



UNOPS and the environment



Implementing projects with a focus on environmental sustainability

UNOPS implements more than \$1 billion worth of projects for its partners every year, meeting world-class standards of quality, speed and cost-effectiveness.

We are a central resource for the UN system in procurement, contracts management, civil works and physical infrastructure development, including the related capacity development activities. Implementing over 1,000 projects for a range of public and private sector partners at any given time, we ensure that our specialized services really benefit the communities where the work is done.

Given the challenges posed by climate change and the importance of infrastructure for socio-economic wellbeing, it is critical to factor in the connected elements of climate change, infrastructure and communities to the design and implementation of sustainable development solutions. Emphasis on this 'nexus' allows for an integrated and holistic approach to project design and implementation.

This approach, UNOPS primary contribution to the Rio+20 process, encourages sustainable development through climate resilient infrastructure with a focus on community benefits. For more information about this approach please see UNOPS position paper on the nexus which is available at unops.org/rio.

Sustainability also guides the implementation support services UNOPS provides in the environment sector, which is one of our focus areas and one of our four contribution goals, and it is targeted as a cross-cutting objective across all projects.

This brochure focuses on how UNOPS supports our partners by implementing projects that promote environmental sustainability. The projects we support include those addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation, land degradation, international waters, ozone depletion, chemical pollution, environmental risk management and environmental post-conflict and natural disaster management.

UNOPS also helps our partners build national capacities for environmental management and raise local, regional and global awareness.

The following examples show how UNOPS capacity, experience and scope in the environment sector can give partners a better chance of success with their projects. Our work supports the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including MDG 7 on environmental sustainability, by translating environmental policies into action. This goes a long way towards achieving the Rio+20 goal of successfully 'building a bridge to the future'.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Ndiaye'.

Abdoulaye Ndiaye,
Global Practice Lead, Environment
Rio de Janeiro, June 2012
Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

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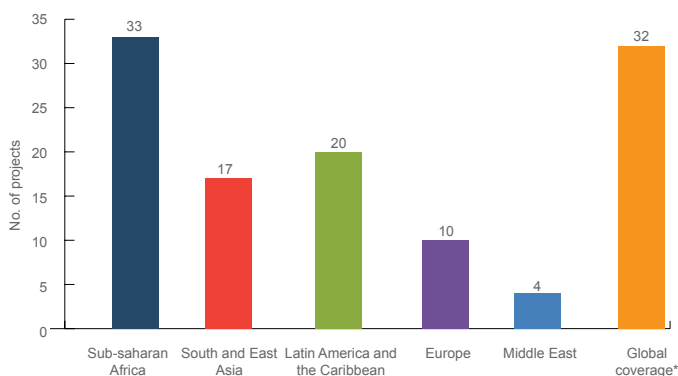
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UNOPS and the environment

The United Nations plays a leading role in guiding environmental governance and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including MDG 7 on environmental sustainability. UNOPS contributes to such efforts by including the environment as both an implementation support practice (ISP) and a cross-cutting concern.

UNOPS provides specialized services to ensure the successful implementation of projects, translating environmental policies into actions. Environmental sustainability is mainstreamed into all of UNOPS operations. This work is done in partnership with other members of the UN family, multilateral and bilateral agencies, national governments, non-governmental organizations, and community-based organizations. Large scale and small grants projects, worth more than \$100 million annually, are executed in over 120 countries worldwide.

**Global coverage refers to projects that are implemented in several regions*

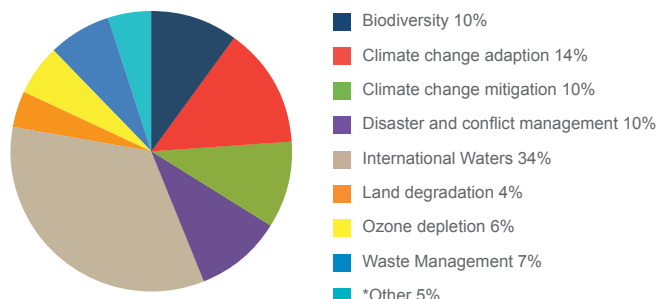


Number of projects in different regions of implementation (excluding the Small Grants Programme)

Key environmental sectors

In support of its partners UNOPS helps address environmental concerns by focusing on building national capacities for environmental management and raising local, regional and global awareness.

