

# CROSS-CUTTING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Despite population growth, increased urbanization, and accelerating climate change, we can reverse the damage that human activity has caused to our environment.

However, we can only do so by ensuring that every individual, community, organization and government is able to play their part in sustaining the ecosystems on which we depend.

But environmental action can't stand alone. As emphasized by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we need to recognize that all aspects of development are intertwined – from tackling climate change to reducing poverty, fostering economic growth and developing our societies. This means breaking out of narrow areas of focus and working across disciplines to ensure our ideas are shared and our efforts are united.

With funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UN Environment has established a high-impact portfolio of cross-cutting capacity development projects. Our aim is to build the capacity of countries to meet global environmental objectives and to ensure that the environment is a key consideration in decision-making in all efforts to achieve sustainable development.

## CASE STUDY

### Restoring resilience with community capacity

Afghanistan's Bamyan Province is a stunning landscape of deep blue lakes and snow-capped mountains. But years of conflict have left this land and its diverse population highly vulnerable to the effects of land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change, with limited capacity to deal with the impacts.

The UN Environment-GEF partnership is working with communities in Bamyan to develop their resilience to the impacts of climate change and land degradation. Local residents have embraced the project and its ecosystem-based approach to overcoming the challenges of a changing climate – from developing land-use plans, to building on traditional knowledge to better manage agricultural land, re-seeding pasture, developing nurseries to bolster local livelihoods, and planting trees to reduce the impacts of disasters such as floods and avalanches.

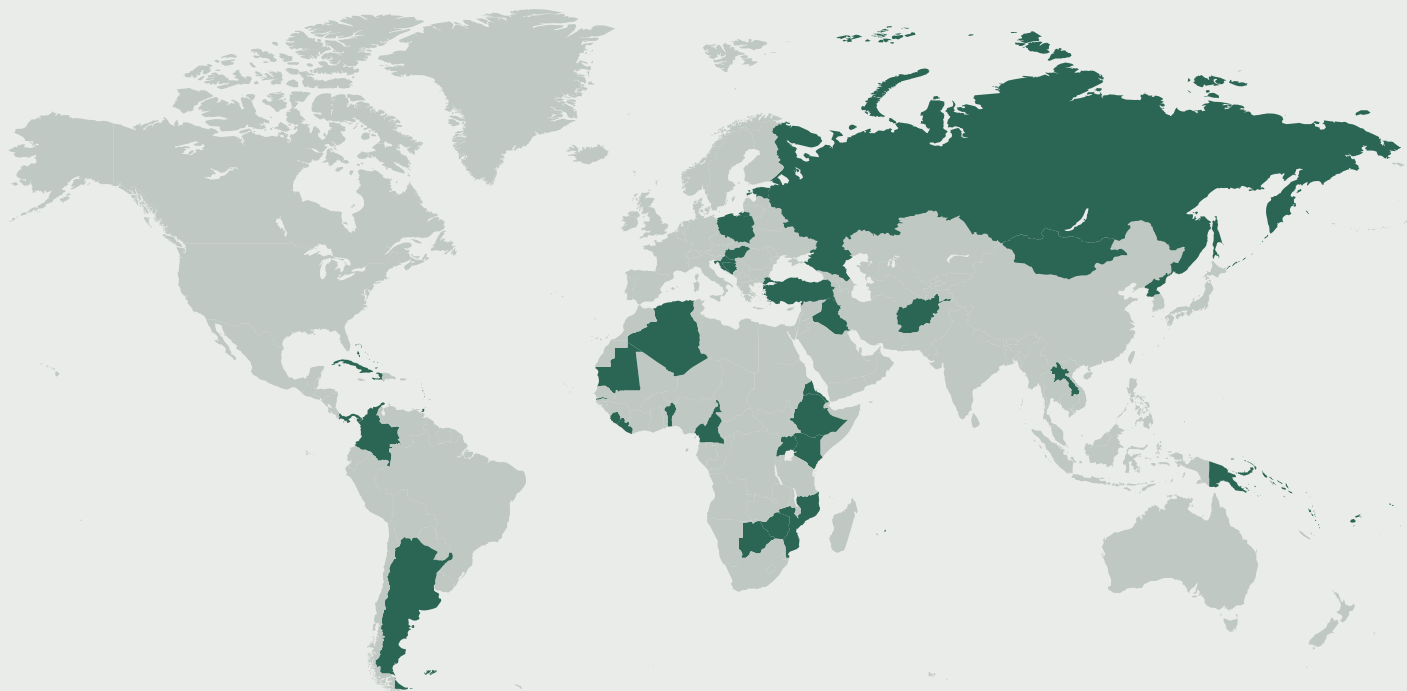
"There have been avalanches," Bamyan resident Khair Begum says. "They took a lot of houses and killed donkeys and cows. But these saplings stop the avalanches. Planting trees is very beneficial for people – for poor people. We have seen it for ourselves."

