



SGP The GEF
Small Grants
Programme

25
YEARS

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LOCAL ACTION, GLOBAL IMPACT



MESSAGE FROM THE GLOBAL MANAGER

Building on the legacy of the past 25 years, and as we look to the future, we are working alongside our partners to find bold and imaginative ways to take the GEF Small Grants Programme to new heights. We know that shifting the future development trajectory – from natural resource depletion and biodiversity erosion, to one based on natural capital management and productive landscapes/seascapes – will require coordinated, integrated solutions at all levels, including that of local communities, civil society, government, private sector, and others.

The GEF Small Grants Programme, implemented by UNDP, has provided a global platform to engage civil society and local communities as key partners in addressing global environmental issues, while improving livelihoods and promoting social inclusion. The small grants of SGP have been supporting community innovations, which have been scaled up and replicated locally, nationally and globally for larger impact.

To accelerate transformational change in our societies and to build a sustainable future, we need to put local communities, including women, indigenous peoples, and youth, at the forefront of environmental conservation. As we look back at 25 years of successes, we thank our partners and look forward to supporting more innovative, community-driven environmental initiatives in the years to come.

Yoko Watanabe
Global Manager of the GEF Small Grants Programme

LOCAL ACTION, GLOBAL IMPACT

25 YEARS OF SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES AS ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS



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Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

FOREWORD



As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme (SGP), we are very proud of the significant impacts that have been achieved through the more than 21,000 projects carried out by civil society organizations (CSOs) and local communities. Thanks to a comprehensive approach, working at multiple scales with a wide range of stakeholders, these innovative solutions have transformed the lives of local communities while at the same time achieving global environmental benefits.

SGP today is recognised as one of GEF's most successful investments that support civil society and community initiatives. Established in 1992 as a dedicated window for CSOs and community-based organisations within the GEF, SGP has been widely recognized for its leadership and proactive approach in ensuring social inclusion in environmental initiatives, by promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and engaging closely with indigenous peoples and youth.

Reflecting on SGP's achievements, it's also important to look at the challenges ahead. We stand at a defining moment for the future of the planet and human well-being. Our global commons – the land, forests, seas and atmosphere we share, and the ecosystems they host – are under severe threat from ever more powerful human activities. Local communities have a deep understanding and knowledge of their environment and community needs, and play a key role as stewards of the commons by developing, testing, and applying innovative solutions that enable transformational change. We need to learn from them how to manage the commons again.

On this occasion, I would like to thank and congratulate all partners, particularly the civil society and community based organizations on the ground and UNDP as the implementing agency, for their dedication, commitment, and hard work in ensuring the long-term success of SGP. I look forward to our continued work through SGP in preserving the global environment and securing benefits for future generations.

Naoko Ishi
CEO and Chairperson, Global Environment Facility





The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is proud to celebrate twenty-five years of successful projects with the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme (SGP) in over 125 countries. This unrivalled global partnership provides direct funds and technical support to civil society organizations and local communities for initiatives that protect the global environment and support for Sustainable Development.

To date, SGP has supported 17,259 civil society and community organizations through its projects with over a total of USD 600 million in project grants.

The activities of this programme produce global environmental and socio-economic benefits that play a key role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the goals on climate, water, and land, as well as on gender equality and ending poverty in all forms.