UNOPS environment portfolio includes projects addressing biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, land degradation, international waters, ozone depletion, chemical pollution, environmental risk management and post-conflict and natural disaster management as related to the environment.



**Other includes Energy and Cross-cutting projects*

Percentage of funding per focal area (excluding the Small Grants Programme)

UNOPS provides services in the following areas:

Biodiversity

Through local and regional initiatives, UNOPS helps conserve biodiversity. Projects include: managing transboundary protected areas such as those within the Congo Basin and the Upper Guinean hotspot; conserving biodiversity in production landscapes, for example through the preservation of fisheries in several large marine ecosystems in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Europe; and conserving endemic livestock species in four countries in West Africa.

Climate change

UNOPS provides services to climate change initiatives that include capacity development and technical assistance projects. These projects help countries adapt to and mitigate climate change by developing policies, practices and frameworks to conduct climate risk analyses, reduce vulnerability and increase resilience. For example, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with funding from the Government of Japan, UNOPS is assisting 20 African countries to adjust their national development policies to incorporate climate change risks and opportunities. UNOPS is also providing management and procurement services to the Secretariat of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD).

International waters

UNOPS executes projects to prevent and reverse the degradation of transboundary water systems, including multi-country rivers and large marine ecosystems such as oceans, lake basins, and shared groundwater resources. Partners include UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank, with funds provided



International waters projects in the Arafura and Timor Seas help to fight ecological stress. **Photo:** Handy Chandra

mainly by the GEF. The 30-plus projects in the portfolio help countries work together to fight ecological stress, such as overfishing, industrial pollution, drought, habitat changes and invasive species. Projects have covered areas such as the Western Indian Ocean region, the Caspian, Yellow, Arafura and Timor Seas, the Danube and Nile river basins, Lake Chad and the Benguela Current marine ecosystem.

Land degradation

Land degradation reduces the ability of land to grow food, provide products and maintain healthy ecosystems. On behalf of partners, UNOPS supports projects to combat land degradation, including a GEF project that is helping build national and regional capacities and encouraging investment in sustainable land management in 48 developing countries.

Small Grants Programme

The GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) provides grants to non-governmental and community based organizations in developing countries to help them tackle climate change, conserve biodiversity, protect international waters, reduce the impact of pollutants and prevent land degradation. Besides benefiting the environment, SGP projects seek to generate sustainable livelihoods in local communities and reduce poverty in the world's poorest areas. UNOPS has supported the GEF-SGP since its inception in 1992, executing more than 13,500 grants, valued at \$682 million. UNOPS supports programmes in 123 countries, initiating close to 4,000 new grant projects each year.

Post-conflict and natural disaster

War and natural disasters cause enormous environmental damage, jeopardizing the livelihoods of the many people in

developing countries that rely directly on natural resources. UNOPS supports the work of the UNEP Post Conflict and Disaster Management Branch in Afghanistan and Sudan, providing management, procurement and capacity building services. UNOPS is also supporting environmental sustainability in Haiti, following the 2010 earthquake. This includes supporting initiatives on land use management, reforestation and the construction of solar-powered homes.

Environmental risk management

In addition to assisting emergency response efforts, UNOPS helps create systems to limit environmental risk. On behalf of the Government of Argentina, UNOPS helped UNDP procure specialized equipment to monitor seismological activity. UNOPS is also supporting environmental risk management in Haiti, installing weather stations, river level monitoring and flood risk mapping.



Energy efficient, environmentally sustainable houses being constructed in Pakistan. **Photo:** Masood Lohar

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability and adaptation to climate change is one of UNOPS four high-level goals. UNOPS targets environmental sustainability as a cross-cutting objective across all its projects by supporting projects that carry out sustainable procurement, ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, improve waste management, incorporate sustainable building techniques and promote renewable energy.

For example, UNOPS is managing the construction of a climate neutral UN Regional Hub in Panama City, designed to be one of the most environmentally friendly buildings in Latin America.

Climate change and development

Climate change is one of the greatest barriers to the eradication of extreme poverty, social injustice and conflict.