In addition, the partnership is improving the sharing of

knowledge amongst villagers and other stakeholders, and developing their capacity to collect environmental data, helping the community understand how best to conserve and manage their natural resources.

"In the past, there was only a bare mountain, without vegetation," local farmer Haji Abul Qadeer says, pointing proudly to the verdant hillside behind him. "Now the farming area has become green, grass has grown and flooding has been prevented."

By enhancing coordination between government entities, and linking data gathered at the local level to national development efforts, the UN Environment-GEF partnership is both building resilience within Afghanistan, and enabling the nation to better implement various global environmental conventions in a holistic manner – proving that everyone has a role to play in building a sustainable future for this fragile state.



■ UN Environment-GEF Cross-Cutting Capacity Development project countries

## The UN Environment-GEF partnership in Capacity Development

A major turning point in the world's attitude to our environment came in 1992 when Rio de Janeiro hosted the Earth Summit. The summit resulted in three Multilateral Environmental Agreements, focusing on overcoming our shared challenges in biodiversity, land degradation and climate change – the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The three agreements are intrinsically linked, sharing many environmental concerns as well as the overall aim of achieving sustainable development. The countries that signed these agreements have a range of obligations to fulfil, including information gathering and exchange, development of national and regional strategies, research and training, and raising public awareness of environmental challenges and strategies to overcome them.

Poor or vulnerable countries can find it difficult to meet these commitments due to limited capacity. To help overcome this, the UN Environment-GEF partnership provides cross-cutting capacity development in these countries. Our aim is to develop countries' capabilities in a way that recognizes the overlapping obligations of the three Conventions, enabling them to implement and mainstream these requirements in an integrated way.

Since our first collaboration in capacity assessment and development in 1998, the GEF has invested over \$32 million in UN Environment-led capacity development initiatives. Together, we have developed and implemented projects in over 50 countries, building the capacity of some of the world's least developed nations to contribute to the global fight to defeat climate change and preserve our environment.

We are currently collaborating on 10 active projects, spanning 23 countries worldwide.

The work of the UN Environment-GEF partnership is guided by the GEF objectives, which aim to support capacity development by, amongst other things:

- Integrating global environmental needs into management information systems and monitoring
- Strengthening consultative and management structures and mechanisms
- Integrating Multilateral Environmental Agreements into national policy, and legislative and regulatory frameworks
- Piloting innovative economic and financial tools for convention implementation
- Updating National Capacity Self-Assessments

All dollar (\$) amounts refer to US dollars.





# Why UN Environment?

The UN Environment-GEF partnership unites the world's leading environmental authority with the largest public funder of projects and programmes that benefit the global environment.

UN Environment builds on the GEF strategic objectives in cross-cutting capacity development by contributing scientific solutions, tools and data, alongside the ability to connect stakeholders and drive change through our global network of partners developed over 45 years of environmental action and advocacy.

Our Environment Under Review sub-programme undertakes environmental assessments and provides open access to high quality, relevant data and information to governments and other stakeholders. This enables decision-makers to take full account of environmental issues when developing policy and taking action.

