

AFRICA

Africa abounds in natural resources, cultures, and scenic beauty. Every year visitors from all over the globe flock to see its world-renowned landscapes: Mount Kilimanjaro, the Serengenti Plain, the Kalahari Desert, and the Cape of Good Hope, to name a few. They also come to see the continent's diverse flora and fauna. Scientists believe Africa contains nearly one-third of the world biodiversity, with more than 50,000 known species of plants, 1,000 species of mammals, and 1,500 species of birds. The rich African savanna sustains the world's greatest densities of large mammals.

These natural systems are critical for millions of Africans. About 70 percent of Africans live in rural areas and depend on agriculture. When the natural environment is degraded through unsustainable environmental practices, accelerated urbanization, armed conflicts, and migrations of refugees, it takes its greatest toll on the poor who rely on these natural resources and the services they provide.

Working together with more than 50 African countries, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is striving to both protect the global environment and improve the quality of life for the poor. It does so by supporting actions in Africa that promote sustainable agriculture, provide rural electrification through renewable energy, conserve unique biodiversity, generate income, manage water resources, and eliminate toxic chemicals. These efforts reflect national priorities and sustainable development imperatives.

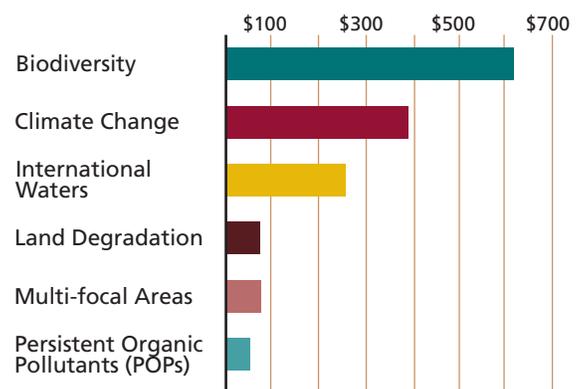
The GEF has a robust portfolio in Africa, with 550 completed and ongoing projects receiving \$1.49 billion in grants and \$4.53 billion in cofinancing.

The key to the GEF's efforts is partnerships with governments, international institutions, the private sector, and civil society. The GEF believes that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (www.nepad.org) and other innovative collaborations are essential for charting a new course for positive environmental trends on this continent.

GOING BEYOND THE GRID

Numerous rural communities throughout Africa are not connected to a central electrical grid. Although these communities rely on kerosene, firewood, charcoal, and dry cell batteries for lighting and fuel, these piecemeal fuel supplies provide limited light and can be hazardous to human health.

GEF INVESTMENTS BY FOCAL AREA (IN \$MILLIONS)



Across Africa, the GEF is helping provide clean energy and access to basic energy services for rural communities. Through its rural electrification program, it is taking renewable energy to places that are not connected to the grid.

Nearly half of GEF's photovoltaic (PV) projects are in Africa, making PV the primary focus of GEF support in the climate change focal area in Africa. Most of GEF's PV projects in Africa are designed to stimulate the PV market by removing barriers to their expanded use.

As a landlocked country facing high energy prices, Uganda has long had an interest in PV development and in making renewable energy sources available to rural people. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-GEF-supported Uganda Pilot Photovoltaic Project for Rural Electrification used a village bank model to pilot the sales of PV systems directly to rural areas. The model was implemented with rural micro finance institutions in six areas and involved grants to village banks from a revolving fund for consumer loans. Through this effort, 510 PV systems, valued at \$350,000, were installed in six locations in 18 months. The clustering of the sales reduced costs by 15 percent compared to retail prices, and village bank recovery rates range from 80 to 90 percent.

As a follow up to this project, the Government of Uganda is working with the GEF and the World Bank on a long-term program that seeks to systematically develop Uganda's rural energy, information, and communications sectors in order to improve the quality of life for rural households and increase the productivity of rural enterprises. The focus of the program is renewable energy development. Although the program is still underway, it has already demonstrated remarkable results.

- 14 MW of renewable energy power generation mostly in small hydro facilities under construction

- 19, 000 cumulative watt-peak sales of solar PV sales to households and institutions
- Increased sales of small-capacity PV systems that are more affordable for poorer households
- Solar home system price reduction of 30 percent (\$14 per watt at peak)

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE OF LAND DEGRADATION

Drylands cover nearly two-thirds of Africa's land. These lands are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, the result of which can be desertification. Desertification threatens more than 39 percent of the African continent and affects as much as 65 percent of agricultural land. This situation has made Africa a net food importer.

Land degradation is one of the biggest problems facing Africa. The United Nations recognizes the severity of this situation, and the Convention to Combat Desertification places a special emphasis on Africa. The United Nations has declared 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (www.iydd.org).

Since its inception, the GEF has worked to prevent and control land degradation in Africa. In October 2002, the Second GEF Assembly approved land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation, as a GEF focal area. A year later, the GEF was designated as a financial mechanism for the Convention to Combat Desertification. Today, the GEF is exploring new approaches to dealing with land degradation throughout Africa.

Kenya, for example, relies heavily on its agricultural sector, which provides livelihoods for the majority of the people. A high population growth rate coupled with a lack of growth in other sectors is placing increasing pressures on Kenya's natural resources, resulting in environmental degradation, decreasing soil fertility, and reduced agricultural productivity. To deal with these concerns, Kenya is working with the GEF and the

World Bank on a project that seeks to improve people's livelihoods in rural communities by promoting sustainable agriculture and modernization of the agricultural sector.