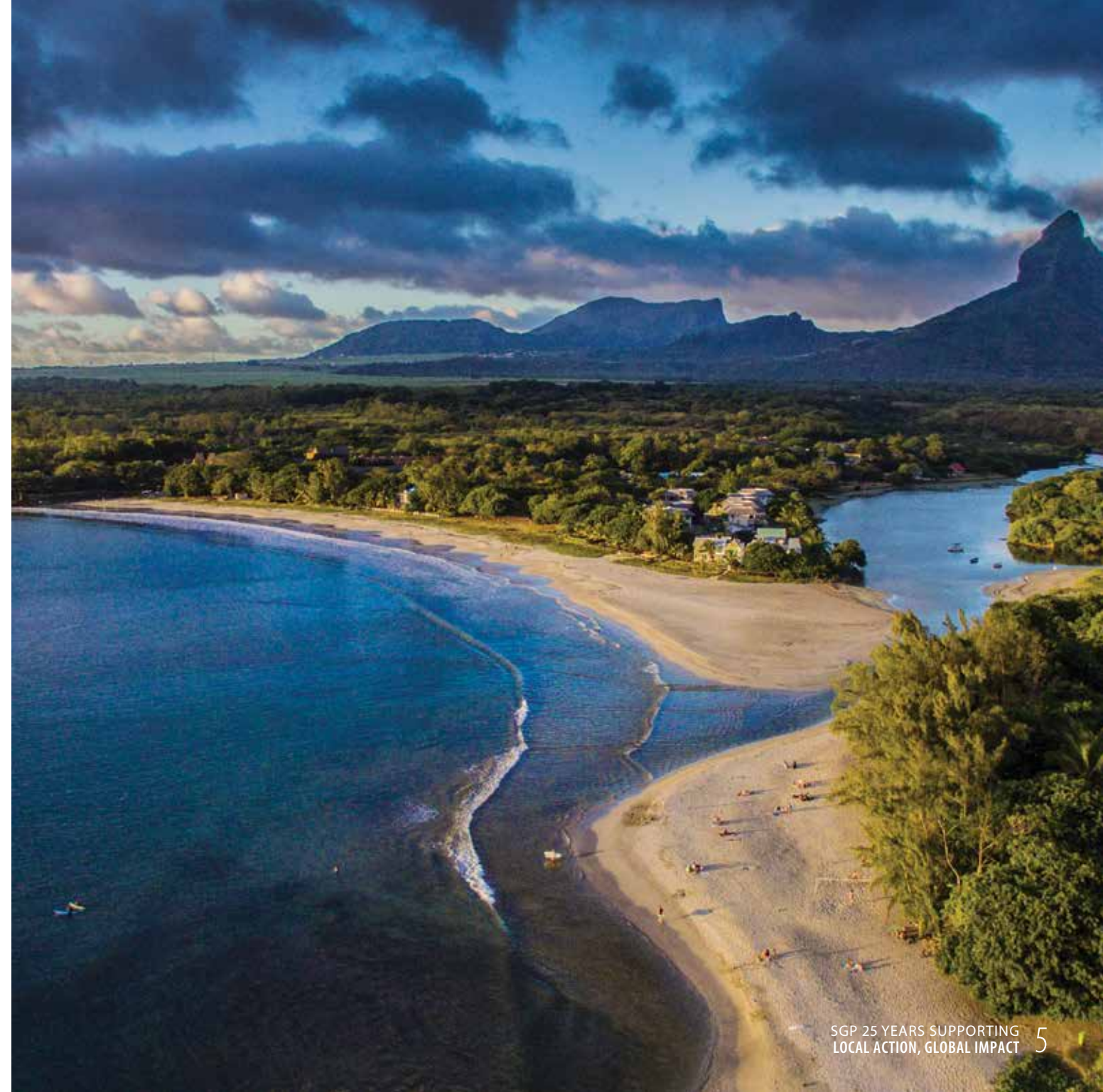
In Fiji, the Small Grants Programme supports the solar-powered traditional canoe, the *Uto ni Yalo*, to revive and sustain traditional voyaging – bridging ancestral wisdom and renewable energy, inspiring youth, and enabling low-carbon sea transportation. Based on its success, we plan to replicate this initiative with other traditional canoes in the region.

UNDP is honoured to be entrusted with the implementation of the Small Grants Programme, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the Global Environment Facility's Secretariat and Agencies, and other donors who provide the necessary co-financing for the programme to ensure it continues operating for years to come.

Through this trusted partnership, we put civil society and local communities at the forefront of our efforts to conserve the environment and improve livelihoods to ensure that no-one is left behind.

Achim Steiner

Administrator, United Nations Development Programme





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LOOKING AHEAD

HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Established in 1992, the year of the Rio Earth Summit, the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) was the response to the call from civil society organisations (CSOs) for a dedicated funding window for CSOs and local communities within the GEF, which would put CSOs in the driving seat with their own ideas in addressing global environmental issues at the local community level.

Civil society organizations from both developing and developed countries expressed their important role in tackling global environmental challenges as key partners alongside governments, private sectors, academia, and others. A collective realisation that the GEF would be a pioneer in funding environmental actions at the grassroots level led to marshalling the necessary support among governments and other allies to create SGP 25 years ago.