Climate change causes more frequent and devastating extreme weather events such as droughts, floods and storms. This in turn leads to food insecurity and famine, increased prevalence of water- and vector-borne diseases and forced human displacement. These effects disproportionately impact poor and vulnerable people including subsistence farmers, slum dwellers and coastal communities in developing countries. In some situations such as in Small Island Developing States, climate change is a threat to the survival of entire societies. Climate change is now a top priority on the international development agenda, and shifting to low-carbon and climate resilient development strategies is a major donor concern.

UNOPS helps partners mitigate climate change and increase the adaptive capacity of vulnerable populations. This is achieved through the execution of approximately 30 projects designed to directly address climate change. Many of UNOPS other environment projects indirectly target climate change through biodiversity conservation, international waters management, green infrastructure, and the Small Grants Programme.

UNOPS and climate change mitigation

Renewable energy, energy efficiency, low carbon transportation, green construction, green procurement, and the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) lie at the core of UNOPS work on climate change mitigation.

- In support of partners such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) UNOPS implements climate change mitigation projects that emphasize developing the capacities of national governments and communities to translate relevant policies into action.
- UNOPS is at the forefront of 'green' infrastructure, as illustrated by its involvement in the construction of a carbon neutral UN Regional Hub in Panama City. Furthermore, UNOPS is pioneering green procurement, for example through the procurement of fuel efficient (hybrid) ambulances in Peru.

- UNOPS has also been providing human resource and management support services to the secretariat of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD).
- Since the inception of the Small Grants Programme in 1992, UNOPS has executed more than 13,500 grants to local communities for the implementation of initiatives specifically related to climate change mitigation.

"Climate change is the preeminent geopolitical and economic issue of the 21st century."

- Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

UNOPS and climate change adaptation

UNOPS partners with other UN agencies to support development plans, policies and capacities to manage climate change risks and opportunities. For example, UNOPS executes a strategic regional technical support component (US\$8.9 million) and a media awareness component (US\$2.5 million) of the Africa Adaptation Programme (AAP), which is a flagship programme of UNDP, established in 2008 in partnership with UNIDO, UNICEF and WFP, and funded by a \$92.1 million grant from the Government of Japan. The AAP assists the governments of 20 African countries to establish integrated and comprehensive approaches to climate change adaptation.

UNOPS is also working on behalf of its partners to support marginalized and remote communities that are exposed to climate change impacts. In partnership with UNDP, the GEF, AusAID, the Government of Japan, the Government of Switzerland, and UN Volunteers, UNOPS is implementing 100 pilot projects to promote Community Based Adaptation in 50 countries worldwide. Through the provision of micro-grants, these community-driven initiatives aim to reach out to the poorest communities to increase their adaptive capacity and resilience to climate change.

Project title:	GEF – Small Grants Programme (SGP)
Lead organization:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Funding source:	Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund
Budget to date:	Approx. \$380 million (under Operational Phase 5: 2011-2014)
UNOPS services:	Service package – fund management (including grant making), HR coordination, etc.

The Small Grants Programme: Community action – global impact

The exposure of poor, remote villages to the serious effects of climate change and environmental degradation is a pressing global dilemma. Helping communities with their initiatives for sustainable livelihoods while generating global environmental benefits is the core inspiration of the Small Grants Programme (SGP). Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the SGP efficiently channels direct grants to non-governmental and community-based organizations to help them:

- cope with climate change
- conserve biodiversity
- protect international waters
- reduce the impact of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)
- prevent land degradation

The frequently award winning, small-scale environment initiatives funded by the GEF-SGP include a wide range of grant projects such as the protection of rhinos in Botswana, the launch of a 'rent-a-bike' system in Macedonia and the conservation of the endangered Persian leopard in Iran. These are just a few examples of the over 13,500 grant projects that the GEF-SGP has funded in over 120 countries across the globe since 1992.

Despite the limited amount of each community grant distributed by the SGP (up to \$50,000) the programme has a very impressive track record of tangible results, in terms of capacity building and impact on the ground, as highlighted by independent evaluations. The SGP's decentralized structure and 'bottom up' decision-making approach has been commended as an effective way of addressing the real needs of small communities facing environmental challenges and opportunities.

