

UNDP and the GEF Small Grants Program:

30+ Years of Local Action, Global Impact



Empowering Communities, Transforming the Planet

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been implementing the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Program (SGP) since its launch in 1992. As the largest and longest standing corporate programme of the GEF, SGP provides direct financial and technical support to civil society and community-based organizations, driving local initiatives that address global environmental issues.

For over three decades, we have empowered local communities to address the ongoing planetary crises—from biodiversity loss and climate change to land degradation and pollution—while improving livelihoods and building resilience. By connecting thousands of grassroots efforts from around the world into a strategic, integrated global portfolio through SGP, UNDP ensures that community solutions can be replicated and scaled, highlighting the power of local action to create global impact.





Key Facts

Since SGP was launched in 1992

31,107
projects implemented addressing global environmental challenges

23,103
CSOs and communities supported through SGP

US$876 MILLION
invested with GEF and non-GEF project funding

US$1 BILLION
mobilized in project level co-financing

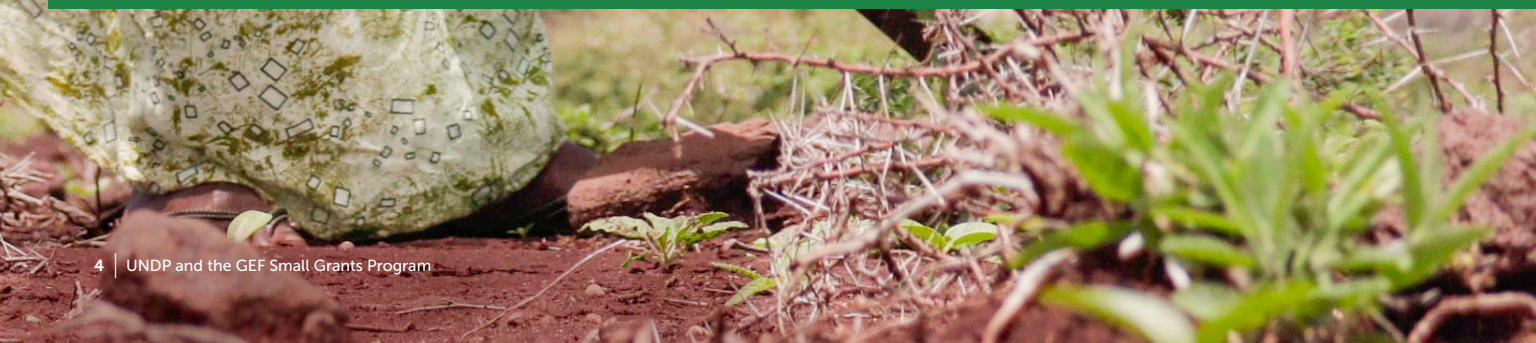




The UNDP Advantage

With a presence in over 170 countries and territories, UNDP combines global reach with strong national partnerships and trusted relationships with governments, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, communities, and the private sector. Supported by proven operational, fiduciary, and policy capabilities, UNDP is uniquely positioned to translate global environmental priorities into measurable local impact at scale.

As SGP enters its next phase and prepares for GEF-9, UNDP offers a trusted and agile delivery mechanism aligned with the GEF's strategic direction and ready to deliver tangible results on the ground. SGP remains one of UNDP's most effective platforms for advancing country ownership, strengthening local leadership, and scaling community-driven environmental action.



Our Core Strengths:



Country-Owned Governance and Social Inclusion

Our model is built on the **National Steering Committee (NSC)**—a decentralized governance mechanism in each country where UNDP implements SGP, composed of representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), Indigenous Peoples groups, academia, and the private sector. This ensures every project is technically sound, context-specific, and aligned with local priorities. With 90 percent of NSCs featuring gender focal points and nearly half including Indigenous Peoples focal points, we guarantee marginalized groups drive decision-making. This makes UNDP the ideal partner to help the GEF meet its ambitious new target of directing 20 percent of financing to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.



Seamless Policy Integration and GEF-9 Alignment

As the UN's lead development agency, UNDP bridges the gap between local action and national policy. By implementing SGP through an **integrated landscape and seascape approach**, we connect grassroots initiatives directly to countries' core climate and environmental commitments, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). This strategy tackles interconnected environmental challenges—such as sustainable agriculture, ecosystem restoration, and low-carbon energy access—directly supporting GEF-9 Integrated Programs. Moreover, it ensures that community-led innovations not only inform national policies but also delivers the multi-benefit solutions.