## Global policy



UN Environment hosts the secretariats of a number of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and works closely with national policymakers across relevant ministries. Most cross-cutting capacity development activities are based on the requirements of Multilateral Environmental Agreements for which the GEF serves as the financial mechanism. These include the three Rio Conventions:

- Convention on Biological Diversity
- UN Convention to Combat Desertification
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

## Technical expertise and resources



- **UN Environment's Science Division:** Science is central to the mandate of UN Environment. Our Science Division provides the up-to-date knowledge and expertise needed for countries to make informed decisions on environmental issues in light of both emerging risks and opportunities for the future
- **Environment Live:** Launched in 2014, our online knowledge-sharing platform (<http://environmentlive.unep.org>) provides open access to up-to-the-minute environmental data, tools and research for policymakers, researchers and implementers worldwide
- **Global Environment Outlook:** Produced every five years, this flagship report on the state of our environment provides an integrated assessment of the global environment. A key reference for both practitioners and policymakers, it shows the interactions and feedback loops between social, economic and environmental drivers and assesses how different policy options can move us to a more sustainable world
- **Indicator Reporting Information System:** This online reporting system enables countries to share data between different ministries and agencies, monitor trends, and regularly evaluate the state of the environment, making it a key tool in both aligning national policy and planning and reporting on international obligations
- **Capacity building for environmental information management:** UN Environment supports national planning, reporting and decision-making through building capacity in environmental information management. To date, the UN Environment-GEF partnership has supported 35 countries to undertake their National Capacity Self Assessments, identifying priority capacity development needs, followed by cross-cutting capacity development projects

## Project highlights



Some of the capacity development projects that the UN Environment-GEF partnership is currently collaborating on internationally include:

- **Developing Core Capacity for MEA Implementation in Haiti:** Focusing on reducing environmental degradation and promoting a sustainable ecosystem-based approach, we are working to strengthen government capacity for environmental decision-making and raise awareness of the national benefits of implementing the Multilateral Environmental Agreements
- **Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement MEAs by Strengthening Planning, and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific Islands:** This sub-regional capacity development project is establishing national and regional environmental databases in 14 nations; enabling countries to collect, analyze and share environmental data. The information collected will be used to support local and national planning and forecasting, as well as contributing to Convention reporting obligations
- **Developing Core Capacity for MEA Implementation in Cameroon:** Cameroon's UN Environment-GEF supported National Capacity Self Assessment identified a number of constraints to the country's ability to meet its international Convention obligations. UN Environment is working to bridge these gaps through developing of tools for improved environmental governance, strengthening institutional arrangements and coordination, and building the capacity of actors to strengthen sustainable financial mechanisms and mobilize resources for Convention implementation
- **Capacity Development for the Integration of Global Environmental Commitments into National Policies and Development Decision Making in Bosnia-Herzegovina:** By building the environmental management capacity of institutions and institutionalizing environmental information and knowledge management tools and practices, UN Environment is helping Bosnia and Herzegovina overcome its pollution challenge and fulfil its international environmental obligations. The project has developed indicators for cross-cutting Multilateral Environmental Agreement information management, established a web-based environmental database to help guide policy development and decision making and opened and rehabilitated air-monitoring stations, helping the country monitor climate and air quality, and reduce illnesses and deaths from outdoor pollution





## Towards a sustainable future

With the global population expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, there is an urgent need to protect our environment, which is the foundation of our subsistence and development needs. Through the UN Environment-GEF partnership, we are committed to providing continuing support to build the capacity needed for countries to achieve this.

UN Environment is the host and administrator of several Multilateral Environmental Agreements, for which the GEF serves as the financial mechanism. This shared involvement forms the basis of a strong and effective partnership. Together we are well equipped to help countries strengthen their capacity to implement the conventions holistically, and ultimately

address the challenges they face in striving to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and a secure environment for all.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an integral part of the environmental policy and decision-making process for all countries, and it will continue to be of major importance in the years ahead. We will help our country partners to build on the synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, assisting them to manage environmental information to enhance decision-making, strengthen institutions, develop national planning and foster (sub)regional networks.

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