

Lessons emerging from Country Self-Evaluations

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Although PEI has not been operating for very long, the Country Self-Evaluations are already producing a rich set of lessons. A few lessons are evident in almost all of the Self-Evaluations, whilst others are highlighted by just one or two countries. The Self-Evaluations are all brief, so the way I have drawn out each lesson will need confirmation from the authors. I have identified just three lessons from each country (1 below), to show a balanced approach (this does not mean to say that the lesson has not emerged from other countries, too). I have also suggested some questions that arise from each lesson. By regrouping the lessons into broad categories (2 below), a range of common strategic issues emerge for discussion.

1. Highlighting key lessons from country self-evaluations

Kenya:

- **Communication** with stakeholders, maintaining a high profile for poverty-environment issues, is central to environmental mainstreaming and Kenya PEI has given this priority. But communicating with the public and sectors is a resource-intensive exercise, requiring special skill. *Is PEI enabling the media to call the shots and apply their own resources?*
- **Economic studies** have special potential to engage those who seek to improve revenues, reduce costs, or plan budgets – influential people who drive development paths. Kenya PEI has given this special attention. *Do we know if our economic analyses best suit treasury/business needs? Are they informed by relevant economic or business concerns?*
- **Professional exchanges** with others also facing mainstreaming challenges can fast-track progress, and inspire a positive ‘can-do’ approach. The Tanzania study trip was valuable for Kenya PEI. *Given that environmental mainstreaming is partly a political art, where local context is key, what kinds of ‘country-country learning’ may be useful? Would exchanges with e.g. gender mainstreamers be helpful too?*

Mali:

- **Influencing major policy initiatives** means having similar ‘weight’ as those initiatives. The project team has chosen to become involved in the Strategic Framework to Combat Poverty (CSLP), but PEI has far fewer staff than CSLP. *What are PEI’s sources of influence over PRSs and similar processes – information, skill, finances, political, positioning, credibility, etc? Can PEI sustain influence with few staff – if so, how?*
- **Selecting sites for micro-projects**, and site diagnostic studies, have taken up much of the Mali team’s time. *On reflection, are these local-level PEI activity modules the most relevant? (It is not clear what has been*

achieved by Integrated Ecosystem Assessments.) How will the sites influence neighbours, field organisations, and policy?

- **Appropriate ‘tools’** for environmental integration are important if PEI wants to have effective influence in an efficient way. PEI Mali has highlighted the key need to develop and use them. *Where is there good advice on effective tools – and how can PEI access, develop and/or deliver it?*

Mauritania:

- **Positioning PEI alongside major existing strategy processes.** These form the framework within which PEI works, and the team believes that PEI will work best if it ‘meets the expectations of’ Mauritania’s strategies for poverty, sustainable development and environment. *How far is PEI being led by these existing strategies, and is subservient to them? And how far can PEI influence them, link them, or even supersede them?*
- **Working with government.** PEI administration has taken some time to set up, so that it is well linked into government, as well as the strategies listed above. Yet there have been three ministers of environment, and three ministerial structures, in one year! *What are the pros and cons of closely embedding PEI in government – as opposed to a more independent approach?*
- **PEI’s ‘niche’** has been established as analysing p/e links (the strategy ‘lists PEI as a specialised project’). This recognition is useful, but PEI has bigger ambitions. *What lessons can we share on establishing and growing PEI’s unique niche?*

Mozambique:

- **Work at local levels** highlights environmental mainstreaming as being a very practical issue. It highlights rights and laws concerning environmental use and degradation, the availability of finance, and other systemic issues concerning the machinery of government and enterprise. In contrast, national ‘plans’ can avoid these key matters. *Is PEI’s mainstreaming work adequately tackling practical issues of rights and resources?*
- **Existing cross-sectoral and sectoral planning procedures** are often entrenched. It is important to create environmental mainstreaming procedures that link directly to each stage in those procedures, so that environmental issues can be taken up. But it is also necessary to change some procedures. PEI has chosen to establish/strengthen environment units in sector departments. *What are other effective approaches to this?*
- **The government budget and expenditure programme** are perhaps the most critical procedures into which to mainstream environment. Without this, mainstreaming in plans (or micro-projects) alone may not come to fruition. This is yet to be done fully by PEI Mozambique. *Is a public environmental expenditure review – as done in TZ – the best approach, or are there alternatives?*

