

What is the GEF?

Written by Gaia

Monday, 05 October 2009 07:03 - Last Updated Monday, 05 October 2009 11:31

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a global partnership among 178 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. It provides grants for projects related to six focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants.

The GEF is also the designated financial mechanism for a number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) or conventions; as such the GEF assists countries in meeting their obligations under the conventions that they have signed and ratified. These conventions and MEAs provide guidance to the two governing bodies of the GEF: the GEF Council and the GEF Assembly.

- [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD)
- [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC)
- [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants](#) (POPs)
- [UN Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (UNCCD)

The GEF is also associated with many global and regional MEAs that deal with international waters or transboundary water systems.

As such, the GEF helps fund initiatives to assist developing countries in meeting the objectives of the Conventions.

Today the GEF is the largest funder of projects to improve the global environment. Since 1991, GEF has achieved a strong track record with developing countries and countries with economies in transition, providing \$8.6 billion in grants and leveraging \$36.1 billion in co-financing for over 2,400 projects in more than 165 countries. [Search](#) the GEF database for project information and documents.

GEF funds are contributed by donor countries. In 2002, 32 donor countries pledged \$3 billion to fund operations through 2006. At the Fourth GEF Assembly in 2006, an additional \$3.13 billion was committed.

The Global Environment Facility was established in October 1991 as a \$1 billion pilot program

What is the GEF?

Written by Gaia

Monday, 05 October 2009 07:03 - Last Updated Monday, 05 October 2009 11:31

in the World Bank to assist in the protection of the global environment and to promote environmental sustainable development. The GEF would provide new and additional grants and concessional funding to cover the "incremental" or additional costs associated with transforming a project with national benefits into one with global environmental benefits.

In 1994 at the Rio Earth Summit, the GEF was restructured and moved out of the World Bank system to become a permanent, separate institution.

The decision to make the GEF an independent organization enhanced the involvement of developing countries in the decision-making process and in the implementation of the projects. Since 1994 however the World Bank has served as the Trustee of the GEF trust fund and provided administrative services.

As part of the restructuring, the GEF was entrusted to become the financial mechanism for both the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In partnership with the Montreal Protocol of the Vienna Convention on Ozone Layer Depleting Substances, the GEF started funding projects that enable the Russian Federation and nations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia to phase out their use of ozone destroying chemicals. The GEF subsequently was also selected to serve as financial mechanism for two more international conventions: The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2003).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Bank were the three initial partners implementing GEF projects. Seven more agencies joined the GEF family over the years: The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Inter-American Development Bank (IaDB), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).