
Implementing Agency	United Nations Environment Programme
Region	Argentina and Bolivia
Focal Area	International Waters
Project Title	Water Resources Management in the Bermejo River Binational Basin
GEF Allocation	US\$3.221 million
Cofinancing	US\$2.735 million
	US\$2,510,000 (Governments of Argentina and Bolivia) US\$150,000 (United Nations Environment Programme) US\$75,000 (Organization of American States)
Total Financing	US\$5.956 million
Dates	July 1996–April 1999
Environmental Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human activities degrading river corridor of globally important biodiversity and regional economic importance
Project Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a comprehensive binational program of environmentally sustainable development

The Bermejo River Basin, shared by Argentina and Bolivia, is a regionally important part of the Plata Basin and acts as a corridor connecting biotic elements of both the Andean mountains and the Chaco Plains. An array of rain forests, humid valleys, and mountain deserts exists in the upper basin and dry forests and humid and gallery forests in the lower basin. These ecosystems harbor exceptional biological and habitat diversity.

Despite its potential, the basin is economically disadvantaged in both countries with a history of extractive exploitation of forests and natural pastures. Although the opportunity exists to gradually substitute new systems of production, poverty and low levels of education complicate proposals for changes in managing the basin. Innovative environmental management, agroforestry, and watershed management will be required as well as active participation of communities to understand and adopt new practices. In addition to these challenges, planned and proposed dams for the region could together seriously affect the Bermejo River to the detriment of the economy and environment of the basin and downstream. Binational actions are also needed to address problems caused by a remarkable level of commercial activity as well as migration of Bolivian nationals into Argentina.

The Project This project responded a request by the governments of Argentina and Bolivia for technical assistance in formulating a strategic action plan for the Bermejo River Basin. More than fifty institutions, government agencies and NGOs, participated in proposing the project, many of which participated in its execution. It was implemented by a binational commission that reported to UNEP and OAS. The project's primary objective was to promote environmentally sustainable development within the basin, taking into consideration the program of investments being prepared by the Binational Commission for the Development of the Upper Bermejo and Grande de Tarija Rivers Basins. This project will help gain an understanding of possible transboundary concerns and help to guide the development projects so that they will

be more environmentally sustainable.

- Activities**
- Conduct an environmental diagnostic survey of the basin to identify priority transboundary environmental concerns and related sectoral issues
 - Formulate a strategic action program for the binational basin addressing different GEF focal areas and intended to solve priority transboundary environmental issues, while implementing water resource and environmental agreements between the countries
 - Assist the national governments to incorporate transboundary environmental concerns, including biodiversity and land degradation protection, into basin development policies, plans, and programs
 - Conduct pilot demonstration activities during the process of formulating the strategic action plan to gain information needed for management purposes
 - Help both countries to institute a system of public consultation on implementing and developing projects of general interest in the basin, so that they are environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable.
- Benefits**
- Preserve integrity of ecologically and economically important river basin
 - Protect exceptional biological and habitat diversity and increase productivity of soils
 - Prevent and control erosion, reclaim land, control sediment, and ensure water supply.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a financial mechanism that provides grants and concessional funds to developing countries for projects and activities designed to protect the global environment. GEF resources address climate change, biological diversity, international waters, and depletion of the ozone layer. Activities concerning land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation as they relate to the four focal areas, are also eligible for funding.

GEF is a joint venture of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank. These three agencies implement GEF projects.

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