Conserving forests for the benefit of nature and people

A long history of continuous support for forests

Over the past three decades, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has invested nearly **$6 billion in projects and programs to conserve and protect forests globally**. Preserving forests – especially tropical primary forests – and restoring degraded forests are the most efficient ways to store and sequester carbon, protect biodiversity, and secure the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities at the same time. Importantly, preserving and restoring degraded forests are also conditions to meet the globally agreed objectives of the Rio Conventions and the United Nations Forum on Forests.

Promoting integrated, whole-of-economy, and systemic approaches, the GEF supports developing countries in their pathways toward sustainable development, balancing the conservation of nature that sustains life on earth and the equitable prosperity needed for all.

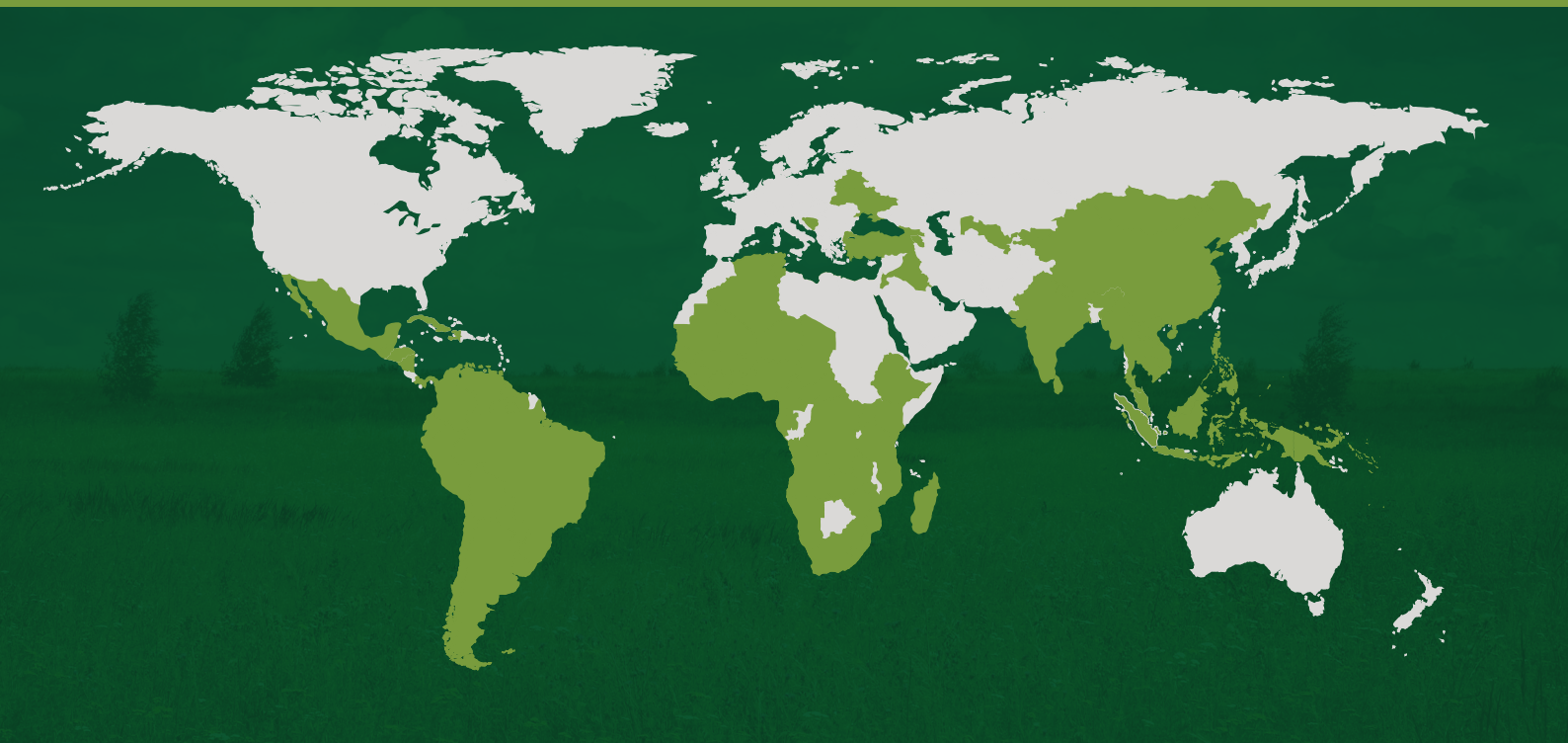
The continuous alarming forest loss, exacerbated by increasing wildfires fueled by climate change, is a tremendous and complex challenge. With its sustained experience and global mandates, the GEF partnership is uniquely positioned to reverse this destructive trend of forest loss. In so doing, it can work with all engaged countries and partners to build a world where humans and nature can live in harmony.

Forests in GEF-8: Focus on primary forests and beyond

Building on more than 30 years' experience of investments to conserve forests, the GEF is implementing its most advanced forest strategy yet to tackle the complex and interrelated drivers of forest loss and degradation, as well as the multiple barriers against reversing these drivers. GEF-8 programming is anchored on this ambitious strategy, which focuses on maintaining and restoring the integrity and functionality of forest ecosystems. This is critical for combating the planetary crises of biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation, and pollution.

