

Rwanda

I. What was achieved?

- The PEI put its support behind a true ‘champion’ of poverty-environment mainstreaming and helped gain the support of the President of Rwanda and the Cabinet

How was it achieved?

- The Rwandan Minister for the Environment strongly believed that environmental degradation was having a negative effect on her country’s economy. Seeing the potential to support a true ‘champion’, the PEI worked with the Minister to help raise awareness of the issue at a high level in the government. A key opportunity then presented itself: the formulation of Rwanda’s Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) and government five-year sector reviews.



The Environment Authority, REMA, pounced on the opportunity and began awareness raising, training and technical support to help integrate environment into the EDPRS and into sector planning, specifically targeting the Ministry of Economic Development and Finance. However, this effort also needed high-level political backing. First, the Minister took the argument to the President and gained his support. She then influenced the Cabinet and obtained their commitment to investing in the environment to tackle poverty reduction and livelihoods. Because the Minister had the backing and commitment from the highest levels of government, it laid the ‘cornerstone’ for environmental improvements in Rwanda and significantly increased the chances of success for the country’s environmental mainstreaming efforts.

2. What was achieved?

- The Rwandan environment authority made the case for integrating the environment into the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

How was it achieved?

- With support from PEI, The Rwandan Environmental Management Authority (REMA) commissioned an economic study to assess the contribution of the environment to livelihoods, poverty reduction and national growth. The study found that because of environmental degradation poverty had increased, people’s livelihood opportunities had declined, provincial health budgets were escalating, and soil erosion was costing the country approximately \$60m per year (2% of GDP). The timing was opportune: Rwanda was formulating its Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) and REMA lobbied within government for the inclusion of the environment as a cross cutting theme. Using findings from the economic study and employing a strategy of ‘continuous interaction’, the REMA team developed checklists and a guideline for mainstreaming environment into the EDPRS. They then developed environment mainstreaming guidelines for 12 sectors key to the economy, including Agriculture, Education, Health and Local Governance. The 12 sectors were organised into ‘working groups’ and each group had an appointed facilitator. The team also wanted to raise the environmental awareness of the facilitators and provided them with guidance and training on integrating the environment. They lobbied, influenced and cajoled and over the period of one year, environment was successfully integrated into the EDPRS and sector planning. One of the participants from a training session exclaimed, “This is exactly the kind of information we desperately need!” He continued, “This

information is essential in order to understand not only the relationship between economic development and the environment, but also for individual sectors to understand how an unsustainable environment can have a negative influence on their own sector's targets."

3. What was achieved?

- Environment-poverty linkages have been successfully integrated into Rwanda's development planning process

How was it achieved?

- The limited understanding of environmental issues and how the environment relates to sectoral developmental priorities were main challenge in Rwanda to achieving environmental mainstreaming. The PEI team based in the environment authority, REMA, employed a persistent and committed approach in engaging with government sectors to try to integrate environmental concerns. By conducting training on poverty-environment linkages, REMA was able to incorporate the environment into government sector guidelines. Before long, the team became known as 'Mr. and Ms. Environment' and were frequently called upon for assistance in designing budget intervention for government ministries. A key achievement of this work was increased awareness across government sectors, particularly the Ministry of Finance & Planning, of the value of environment and conservation to national development. Furthermore, the mainstreaming process highlighted underfunding for the environment in the government budget. With help from the REMA team in identifying funding gaps, the government increased its budget for the environment by 40% in 2007/08.

4. What was achieved?

- In Rwanda, the media proved an effective vehicle to put the environment into the spotlight

How was it achieved?

- The PEI assisted the government to launch radio and TV features highlighting issues of national environmental importance and targeted audiences at all levels of society. In the first month of the TV programme, policy makers including Cabinet Ministers made phone calls to the TV station commending the programmes for showing the importance of the environment to national development. Following this media coverage, the Minister for Trade, Commerce & Industry, Tourism and Cooperatives asked PEI to help organise a TV interview to demonstrate her high level of commitment to the environment sector. The Minister then met with the Director of the Environmental Management Agency (REMA) to explore ways to integrate the environment into the Ministry's programming and to enhance cooperation for environmental protection. A result of these actions was an increase in the importance of the environment to the private sector as key driver for growth.