Rwanda:

- **EDPRS and therefore non-environment stakeholders' priorities** set the real framework for 'mainstreaming', and PEI's should be organised around them. Rwanda's logframe was based on key sector priorities. *How do we identify the key sectors – or key outcomes – around which to construct PEI?*
- **An environmental information baseline** is a key requirement, again relating to sector priorities. Rwanda's ecosystem and economic assessments, and poverty-environment indicators, are proving to offer a good basis for working with sectors. *Are non-environment sectors happy with the structure and content of these ecosystem and economic assessments? Will they help with SEA to come?*
- **Environment is both a 'sectoral' and a 'cross-sectoral' issue.** In Rwanda it is a sectoral issue within the EDPRS, alongside land use – recognised as requiring investment in its own right. It is also a cross-sectoral issue, supporting the aims of many sectors. *What tactics can PEI use to make the most of these two 'faces' of environment, or is there a bias within PEI?*

Tanzania:

- **A high-level, umbrella policy that is conducive to sustainable development** makes environmental mainstreaming more possible. MKUKUTA is the overriding national planning, decision-making and consensus building tool. Now it is also a budget-influencing tool, too – and the finance ministry has increased the environment budget. *Should PEI do different things depending upon whether such an umbrella policy exists or not? How far is it a 'prerequisite' for PEI to work, and how far the outcome of PEI's work? How can we assess the situation?*
- **Capacities and systems** need most attention once policy on poverty-environment is sound, so that the machinery of government and decentralisation can deliver. PEI has focused on district planning and local government administration. *What other means can we consider for building (district) capacity, to really serve poor people's needs?*
- **Community-level activities** have been supported by PEI, and local awareness of poverty-environment issues is growing. Now, community-level demands for action are growing. This is a sign of success. *But how far should PEI be responding to those demands with, e.g., micro-projects, as opposed to encouraging/enabling other existing bodies to respond?*

Uganda:

- **Using/leveraging the capacities of others** is key if we want to introduce change into a national system. Environmental mainstreaming proceeds down many tracks, and PEI is but one project, with limited funding and a short life span. Uganda's PEI is using the advocacy, training and networking skills of CSOs. *How do we find organisations with the greatest reach, and how best to motivate them to work with PEI on mainstreaming?*
- **Communication and sensitisation** is key if we want mainstream change. It is key to get away from 'environment' language and preoccupations, and

express issues in 'poverty/development' terms. *Do Integrated Ecosystem Assessments do this well? What else can we do?*

- **Funding** will never be enough to tackle the huge 'backlog' of environmental mainstreaming tasks in the foreseeable future. For example, micro-projects are increasingly demanded in the field. PEI Uganda believes 'this is the way to go' – poverty-environment issues affect almost all people and all sectors – but PEI funds are limited. *How much effort should go into local projects? What existing scale-up possibilities could we work with? Should we devote attention to attracting the massive investment in p/e that is needed, and developing finance models?*

Some conclusions from all countries – working with others is key!

- **Mainstreaming is not achieved by a single project over a short time scale. It is a messy, long-term political and institutional change process, driven by many actors using many mechanisms.** It is difficult to attribute mainstreaming 'success' to PEI alone, or to 'plans' alone. This suggests that PEI should work as a catalyst: better coordination can increase the pace and efficiency of mainstreaming; and key activities can 'light the path'. It also suggests that the latest round of planning (e.g. MDG-based national plans) is not necessarily the most important target for PEI. *Have we 'mapped' that long-term processes in which we are now intervening? Have we asked stakeholders about useful mainstreaming tactics from all sources – then keeping track of them, supporting them, and scaling them up?*
- **Civil society and the private sector are major forces shaping the environment – not just government.** The country processes all focus rightly on central and local government, as these establish the 'rules'. But government is invariably slow. *What more can be done with civil society, and with the private sector?*
- **Mainstreaming is not any easy, smooth activity. Several constraints remain:** (a) It is difficult to engage government broadly throughout the mainstreaming process. (b) Environmental authorities appear to be too weak to drive the mainstreaming. (c) Whilst there is strong appreciation of UNDP/UNEP expertise and aspirations, and their improving support, until PEI2, UNDP and UNEP capacity to support countries has been limited – and now 25 countries need support... *Can we develop an efficient action plan for UNDP/UNEP to tackle these constraints?*

