



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

# The GEF and Civil Society Organizations:

A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP





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# Foreword





**Monique Barbut**  
CEO and Chairperson  
Global Environment Facility

Meaningful partnerships are the foundation for success. Since its inception, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has fostered partnerships with the public, private and nonprofit sector to increase our impact in the developing world.

Over time, we have found that one of the most robust alliances has been with civil society organizations (CSOs) whose expertise in the field help us better communicate with the communities and people we serve.

Engaging with CSOs therefore is a critical step in funding any GEF project: public participation is an integral part of GEF's *raison d'être*. To date about 13 percent of our projects have been granted directly to CSOs translating into catalytic benefits, both global and local. Through the Small Grants Programme (SGP) we supported over 12,000 small grants in 122 participating countries. Through these efforts the GEF together with its partners have made a dramatic difference in the lives and environments of local communities while at the same time achieving global benefits to help meet international agreements.

CSOs are also at the table helping shape the future. Through the GEF NGO Network they participate in stakeholder consultations as well as adding their voice at GEF Council meetings. Through information dissemination and consultation, the Network reaches out to an extensive membership of CSOs worldwide.

Over the last 18 years, the GEF-CSO partnership has delivered many successes and provided valuable lessons on which to build. Moving forward, we remain committed to further enhancing our engagement with CSOs in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the GEF.

This publication is one step in that process. We encourage GEF stakeholders from all sectors, public, private and non profit, to read these pages and offer guidance to ensure the GEF stays on the right path forward. Now more than ever, we must promote partnerships that are effective and which can consistently leverage environmental protection in budget-conscious times.





# Introduction





## About the GEF

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established in 1991 as an independent financial mechanism that provides grants to developing countries for projects that benefit the global environment and promote sustainable livelihoods in local communities. The GEF provides grants to projects in biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer and persistent organic pollutants.

The GEF is the financial mechanism for implementation of the international conventions on biodiversity, climate change and persistent organic pollutants. The GEF is also a financial mechanism for the Convention to Combat Desertification and collaborates closely with other treaties and agreements. The GEF works closely with Convention Secretariats, Implementing Agencies, Executing Agencies, the private sector and civil society.

The GEF unites 181 member governments—in partnership with international institutions, nongovernmental organizations, indigenous and local communities, and the private sector—to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. In just 18 years, the GEF has evolved into an effective and transparent entity with a solid, outcomes-driven track record. As the largest funder of projects to improve the global environment, the GEF has allocated \$9.2 billion, supplemented by more than \$40 billion in co-financing, for over 2,600 projects in more than 165 developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Through its Small Grants Programme (SGP), the GEF has also made more than 12,000 small grants directly to non-governmental and community organizations.

The GEF partnership includes three Implementing Agencies—the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank—and seven Executing Agencies—the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the U.N. Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

## The unique partnership with CSOs

Since the Rio Conference in 1992, where world leaders met to address the crucial linkages between environment and development, civil society organizations (CSOs) were recognized as critical partners in meeting



sustainable development goals. As such, one of the main principles emanating from Rio was that “environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens<sup>1</sup>.”

The GEF embraced this philosophy from its inception, fostering a unique partnership with CSOs that has strengthened over time. From project identification and execution, to influencing its governance and decision-making process, CSOs have become one of the GEF key partners. The diversity of organizations which have been steadily and increasingly participating in GEF activities include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), at the local, national and international levels; community groups; indigenous peoples organizations; women’s groups, research and academic institutions, and the private sector.

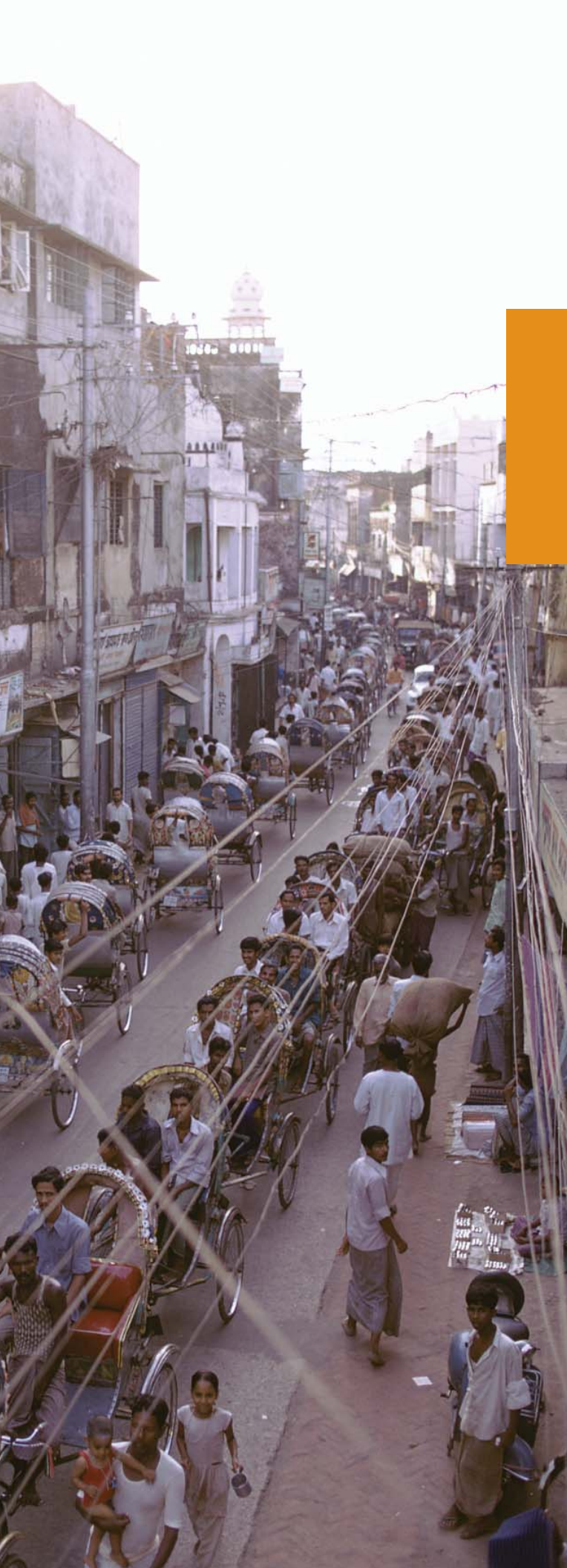
In addition, the Rio Conventions –namely the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD)—for which the GEF serves as financial mechanism, also recognize the importance of promoting cooperation and encouraging participation of civil society in the achievement of the Conventions’ goals and objectives.

This publication provides an account of the diversity, scope and extent of CSO involvement in GEF projects and policies, and offers future directions to further strengthen this unique partnership to address global environmental concerns.

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1 Principle 10, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992)





## Civil Society Organizations: Policies and Participation

The GEF was one of the first international financial institutions to actively engage CSOs in its projects and programs as well as its policies. There are various channels through which CSOs have been participating in GEF processes. These include:

- Access to GEF funds for specific projects;
- Involvement and participation in GEF projects; and
- Involvement in policy processes through the GEF Assembly and Council.

Specific policies were adopted by the GEF Council in this regard, setting the foundation for CSO engagement in GEF activities on two distinct levels, projects and international policy.

