

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT IN LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

Least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS) share several characteristics: high levels of poverty, serious environmental degradation, and low human and institutional capacities for integrated and sustainable land management. Because of these vulnerabilities, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has made supporting LDCs and SIDS a top priority.

Generally, LDCs have largely rural-based populations and heavily depend on productive use of natural resources. The prevalence of land degradation in croplands, rangelands, and forest lands can constrain these countries' economic growth, human development, and environmental sustainability.

Small islands face their own set of specific challenges—small land territories and economies, limited infrastructure, isolation from large international markets, and high vulnerability to natural disasters. Population pressure and deforestation can often lead to the limited land area being degraded. Tourism, a growing mainstay of many SIDS' economies, also increases pressure on limited resources, notably water and land, especially along coastal areas.

The GEF recognizes the need for targeted capacity building for sustainable land management, including mainstreaming environmental concerns into the national development frameworks. Priority goals for the GEF's land degradation focal



The Rock Islands of Palau

area are strengthening institutional and human resource capacities to improve planning and implementation of sustainable land management; and enhancing policy, regulatory, and economic frameworks to facilitate the adoption of sustainable land management practices across sectors.

In addition, the *Strategic Approach to Enhance Capacity Building* (approved by the GEF Council in November 2003) recognizes that capacity building, either targeted within a focal area or as a stand-alone synergetic activity, must be based on several overarching principles. These include national ownership and leadership, multistakeholder consultation, needs self-assessments, and integration into wider sustainable development efforts.

In November 2004, the GEF Council approved the *United Nations Development Programme-GEF LDC and SIDS Targeted Portfolio Project for Capacity Development and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Management*. Individual projects under this umbrella framework will focus on those countries that have not completed their National Action Plans as required by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Often the term “desertification” is defined by these countries as “land degradation resulting from deforestation and unsustainable agriculture,” with the issue of deforestation being intractable and requiring urgent attention.

Limited capacity for sustainable land management is particularly acute at the individual, institutional, and systemic levels in LDCs and SIDS. Often, LDC and SIDS poverty reduction strategies do not take environmental concerns into account. Among the obstacles to environmental mainstreaming are a lack of information, absence of analytical and advocacy skills, and lack of a cross-sectoral approach to development.

Forty-seven countries will work with the United Nations Development Programme and establish close ties to other GEF Implementing Agencies to minimize overlap and ensure maximum collaboration. A Global Advisory Committee will provide timely, strategic guidance.

The individual country projects will seek to strengthen the enabling environment for sustainable land management while ensuring broad-based political and participatory processes toward the achievement of three key outcomes:

1. Developing domestic, sustainable land management capacities at the national and local levels; enhancing cross-sectoral capacities, with a focus on the landscape approach and integrated land use planning and management; and developing mechanisms for sustainability, such as capacities for monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, and economic valuation techniques.
2. Mainstreaming and harmonizing the National Action Plan and sustainable land management into national development strategies and policies—including raising awareness of desertification and deforestation issues—to increase political and financial support for mitigating land degradation in the country. The National Action Plan and sustainable land management principles and approaches will also be harmonized with other development frameworks.
3. Implementing investment planning and resource mobilization for the National Action Plan and sustainable land management, including developing a medium-term investment strategy and plan. Possible sources are the government, donors, private sector, trust funds, and others.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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