UNOPS support to the SGP

Annually, UNOPS provides administrative and financial management to almost 4,000 SGP grant projects in more than 120 countries.

While the substantive SGP planning, supervision and policy making is carried out by the UNDP-GEF (as the designated GEF Implementing Agency), UNOPS ensures that the actual execution is quick and cost-efficient, working in close collaboration with the local UNDP Country Offices. As a result, the SGP is recognized as a very fast and effective delivery mechanism.

The custom-made service package for the SGP includes:

- fund management
- project monitoring
- HR and recruitment coordination
- procurement of equipment and services
- legal advice/internal oversight/audit coordination
- operational training and troubleshooting



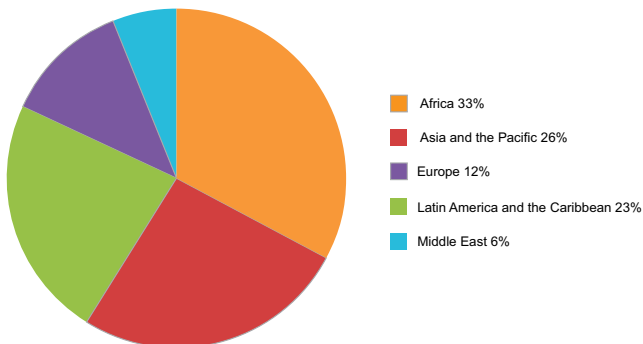
Women's group in Niger. *Photo:* SGP Niger

SGP success stories

The following three SGP grant projects exemplify the programme's concept, results and impacts.

Innovative recycling in Mongolia

An NGO in Darkhan, Mongolia has introduced an innovative model for recycling plastic bags, bottles, and waste littered throughout the city. Through a \$12,000 grant, San-Orgiu is recycling the materials into pipes, chairs and fences, resulting in a 20 percent decrease in the city's iron and wood consumption. The initiative has also helped reduce air pollution by approximately 40 percent, and close to 55,000 acres of land have been cleared of all plastic residue, generating income for 150 locals. In 2010, the initiative won the prestigious Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment.



Geographical distribution of countries of implementation

Mitigating the impacts of POPs in Zimbabwe

The intensive use of fertilizers has caused significant land degradation and soil contamination in Zimbabwe. To mitigate these effects, largely caused by POPs, the Organic Network Forum has trained 500 farmers in Makoni District in organic farming, 450 of whom will be certified. So far, 450 hectares of land have been restored, leading to increased crop yields and profits for the local communities. Harmful pollutants originally



Insulated wooden houses, Turkey. *Photo:* SGP Turkey

used in high volumes no longer affect the soil and the aquatic life of the international Save River. This success has also prompted the development of a national policy on organic farming to be formalized in the near future.

Protecting the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System

The lionfish is an invasive species that often causes devastating impacts on marine reef systems. In Belize, the Environmental Conservation Organization (ECOMAR) is addressing this problem by enabling scientists to determine the origin of the lionfish and the reason for its rapid reproduction. In addition to helping control the lionfish population, the research is contributing to the conservation of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Support to similar grant delivery mechanisms

In addition, UNOPS supplies tailor-made and standardized services to other similar grant delivery operations. These include: UNDP's Community Water Initiative, the Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation (COMPACT) and the Mekong-Asia-Pacific Community Based Adaptation (MAP-CBA) project which is funded by AUSAid, as well as UNEP-GEF's South China Sea project.

The conservation and protection of international waters such as rivers, lakes, aquifers, seas, and oceans requires international cooperation. These waters are home to diverse ecosystems and are sources of drinking water, food, energy and income for local communities. Competition for these resources is extremely high and their mismanagement can cause conflict.



Members of an environmental expedition studying biodiversity.
Photo: Handy Chandra

The UNOPS International Waters Cluster provides specialized services to partners such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank. Together we promote international cooperation to prevent and reverse environmental degradation of international water systems caused by pollution, overfishing, drought, habitat changes and invasive species.

UNOPS is executing over 30 international waters projects on behalf of these partners in more than 100 countries, amounting to approximately \$148 million. Major projects include the Benguela Current marine ecosystem (three countries), the Caribbean marine ecosystem (25 countries), the Caspian Sea (five countries), Lake Chad (six countries), and the Dnieper River (three countries).

