ARE CTFs?

CTFs are legally independent institutions designed to support sustained financing for environmental initiatives, in alignment with government objectives. These funds come in various forms including **trusts, foundations, non-profits,** and **national associations.**

They mobilize:

-  international donors
-  national governments
-  the private sector

And provide grants to:

-  national parks agencies
-  Indigenous groups
-  local communities

This approach helps countries accelerate their progress to meet global environmental goals. CTFs are important partners for governments working to fulfill national, regional, and international commitments

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BENEFITS OF CTFs

- ✓ Stability throughout political transitions and economic cycles
- ✓ Institutional memory and expertise about past successes and failures
- ✓ Steady relationships with donors, civil society, and local communities

GEF SUPPORT

The GEF has provided more than \$320 million to 60 CTFs over the past three decades. Most have used this initial capitalization to leverage far more funding over the years, including from other international donors such as: the GCF, the Adaptation Fund, KfW, AFD, FFEM, USAID, Norad, Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, David & Lucile Packard Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and World Wildlife Fund.



Sustained Funding for Protected Areas

A major priority for CTFs is covering the recurrent costs of managing protected areas—including paying staff. They do this by investing the funds received as endowments or “sinking funds” (similar to reserve funds) to provide reliable, long-term financial flows to protected areas.

Properly-funded protected areas ensure that high biodiverse areas have predictable, long-term funding for staff, park rangers, and local community support. Well-managed protected areas help ensure healthy terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems, protect endangered species, sequester carbon, and support sustainable livelihoods. These include priority areas such as World Heritage and RAMSAR

Sites, Biosphere Reserves, nationally-recognized protected areas, and other effective area-based conservation measures identified as biologically rich and threatened hotspots.

Protected areas are often difficult to manage given their size and location—e.g., logistical difficulties, scarcity of trained personnel, and competing interests over land and natural resource use. These challenges are especially acute in tropical and ocean settings. Overcoming them—and achieving the desired biodiversity impacts—requires predictable budget allocations, management plans, equipment, trained staff, clear boundaries, and consistent community engagement.

PANDEMIC SUPPORT

During COVID-19, CTFs helped countries maintain their biodiversity goals through sustained support to protected areas. The Guyana Protected Areas Trust provided payments to rangers in the country’s only Indigenous-owned protected area. In Colombia, Fondo Acción ensured that payments for ecosystem services continued, to incentivize communities to value their forests rather than log them under the economic pressures triggered by the pandemic. In Bolivia, The National Service of Protected Areas received stable operational funding throughout the pandemic from FUNDESAP.



SUPPORT FOR MARINE AND COASTAL PROTECTED AREAS

Over the past two decades, conservation trusts have widened their focus to include marine and coastal protected areas (with a lens towards included freshwater protections)—focusing on investment, expertise, and enforcement capacity. To meet the 2030 global biodiversity goals, the world will need to add 10 million square km of marine protected areas per year. These new areas will require stable funding, long-term management strategies, and inclusive engagement with coastal communities and national authorities to effectively address harmful fishing subsidies. CTFs including **The MedFund, PACIFICO, the Mesoamerican Reef Fund, the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund, and the Micronesia Conservation Trust** are among those focusing on these issues, such as:

- ✓ Funding for improved fishing gear that minimizes bycatch (non-target species)
- ✓ Improved solid waste and wastewater management
- ✓ Support measures for migratory species, mangroves, reefs, and fish spawning sites
- ✓ Collaboration with local fishing communities on fish replenishment zones, size and species limits, and specific closed seasons or no-take areas
- ✓ Emergency funds and new insurance products for coral reef repair after storms

