



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Global Environment Facility". The topic "Global Environment Facility" has relevance in the Environment section of the UPSC CSE exam.

### Relevance:

#### For Prelims:

What is GEF?

#### For Mains:

GS 3: Environment

Impact of GEF?

Challenges For GEF?

GEF and India?

### Why in the news?

At the 64th Global Environment Facility (GEF) council meeting in Brazil, the governing body approved the disbursement of \$1.4 billion to accelerate efforts to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution crises.

### What is GEF?

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an international financial organization that provides grants and financing for projects aimed at addressing global environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development. Here are some key facts about the Global Environment Facility:

- **Established:** The GEF was established in 1991 as a result of cooperation between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank. It operates as an independent organization.
- **Mission:** The GEF's mission is to help countries tackle the world's most pressing environmental issues by investing in projects that promote sustainable development, protect biodiversity, combat climate change, promote sustainable land management, protect international waters, and address issues related to chemicals and waste.
- **Membership:** The GEF has a membership of 184 countries, including both developing and developed nations. These countries work together to shape and implement the GEF's programs and initiatives.
- **Financial Resources:** The GEF raises and manages financial resources to support its projects. It receives contributions from member countries, known as "donors," as well as from other sources such as multilateral development banks, private foundations, and the private sector.
- **Project Types:** The GEF funds projects in a variety of areas, including biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable land management, international waters management, chemicals and waste management, and sustainable forest management. These

projects aim to have a positive impact on the environment and contribute to sustainable development.

- **Focal Areas and Programs:** The GEF operates through different focal areas and programs to address specific environmental challenges. These include the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), the Adaptation Fund (AF), and the Global Wildlife Program (GWP), among others.
- **Project Implementation:** The GEF provides grants and concessional financing to countries for project implementation. It works in collaboration with governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to design and implement projects that have a positive impact on the environment and local communities.
- **Impact:** The GEF has supported thousands of projects around the world, resulting in positive impacts on biodiversity conservation, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, sustainable land management, and the protection of international waters. These projects contribute to the achievement of global environmental goals and promote sustainable development.
- **Country Ownership:** The GEF promotes country ownership by engaging governments and stakeholders in the design and implementation of projects. It emphasizes the importance of integrating local knowledge and priorities into project activities.
- **Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building:** The GEF supports knowledge sharing and capacity building activities to enhance countries' abilities to address environmental challenges effectively. It facilitates the exchange of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned among countries and partners.

#### **Impact of GEF?**

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** The GEF has supported numerous projects aimed at conserving biodiversity and protecting ecosystems. It has helped establish protected areas, promote sustainable management of biodiversity, and conserve endangered species.
- **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** The GEF plays a crucial role in addressing climate change by supporting projects that mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and promote adaptation to climate impacts. It has funded renewable energy projects, energy efficiency initiatives, reforestation programs, and climate-resilient infrastructure development.
- **Sustainable Land Management:** The GEF has supported projects that promote sustainable land management practices, such as sustainable agriculture, reforestation, and combating land degradation. These projects have helped restore degraded lands, improve soil fertility, and enhance agricultural productivity.
- **International Waters Management:** The GEF has contributed to the sustainable management of transboundary water systems, including rivers, lakes, and oceans. It has funded projects to reduce water pollution, protect coastal areas, and enhance water resource management.
- **Chemicals and Waste Management:** The GEF addresses the sound management of chemicals and hazardous waste through its projects. It supports efforts to reduce the use of harmful chemicals, promote safe disposal practices, and build capacities for chemical management.
- **Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building:** The GEF emphasizes knowledge sharing and capacity building to enhance countries' abilities to address environmental challenges effectively. It supports the exchange of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned among countries and stakeholders.
- **Leveraging Additional Funding:** The GEF's financial support often acts as a catalyst for attracting additional funding from various sources. By mobilizing co-financing and leveraging resources, the GEF amplifies its impact and enables the implementation of larger-scale projects.

