POVERTY ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE (PEI) IN ASIA-PACIFIC

A Joint UNDP-UNEP Programme

In 2005, UNDP and UNEP began the process of integrating their respective poverty and environment programmes to form the UNDP-UNEP PEI, which currently operates in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and CIS. To support the PEI scale-up process in Asia and the Pacific, a PEI regional team was formed in late 2006 bringing together staff from the UNEP Regional Office for Asia-Pacific and the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok. This PEI Asia-Pacific (AP) is part of the global PEI coordinated by the UN Poverty Environment Facility (PEF) in Nairobi. It links with wider UN reform and donor harmonization through the multi-donor Poverty Environment Partnership (PEP). PEI supported activities are underway in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam to support governments to increase their financing and implementation of pro-poor environmental management through mainstreaming environment issues in planning and budgeting processes

How PEI addresses poverty-environment mainstreaming challenges in Asia-Pacific

In spite of the region's rapid economic growth, 641 million people in the region – two thirds of world's poor – still live on less than $1 a day. The demand for ecosystem goods and services is already exceeding the region's natural resource endowment and resulting in environmental degradation and natural capital losses. The strong linkages between poverty and environment in terms of the poor's livelihoods, resilience to environmental risks and health are clearly observed in many countries in the region. Nevertheless, environment remains a low priority for most countries. Countries in the region face difficulty in measuring the real value of ecosystem services and understanding the linkages between poverty and environment. As a result environment is treated as an externality leading to low level of investment in environmental management which is often less than 1% of GDP and the natural resource base on which the region's poor heavily depend on continues to be degraded.

To address these challenges, PEI works to influence institutions, policies and investments. PEI in the region focuses on improving the livelihoods of poor people dependent on natural resources and making them less vulnerable to climate change through integrating environmental concerns into national, sectoral and sub-national economic decision-making and planning processes. PEI works closely with planning and finance ministries targeting government processes for planning, budgeting, sector implementation and local level implementation and provides a sustained operational support for country-led poverty-environment mainstreaming programmes. PEI complements UN Country programmes in supporting the national government.

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Country Highlights

South Asia

Bangladesh: Integrating climate change in planning

- Integrating poverty-environment-climate issues into national planning and budgeting processes through support to science-based policy making, development budget system, development planning and appraisal processes, advocacy and knowledge management
- Mainstreaming poverty and climate issues into UNDP programmes

Bhutan: Gross National Happiness through sustainable natural resource management

- Developing sectoral environmental mainstreaming guidelines
- Developing planning manual for local authorities to ensure effective utilization of decentralized budget
- Supporting assessment of public expenditure to identify environmental expenditure in all sectors and to serve as the reference framework for measuring future environmental investment
- Supporting the Rural Economic Advancement Programme through planning and identification of sustainable livelihood opportunities based on natural resource management

Nepal: Natural resource management in decentralized planning

- Incorporating poverty-environment related indicators in the poverty monitoring system
- Strengthening district and local planning and economic decision making processes to address pro-poor environmental management and energy access issues
- Scaling up community based natural resource management and sustainable livelihood development activities

Pakistan: Environment within the UN reform programme

- Supporting the outcomes of the Joint Programme (JP) on Environment
- Integrating environment into sector policies and influencing fiscal policy to increase investment for environment

South-East Asia

Thailand: Provincial planning and community-based resource management

- Integrating pro-poor environmental concerns into provincial planning and decentralized budgeting processes
- Improving interaction between communities and local authorities in decision making processes and to facilitate benefit sharing arrangements
- Undertaking ecosystem assessment to influence land use and development planning decisions

Lao PDR: Promoting sustainable investment

- Strengthening poverty reduction and environmental sustainability linkages in the 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plan
- Managing investments to maximize social benefits and minimize environmental impacts
- Enhancing capacity of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
- Assisting the National Assembly's legislative function related to environmental conservation and management and rural livelihoods

Cambodia: Climate Change adaptation in planning

- Integrating climate change into national plans, sectoral strategies and decentralization processes
- Increasing coordination of development partners in climate change adaptation mainstreaming

Viet Nam: Integrating environment in national policy and legislation

- Mainstreaming poverty issues into environmental legal frameworks and regulations, notably the new biodiversity law, establishing a legal basis for introducing payments for ecosystem services
- Piloting of environmental regulations, solid waste and clean water cooperatives and organic agriculture
- Developing a communication network on poverty-environment issues between Government, civil society and donor community

Pacific

Papua New Guinea: Promoting Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth (ESEG)

- Supporting submission on ESEG approach by Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and Department of National Planning and Monitoring (DNPM)
- Supporting natural resource economics capacity within DEC and government
- Supporting reform of DEC and self-financing authority through use of environmental fiscal reform and increased revenues from licensing
- Promoting take-up of ESEG approach by DNPM and the Treasury

Timor-Leste: Enhancing knowledge on poverty-environment linkages

- Building the national capacity on analysis of poverty environment issues
- Supporting the linkages to the planning and decision making processes for sustainable energy access to the rural poor and alternative livelihood development
- Serving as a policy platform to mainstream environment within the UN Country Programme
- Raising awareness on poverty-environment linkages for decision makers and beneficiaries and national, district and local levels