

International

India-born Economist Geeta Batra Appointed First Woman Director of World Bank's GEF

Historic Appointment Marks a Milestone for Women in Developing Countries

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In a groundbreaking move, Geeta Batra, a 57-year-old Indian economist, has been named the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office of the World Bank's Global Environment Facility (GEF). This historic appointment makes her the first woman from a developing country to hold such a significant position within the organization.

Batra, currently serving as the Chief Evaluator & Deputy Director for Evaluation at the GEF's Independent Evaluation Office, was unanimously recommended for the role during the 66th GEF Council Meeting held in Washington on February 9. The announcement was made last week, signifying a shift towards greater gender diversity in leadership positions.

Geeta Batra, in an exclusive interview with IANS from Virginia, US, shared her top priorities for the role. “My focus will be on delivering sound evaluative evidence on the results and performance of the GEF, leading environmental evaluation initiatives, and strengthening the capabilities of the IEO teams,” she stated.

Apart from her commitment to evaluating the GEF’s impact, Batra aims to foster collaborations with multilateral and bilateral agencies, foundations, and networks. She emphasizes the importance of sharing knowledge about effective environmental practices globally.



Born in New Delhi, Batra’s journey to this prestigious position includes academic achievements from institutions like Stella Maris College, Chennai, and NMIMS, Vile Parle, Mumbai. Inspired by her professor, Harkant Mankad, she pursued a Ph.D. in Economics in the United States after completing her MBA in Finance.

Batra's professional journey began with American Express, followed by a significant tenure at the World Bank's Private Sector Development Department. Over the years, she held key positions at the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group.

In 2015, she joined the GEF's Independent Evaluation Office, where she manages a team overseeing the design, implementation, and quality of evaluations assessing the progress and impact of GEF interventions.

The GEF, a major player in the environmental sector since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, has provided substantial grants and co-financing for over 5,700 projects in 170 countries till 2020. Geeta Batra's appointment reflects a commitment to addressing global environmental concerns through collaboration between 183 countries, international institutions, the private sector, and civil society.

Batra, a prolific author and evaluator with over 100 evaluations under her belt, expressed her interest in development issues. She particularly focuses on promoting practical approaches in monitoring and evaluation to achieve better outcomes.

Geeta Batra resides in Northern Virginia with her husband Prakash and their daughter Roshini. When not working, she enjoys the outdoors, national park hikes, reading historical biographies, and indulging in various cuisines. Despite her global endeavors, she maintains a fondness for India's classic pav-bhaji, pani-puri-puri, and chhole-bhatore.