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Foreword

The world has been talking about sustainable development and poverty alleviation for a long time. More than two decades have passed since the 1987 Brundtland Report first laid out a vision of sustainable development to be achieved, in part, by integrating environmental management into economic planning and decision-making. Given the likely impacts of climate change on the world's poorest and most vulnerable, and the unprecedented strains on the world's ecosystems and their ability to sustain a rising standard of living for billions of human inhabitants, the need to accelerate efforts to integrate environment into poverty reduction efforts has never been greater.

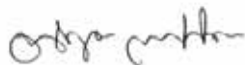
Experience continues to show the vital contribution better environmental management can make to improving health, well-being and livelihood opportunities, especially for the poor. To create the kind of world we want, to fight poverty, to promote security and to preserve the ecosystems that poor people rely on for their livelihoods, pro-poor economic growth and environmental sustainability must be placed unequivocally at the heart of our most fundamental policies, systems and institutions.

One way to do this is through the process that has come to be known as **poverty-environment mainstreaming**. This essentially aims to integrate the linkages between the environment and poverty reduction into government processes and institutions, thereby changing the very nature of its decision-making culture and practices. Typically, such mainstreaming must occur within a nation's development or poverty reduction strategy and the way it approaches aspects of economic decision-making. In this way, we can put the twin imperatives of pro-poor economic growth and environmental sustainability at the core of everything we do.

This handbook is designed to serve as a guide for champions and practitioners engaged in the painstaking task of mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages into national development planning. It draws on a substantial body of experience at the country level and the many lessons learned by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme in working with governments—especially ministries of planning, finance and environment—to support efforts to integrate the complex interrelationships between poverty reduction and improved environmental management into national planning and decision-making. The handbook also benefits from the knowledge and experience of other development actors, in particular the Poverty Environment Partnership.

Our hope is that practitioners of poverty-environment mainstreaming—either those who have already embarked on the journey or those who are just beginning to think

about the challenge ahead—will find this a helpful guide. We intend for it to be not just a repository of information and assistance, but also and especially a source of encouragement and inspiration in carrying out a mission that is sometimes daunting, occasionally frustrating, but of critical importance for the future well-being of the world's poor and most vulnerable.



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