### GEF policies related to CSO involvement at the project level

The Public Involvement in GEF-financed Projects policy, approved by the GEF Council in April 1996, sets the basis for public involvement in the design, implementation and evaluation of GEF projects. Public involvement comprises three related and often overlapping processes: information dissemination, consultation, and stakeholder participation. It applies to all GEF focal areas programs and projects; spells out the rationale, terms and principles for public involvement; and solidifies the operational requirement for stakeholder involvement and partnership in the design, implementation, and evaluation of GEF-financed activities. Upon approving the policy, the GEF Council stressed that, when applying the principles, there should



be an emphasis on local participation and local stakeholders, and specific national and local conditions should be taken into consideration. The document recognizes the need for developing strategies that incorporate stakeholder participation throughout the project cycle, including project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, the GEF Operational Strategy<sup>3</sup> provides ten operational principles and overall direction to the GEF focal areas to maximize global environmental benefits. Principle 7 relates directly to public participation, and states that “GEF projects shall provide for full consultation with, and participation as appropriate, of the beneficiaries and affected groups of people.”

The rationale for public involvement in GEF-financed projects is based on the principle that public involvement is essential to developing quality, sustainable projects, and improves the performance and impact of projects by:

- Enhancing recipient country ownership of, and accountability for, project outcomes;
- Addressing the social and economic needs of affected people;
- Building partnerships among project executing agencies and stakeholders; and
- Making use of skills, experiences, and knowledge, specifically of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community and local groups, and the private sector in the design, implementation and evaluation of project activities.

The GEF project design and implementation process also complies with the GEF Agencies’ policies and procedures. The GEF Agencies also have their own policies and strategies on civil society involvement in the context of project interventions, and these apply for GEF projects as well.

### **GEF policies related to CSO involvement at the international policy level**

Often times, CSOs are referred to as “the eyes and ears” of the GEF on the ground. Thus, the participation of

CSOs, through input and experiences, has been valued to help shape and define GEF policies. The GEF Council has agreed on a series of innovative decisions to involve CSOs in the decision-making process at the international level.

In order to benefit from a broader and independent diversity of views, experiences and perspectives, the Council approved a policy to engage CSOs in the Council meetings. The document recognizes that CSOs provide views and comments on GEF activities from which the GEF can benefit<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the Council agreed that the CEO shall invite CSO representatives to attend or observe the Council meetings (in GEF language, a fine distinction is that being in the room is attending the Council meeting, and watching on the closed-circuit TV is observing the meeting). To take full advantage of CSOs’ views and input, regular GEF-NGO Consultation meetings are organized—before each bi-annual Council meeting—to give the GEF, the GEF Agencies and Council members a valuable opportunity to interact with CSOs.

To further define how CSOs would interact with the Council during its bi-annual meetings, specific criteria were then developed, in consultation with CSOs, for the selection of these representatives to attend or observe Council meetings. The Council approved basic criteria

## **COUNCIL DEFINITION OF CSO’S**

The term CSO is broad, and includes various types of organizations. The basic principle, as approved by the GEF Council in 1995, is that CSOs attending / observing Council meetings are defined as “non-profit organizations whose mandate, experience, expertise and capacity are relevant to the work of the GEF.” These organizations include: community groups; local, national, regional and international organizations, including NGO networks, dedicated to preserving the environment or promoting sustainable development; indigenous peoples organizations; and academic and research institutions.

2 GEF Secretariat. 1996. Public Involvement in GEF-financed Projects, Washington, DC

3 GEF, 2004, GEF Operational Strategy, Washington, DC.

4 Technical Note on NGO Relations with the GEF (GEF/C.1/4) – July, 1994 (GEF/C.3/5) - February 1995



for those representatives to be invited to attend/observe the Council meetings<sup>5</sup>, which include:

- NGOs should be accredited to the GEF;
- A broad based geographic representation should be ensured;
- The agenda for the Council meeting should be taken into account and organizations with relevant competence should be selected;
- A wide representation of views and expertise should be reflected, a balance among international, national and local representation; and
- Past attendance of NGOs at Council meetings should be considered and rotation among NGOs should be sought.

Respecting the independence of CSOs, the GEF Council left the selection process of representatives to the CSOs, retaining only the authority to review whether these criteria are being followed.

The travel costs of a limited number of CSO representatives from recipient countries to attend the Council meetings are covered from the GEF Secretariat's administrative budget. CSO representatives invited to attend the Council meetings would, in turn, be responsible for communicating with the wider CSO community, including preparing for and reporting on the Council and NGO Consultation meetings.

In 2008, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to engage with CSOs. After more than a decade of engagement and participation, it was noted that the CSO accreditation process required improvement. The Council approved the replacement of the NGO accreditation to the GEF with membership in the GEF-NGO<sup>6</sup> Network, a network of accredited CSOs to the GEF (please see Section VI for details on the GEF-NGO Network). Membership in the GEF-NGO Network provides for a more flexible and effective mechanism for accreditation of CSOs to the GEF.

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5 Criteria for Selection of NGOs to Attend/ Observe Council Meetings and Information on NGO Consultation were presented to Council

6 Enhancing Civil Society Engagement and Partnership with the GEF (GEF/C.34/9) - November, 2008







## Fostering Innovative Partnerships

*Civil society organizations have been partnering and accessing GEF funds to implement projects in the GEF's focal areas—biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation and persistent organic pollutants. This section presents the involvement of CSOs in GEF projects at the international, regional and national levels.*

The involvement of CSOs in GEF-funded projects has been an integral part of achieving GEF's goals. By fostering innovative partnerships through its actions on the ground, the GEF has been able to build and strengthen numerous successful partnerships.

Through its projects and programs, the GEF has been able to act as a catalyst, bringing various stakeholders together, and "creating linkages among communities, NGOs, and governments; encouraging cooperation; and improving understanding and dialogue between local and national levels<sup>7</sup>." This would not have been possible without the active involvement and participation of CSOs. Various evaluations highlighted the benefits of CSO involvement in GEF projects. The benefits include, among others, enhancing country ownership, ensuring that the needs of affected communities are adequately met, improving project design, implementation, and evaluation, and helping to strengthen the capacities of NGOs and civil society groups.

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<sup>7</sup> Progressing Toward Environmental Results—Third Overall Performance Study of the GEF (OPS3), 2005



CSO participation in GEF-funded projects embraces various types of key contributions—from identifying projects, implementing specific components, providing co-financing, serving as a link between the national and local levels, directly interacting with beneficiaries through outreach and consultations and providing specialized experience and knowledge, to monitoring and evaluation activities.

### Analysis of CSO-executed projects

Since 1991, the GEF has supported more than 1,500 projects<sup>8</sup> in its six focal areas, including Full-sized projects (FSP) (those over \$1 million in GEF funds) and Medium-sized projects (MSPs) (those up to \$1 million in GEF funds). The majority of these projects involve CSOs at various levels of the project cycle and project implementation. For the purpose of categorization, those projects granted directly to CSOs were considered in this analysis, to better illustrate the GEF-CSO partnership in project execution.<sup>9</sup>

As of January 2010, 13 percent of GEF allocations were granted directly to CSOs (236 projects, including FSPs and MSPs) for a total of \$543 million which leveraged over \$1.5 billion in co-financing (see Figure 1). Of the total number of projects, 24 percent (57) were FSPs, with a GEF allocation of \$393 million and \$1.2 billion as co-financing; and 76 percent (179) were MSPs, with \$149 million in GEF funds and \$379 million in co-financing (see Figure 2). The larger number of MSPs can be explained by the availability of this modality approved in 1996, which significantly expedited the review and approval procedures for these projects, greatly facilitating direct access to GEF funds from a broad variety of stakeholders, in particular CSOs.