Catalyzing Global Partnerships

Backed by an active presence in 170 countries and territories, UNDP provides a resilient operational backbone that connects environmental initiatives to broader development goals, such as poverty reduction, democratic governance, and crisis resilience. Beyond funding, we offer a comprehensive support system focused on **capacity building, knowledge sharing, and partnership brokering**. By leveraging long-standing relationships with governments, academia, and the private sector, we connect SGP grantee-partners to a global network of experts and policy advisors. This structure fosters strategic alliances, unlocks critical co-financing, and mobilizes the technical expertise needed to scale local success across GEF-9 focal areas.



A Launchpad for Local Innovation and Scaling

UNDP positions SGP as a **global incubator for locally-led innovation**, providing flexible financing that allows communities to test, refine, and prove new approaches. Rather than just funding isolated projects, we build the pathways to scale grassroots successes into national realities. Serving as a trusted and neutral partner, UNDP convenes and facilitates CSO-Government-Private Sector Dialogue Platforms, which enable CSOs and communities to engage directly with national governments, private sector and other partners to build and strengthen relationships, influence national policy and unlock new resources.

Geographic Coverage



SGP has historically supported a total of **136 countries**, while it is currently active in 122 countries in Operational Phase 8 with UNDP. This includes 32 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and 42 Least Developing Countries (LDCs).

122
OP8 active countries

32
SIDS

42
LDCs







SGP Strategic Initiatives

Through an integrated landscape approach, SGP supports community action across five strategic initiatives that align with the GEF focal areas:

- Community-based management of threatened ecosystems and species
- Local to global coalitions for chemicals and waste management
- Sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and food security
- Catalyzing sustainable urban solutions
- Low-carbon energy access and co-benefits

SGP's Strategic Approach

From Individual Projects → Toward Landscape-Based Solutions



Landscape Approach

Building social and ecological resilience

Core approaches

- Demand-driven implementation
- Landscape-based planning
- Multi-stakholder partnerships and platforms
- Community-led innovation
- Scaling and replication of solutions

Local Initiatives

Grassroots action driven by communities and local partners

- Community projects
- Local knowledge
- Small grant support

Landscape Impact

Integrated solutions that strengthen ecosystems and livelihoods

- Healthy ecosystems
- Resilient communities
- Improved livelihoods

National Priorities

Contributing to sustainable development and global environmental goals

- Biodiversity conservation
- Sustainable land and agriculture
- Water security and efficient use
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency
- Climate change adaptation and resilience
- Chemicals and waste management

SGP transforms **local action** into **landscape level impact**, contributing to **national priorities** and **global environmental objectives**.

Key Results 2016-2026



BIODIVERSITY

2,861

Protected areas and ICCAs (territories and areas conserved by Indigenous Peoples and local communities) under effective management



