



The Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands

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GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY AND ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

Interlinked crises of freshwater depletion, food insecurity, pollution loading, and ecosystem decline stand in the way of poverty reduction and sustainable development. These crises are made worse by changes in climatic regimes and associated disasters from floods, droughts, and storms that further marginalize the world's 2.7 billion people living in poverty. The planet's oceans and their coastal interfaces are especially at risk with livelihoods, food security, international trade, and relations among sovereign nations are all at stake. Increased vulnerability of burgeoning coastal urban areas and the expanding footprint of coastal resource depletion are becoming increasingly significant economic liabilities. It is precisely at the coast that unsustainable development is creating the most risk for stability, security, and economic progress.

Traditional sector-by-sector development strategies at the coasts of both developed and developing nations have exacerbated the situation. Traditional development strategies fail to recognize the importance of maintaining natural ecosystems for their value as life and economic support systems for our societies, and the need to adapt to change is often ignored until disaster strikes. When problems arise, specialists often handle them thematically rather than in an integrated, place-based fashion that some might term

“ecosystem-based approaches.” Actions in economic sectors such as fisheries and environmental themes such as pollution constitute ways in which our societies work. However, the crisis of oceans, coasts, and small island developing states (SIDS) will just get worse unless place-based, ecosystem approaches to environmental management are part of the desired transition to sustainability.

Global Environment Facility

Global commitments that have been agreed to since 2000 at Doha, Monterrey, and Johannesburg represent the potential for a political turning point in reversing the degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems. International finance institutions, bilateral donor agencies, international organizations, and governments of the North and South all must realign their policies and programs if progress is to be made. Since 1992, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has supported countries in addressing Chapter 17 of Agenda 21. Many thematic actions GEF has supported on a pilot basis have been incorporated into the WSSD Plan of Implementation (POI), and, in early 2003, GEF adjusted its strategic priorities to align with WSSD goals.

The GEF is an international financial entity that unites its 176 member governments in partnership with its three implementing

agencies (UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank), a number of executing agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to address global environmental concerns while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. While best known for serving as the financial mechanism for global conventions such as the conventions on biological diversity and climate change, it also addresses concerns of oceans, coasts, and SIDS in its international waters focal area. GEF realigned its priorities with the outcomes of WSSD in 2002 and in the international waters areas has been aligned with Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 since Rio. Since 1992, GEF has approved 58 projects addressing oceans, coasts, and SIDS in international waters for \$553 million GEF and \$2.34 billion in total cost as well as 67 projects in its biodiversity focal area for \$384 million from GEF and \$1.43 billion in total cost for some 134 countries supporting marine ecosystem interventions described in paragraphs 30-34 and 58 of WSSD's POI.

Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs)

In 1995, the GEF Council included the concept of LMEs in its Operational Strategy as a vehicle to foster ecosystem-based approaches to the management of coastal and marine resources and address the land-sea interface. LMEs are regions of ocean space encompassing coastal areas from river basins and estuaries to the seaward boundaries of continental shelves, enclosed and semi-enclosed seas, and the outer margins of current systems. They are large regions on the order of 200,000 km² or greater, characterized by distinct bathymetry, hydrography, productivity, and trophically dependent populations. LMEs are where land-based pollution occurs, habitat losses are evident, ports are located, and 93% of all marine fisheries are harvested.

The GEF uses LMEs as units for facilitating integration across sectors, developing adaptive management frameworks with site-specific targets, and providing tools for engaging stakeholders. This allows sound science to inform policy-making and provides a practical approach to build trust and confidence among governments as well as integrated approaches across sectors. Without place-based participative processes engaging governments and stakeholders in understanding what is needed for integrated management and building capacity to implement these activities, marine science has often remained confined to the science community or has not been embraced in policy-making. With GEF assistance, 121 different nations are cooperating to improve place-based management for 12 LMEs, with projects for another 4 LMEs under preparation. GEF projects illustrate interventions at different scales as part of its

ecosystem-based approach to address World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) targets.

Developing Partnerships for Actions at Different Scales

For the GEF, LMEs represent a pragmatic way to assist countries in getting started in operationalizing the "ecosystem approach" with an area sufficiently large to include transboundary considerations. GEF also utilizes support at other appropriate geographic scales ranging from integrated coastal management (ICM) for individual municipalities to support in its biodiversity focal area at the specific reef or coastal ecosystem scale for protected areas or community-based sustainable use. Sector-specific demonstrations with fisheries, pollution reduction, and ship contaminants complement this place-based approach. Scaling between the LMEs and ICM or individual biodiversity sites determines which GEF focal area is appropriate so that both transboundary resources and globally significant biological diversity are addressed.

We need to develop long-term, place-based partnerships for enacting reforms among countries of the South and the North that use particular areas of sea space and adjacent basins. Without this integrated approach working at several scales of action, there is little chance to meet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and WSSD targets. Adopting such science-driven, ecosystem-based approaches to managing human activities involving coastal/marine systems takes time, capacity, and money. It must also be integrated with poverty reduction and climate change adaptation efforts.

Through the GEF, countries are cooperating in establishing adaptive, joint management institutional structures with their own LME and ICM-specific ecosystem targets to track on-the-ground progress related to the WSSD goals. The broad WSSD targets are important to achieve, but more customized, focused targets adopted by GEF projects may be useful to stimulate action. The GEF is bringing the North and South together around their shared LMEs to jointly adopt reforms and undertake pilot investments through a new modality known as a GEF Strategic Partnership. This is a tool for achieving coherence in development assistance funding. Currently, the GEF has approved 3 of these partnerships: (a) 16 basin countries of the Danube/Black Sea LME, (b) land-based pollution reduction for the 5 LMEs of East Asia, and (c) sustainable fisheries for the 5 LMEs of Sub-Saharan Africa. A fourth partnership for the Mediterranean Sea LME is under final preparation. These Strategic Partnerships are based on country-driven action programs aimed at particular targets. It has been the

GEF position since the Johannesburg Summit that long-term, ecosystem-based partnerships among rich and poor nations sharing benefits from particular land/ sea spaces are necessary to meet sustainable development goals.

Our planet's fragile oceans and coasts are too economically and socially valuable to allow resource depletion to continue and threats to sustainability to rise. Many coastal communities and nations are simply living on borrowed time before the \$60 billion dollar annual international trade in fisheries collapses, depleted groundwater supplies for coastal cities run dry, changing climate swamps coastal communities, and burgeoning coastal urban populations overwhelm their degraded and polluted natural resource base. Action is needed yesterday, not tomorrow.