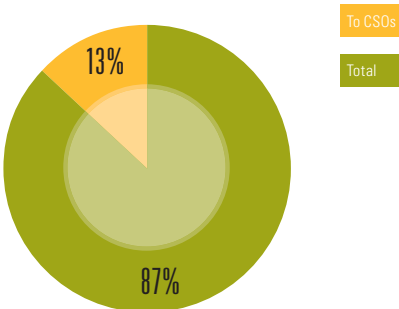
### Trends by GEF replenishment cycle

Although the active participation and involvement in projects has been sought in project execution, the number of GEF projects granted to CSOs varies over the replenishment cycles. In GEF-1, three FSPs were granted to CSOs. The approval of the MSP modality by the end of this replenishment cycle represented an ideal opportunity for CSOs to access to GEF funds directly. Only in the last year of GEF-1, 10 MSPs were approved, five of which were for CSOs. In GEF-2 and GEF-3, CSO-executed projects steadily increased, with 13 and 26 FSPs respectively; and 85 and 66 MSPs. A new system for the allocation of resources, the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF), was approved in GEF-4, introducing changes in the way GEF resources are allocated. For the biodiversity and climate change focal areas, a fixed amount of resources was allocated per country, and projects had to be prioritized accordingly. Adapting to these changes, 15 FSPs and 23 MSPs were granted to CSOs in GEF-4 (see Figure 3).

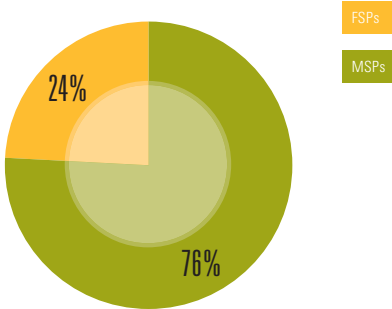
### Distribution by type of CSO

National NGOs have been the most significant partner, accounting for the execution of 37 percent of GEF projects (14 FSPs and 76 MSPs). International NGOs were responsible for 32 percent of the projects (19 FSPs and 58 MSPs). Research and academic institutions have also implemented projects, with 11 percent of the portfolio granted to international research institutions (14 FSPs and 13 MSPs); and seven percent to national research institutions (3 FSPs and 14 MSPs). Private sector companies also partnered with the GEF, with five percent of the project

**FIGURE 1 PERCENTAGE OF CSO PROJECTS GEF PORTFOLIO (1991-2010)**



**FIGURE 2 DISTRIBUTION OF CSO-EXECUTED PROJECTS, BY TYPE**



8 Projects funded by the GEF Trust Fund.

9 Projects considered were those in which a CSO was the recipient of the GEF grant, and thus the lead organization responsible for its execution. In all other projects, CSOs were involved through sub-contracts for implementing specific components.



portfolio (1 FSPs and 11 MSPs). In addition, four percent of projects were co-executed through diverse partnerships between CSOs, government agencies and other stakeholders (1 FSP and 4 MSPs). Indigenous peoples organizations (IPOs) were responsible for the execution of two MSPs (see Figure 4).

### Focal Area distribution

The majority of CSO-executed projects focused on biodiversity, with 71 percent (41 FSP and 126 MSPs); followed by actions to mitigate climate change, with 14 percent of CSO projects (12 FSPs and 22 MSPs). International waters projects comprise six percent of CSO interventions (13 MSPs); and a similar percentage was executed as multi-focal area projects (3 FSP and 11 MSPs). The inclusion of land degradation and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) as GEF's focal areas in 2002 also resulted in CSO projects, totaling three percent of the CSO-executed portfolio to address land degradation concerns (1 FSP and 6 MSPs) and one MSP targeting the elimination of POPs.

### Regional distribution

The largest number of projects executed by CSOs (28 percent, with 14 FSPs and 49 MSPs) took place in the Latin America and Caribbean region. This was followed by the Asia and the Pacific region, where CSOs executed 17 percent of the portfolio (8 FSPs and 33 MSPs); 12 percent

of CSO-projects were executed in Africa (3 FSPs and 26 MSPs); while CSOs in the Europe and Central Asia region executed seven percent (17 MSPs). Additionally, regional projects accounted for 21 percent (22 FSPs and 28 MSPs) of CSO interventions; while global projects represent 15 percent (10 FSPs and 26 MSPs) (see Figure 6).

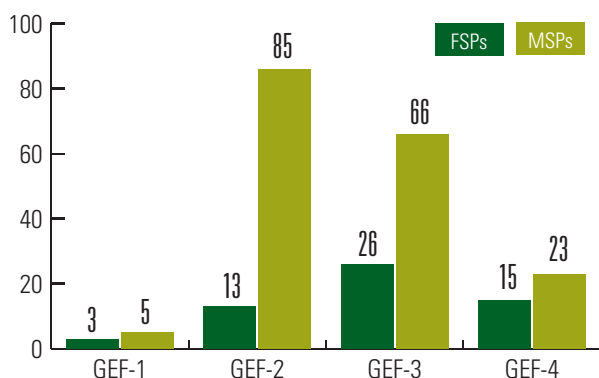
### Distribution by Agency

The World Bank was responsible for the implementation of the majority of CSO-executed projects, with 41 percent (20 FSPs and 78 MSPs). UNDP also played a key role in partnering with CSOs in GEF-funded projects, representing 33 percent (16 FSPs and 61 MSPs); followed by UNEP, with 24 percent (20 FSPs and 37 MSPs). Since their inclusion as GEF Agencies in 2002, the Executing Agencies<sup>10</sup> also started implementing CSO projects, accounting for two percent of projects granted to CSOs (1 FSP and 3 MSPs) (see Figure 7).

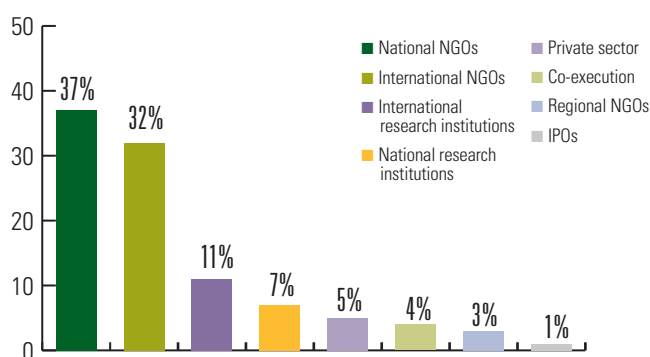
### Co-financing

CSOs have also been key partners in leveraging and contributing co-financing to complement GEF projects. Cash and in-kind contributions from NGOs, beneficiaries, foundations, the private sector and other stakeholders account for almost 30 percent of the total co-financing of the GEF portfolio (\$10.3 billion in co-financing, 1991-2008<sup>11</sup>).

**FIGURE 3 TRENDS BY REPLENISHMENT CYCLE**



**FIGURE 4 DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE OF CSO**



<sup>10</sup> The GEF's Executing Agencies were considered together, and include: the African Development Bank (AFDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

<sup>11</sup> GEF 2008 Annual Report, Washington DC



FIGURE 5 FOCAL AREA DISTRIBUTION

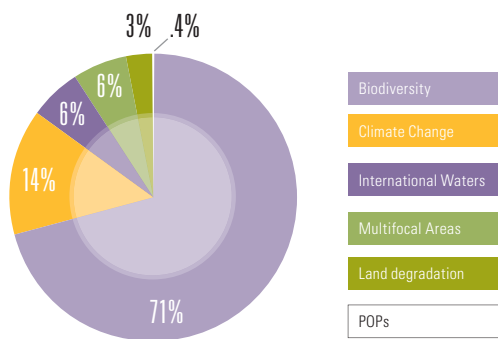


FIGURE 6 REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

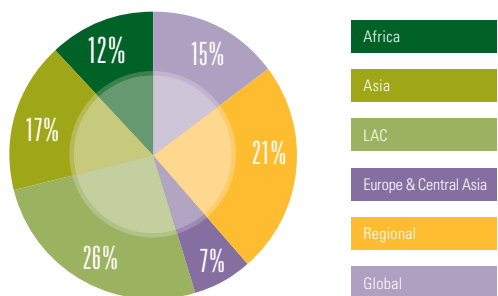
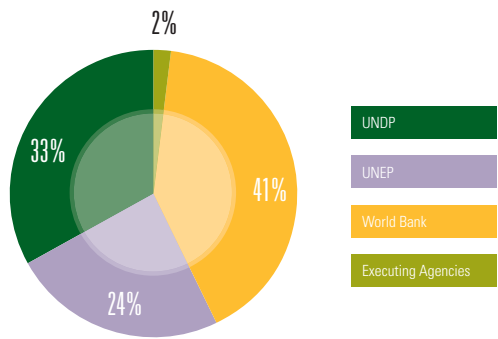