To maximize the impact of its investments, the GEF strategy pursues a set of simultaneous objectives: conserving remaining primary forests and raising awareness of their vital importance at the global level; promoting large-scale and multi-country programmatic approaches to foster cooperation and synergies; targeting investments with the greatest impact, such as sustainable finance and institutional reforms; supporting restoration of degraded forest ecosystems; and promoting who whole-of-economy and inclusive approaches to create sustainable and transformative changes.

Geographical distribution of GEF-8 forest projects (2022-2026)



PROGRAMMING IN GEF-8

To achieve its goal of forest conservation, sustainable management, and restoration, the GEF used its increased eighth replenishment for the 2022-2026 cycle t o expand the scale, ambition, and anticipated impact of its investments. In total, as of August 2025, $1.7 billion of GEF-8 financing has been invested in projects and programs related to forest conservation, leveraging another $11 billion in co-financing. These investments supported 217 projects in 102 countries, as well as six global and five regional programs.

The GEF's strategy on forests is implemented through multiple vehicles across the entire GEF-8 programming architecture, using two modalities: Integrated Programs (IPs) and stand-alone projects. In GEF-8, the Amazon, Congo and Other Critical Forest Biomes IP is the most important vehicle supporting the strategy, targeting the most significant biomes of primary forests on the planet. It mobilizes $307 million in GEF grants, leveraging approximately $1.5 billion in co-financing.

Other significant IPs include Wildlife Conservation for Development, Ecosystems Restoration, Food Systems, and the Net-Zero Nature Positive Accelerator. Together, these IPs incorporate key activities in all types of forests in eligible countries. Their conservation and sustainable management generate significant benefits for global biodiversity, climate, land, and people.

Furthermore, several focal area objectives in the GEF-8 Programming Directions provide entry points for national, regional, and global stand-alone forest projects. These projects are tailored to the specific needs of eligible countries. Through these focal area objectives, the GEF engages all interested countries in implementing the strategy on forests, expanding the geographical scope and type of interventions supported by the IPs.

GEF-8 EXPECTED PROJECT RESULTS

Facilitate the creation or expansion of **4.5M hectares of protected areas**

Strengthen management effectiveness of more than **115M hectares of protected areas**

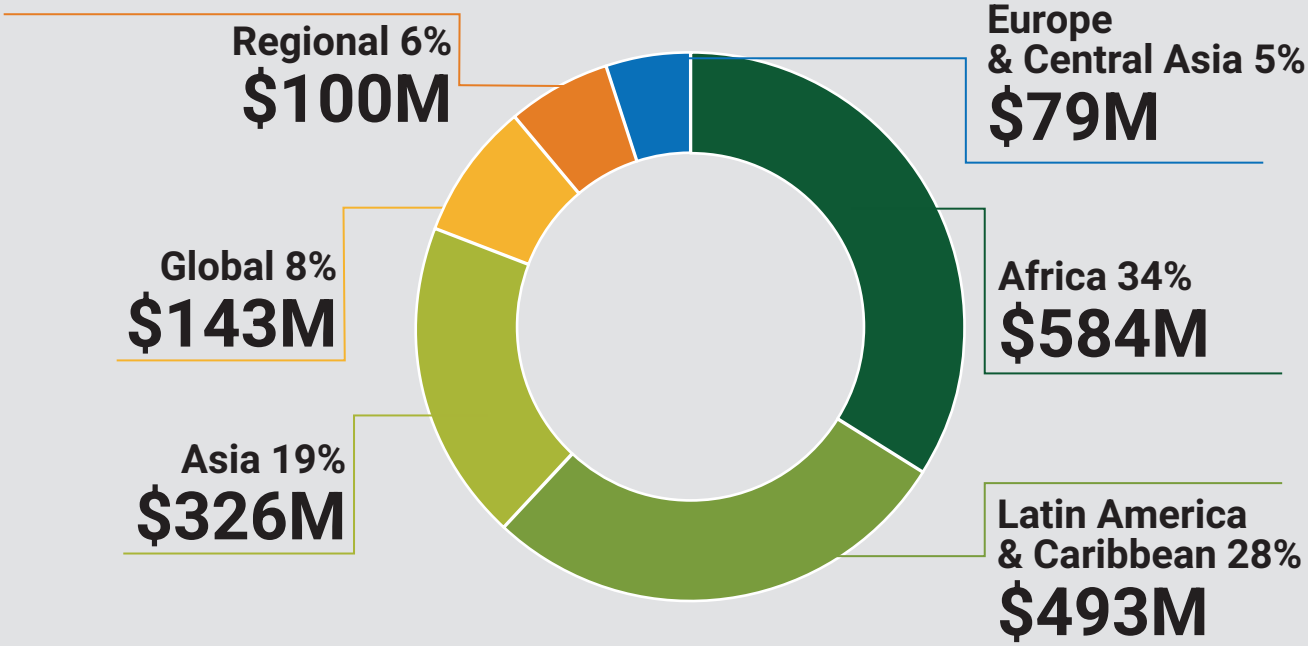
Promote sustainable practices on **94.9M hectares of landscape**

Mitigate greenhouse gas emissions by **999M metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents**

Restore **4.2M hectares of degraded landscape** including **1.8M hectares of forests and mangroves**

19.7M people directly benefited of which 50% female

GEF-8 FOREST INVESTMENTS BY REGION



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