Burkina Faso, Namibia, and other countries are addressing land degradation in a comprehensive and integrated manner through a pioneering GEF initiative: the Country Partnership Program for Sustainable Land Management (CPP). The program offers a variety of interventions to tackle land degradation, including policy, regulatory and institutional reforms, capacity building, and investments.

Burkina Faso, a landlocked country of the Sahel, faces severe degradation in 30 percent of the country's arable land. Adverse conditions throughout the country are diminishing the impact of food security initiatives, exacerbating poverty, and undermining the quality of life for numerous Burkina Faso. The standard project approach has not allowed the Government of Burkina Faso and its partners to address these specific challenges. Consequently, the Government, with the support of UNDP and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, has embarked on the process of developing a CPP. This CPP seeks to develop a partnership framework for sustainable land management, promote an enabling institutional and policy environment for sustainable land management, and foster equitable and integrated approaches to sustainable land management practices.

MANAGING FRESH WATER AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS

Africa contains some of the world's most valuable freshwater and marine biodiversity and ecosystems. Overexploitation, degradation of adjoining lands, and climatic fluctuations are threatening these systems. The transboundary nature of most African freshwater basins and large marine ecosystems (LMEs) represents a challenge and an

opportunity for the GEF. Starting in the early 1990s, the portfolio of international waters projects in Africa has been growing steadily. It now encompasses virtually all major freshwater basins, all LMEs, and several key transboundary aquifers in the Sahara, the Sahel and Southern Africa. All African nations are or have been engaged in GEF international waters projects.

Lake Tanganyika, one of the world's great lakes, possesses some of the highest biodiversity of any lake on Earth. The lake also plays an important role in the economies of the countries that surround it—Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, and Zambia—and provides food security for the communities. Since 1995, GEF's assistance has helped the four riparian countries to recognize the need for an integrated, regional approach to the conservation and management of the shared lake ecosystem and its basin. Also with GEF support, the Lake Tanganyika Convention was signed in 2003 and adopted by the riparian countries, and an agreement was reached on a Strategic Action Program addressing unsustainable fisheries, increasing pollution, excessive sedimentation, and habitat destruction. This action program is now being implemented through a concerted effort of the countries, development partners, and the GEF.

Following the Tanganyika example, the overall objective of GEF's international water action in Africa for the next few years is to create an enabling environment for future on-the-ground action, including building capacity, setting priorities, and strengthening joint management structures. An additional focus is on the marine fisheries in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the GEF is accelerating a coordinated response to the looming threats of fishery depletion and collapse. A GEF-World Bank Partnership Investment Fund has been established to assist countries in meeting sustainable fisheries targets agreed upon by world leaders in 2002 in Johannesburg.

CONSERVING UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY

For more than a decade, GEF has worked collaboratively with its implementing agencies and other partners to assist African countries in developing sustainably, while conserving biodiversity in a range of ecosystems: from drylands and forests to freshwater bodies and marine and coastal areas.

South Africa's Cape Floral Kingdom harbors more than 9,000 plant species, 70 percent of which are found nowhere else. The government has developed an innovative 20-year program, Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE).

In 1998, the GEF funded the strategic plan for the CAPE, identifying areas that need to be conserved and broad program activities to be undertaken. The strategic plan is being used as an international model for successful management and planning initiatives.

Today, the GEF is supporting a number of projects in the CAPE. The program is expected to have a major impact on conservation, land-use planning, environmental management, and nature-based tourism. The program involves local people in a variety of ways, including employing them to uproot intrusive alien species, which are replacing native plants and using large amounts of scarce water.

PRESERVING CROPS AND MEDICINAL PLANTS

Ethiopia is a center of origin for a significant number of food plants, including coffee. Preserving agricultural biodiversity is important to Ethiopia and other African countries. An innovative GEF project in Ethiopia worked to conserve globally important crop genetic resources in the long term by strengthening Ethiopian institutional

capacity, providing local farmers with more secure seed sources, and improving knowledge on seed selection and management.

In Zimbabwe, the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Traditional Medicinal Plants project, supported by the GEF and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, is promoting the conservation, sustainable use, and cultivation of endangered medicinal plants. The project is demonstrating effective models at the local level and developing a legal framework for the conservation, sustainable use, and equitable sharing of benefits from medicinal plants

ELIMINATING TOXIC POLLUTANTS

Throughout Africa, at least 50,000 tons of obsolete pesticides have accumulated. These hazardous pesticides are contaminating soil, water, air, and food sources. They pose serious health threats both to rural and urban populations and contribute to land and water degradation.

The Africa Stockpiles Programme (ASP) is addressing this urgent situation. The program seeks to clear all obsolete pesticide stocks from Africa and put in place measures to help prevent their recurrence. The GEF is a key supporter of the ASP.

ASP is designed as a 12-to-15 year program. The total cost of the program is estimated at \$250 million, of which the GEF would contribute up to \$80 million. The first phase of the ASP, which is under implementation, focuses on comprehensive clean up and prevention in Ethiopia, Mali, Morocco, South Africa, Tanzania, and Tunisia. Prevention programs, as well as preparations for disposal of obsolete stocks, will take place in Nigeria and eight other countries.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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