CLIMATE CHANGE

336,723

Households with improved energy access + benefits



LAND DEGRADATION

1,086,490

Hectares of land with improved management practices



INTERNATIONAL WATERS

84,376

Tonnes of land-based pollution reduced



CHEMICALS AND WASTE

629

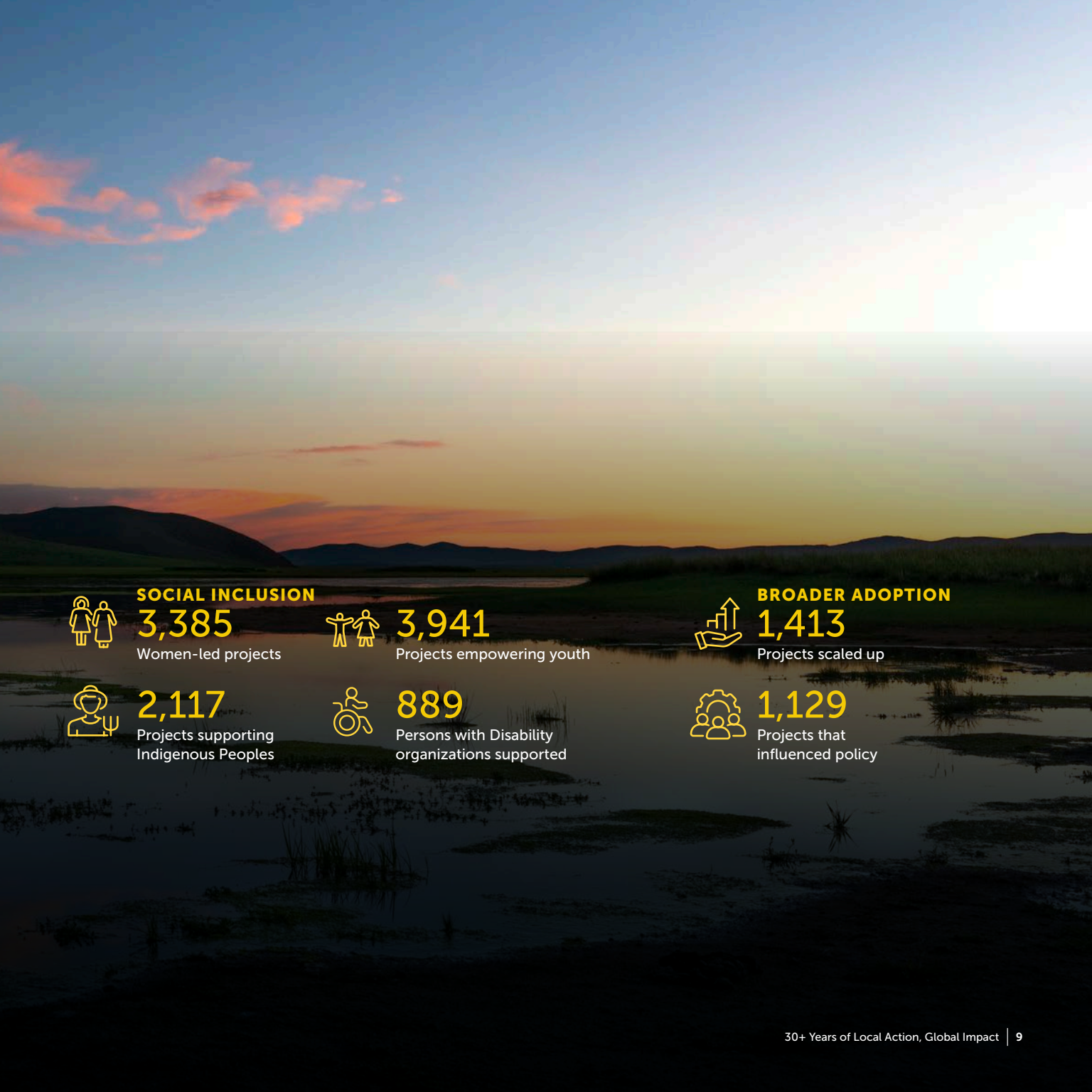
Tonnes of pesticides responsibly disposed of



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

13,740

Civil society and community-based organizations with improved capacities



SOCIAL INCLUSION

3,385
Women-led projects

3,941
Projects empowering youth

2,117
Projects supporting Indigenous Peoples

889
Persons with Disability organizations supported

BROADER ADOPTION

1,413
Projects scaled up

1,129
Projects that influenced policy

Our Partners

SGP acts as a global community-action platform with multi-stakeholder partnerships at every level.

SGP partners with a diverse network of organizations at the global, regional, and country levels to amplify impact through shared resources, expertise, and collaboration. In this way SGP helps to ensure that communities remain at the heart of environmental action and sustainable development initiatives. The following are a few examples of our global partners.

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SATOYAMA INITIATIVE

Ministry of the Environment
Government of Japan

KNCF

UNU IAS

Australian Aid

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

Mountain Partnership

MAVA
FONDATION POUR LA NATURE

CARIBBEAN BIODIVERSITY FUND

Japan Biodiversity Fund

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

SOS SAHEL

Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Climate Action,
Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

based on a decision of
the German Bundestag

IKI INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE

"Over the years, we have seen that some of the most effective solutions begin at the community level. Through SGP, UNDP helps connect those solutions to the institutions, partnerships, and policy processes that allow them to create impact far beyond their place of origin."

— Leonel Requena, National Coordinator, SGP Belize

Scan to read how UNDP empowers community champions through SGP.



PHOTO CREDITS

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SGP
SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

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