SGP is rooted in a strong recognition that CSOs and local communities have a deep understanding and knowledge of their environment and community needs, and a unique ability to act as stewards of the commons. SGP empowers them to seek innovative solutions to global environmental challenges, and fosters their active participation in the development, testing, and application of such solutions, thus catalysing transformational change in societies.

Funded by the GEF, implemented by UNDP, SGP remains one of the GEF's most successful initiatives to date. It continues to support communities with effective and efficient projects that realize global environmental benefits while improving livelihoods and reducing poverty, as well as promoting gender equality and empowering women. SGP, as a decentralized national-level delivery mechanism, has implemented more than 21,000 projects in 133 countries over time, with a total of USD 600 million in project grants. Over the past 25 years, participating countries to SGP have increased steadily from the initial 11 countries to a recent count of 125. Sixty-nine of these countries, a majority of those served by SGP, are Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), with several in post-conflict or crisis status.

SGP also plays an essential role in meeting the objectives of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) served by the GEF in its role as a financial mechanism. SGP effectively implements socially inclusive and integrated approaches to promote multisectoral solutions to environmental challenges across MEAs. In each participating country, SGP facilitates close linkages and synergies with MEA-related policies and strategies, all of which emphasize the importance of engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including CSOs, implementing partners, and gender-related

organizations, to achieve the objectives of the conventions. Participating countries further recognize the strategic significance and relevance of SGP in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and achieving socially inclusive sustainable development.

During the GEF-6 (2014 – 2017) alone, SGP positively influenced the conservation of 1,388 protected areas, including indigenous peoples and community conserved territories and areas (ICCAs), covering approximately 25 million hectares. SGP also supported 23,907 households to achieve energy access co-benefits, including increased income, health benefits, and improved environmental services. Through SGP projects, over 1.5 million hectares of land – including forest, agricultural land and waterbodies – was brought under improved management practices. Additionally, the projects have prevented 55,015 tons of land-based pollution, such as solid waste, sewage, waste water, and agricultural waste, from entering waterbodies or undergoing open burning. During the last year, the projects further supported the establishment and strengthening of 23 national coalitions and networks on chemicals and waste management.

Complementing the work toward achieving global environmental benefits, SGP's Grantmakers Plus window is a cornerstone of the programme,

known for its efforts to promote social inclusion of vulnerable groups, including women, indigenous peoples, youth, and people with disabilities; develop and improve capacities of CSOs; and encourage knowledge production, exchange and advocacy. During the GEF-6 period, SGP supports strengthened the capacities of 2,918 civil society organizations and 1,912 community-based organizations, comprising 82,025 people, to address global environmental challenges. Additionally, to improve knowledge flow and technology transfer among countries and regions, over 200 South-South exchanges were facilitated.

Over the past years, SGP has adopted an approach to cluster its interventions in priority landscapes and seascapes for larger impact. It also implemented an integrated approach to its investments by introducing four strategic initiatives to serve as multiple focal area platforms. These are: (1) community landscape and seascape conservation, (2) climate-smart innovative agro-ecology, (3) low-carbon energy access co-benefits, and (4) local to global chemicals and waste management coalitions. In addition, to scale up and replicate successful initiatives on the ground, CSO-government policy and planning dialogue platforms, global reach for citizen practice-based knowledge, and social inclusion are key approaches of SGP under its Grantmakers Plus window.

To strengthen its results and partnerships, SGP has developed strategic collaborations and co-financing arrangements with a range of different actors to scale-up and support emerging areas of work. Partners include the Community-Based Adaptation Programme supported by the Government of Australia, the Community Development and Knowledge Management for Satoyama Initiative supported by the Government of Japan, the Community-Based REDD+ Programme supported by UNREDD and the Government of Norway, the Building Capacities of NGOs for Environmental Governance Project supported by the European Commission, and the Indigenous Peoples and Community Conserved Territories and Areas: Global Support Initiative supported by the Government of Germany.

As SGP consolidates and capitalizes on the progress and results achieved in the last 25 years, we celebrate the works of local communities and civil society organizations around the world, who work tirelessly to protect our planet. This book is a celebration of these true leaders, who – from community to community, landscape to landscape, and country to country – fight to preserve our planet's most precious natural resources for future generations.



COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE AND SEASCAPE CONSERVATION

Healthy ecosystems are critical for human survival. To effectively sustain our ecosystems, it is essential to take an integrated approach, addressing multiple environmental benefits at the landscape and seascape level. The Small Grants Programme (SGP) works with a broad array of stakeholders from various sectors to identify priority landscapes and seascapes for investment, and to apply a community-based approach to their conservation and sustainable use.

Between 2014 and 2017 alone, the SGP positively influenced the conservation of 1,388 protected areas (including ICCAs), covering approximately 25 million hectares within the priority landscapes and seascapes. By focusing initiatives on selected landscapes and seascapes, communities involved in SGP projects can more effectively interact, share lessons, replicate and scale up good practices.



In Kyrgyzstan, SGP works with national and regional partners to conserve the iconic and threatened snow leopards through a landscape management approach.



ICCAs demonstrate community and indigenous peoples led ecosystem protection and stewardship.



In Senegal, SGP supported the Mangagoulack fisherfolk establish a Community Conserved Area that enables controlled fishing and access.



In Turkey, several marine and coastal conservation projects were supported by SGP, including establishing six no-take fish zones and empowering women in Gokova Bay.





In Seychelles, an identification and monitoring system was developed to increase public awareness and conservation of sharks.



COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACHES TO AGRO-ECOLOGY

Unsustainable agriculture practices have resulted in land degradation and deforestation, both of which have adversely impacted the livelihoods of over 900 million people globally. Achieving multiple environmental benefits, as well as enhancing food security, requires the integration of land degradation, biodiversity,

water management, and climate resilience approaches. In this strategic initiative, SGP incorporates agroecological practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance resilience in critical landscapes that are suffering declining productivity as a result of human-induced land degrading practices.

Walnut cultivation to rehabilitate degraded soils and reforest land in the High Atlas Mountains in Morocco.



In Panama, SGP supported the establishment of a silvopastoral farming system for raising cattle and cultivating coffee and sugarcane sustainably.



LOW-CARBON ENERGY ACCESS CO-BENEFITS

Currently some 1.3 billion people globally live without access to electricity, and 2.7 billion still rely on energy-inefficient and polluting biomass fuels for cooking. Renewable energy and energy efficient sources can meet demand for energy, while providing benefits for livelihoods and health. SGP supports the successful deployment of low-carbon energy

access solutions at the community level by working in alignment and coordination with larger policy and development frameworks. The bottom-up energy solutions provided by SGP are low-cost and provide high potential for carbon emission reductions, while providing co-benefits to local livelihood.



The Uto ni Yalo, a solar-powered traditional canoe demonstrates sustainable sea transportation in Fiji, bringing emergency supplies to the remote atolls, as well as pride and employment among youth.

In the Dominican Republic, SGP supports rural electrification and reforestation for the maintenance of watersheds through the use of micro hydroelectric systems at the national scale.



Locally produced wind turbines provide renewable energy and reliable access to clean water in Afghanistan.



COALITIONS FOR CHEMICALS, WASTE, AND MERCURY MANAGEMENT

SGP supports communities on awareness raising and increased control over mercury use, including introducing alternatives, for artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

The unsafe use of chemicals disproportionately impacts poor communities, adversely affecting the health and lifespan of their members. SGP supports communities to demonstrate, deploy, and transfer innovative tools and approaches for managing chemicals, waste and other harmful substances, including Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), pesticides, mercury, and other harmful chemicals. SGP also supports waste management initiatives, including community actions on plastics, and works on artisanal and small-scale gold mining issues with the GEF and other partners.

Citizen awareness and networking at local, national and global levels are key tools towards more environmentally friendly practices and products and reduce the risks of exposure to toxic and hazardous substances. Through the establishment of coalitions and networks, SGP is linking local experiences in chemicals and waste management to the global policy dialogue, thereby leading to larger policy impacts.



In Vietnam, the Women's Union of Hoi An designed and implemented a long-term waste management plan for the city.



SOCIAL INCLUSION



A cornerstone of SGP is its approach to social inclusion and equity, by actively engaging women, youth, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities through its projects.