FIGURE 7 DISTRIBUTION BY AGENCY





## Local Solutions to Global Environmental Concerns

*Community-level strategies have significantly contributed to addressing global environmental concerns. This section presents the involvement of CSOs at the local level through the GEF's Small Grants Programme.*

When local people are involved and direct community benefits and ownership are generated, global environmental problems can be best addressed. This is the core belief of the GEF's Small Grants Programme (SGP).

Established in 1992, the SGP works at the local level supporting various types of CSOs, including community-based organizations (CBOs), grassroots organizations, indigenous peoples organizations, women's organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), among others.

The SGP provides grants of up to \$50,000, but averaging \$20,000 to \$35,000, directly to local communities, based on the principle that with small amounts of funding, members of local communities can undertake activities that will make a significant difference in their lives and environments while achieving global benefits. SGP grants are allocated in five focal areas—biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, and persistent organic pollutants. Priority is given to projects that:

- Enhance community engagement in all the stages of the project;
- Are led by local organizations;
- Include provisions for capacity development of communities;
- Link livelihoods to global environmental benefits through community-level strategies;



- Attend to women's needs and the needs and practices of indigenous groups; and
- Meet local knowledge with scientific and technical resources.

By promoting the development of community-level strategies, gathering and sharing lessons from these innovative community-level strategies, building partnerships and networks of stakeholders, and encouraging replication, the SGP has become one of the most successful corporate programs of the GEF.

Among the strategic features of the program are its support of activities that reconcile sustainable livelihoods with GEF global priorities; the growing ownership by communities and local NGO's as a result of increased capacities and experiences gained, as well as the active engagement of diverse stakeholders working on global environmental issues at the local level.

Independent evaluations have stressed the significant impacts the SGP has achieved at the national and local levels, as well as its importance to developing countries, which comes from "the way in which it links, global, national and local level issues through a transparent, strongly participatory and country-driven approach to project planning, design and implementation<sup>12</sup>".

### SGP structure

The SGP is a GEF corporate program implemented by UNDP on behalf of the GEF agencies.

The decentralized structure of SGP, which is based on the principles of participation, flexibility and transparency, encourages maximum country and community-level ownership and initiative. Decisions are taken by consensus at the country level by a National Steering Committee (NSC), a multi-sectoral body with strong representation from CSOs, including non-governmental organizations, academic and scientific institutions, indigenous people

organizations, along with UNDP Country Office and the Government. The NSC is also responsible for developing the country's program strategy, adapting the SGP global strategic framework to the country's specific conditions.

## COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS FOR CONSERVATION

The SGP joined efforts with the United Nations Foundation in 2000 to launch a partnership initiative—the Community Management of Protected Areas for Conservation (COMPACT). The goal of this program is to add significant value to existing conservation programs through community-based approaches to conserve globally significant biodiversity.

By supporting landscape-level conservation, COMPACT has significantly increased the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation in targeted World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Ramsar sites, and globally important marine coral reefs. The SGP manages and implements COMPACT, awarding small grants of up to \$50,000 for community-based initiatives. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention is a partner in this program.

The sites participating in COMPACT include:

- Africa: Mount Kilimanjaro National Park in Tanzania, Mount Kenya National Park in Kenya, a cluster of five protected areas in South-West Madagascar, and the Djoudj-Djowaling Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, in Senegal and Mauritania;
- Latin America: Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System in Belize and Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve in Mexico;
- Caribbean: Morne Trois Pitons National Park in Dominica; and
- Asia: Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park in the Philippines.

Examples of community-based initiatives supported by COMPACT include buffer zone and outreach projects, sustainable tourism, small-scale irrigation, preservation of traditional ecological knowledge, micro-hydro and renewable energy projects, increased productivity of agro-ecosystems, as well as a suite of income-generating activities such as apiculture, organic farming, and community-managed fisheries.

<sup>12</sup> Third Independent Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme, 2002

A National Coordinator serves as the link between the NSC and the local partners. A Central Programme Management Team (CPMT) within UNDP Headquarters' GEF Unit is responsible for the overall global management of the SGP.

### Analysis of the SGP portfolio

As of March 2010, the SGP has awarded more than 12,500 projects, totaling more than \$295 million, and leveraged \$408 million in co-financing, including \$178 million in in-kind contributions from CSOs.

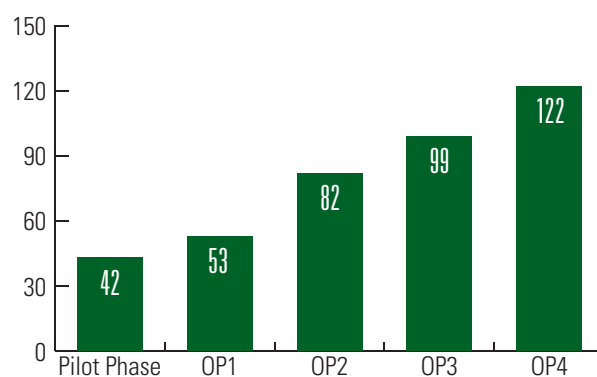
### Trends by operational phase

Participation in the SGP responds to the demand and interest from both the government and the communities to be part of the program. Based on the achievements by communities and local organizations, the expansion of the SGP has steadily grown across its Operational Phases (OP). Since its Pilot Phase (FY1992 – FY1996) when the SGP operated in only 42 countries, the number of participating countries has almost tripled. During its OP1 (FY1996 – FY1998), 53 countries were participating; in its OP2 (FY1999 – FY2004), 29 more countries joined the program, totaling 83; during OP3 (FY2005 – FY2007) 99 countries were participating; and in its OP4 (FY2007 – FY2010) the total number of countries is 122 (see Figure 8).

### Distribution by type of CSO

The SGP works exclusively with communities and local groups, including a diversity of organizations.

**FIGURE 8 PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES BY OP**



The categorization by types of grantees in the SGP portfolio indicates that 63 percent (7,800 projects) of the SGP portfolio was granted to NGOs, including local and national organizations; 33 percent (4,100 projects) to CBOs and indigenous peoples organizations; and 4 percent (560 projects) to other organizations, such as academic and research institutions (see Figure 9).

### Focal area distribution

The most significant contribution by communities and local organizations through the SGP has been in the biodiversity focal area, with 52 percent of the SGP portfolio (6,906 projects), followed by local initiatives on climate change, with 18 percent (2,415 projects). Also, 11 percent of SGP projects (over 1,500 projects) combine various focal areas, categorized as multi-focal area projects. Projects have also been implemented under the

## SGP PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

- Africa: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
- Asia and the Pacific: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Micronesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vanuatu, Vietnam. Also, there are three Sub-regional Programs for the Pacific Island States, a sub regional program for the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau and Marshall Islands; another for Nauru, Kiribati, Tonga and

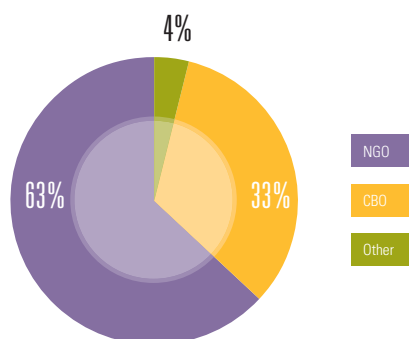
Tuvalu; and a third Sub-regional Program that includes the Cook Islands and Niue.

