

## Chapter 1

# About the Handbook



**P**oor households rely disproportionately on natural resources and the environment for their livelihoods and income. The poor are more vulnerable to natural disasters such as droughts and floods and to the ongoing impacts of climate change. On a broader scale, natural resources such as forests and fisheries play a larger role in the national income and wealth of less developed economies.

Thus, a healthy and productive environment contributes significantly to human well-being and pro-poor economic development. Intact, functioning ecosystems provide services—such as the provision of food, water, fuel and fibre, as well as regulation of climate—on which nations and people rely to earn income from agriculture, fishing, forestry, tourism and other activities. Sustainable use of these ecosystem services and natural resource assets is increasingly recognized as a key factor in enduring economic development and improvement in human welfare, and as a necessary condition for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These and other poverty-environment linkages are explored in greater detail in chapter 2.

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide practical, step-by-step guidance on how governments and other national actors can mainstream poverty-environment linkages into national development planning. We here define poverty-environment mainstreaming as the **iterative process of integrating poverty-environment linkages into policymaking, budgeting and implementation processes at national, sector and subnational levels. It is a multi-year, multi-stakeholder effort** grounded in the contribution of the environment to human well-being, pro-poor economic growth and achievement of the MDGs. It entails working with a range of government and non-governmental actors, and other actors in the development field.

The handbook lays out a programmatic approach to mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages into development planning that has been developed by the Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI), a joint effort of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that provides financial and technical support to countries for poverty-environment mainstreaming. The approach is largely based on the PEI experience in helping governments around the world mainstream poverty-environment linkages, primarily in Africa and Asia and the Pacific, as well as selected experiences from other development actors, particularly members of the Poverty Environment Partnership. The approach aims to provide a **flexible model that can be adapted to national circumstances to guide the choice of activities, tactics, methodologies and tools to address a particular country situation.** It comprises the following components:

- Finding the entry points and making the case
- Mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages into policy processes
- Meeting the implementation challenge

Stakeholder engagement occurs throughout, from inception through policy development, implementation and monitoring. Each successive component builds on previous work, but the chronology is not fixed. Rather, mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages is an iterative process in which activities may take place in parallel or in an order different from that presented here, according to a country's particular priorities and needs.

## 1.2 Target Audience

The target audience for the handbook consists primarily of champions of the mainstreaming process and practitioners at the country level.

- **Champions** are practitioners who take on the role of advocating the integration of poverty-environment considerations into development planning at national, sector and subnational levels. These include high-level decision-makers and government officials who serve as ambassadors for poverty-environment mainstreaming.
- **Practitioners** include stakeholders from the government (head of state's office, environment, finance and planning bodies, sector and subnational bodies, political parties and parliament, national statistics office and judicial system), non-governmental actors (civil society, academia, business and industry, the general public and local communities, and the media) and development actors in the environment, development and poverty reduction fields.

A secondary audience consists of officials at United Nations agencies, including United Nations resident coordinators and country teams that engage with governments on national development priorities. Their work often involves mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages, and this handbook aims to guide and inform these efforts.

### 1.3 Structure

The handbook is divided into several chapters, as outlined below. The chapters can be read individually, according to user interests and needs, referring to other sections of the handbook as required. Key messages are highlighted throughout the text, and numerous examples are presented.

**Chapter 2** describes key concepts related to mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages, including the contribution of the environment to human well-being, pro-poor economic growth and achievement of the MDGs.

**Chapter 3** presents a detailed overview of the mainstreaming approach, describing the various activities involved in each of its three components. It highlights the role of stakeholders and the development community, including experiences and initiatives from UNDP and UNEP.

**Chapters 4 through 6** detail the three components of the programmatic approach. Each chapter presents step-by-step guidance, provides references and illustrative cases and concludes with expected achievements and examples.

**Chapter 4** provides guidance for preparing a mainstreaming effort, which involves finding the entry points into national development planning and making the case to decision-makers for poverty-environment mainstreaming. It explains how to carry out relevant activities, including initial assessments of the nature of poverty-environment linkages; understanding the country's governmental, institutional and political contexts; raising awareness and building partnerships within and beyond the government; assessing institutional and capacity needs; and developing working arrangements for a sustained effort in poverty-environment mainstreaming.

**Chapter 5** describes how to integrate poverty-environment linkages into a policy process. It includes guidance on how to collect country-specific evidence using such techniques as integrated ecosystem assessments and economic analyses. It also provides information on how to use this evidence to influence policy processes and to develop and cost policy measures.

**Chapter 6** offers guidance on meeting the implementation challenge. It discusses how to integrate poverty-environment linkages in national monitoring systems; how to engage with budgeting processes and ensure that policy measures are funded; how to support policy measures at national, sector and subnational levels; and how to strengthen institutions and capacities to sustain the effort.

**Chapter 7** concludes and puts forth some proposals for UNDP-UNEP and its partners for future work in the area of poverty-environment mainstreaming.

The handbook also contains a list of abbreviations and acronyms, a glossary and a references section.