



**Global
Environment
Facility**

Media Contact:
Hutton G. Archer
Global Environment Facility (GEF)
Tel: 1 (202) 473-0508
Fax: 1 (202) 522-3240
e-mail: harcher@theGEF.org
Internet: www.theGEF.org

NEWS RELEASE

GEF to Double Funding Available to NGOs for Community-Based Environmental Projects

Washington, D.C., July 1, 2003 – The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has announced that it will more than double the amount of small grant funding available to non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations. The grants, which are up to US\$50,000 each, support projects that simultaneously benefit the global environment and local communities in developing countries. The projected increase in funds for grants reflects the program's record of success, which has led to greater demand for grants and increased donor support.

According to the recently approved GEF business plan, the GEF small grants budget is projected to increase from \$30 million in 2003 to more than \$60 million in 2005. The increase in funding would allow GEF to award more small grants and increase the number of countries participating in the program.

“GEF’s Small Grants Programme has made a huge difference in the well-being and environmental health in thousands of local communities,” said GEF’s CEO and Chairman, Mohamed T. El-Ashry. “Though the program’s grants are small compared with the needs of our global environment, their impact is large – and GEF is working closely with its partners to make the program’s impact even larger in the coming years.”

Since 1992, GEF has committed approximately \$117.35 million for small grants – leveraging an additional \$65.6 million in co-financing – to NGOs and community groups in developing countries, directly involving them in addressing global environmental problems. Through the program, grants of up to \$50,000 are used to demonstrate and support the dissemination of community-based natural resource management practices and technologies that could reduce threats to the global environment if they are

replicated. The Small Grants Programme is administered on behalf of the GEF by the UNDP (the United Nations Development Programme).

So far, GEF's Small Grants Programme has benefited some 4,000 communities, including those in:

- **Zimbabwe**, where large areas of land are approaching desert conditions. In many areas, rainfall simply runs off the hard, dry ground, creating deep gullies rather than replenishing the earth. In 1997, a community in Masvingo province used a GEF small grant to obtain training in modern conservation techniques and nearly forgotten traditional methods of land management. The funding enabled the community to reclaim the gullies by planting vetiver and other grasses – rich source of fodder and renewed habitats for wildlife. In addition, fishponds were stocked, sacred springs revived, and ecotourism was introduced to the area.
- **Bolivia**, where a community near La Paz used a GEF small grant to conserve native potato varieties that are highly valued by local communities and contribute to global biodiversity. Andean farmers had traditionally cultivated dozens of native potato varieties, however the genetic diversity of native varieties has been eroded because of the influence of imported, high-yielding potato varieties and other factors. Through GEF's small grant, the NGO Centro de Promocion de la Mujer provided technical assistance to households for conserving, managing, and producing the *sani negra* and other native potato varieties. The project enabled the local community to produce more than 30 tons of potatoes – enough for themselves and to sell to neighboring communities.
- **Jordan**, where a series of GEF small grants were used by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature to help protect biological diversity and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities near the Dana Nature Reserve, the second largest protected territory in Jordan. Through rangeland management and animal husbandry, combined with alternative income-generating activities such as eco-tourism, overgrazing of the land has been reduced and the community has benefited.
- **The Philippines**, where the people of the island of Mindanao used a GEF small grant to take charge of their own energy needs while protecting the environment. They built a 25-kilowatt micro-hydropower station, which transfers the potential energy of streams and small flows, to supply themselves with inexpensive, renewable electrical power. With GEF support, local residents conducted a survey of the watershed before building the micro-hydropower station. They used the results to begin rehabilitating the watershed area. Now the schools of Mindanao are no longer dark in the afternoon, and the homes are lit at night – allowing more time for studies and for income-generating activities such as making crafts. The watershed protection activities promoted by the project will ensure the long-term sustainability of the water source and the micro-hydropower station.

About the GEF

The Global Environment Facility is an international financial organization with 175

member countries that acts as a major catalyst for improving the global environment. GEF's mandate is to make the connection between local and global environmental challenges, and between national and international efforts to conserve biodiversity, reduce the risks of climate change, protect the ozone layer, clean up international waters, combat land degradation, and phase out persistent organic pollutants.

Since its creation in 1991, the GEF has allocated \$4.5 billion in grants to support more than 1,200 projects in 140 developing nations and countries with economies in transition. In addition, GEF has committed approximately \$117.35 million in small grants to NGOs and community groups in developing countries, directly involving them in addressing global environmental problems.

A recent assessment by an independent panel of experts finds that the GEF has been a "catalyst for innovative programs" and has produced "significant results" to improve the global environment.

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