- Arab States: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen.
- Europe and the CIS: Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.
- Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela. A sub-regional program for the Caribbean covers the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.





FIGURE 9 DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE OF CSO



international waters focal area, representing five percent (675 projects). In 2002, land degradation and POPs also became SGP focal areas, and communities implemented 12 percent of the SGP portfolio (1,562 projects) and two percent (242 projects), respectively (see Figure 10).

### Regional distribution

Latin America and the Caribbean region accounts for the largest share of projects implemented (4,043 projects, or 33 percent); followed by the Asia and the Pacific and Africa regions (3,060 projects, or 24 percent; and 2,931 projects or 23 percent, respectively). Europe and the CIS, and the Arab States account for a smaller yet significant share of SGP projects (1,636 projects or 13 percent; and 879 projects or 7 percent, respectively) (see Figure 11). These percentages only represent trends, since some regions have more countries participating in the SGP than others, due to the expansion of the program over the years.

FIGURE 10 SGP FOCAL AREA DISTRIBUTION

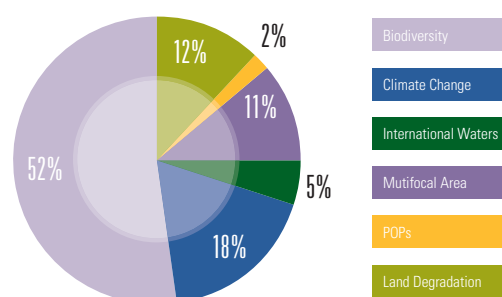
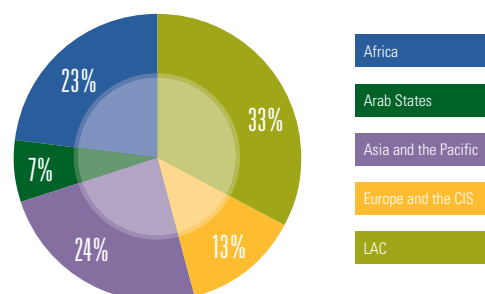


FIGURE 11 SGP REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION



More information on the SGP, as well as the complete list of all SGP contacts at the national and global levels can be found at: <http://sgp.undp.org>





## Project Highlights and Good Practices

*The following section presents an overview of examples of CSO-executed projects. All of these projects were identified and implemented by CSOs. These projects showcase the diversity of partnerships created in the biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation and POPs focal areas. These examples also reflect a balance between types of projects, including FSP, MSP and SGP, regions and GEF Agencies.*

### GLOBAL LEVEL

**Global:** Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund

**Focal Area:** Biodiversity

**Executing CSO:** Conservation International  
(International NGO)

**Project type:** FSP; GEF Agency: World Bank; GEF: \$25,000,000; co-financing: \$75,000,000; GEF approval: FY2001

### BACKGROUND

The most biologically rich and threatened ecosystems in the world are defined as biodiversity hotspots. These hotspots support nearly 60 percent of the diversity of life. The loss of endemic species and natural habitat is proceeding at an alarming rate.



In order to tackle the challenge of biodiversity loss in the world's hotspots, Conservation International established a partnership through this project, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). The goal of the CEPF is to provide strategic assistance to non-governmental and other private sector organizations for the protection of the world's most threatened ecosystems. The hotspots approach to the conservation of ecosystems is a highly targeted strategy that combines technical and financial strength, field knowledge, administrative agility and flexibility, and a knowledge system to facilitate information communication. Within the hotspots, CEPF focuses on the highest priorities for conservation:

- Globally threatened and geographically concentrated species;
- The sites critical for their survival; and
- The landscapes necessary to maintain ecological and evolutionary processes.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The CEPF enabled CSOs to participate in and benefit from conserving some of the world's most critical ecosystems. Through the innovative model in international biodiversity conservation introduced by the project, the CEPF has awarded grants to more than 1,500 CSOs, implementing diverse projects to help conserve biodiversity hotspots in 51 countries through a flexible and agile structure and operations. Grants to CSOs proved to be particularly effective in the expansion and enhanced management of protected areas, the promotion of alternative sustainable livelihoods in production landscapes, environmental education, awareness and capacity building, and the enhancement of community development and poverty mitigation.

The support provided by the GEF helped initiate the CEPF. The model introduced by the project proved to be successful and effective in attaining the goal of biodiversity conservation. Currently, the CEPF continues its work as a joint program with the support of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the GEF, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank.

**Global:** Fostering Active and Effective Civil Society Participation in Preparations for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention

**Focal Area:** Persistent Organic Pollutants

**Executing CSO:** Environmental Health Fund (International NGO)

**Project type:** MSP; GEF Agency: UNEP; GEF: \$1,000,000; co-financing: \$1,400,000; GEF approval: FY2003

#### BACKGROUND

The international community has responded to the threat of POPs by adopting the Stockholm Convention, intended to protect human health and the environment by reducing and eliminating POPs. Public participation is recognized as an integral component in addressing and developing adequate responses to POPs and their health and environmental effects.

Through partnerships with some 160 NGOs and CBOs, the Environmental Health Fund, in partnership with the International POPs Elimination Network, implemented this project with the goal of increasing the capacity of CSOs to engage in activities that provide concrete and immediate contributions to country efforts in preparing for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention. Increased NGO capacity will, in turn, enhance the ability of these countries to achieve the objectives of the Stockholm Convention.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

One of the most significant achievements of the project was ensuring the sustainability of CSO involvement in POPs issues –more than 100 CSOs have substantially increased their capacity to engage and contribute to the implementation of the Stockholm Convention in their countries. In addition, more than 200 CSOs in 65 countries contributed to raising awareness about POPs, their sources and health and environmental impacts by producing country-specific and/or country-relevant informational and policy documents. A website ([www.ipen.org](http://www.ipen.org)) serves as a global database for CSOs, governments,

industry and other stakeholders on POPs-related issues. The project has been effective in policy advocacy, contributing to partnerships in many countries between CSOs and governments. Many CSOs are participating and providing substantive input for national implementation planning activities. CSOs and government officials can now more easily see themselves as allies working on a common national problem.

## REGIONAL LEVEL

**Regional:** Sustainable Management of Inland Wetlands in Southern Africa: A Livelihoods and Ecosystem Approach

**Focal area:** Land Degradation & Targeted Capacity Building

**Executing CSO:** International Water Management Institute (Research Institution)

Project type: MSP; GEF Agency: UNEP; GEF: \$999,000; co-financing: \$1,211,000; GEF approval: FY2005

wetlands, detailed information of the areas by land use type and seasonal land use assessments and hydrological monitoring and modeling. This new data is complemented by other studies, such as a detailed review and analysis of wetlands policies and legislation and socio-economic surveys and case studies on impacts of land degradation related to wetland use, livelihoods and value of wetlands.

This project is currently under implementation. Next steps are to formulate improved policies and strategies, based on new knowledge and increased capacity, for sustainable wetland management.