## Challenges For GEF?

- **Funding:** Ensuring sufficient and predictable funding is a constant challenge for the GEF. It relies on voluntary contributions from member countries and other sources, and securing adequate resources to address the growing environmental challenges remains a persistent challenge.
- **Complexity of Environmental Issues:** The GEF deals with complex and interconnected environmental issues, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation. Developing comprehensive and integrated solutions that effectively address these challenges requires coordination and collaboration across multiple sectors and stakeholders.
- **Balancing National Priorities:** The GEF works with diverse countries, each with its own set of environmental priorities and development needs. Balancing national priorities with global environmental objectives can be challenging, as countries may have differing levels of commitment, capacity, and resources for environmental initiatives.
- **Implementation and Monitoring:** Ensuring effective implementation and monitoring of GEF-funded projects is a challenge. Projects often require coordination among multiple stakeholders, technical expertise, and long-term monitoring and evaluation to measure their impact and success.
- **Local Community Engagement:** Engaging local communities and ensuring their participation in environmental projects can be challenging. GEF projects aim to deliver benefits at the local level, but achieving community ownership and meaningful involvement requires overcoming cultural, social, and economic barriers.
- **Addressing Inequities:** Environmental challenges often disproportionately affect vulnerable communities and countries with limited resources. The GEF faces the challenge of addressing these inequities and ensuring that its interventions promote inclusive and equitable outcomes for all.
- **Adapting to Changing Environmental Priorities:** The global environmental landscape is dynamic, and new challenges emerge over time. The GEF must continually adapt its strategies and funding priorities to address emerging environmental issues, such as plastic pollution, ocean acidification, and new dimensions of climate change.

## GEF and India?

- **Partnership Duration:** India has been an active participant in the GEF since its inception in 1991 and continues to collaborate with the GEF on various environmental initiatives.
- **Funding Allocation:** India has received substantial financial support from the GEF for its environmental projects. The GEF has allocated over \$1.2 billion in grants to India across various focal areas, including biodiversity conservation, climate change, land degradation, international waters, chemicals, and waste management.
- **Focal Areas and Projects:**
  1. **Biodiversity Conservation:** The GEF has supported India in preserving its rich biodiversity through projects such as the Protected Area Network Expansion project and the Mainstreaming Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants project.
  2. **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** GEF-funded initiatives in India focus on promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate-resilient infrastructure. Notable projects include the Solar Rooftop Photovoltaic Program and the Climate Resilient Cities project.
  3. **Land Degradation and Sustainable Land Management:** The GEF has supported India in combating land degradation and promoting sustainable land management practices. Projects like the Sustainable Land and Ecosystem Management project aim to restore degraded lands and improve soil fertility.
  4. **International Waters Management:** Collaborating with the GEF, India has worked on projects to protect its transboundary water bodies, such as the Ganga River Basin Management Plan project and the Integrated Sustainable Coastal Zone Management project.

5. Chemicals and Waste Management: GEF-funded initiatives have helped India strengthen its capacity for the environmentally sound management of chemicals and hazardous waste. Projects like the Persistent Organic Pollutants Management project focus on reducing the use and release of harmful substances.
- **Small Grants Program:** The GEF's Small Grants Program (SGP) in India provides grants to local communities and grassroots organizations for environmental projects. The SGP supports initiatives promoting sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, and community-based natural resource management.
  - **Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing:** GEF initiatives in India emphasize capacity building and knowledge sharing. They promote the exchange of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned among stakeholders to enhance India's capacity to address environmental challenges effectively.
  - **National Ownership and Partnerships:** GEF projects in India emphasize national ownership, with active involvement from the Indian government, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders. Collaborations with national and state-level agencies, research institutions, and private sector entities have been instrumental in implementing GEF-funded projects.

**Source:**

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/wildlife-biodiversity/brazil-gef-meet-over-half-a-billion-dollars-set-aside-for-work-on-biodiversity-90282>

**Q.1 Which of the following statements about the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is/are correct?**

1. The GEF was established in 1991 to address global environmental challenges.
2. The GEF solely focuses on climate change mitigation and adaptation projects.
3. The GEF operates under the United Nations.

**Select the correct option(s):**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3

**Answer: (a)**

**Q.2 Which of the following statements regarding the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is/are accurate?**

1. The GEF is the largest funder of climate change projects globally.
2. The GEF operates solely in developing countries and does not support projects in developed nations.

**Choose the correct option(s):**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) None of the above.

**Answer: (d)**

**Q.3 "Discuss the role and significance of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in addressing global environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development. Highlight its major achievements, challenges faced, and potential areas for improvement."**

**Rishabh**