

CREATING SYNERGIES

Land degradation is recognized as a major threat to conserving biodiversity, stabilizing the global climate, and safeguarding international waters. Although the direct causes of land degradation are geographically specific, the effects of land degradation go beyond national boundaries.

From its inception, the GEF's work to preserve biodiversity, reduce the risks of climate change, and safeguard international waters has had the added benefit of strengthening sustainable land management. In its first decade, the GEF invested a total of about \$624 million in more than 80 projects with linkages to combating land degradation.

In 2002, the GEF's portfolio was significantly expanded to include the prevention and control of land degradation. Since then, the GEF has approved an additional \$155 million for 158 projects that directly target land degradation. Although land degradation (desertification and deforestation) is now part of its mandate, the GEF also continues to address land degradation as a cross-cutting issue, building on past experience and creating synergies with projects in other focal areas.

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

An important GEF priority is the integration of climate change risk into sustainable land management planning and implementation. GEF-supported interventions seek to alter land-

use and production sector policies and management practices, especially in marginal, arable lands, taking into account intensified El Niño and La Niña phenomena. The GEF also supports activities to minimize drought-related stress brought on by climate change through the development of drought management plans, the establishment of community emergency reserves (food, water, and wood), and the development of early warning systems.

A GEF sustainable land management project covering eight Caribbean small island developing states (SIDS)—Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines—will fully incorporate climate change adaptation into its planning and implementation. The project, which the United Nations Environment Programme is managing, will address the problem of land degradation, in particular deforestation and loss of biodiversity, by mainstreaming sustainable land management into national development priorities and conservation management techniques. One key issue for SIDS is preventing and managing the impact of extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, droughts, and fires, which are potentially destructive to terrestrial, coastal, and marine habitats. The project will test various approaches and methodologies to sustain ecosystem functioning through sustainable land management in different island scenarios.

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY

The GEF biodiversity focal area seeks to integrate biodiversity considerations into production sectors and broader socioeconomic processes. The GEF supports efforts to remove barriers to developing mainstreaming opportunities in different production landscapes and sectors as part of a wider effort to promote sustainable land management. Strengthening capacities at the systemic, institutional, and individual levels is essential to the GEF's work, along with undertaking demonstration activities to catalyze innovation in production processes and increase management skills. These activities all reflect the GEF's integrated approach to natural resources management.

A GEF and World Bank project in West Africa aims to restore, maintain, and conserve ecosystems and their biodiversity in the inner delta of the Niger River. The project will increase rural incomes and contribute to food security by fostering the sustainable management of local natural resources. The Niger River is a critical resource for agriculture and biodiversity in Mali, a vast country that is home to globally unique ecosystems. Despite its natural endowments, Mali is one of the most disadvantaged countries, with poverty affecting two-thirds of the population. The GEF project is an example of a partnership that seeks to promote the integration of biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use into natural resource management and land-use plans developed by the communities.

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION OF INTERNATIONAL WATER BODIES

International water bodies are severely affected by land-based pollution—for example, sedimentation from soil erosion and agrochemical pollu-

tion from uncontrolled use of fertilizers and pesticides. International water bodies are also affected by the excessive pumping of water from aquifers for irrigation. These problems are related to unsustainable land management systems.

International water bodies also face an additional challenge: the need for full collaboration of the involved countries. The GEF's role is to bring together nations to strengthen integrated management of shared land and water resources. These collaborations focus on implementing policy, legal, and institutional reforms as well as stress-reducing investments in those systems.

In the Prespa Lakes Basin of Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Greece, a GEF project, is addressing the problems of integrated and transboundary ecosystem management. The Prespa region, located in the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe, is a mountainous area that includes two linked lakes. The Prespa Park is divided among Albania, Greece, and FYR Macedonia and contains globally significant biodiversity. The park's ecological integrity is being threatened by inappropriate land and natural resource use, partly because of different national management regimes and policies. The GEF project, which the United Nations Development Programme is implementing, will promote integrated planning, improve coordination among countries and economic sectors that introduce regulations and policies, and target community activities that address land-based pollution issues.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Shirley Geer
*Acting Team Leader,
External Relations*

Global Environment Facility
1818 H Street NW
Washington DC 20433 USA
Tel: 202-473-0508
Fax: 202-522-3240