**Regional:** Creation and Strengthening of the Capacity for Sustainable Renewable Energy Development in Central America

**Focal Area:** Climate Change

**Executing CSO:** Biomass Users Network—Central America (National NGO)

Project type: MSP; GEF Agency: UNDP; GEF: \$750,000; co-financing: \$3,400,000; GEF approval: FY1999

### BACKGROUND

Wetland ecosystems in southern Africa support a variety of flora and fauna as well as providing various ecosystem goods and services. The potential for using water resources in small inland wetlands for small-scale agricultural production remains underdeveloped in southern Africa. Unplanned development and conversion of wetland ecosystems to agricultural land use could severely compromise the livelihoods of communities that depend on these wetlands.

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) is implementing this project aimed at mitigating land degradation in wetlands used for food production in southern Africa by addressing the lack of scientific data to provide policy and intervention options for ecologically sound wetland-based livelihood strategies. To maximize the scope and impact of this project, the IWMI is partnering with FAO and IUCN Regional Office for southern Africa, as well as governments, NGOs and universities in the participating countries—Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

Through a multidisciplinary approach, new data on wetlands has been generated by the project. Useful information tools developed include mapping of

### BACKGROUND

Despite a strong focus on environmental issues and sustainable development as national priorities, renewable energy has been largely overlooked by the electrical sector in all Central American countries. Institutional, informational, financial and technical barriers in the region prevented the adoption of renewable energy alternatives, in particular in the rural sector without access to electricity and in small-scale markets.

Biomass Users Network–Central America (BUN-CA) implemented this project to create and strengthen capacity for sustainable renewable energy projects based on regional cooperation and in-country linkages. With the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by fostering small-scale renewable energy, specific objectives included:

- Increasing access to basic energy services of a greater number of Central Americans, in particular in rural areas;
- Using renewable energy sources to replace fossil fuels for small-scale electricity generation; and
- Initiating discussions to facilitate the integration of global environmental protection into the energy policies of the Central American political agenda.

### ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Several replicable experiences of sustainable energy solutions were implemented through eight demonstration



projects, including hydropower, co-generation and solar photovoltaic, totalling 9.7 kilowatts of capacity. All of these demonstration projects were implemented through partnerships with local NGOs and CBOs, benefiting off-grid communities in seven participating countries. Feasibility studies were developed to identify innovative financial mechanisms for renewable energy.

Additionally, government officials substantially increased their awareness and capacity on renewable energy. As a result, the regional integration of government institutions was achieved, and renewable energy has been integrated into energy and environmental policies and plans in both the region and the participating countries.

## NATIONAL LEVEL

**Argentina:** Management and Conservation of Wetland Biodiversity in the Esteros del Iberá

**Focal Area:** Biodiversity

**Executing CSO:** Fundación Ecos (National NGO)

**Project type:** MSP; GEF Agency: UNDP; GEF: \$975,000; co-financing: \$9,394,125; GEF Approval: FY2003

### BACKGROUND

The Esteros del Iberá (from the local indigenous language Guaraní *ý berá* “bright water”) is the second-largest wetlands in the world, and the largest protected area in Argentina. It is a globally significant inland wetlands ecosystem of pluvial origin, spanning 1.2 million hectares, also representing one of the most important fresh water reservoirs in the continent. The almost pristine conditions in this ecoregion in the northeast of Argentina were being threatened by underlying conditions in the area, including poor stewardship, unclear land ownership, and economic underdevelopment in the area.

To protect and manage for sustainable use, the globally significant wetland biodiversity in this ecoregion in the northeast of Argentina, Fundación Ecos implemented this project in close cooperation with and full participation of stakeholders.

### ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The key achievement of this project was the adoption of a regional management plan for the ecoregion. By engaging the community in the formulation process through consultations and dialogue, full ownership of the plan was achieved. Of particular importance in this process was

respecting the cultural heritage of the Iberá inhabitants, a culture of extremely close relationship with the wild dwellers of the wetland. Numerous reports were also produced, including mapping of landscapes and endangered native species of fauna and flora, as well as socio-economic and productive activities. Based on these reports, an alternative livelihood strategy was developed, with particular emphasis on ecotourism, which provided new sources of income and ensured the sustainable use of resources in the area. In addition, an innovative approach to environmental education and capacity building was introduced, by empowering school children in the promotion of conservation and protection efforts.

Involving the local community in the conservation effort was a key component of the success achieved. By being part of the solution, the local community ensured the sustainability of the efforts to preserve their natural and cultural patrimony.

**Russian Federation:** Persistent Toxic Substances, Food Security, and Indigenous Peoples of the Russian North

**Focal Area:** International Waters

**Executing CSO:** Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (Indigenous Peoples Organization)

**Project type:** MSP; GEF Agency: UNEP; GEF: \$750,000; co-financing: \$2,010,000; GEF approval: FY2000

### BACKGROUND

Health conditions of the Arctic indigenous peoples have been threatened due to exposure to Persistent Toxic Substances (PTS). PTS have the tendency to bio-accumulate and bio-magnify in food chains, particularly marine food chains, on which the lifestyle of Arctic indigenous populations depend. As a result, the indigenous populations of the North, Siberia and Far East regions of the Russian Federation are subject to some of the highest exposure levels to PTS of any population groups on Earth. Preliminary studies showed that environmental levels of PTS are significantly elevated in the Russian Arctic. The data were sparse, and many areas of the Russian Arctic were not covered in these studies.

To address the pressures on the health of the indigenous peoples, and ultimately their survival, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON) implemented a series of interrelated initiatives with the purpose of reducing PTS contamination of the Arctic environment.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

In partnership with research institutions from Russia and other Arctic countries, extensive studies were undertaken to fully document the extent of PTS contamination and its impacts on human health. The studies included assessments of local pollution sources in the vicinities of indigenous communities; assessment of pollution from distant sources due to atmosphere and riverine transport to areas populated by indigenous peoples; and assessment of the influence of pollution on the human health status of indigenous peoples.

A close partnership has been successfully achieved between researchers and indigenous organizations and communities in accordance with internationally recognized practices, as well as effective cooperation in developing remedial actions to reduce health risks resulting from the contamination of the environment and traditional food sources. Moreover, project implementation enhanced the position of the Russian Federation in international negotiations to reduce the use of PTS. The experience gained has also empowered RAIPON to participate actively and fully in these negotiations. RAIPON acted as the main NGO in the development and implementation of the action plan to eliminate pollution in the Arctic at the Stockholm Convention meetings.

## LOCAL LEVEL

**Chile:** Lafkenches Coastline Management

**Focal Area:** Biodiversity

**Executing CSO:** Newen Pu Lafkenche Indigenous Association (Indigenous Peoples Organization)

**Project type:** SGP; GEF: \$33,446; SGP approval: FY2002

## BACKGROUND

The Mapuches are the most significant indigenous populations in central and southern Chile, totaling around four percent of its population. The Lafkenches, a Mapuche coastal community, comprised of eight indigenous ethnicities, lived under social and economic deprivation. These adverse circumstances forced these communities to

overexploit their natural resources, making their livelihoods unsustainable and jeopardizing their survival.

The Newen Pu Lafkenche Indigenous Association implemented this project to build a participatory form of protected area management geared toward biodiversity conservation through cultural activities. The strategies used to achieve this goal included active community participation, diagnosis of the environmental situation and planning, implementation, management and evaluation.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Workshops on soil recovery and forestry, as well as broadcasts from a local radio station, significantly increased the capacity of the community on the sustainable management of natural resources, including marine resources. Also, 24 greenhouses were built for the sustainable production of fruit, vegetables and other products for consumption by the community. In addition, the Lafkenche entered into an agreement with government authorities to create a Bilateral Negotiation Commission to deepen lobbying efforts with the appropriate authorities.