Case study: The Caribbean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Project

The Caribbean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) is a semi-enclosed sea adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean, south of the Mexican Gulf. It is one of the larger salt water seas with a diverse marine life that is fundamental to the livelihoods of coastal communities. However, the region is under environmental stress as climate change, pollution, nutrient enrichment, overfishing, and unsustainable tourism threaten the CLME, and the livelihoods linked to it.

UNOPS is working with UNDP to protect the CLME. The GEF financed project has carried out a scientific assessment to identify three transboundary environmental problems: unsustainable exploitation of fisheries, habitat degradation and pollution. A Strategic Action Programme is being developed with a clear focus to strengthen fishery governance and protect critical livelihood species such as the spiny lobster. The project aims to enhance the health of the ecosystem and increase sustainable livelihoods for coastal communities.

Case study: The Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem Strategic Action Programme

The Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) is situated along the coast of southern Africa, bordered by Angola, Namibia and South Africa. The BCLME is extremely rich in marine biodiversity and other natural resources such as diamonds and gas reserves. Environmental degradation is increasing due to overfishing, climate change, invasive species, habitat destruction, unsustainable tourism, pollution from mining and illegal disposal of hazardous waste.



The management of shared fish stocks helps improve the livelihoods of coastal communities. *Photo:* Claire Attwood

UNOPS is working with UNDP-GEF and the three BCLME governments to implement a four-year project that is financed by GEF and aims to protect the BCLME. The project supports the implementation of the BCLME Strategic Action Programme through the adoption of national policy reforms, the creation of a regional commission and the endorsement and ratification of a legally binding international convention which will be the world's first for an LME. The project also aims to improve the management of shared fish stocks, biodiversity and ecosystem health as well as the livelihoods of coastal communities.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as “the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems”.

Healthy ecosystems are essential for biodiversity to flourish, providing a range of goods and services upon which humanity depends, including food, fuel, clean water and protection from natural hazards. Conserving biodiversity is therefore central to sustainable development, human wellbeing and poverty eradication. Yet, the global decline of biodiversity is accelerating, mainly due to urbanization, overpopulation, agricultural expansion, the introduction of invasive species, pollution, overexploitation of natural resources and climate change. Action to stop the negative trend must be immediate before the damage is irreversible.

In May 2011, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, continuing the UN’s work with the Convention on Biological Diversity. The convention promotes biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of ecosystems as well as the equitable sharing and utilization of genetic resources.

UNOPS and biodiversity

Together with partners that include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNOPS promotes the management of protected areas including nature reserves and national parks in West and Central Africa, and marine ecosystems across the globe.

UNOPS also works to enhance biodiversity conservation in production landscapes, marine areas and economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry and tourism. In West Africa, UNOPS supports local communities to develop alternative livelihood strategies to poaching such as eco-tourism, and promotes the protection of endemic livestock species. In Guatemala, UNOPS is ensuring compliance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, an international agreement which aims to ensure the safe handling, transport and use of living modified organisms.



UNOPS is supporting governments to conserve the biodiversity of the TRIDOM landscape. *Photo:* COMIFAC

Presently, UNOPS implements biodiversity projects worth over \$50 million. UNOPS also supports biodiversity conservation through international waters projects and the Small Grants Programme.

Case study: Building partnerships for rainforest conservation in Central Africa

The Congo Basin contains the second largest rainforest in the world after the Amazon, spanning six African countries. The area is one of the world’s most biologically diverse regions and provides shelter, food and materials for nearly 20 million people, including the indigenous forest-dwelling Baka people. The Congo Basin is also a vital region for climate change mitigation as it acts as a major carbon dioxide sink. However, the biodiversity of the Congo Basin is at risk from illegal timber exploitation, mining, poaching and large-scale commercial hunting.

Together with the GEF and UNDP, UNOPS is supporting the governments of Cameroon, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo to conserve the biodiversity of the Tri-national Dja-Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM) landscape, covering almost 150,000 square metres – around seven percent of the entire Congo Basin. The project supports local communities by involving them in sustainable natural resource management. Moreover, the project seeks to alleviate poverty through income generating activities including eco-tourism, small scale commercial fish ponds and agro-forestry.



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