Women play a fundamental role in the sustainable management of natural resources and livelihood improvements. SGP provides women and men equal opportunities to participate, work together, and benefit from the results of its projects, and simultaneously promotes women-led projects for women's empowerment and gender equality.

Indigenous peoples also play a key role in the conservation of the global environment. Recognizing the vital role and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples for conservation, SGP has developed a range of tools and approaches to further engage them, including acceptance of proposals in local languages or in video format, as well as through the launch of an Indigenous Peoples Fellowship programme.

Addressing environmental issues is an intergenerational efforts, requiring the expertise and experience of elders as well as innovative and dynamic inputs from youth in their capacity as future leaders. As such, SGP sees great value in investing in youth, who have a unique capacity to shape a sustainable future.

SGP also supports projects by and for people with disabilities. By mainstreaming and engaging these groups, it enables them to actively participate in community efforts, which in turn improves livelihoods more broadly, and enables effective environment and development management that reflects the needs and aspirations of all.

In India, a women's organization has trained rural women in organic farming, sustainable land management, and biodiversity conservation.



In Peru, the Nuñoa community led the recovery and conservation of the genetic resources of the Suri alpaca.



In Colombia, SGP is working with the Tayrona Indigenous Confederation to establish an Indigenous and Community Conserved Area to protect the ecosystem of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.



A community, with the help of their youth, created a sustainable reforestation programme to conserve biodiversity, improve resilience and generate income in the Solomon Islands.



To promote the use of renewable energy, a solar-powered water pump was installed in a children's hospital specialized in disability rehabilitation in Tanzania.



GLOBAL CITIZEN KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM: SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

SGP has been engaged in South-South cooperation for many years, and recently launched the South-South Community Innovation Exchange Platform as a targeted initiative. The platform responds to the need for a proactive solution to

promote cross-country and regional learning at the community levels. The cross-country exchanges promote transfer of knowledge and encourage replication of good practices at regional and global scales.



CSO-GOVERNMENT POLICY DIALOGUES

Small but successful local actions have the power to transform policies and programmes. SGP leverages multi-stakeholder partnerships to bring CSOs and government to the same table for policy and

planning dialogue on key environmental issues, building trust by fostering joint working relationships. These platforms assist governments to institutionalise civil society participation in the development of policy and strategy

on issues that directly affect them. Through active participation in these dialogue platforms, CSOs share local perspectives, experiences and lessons that are essential for sound policy development.



LOOKING AHEAD

The photos in this book provide a snapshot of SGP's portfolio over the past 25 years. SGP has been empowering people and supporting community-based action on global environmental issues, with an emphasis on innovation, sustainability, and scaling up.

SGP incubates, tests and implements innovative solutions, and scales up good practices through policy influence, replication, partnerships, networks, and other mechanisms. This approach has resulted in small grants achieving big impacts in the national, regional, and global policy and planning spheres, and has produced significant local and global benefits.

SGP's experiences show that small, local actions can be scaled up and create greater national and global impacts in terms of quantity and quality. SGP has taken systematic measures to create an enabling environment, nurture civil society and local communities, and promote strategic partnerships.

The program also shifted to a landscape and seascape approach with the aim to improve coordination, networking and learning at the portfolio level. SGP also serves as a delivery mechanism

for large initiatives of the GEF and other partnership programs, enhancing the vertical integration of interventions at the local, national and global levels.

SGP also systematically promotes dissemination of knowledge and policy dialogues through its Grantmakers Plus activities including knowledge management, capacity development, social inclusion, and CSO-government dialogues.

Based on these experiences and lessons, SGP will strengthen its strategic focus, promote integrated approach, and enhance partnership as a CSO-led multi-stakeholder platform by working closely with governments and the private sector.

With a focus on people, SGP will continue to serve as a key global mechanism that contributes to the achievement of global environmental benefits and sustainable development outcomes by empowering civil society and local communities from the ground up for years to come.

Community-managed marine protected areas, supported by SGP, have contributed to national policy and brought back fishers and ecotourism to the islands in Tonga.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is dedicated to the SGP staff, communities, and partners around the world for their dedicated work and commitment to protect our precious natural resources over the past 25 years. It is also dedicated to the GEF and UNDP for their unwavering support and leadership.

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An organization of people with disabilities developed two cycling routes to enable people with special needs to use bicycles as a mode of transportation in Ukraine.