The adoption of sustainable and participatory public management systems produced positive impacts on the livelihoods of these communities. Local leaders have enhanced their management skills and their ability to negotiate with the authorities. The cultural heritage of the Lafkenche was recovered through religious rites and events promoted by the project.

**Philippines:** Community Based Watershed Management and Water Resource Utilization for Hydro Power

**Focal area:** Climate Change

**Executing CSOs:** Yamog Renewable Energy Development Group and the Polocón Farmers Association (Community Based Organization)

**Project type:** SGP; GEF: \$44,914; SGP approval: FY1999

## BACKGROUND

Polocón is a small farming community of around 100 households located in the southernmost part of the



Philippines. Although this community is technically part of the country's third-largest metropolis, Davao City, the city's electric grid ends 20 kilometers away. The limited source of electricity for only a few families in Polocón was via a shared diesel generator.

To provide access to electricity for the community, the Yamog Renewable Energy Development Group, in close collaboration with the Polocón Farmers Association, implemented this project aimed at reducing technical, institutional, and informational barriers to the implementation of community-managed micro hydro schemes.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Polocón community was involved in the design, building, operation and maintenance of a 15 kW micro hydro system. Some 110 households, as well as most

public spaces, have gained access to clean electricity. Capacity building was a key component, as the community received training in designing, building, maintaining and managing the hydroelectric plant. Restoring and protecting the watershed also involved community action. Without the 70-hectare watershed, the river's flow would decrease and the micro hydro plant would not work. The community replanted 25 of the 70 hectares in the watershed region.

The entire community took ownership of the project. Members of the Farmers Association and the Polocón Women's Group formed the Polocón People's Power Cooperative, which owns and operates the hydropower plant. Revenues from the community-owned cooperative are invested in community projects that help improve lives in Polocón.





## Effective Partnership in International Policy Advocacy

*CSOs have become effective advocates in the GEF international policy-making process, by engaging in a systematic and proactive manner at the international level. This section presents the involvement of CSOs at the international policy level.*

At the international policy level, CSOs have been contributing as effective advocates to the GEF's decision-making process through:

- Governance and policy development;
- Lobbying for donor contributions during replenishment negotiations; and
- Awareness and outreach on global environmental issues.

The most significant contribution, however, has been through actively engaging in the GEF-NGO Consultation and Council meetings, as well as the GEF Assembly. This dialogue process is unique within other multilateral bodies, allowing for a direct exchange of views between CSOs, the GEF, its Agencies and Council members.

These interactions provide CSOs with the opportunity of putting forward constructive proposals for policy and institutional reforms to strengthen the effectiveness of the GEF. The GEF has greatly taken advantage of and benefited from CSOs' perspectives in shaping its policies.

### The GEF-NGO Network

The GEF-NGO Network was established in 1995 as a voluntary network of CSOs interested in taking part in the



NGO Consultations and Council meetings, as well as regularly receiving GEF-related information. The establishment of this CSO participatory mechanism followed the Council's decision to invite CSOs to attend its meetings.

The GEF-NGO Network is a partnership between the GEF and CSOs whose work in the environment and sustainable development is aligned with the GEF's mandate.

The impact of the Network has been documented in some evaluations<sup>12</sup> highlighting that “the GEF catalyzed the establishment of the GEF-NGO Network that serves as consultative body as well as a channel of information to national civil society groups on GEF policies and programs.”

The interest of CSOs in establishing a formal dialogue with the GEF grew exponentially over the years, and currently more than 400 active CSO members are participating in the Network by providing input for policies, programs and evaluation of GEF activities.

The GEF-NGO Network is facilitated by 15 Regional Focal Points (RFPs); three representatives from the Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs); and a Central Focal Point (CFP). The regions represented in the Network, and the countries covered by each region, are listed in the table below.

Responsibilities of the Focal Points include, among others, maintaining an updated list of active members; regularly coordinating with the respective regional membership to provide reports on specific regional concerns; selecting CSOs to be invited to the Council meetings; coordinating the development of the agendas for the Consultation meetings, and the participation at the Council meeting; providing information to its members and other stakeholders on all relevant GEF-related activities, including Consultations and Council meetings and reporting back on these meetings.

The increased demand for information and participation from CSOs resulted in the need for a more structured and organized NGO Network. The objectives and structure of

## THE GEF-NGO NETWORK

**Vision**—A dynamic civil society influencing policies and actions at all levels to safeguard the global environment and promote sustainable development.

**Mission**—To strengthen civil society partnership with the GEF by enhancing participation, contributing to policy and stimulating action.

GEF-NGO Network's Regions	Countries covered
<b>Southern Africa</b>	Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Southern Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
<b>Eastern Africa</b>	Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.
<b>Western Africa</b>	Benin, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Togo.
<b>Northern Africa</b>	Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia.
<b>South Asia</b>	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
<b>Southeast Asia</b>	Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Timor Leste, Thailand and Vietnam.
<b>Northeast Asia</b>	China, Republic of Korea, Korea DPR, Japan and Mongolia.
<b>Western Asia</b>	Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Yemen.
<b>Pacific</b>	Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
<b>Eastern Europe &amp; Central Asia</b>	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.
<b>Mesoamerica</b>	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama.
<b>South America</b>	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.
<b>Caribbean</b>	Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Bahamas, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and Virgin Islands.
<b>Europe</b>	Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, FYR Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and [Israel].
<b>North America</b>	Canada and United States.
<b>Indigenous Peoples</b>	Africa, Americas and Asia Pacific.

the Network and the election procedures of the Focal Points, among other issues, are detailed in the *Rules and Procedures for the Operation and Management of the GEF-NGO Network*<sup>13</sup>. The Network's members were extensively consulted about these rules and procedures, which were approved in 2008.

### CSOs' engagement in policy advocacy

The GEF Council meets twice a year to discuss and make decisions on policies, and to review and approve projects. Prior to the formal meeting of the governments that participate in the GEF, a GEF-NGO Consultation meeting is held. The Consultation meeting is jointly organized by the Network and the GEF Secretariat. Through the RFPs and the representatives of the IPOs, and under the facilitation of the CFP, CSOs prepare themselves to interact with the GEF Secretariat and the Agencies, as well as with Council members. During these Consultation meetings, CSOs voice concerns and comment on policies and projects, and present positions on substantive issues that are on the Council's agenda. These presentations and discussions are not just an exchange of opinions and concerns. CSOs have achieved some major changes to GEF policies by voicing their concerns at the Consultations. One example is the discussions that resulted in the approval of MSPs. Positive and negative aspects of GEF implementation are also showcased during these meetings, through the presentation of CSO case studies. These experiences represent an opportunity to share CSOs' practices and lessons in the implementation of projects with the various GEF partners. In addition, during the Council meeting, CSOs have the opportunity to interact with Council members and make formal interventions at the meetings.

Another key opportunity for CSO engagement is through the GEF Assembly, which meets every three or four years, coinciding with the start of a new replenishment cycle. Representatives of all participating countries attend the Assembly, to review the general policies and operations of the GEF and set the policy guidelines for the next replenishment cycle. The Assembly also provides opportunities for high-level dialogues on the major challenges facing the GEF and ways to address these challenges; increased awareness and understanding of key global environmental challenges; and strengthened ownership of all its participants.

### CSO involvement in GEF evaluations

The independent Evaluation Office of the GEF evaluates performance and achievements of the GEF across focal

areas, agencies and countries. In many of these evaluations the involvement of CSOs is an essential element. This starts at the preparatory phase: approach papers and draft terms of reference are published on the website of the Office with an invitation to provide comments and suggestions. In several evaluations special efforts are made to engage with civil society evaluations—from consultative workshops to surveys and interviews. Many useful suggestions were received from CSOs to key evaluations undertaken by the Office, such as the Overall Performance Studies. The Fourth Overall Performance Study, for example, included a series of sub-regional meetings with representatives of CSOs, as well as an electronic survey, to ensure that their perspective would be represented. Where appropriate, CSOs are involved in commenting on preliminary findings of the Office.

