

UNDP-UNEP Poverty and Environment Initiative (PEI)

Overall goal: *To contribute to poverty reduction and improved well-being of poor and vulnerable groups through mainstreaming of poverty-environment linkages into national development processes.*

Objectives at country level:

- *Inclusion of environmental sustainability as a central objective in national development strategies, such as poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), MDG implementation plans or equivalent;*
- *Increasing national budget allocations in support of pro-poor environmental outcomes*
- *Building the long-term capacity of the government to integrate poverty-environment concerns into the design and implementation of development plans*

Basic facts of the PEI in Bangladesh

- The focus of PEI in Bangladesh is on poverty reduction, environment sustainability and climate change adaptation mainstreaming. The project aims to contribute to reversing environmental degradation and adapting to climate change impacts in a way that will benefit the poor, particularly destitute women as well as to help enabling growth consistent with a better environment.
- PEI aims at improving natural resources management and environment outcomes for poor people through mainstreaming pro-poor and gender sensitive environment and climate change issues into the design and implementation of national development processes, budgets and economic decision-making.
- Following a prolonged preparatory phase (2008-June 2009), which resulted in government and UN commitment to broaden the institutional framework for environment and climate change mainstreaming, a Joint Programme Document was developed by the Government of Bangladesh, UNDP- Bangladesh and PEI. It was signed in December 2009 for a three year period.
- The programme will be lead by the Planning Division. It will be coordinated by the General Economic Division and by the Ministry of Planning with other partners from the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The context of mainstreaming in Bangladesh

- The geographical location of Bangladesh in the confluence and delta of three mighty rivers – Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna, at the head of the Bay of Bengal, and near the eastern Himalayas, make it extremely vulnerable to floods and cyclones.
- Poverty, growth, climate change and environmental sustainability are inextricably bound together in Bangladesh. Half the population is poor and depends on an over-exploited and degrading natural resource base. Environmental factors account for as much as 22% of the national burden of disease. Over two-thirds of the labour force directly depends on environmental resources for their livelihood support.
- National government and its agencies are divided along sector lines with limited technical expertise at the Ministry level. There is no mechanism that can effectively ensure environment and climate change issues are addressed and integrated in policy or project planning.
- The relevant key regulatory national agencies include the Planning Commission, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Ministry of Land, and Ministry of Water Resources. Several have developed plans and strategies, but implementation is ad hoc with a lack of sound information and analysis. The linkages between

poverty and environment is neither clearly focused nor adequately strategized.

- Targeted national and sector planning documents include the 2nd Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Five-Year Plan, a three-year rolling investment programme, Annual Development Plan, Annual Development Programme, Vision 2030, sector strategies and Development Project Performa
- The over 12,000 non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh are part of a highly diverse sector ranging from vast service providers to small local welfare groups, pressure groups, and service contractors. Corporate social and environmental responsibility is not yet a widely accepted practice in domestic industries, but is now starting to be emphasized by those multinationals that operate here or that are buyers from national industries.

Main activities of the PEI

- Develop and disseminate analysis of linkages between social and economic factors, climate change and key development priorities (e.g. agriculture, infrastructure, trade, food security, gender equality and poverty reduction).
- Increase awareness, knowledge of and commitment to poverty-environment- climate mainstreaming through dissemination of analysis and findings (building on lessons from national level analysis and field experience).
- Develop Project Performa to integrate poverty-environment-climate issues into key national and sector planning documents and appraisal processes.
- Improve the current development budget to ensure adequate investment in poverty-environment-climate related purposes.
- Support the Planning Commission to institutionalize climate mainstreaming process.
- Integrate poverty-environment-climate linkages into the UNDP country programmes.

What has been achieved to date?

- Scoping and preparation with in-country consultations translated into a country-led PEI programme.
- PEI-Bangladesh has been linked to the UNDAF and is expected to contribute to the outcome “Survival and development rights of vulnerable groups are ensured within environmentally sustainable frameworks and the country programme outcome “Enhance carrying capacity of the environmental and natural resource base and increase access to sustainable energy services resulting in human and income poverty reduction”.

Lessons learned

- In line with the PEI programmatic approach, it is critical to engage the actors in charge of development planning and encourage them to take the lead in the mainstreaming effort.
- Changes in extreme weather events, average temperature, and precipitation all have implications for the environmental and socio-economic status of a country. Poor people are highly vulnerable to external shocks that they have little control over. Climate change adaptation mainstreaming is thus an integral part of poverty-environment mainstreaming.

Way forward

- Set up the project management unit for PEI-Bangladesh.
- Develop appropriate coordination mechanisms with other UNDP and donor programmes in the country.
- Establish a socio-economic analysis team and carry out a mapping exercise and preliminary analysis of linkages between social and economic factors, climate change and three top development priorities.

- Follow on with other activities planned under the project document.

Contacts:

M. Aminul Islam

Assistant Country Director, Environment and Sustainable Development Cluster

UNDP Bangladesh

UN Offices, 18th Floor, IDB Bhaban, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar

Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh

Tel: +880-2-8118600 Ext: 2465; Fax: +880-2 8113196

E-mail: aminul.islam@undp.org