2. The big issues: strategic choices facing PEI

Environmental mainstreaming is a highly strategic activity:

- **Environment** is invariably *excluded* – unmonitored, unvalued, unpriced, untraded, uncertain
- **Mainstreaming** is the '*art of influence*': PEI would benefit from discussing its sources and tactics for influence.
- **Strategy** is '*the art of choice*', and so PEI would benefit from discussing the choices that need to be made in order to improve PEI's effectiveness, achieving more with limited resources.

As PEI develops in each country, choices need to be made concerning:

Issue coverage strategy:

- a) *Breadth of issues tackled:* e.g. should we work on everything at national level, with possible policy multiplier effects *or* work on specific themes (sector, locality), with possible demonstration effect (KY, UG)

Influence strategy:

- b) *What to influence:* e.g. should we serve technocratic plan and strategy processes *or* lobbying and improving them *or* influencing day-to-day machinery of government and business (budgets, planning procedures, etc) *or* influence politics (MZ)
- c) *How to influence:* e.g. how should we use new information, analysis, skills, attracting finances, political alliances, positioning as 'gatekeeper', credibility as multi-stakeholder or independent, etc (TZ, RW, ML, MT)
- d) *Who to influence:* e.g. should we focus directly on government 'policy-makers' *or* work with civil society and business drivers of environmental conservation or degradation (MZ)

Capacity and learning strategy:

- e) *Capacity dilemmas:* e.g. should we aim at producing outputs quickly through short-term consultancy *or* at utilising and developing existing capacity, which takes time (eg. RW, KY, UG)
- f) *Participation:* e.g. how can we balance benefits of full participation *with* associated high demands especially on government officials (eg. RW)
- g) *Who to work with:* e.g. how to balance (weak) environment authorities *with* (weak) institutions representing the poor, *with* (more powerful) planning and finance authorities who have the major mandate for change (KY)
- h) *International links:* e.g. should we concentrate all PEI efforts within the country *or* learn with – and use resources of – other PEI countries (UG)

3. Questions for discussion across the PEI country teams:

The discussion above suggests a number of questions:

Questions about learning to date:

- Do we really know **on which 'tracks' environment and poverty really get integrated** – political, market, field – and not just policy & analysis?
- What can we identify as the **'must-have' outcomes for environmental mainstreaming** required in any country?¹
- How have our **assumptions** about 'environmental mainstreaming' changed through work on PEI to date?

¹ E.g. (a) env cross-cut targets in most chapters of a national development plan, (b) a national env budget connected to this, (c) key environmental assets and hazards factored into national accounts, (d) similar for land use and municipal planning, (e) clear env rights and responsibilities at constitutional level, (f) basic env safeguards in legislation, with practical guidelines, incentives and sanctions, (g) politicians and legislature able to identify p-e issues and potentials, and promote action, (h) adequate capacity and clear roles of government agencies re public environmental goods...

- Can it help to join up with **other ‘mainstreaming’ interests, such as gender** and disability, and how can this be managed?

Questions about improving influence:

- How can we better **influence budgets and financial flows**?
- How can we better link up with **private sector and CSOs**, both influencing them and using their own powers to influence change?
- Could influence be improved by supporting **poor people’s** contributions?
- Is **PEI’s ‘menu’** of activities and methodologies adequate – any changes?
- How can we develop our **communications and information management strategy**?
- Where is it best to focus attention at the **sub-national level** – local micro-projects, district capacities, provincial policy?

Country participants may wish to prepare their own 2-3 questions, based on problems they are actually facing – we could organise a **‘swap-shop’** where others share ideas on dealing with those questions.