### EXAMPLES OF THE IMPACT OF CSO ADVOCACY

**Approval of MSPs.** Through concerns voiced by the GEF-NGO Network, a CSO Working Group was convened by the GEF Secretariat in 1995, to examine means to strengthen the involvement of CSOs in GEF project activities, beyond the arrangements for Council meetings. As a result, the document *Promoting Strategic Partnerships between the GEF and the NGO Community* (GEF/C.7/Inf.8) was presented to the Consultation and Council meetings in April, 1996. One of the proposals included in this paper was the 'expedited access to GEF resources for mid-sized grants' in order enable the GEF to take full advantage of the potential that CSOs offer. Based on the positive feedback and comments from the Council, a Working Group including representatives from CSOs, the GEF Secretariat and the Agencies was convened to further explore this modality. The document *Proposal for Medium-Sized Projects* (GEF/C.8/5) was reviewed and approved by Council in October, 1996. The approval of MSPs opened a mutually beneficial modality for CSOs to work with the GEF.

**Participation in the replenishment meetings.** The GEF receives its funding from donor countries. Every four years, donors meet to review achievements and impact, and commit funds for the next cycle. These meetings were limited to representatives from donor countries. Through concerted advocacy efforts between CSOs from donor and recipient constituencies, in June 2009, donor countries agreed to invite the GEF-NGO Network to select representatives to participate as observers in the replenishment discussions. This step represents a key milestone for CSOs, since no other international finance institutions involve CSOs in its donor meetings.

13 The Rules and Procedures for the Operation and Management of the GEF-NGO Network can be accessed at: [www.gefngo.org](http://www.gefngo.org)





Some of the evaluations of the Office are especially relevant to how the GEF interacts with CSOs. For example, the role and involvement of CSOs is an important issue in country portfolio evaluations. The Local Benefits Study conducted in 2005 highlighted the importance of improved articulation in GEF approaches of the relationship between environment and development, specifically between poverty and environmental management. Failure to address this relationship has reduced the GEF's effectiveness in meeting its global environmental goals, since poor people are often left with no alternative to unsustainable natural resource management practices. Furthermore, in 2007 the Evaluation Offices of the GEF and UNDP conducted a joint evaluation of the Small Grants Programme (SGP) which assessed the relevance of SGP results to the GEF and to country and environmental priorities, the effectiveness of the SGP in generating global environmental benefits, and the efficiency of the SGP in engaging community-based and civil society organizations.

More information, as well as all of the above reports, can be found on the GEF Evaluation Office website: [www.gefeo.org](http://www.gefeo.org).

### How to participate

By becoming members of the Network, CSOs can participate in the GEF-NGO Consultation and Council meetings, and the GEF Assembly meetings. CSO members also receive regular updates on policies and activities of the GEF and the Network. These include funding and capacity building opportunities, upcoming meetings and events, and

the CSO reports from the Council meetings. Through the Focal Points, CSO members are able to contribute input and experience to the development of priorities for GEF support at the national level, as well as raise any concerns on GEF policies, processes or implementation. Membership to the Network also enables CSOs to establish contact with other members to exchange experiences and lessons. CSOs working on GEF-related issues can request information on options and criteria for membership.

More information, including the list of the Network's Focal Points and members, can be found in the CSO section of the GEF website ([www.thegef.org/gef/CSO](http://www.thegef.org/gef/CSO)) and the GEF-NGO Network website ([www.gefngo.org](http://www.gefngo.org)), or requested by e-mail to: [gefcivilsociety@thegef.org](mailto:gefcivilsociety@thegef.org).



A photograph of a crowd of people at an outdoor event. In the foreground, a young girl with light brown hair is looking towards the camera, with several red and green apples tucked into her hair. To her left, a woman with dark hair and a blue and white striped sweater looks off to the side. To her right, a woman with brown hair and sunglasses looks upwards. The background shows other people and trees under bright sunlight.

# Future Directions





*The contributions from CSOs have been crucial to the GEF, both for the effectiveness of its projects and for ensuring that their particular expertise and views are reflected in its policies. Future directions include means and ways to further enhance the successful partnership the GEF has established with CSOs.*

Through its projects and policies, the GEF has fostered innovative partnerships among governments, CSOs, stakeholders and communities to work together. Ranging from international NGOs at the global level to CBOs at the local level, CSOs have significantly contributed to the overall success of the GEF.

Building on the lessons learned, the GEF seeks to further enhance its engagement with CSOs in GEF-5 in order to improve its effectiveness and efficiency.

The system for allocation of resources, renamed the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources<sup>14</sup> (STAR), provides governments in recipient countries opportunities for engaging with CSOs, in particular at the GEF national planning level. The National Steering Committees have proven to be a valuable conduit in the national planning process for the prioritization of GEF projects. Governments have the opportunity to take full advantage of engaging a broadly representative group of stakeholders, including CSOs, in consultations for the strategic prioritization for the use of GEF resources. These consultations will, in turn, enhance country ownership. Also, GEF projects will continue to benefit from the active participation of CSOs, based on their distinct comparative advantages, including cost-effectiveness of interventions; establishing the linkages between the global, national, and local levels; and ensuring sustainability and the long-term impact of its results.

The SGP will continue to expand in GEF-5. Thirteen new countries will join the program during this replenishment cycle, empowering CSOs in 135 participating countries to protect the global environment through community-based interventions. Additionally, the more

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<sup>14</sup> In June 2009, the Council approved the proposal by the Secretariat to change the name of the RAF to System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR). Details can be found in the document Revised Scenarios and Operations for a System for Transparent Allocation of Resources in GEF-5 (GEF/C.35/4.Rev.1, May 29, 2009)

mature and experienced countries will be upgraded in GEF-5<sup>15</sup>, to function in a more independent manner and take broader responsibilities. The SGP effective delivery mechanism in these upgraded countries will be further strengthened through additional sources of funding to increase its scope and impact. Based on the experience gained in delivering global benefits through local community actions, upgraded countries will also assist new country programs in training and capacity building, particularly in replication, scaling-up and mainstreaming.

Engaging CSOs in its decision-making process has been a strategic priority for the GEF. This dialogue helped foster broader and deeper CSO participation in

international environmental protection efforts.

The pioneering engagement of CSOs in the GEF policy-making process has proven to be effective for channeling information both to and from CSOs into the GEF, its Agencies and the Council. The GEF-NGO Network has provided valuable contributions and an independent perspective, helping the GEF strengthen and maintain its impact on the ground. Ways to further enhance the GEF-CSO partnership will be explored in GEF-5 through a process which is expected to result in a proposal for a GEF-CSO Strategy. In close collaboration and consultation with the GEF-NGO Network and other stakeholders, this process will include a review of the policies and programs for engaging CSOs in the work of the GEF.

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15 Small Grants Programme: Execution Arrangements and Upgrading Policy for GEF-5 (GEF/C.36/4, November, 2009)







## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFDB	African Development Bank
CBO	Community Based Organization
CPMT	Central Programme Management Team
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
GEF	Global Environment Facility
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FSP	Full-Sized Project
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IPOs	Indigenous Peoples Organizations
MSP	Medium-Sized Project
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NSC	National Steering Committee
OP	Operational Phase
RAF	Resource Allocation Framework
SGP	Small Grants Programme
STAR	System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization



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