



## ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE MDGs: RESHAPING THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

A Poverty Environment Partnership Event in  
support of the UN High Level Event on MDGs



# Stories from the Country Level. The UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative: Operationalizing the Poverty-Environment Agenda

At the 2005 World Summit in New York, the Poverty Environment Partnership organised a High Level Policy Dialogue on Investing in the Environment to Fight Poverty, followed by a Head of State Dinner on Environment for the MDGs: Celebrating Leadership, Innovation and Action. The message delivered to world leaders was simple:

- Investing in environmental management that benefits the poor will deliver strong returns in terms of sustained poverty reduction and growth
- A strong focus on policy, governance and capacity building is needed to deliver increased resources for environmental management
- Innovative market-based approaches can encourage pro-poor investments
- Key knowledge gaps need to be filled to ensure effective efforts to target environmental investments at benefiting the poor.

At the Head of State event, the leaders of UNDP and UNEP announced a major partnership to scale-up support for country-led efforts to integrate poverty-environment concerns into the mainstream of development planning and investment. Building on previous work by both organizations, the Poverty-Environment Initiative took shape as a joint UN programme committed to the challenging task of operationalizing the concepts and aspirations of the poverty-environment agenda.

In the subsequent 3 years, the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) has embarked on a scaling up effort supported by key donor agencies - evaluating its initial support to countries and shaping lessons learned into guiding principles. It takes time and sustained effort to move poverty-environment concerns to the centre of development planning and action- but there are stories of achievement and how progress has been made along the way. Environment agencies typically operating on the periphery of development have found entry points into national policy making processes; the contribution of environment has been systematically integrated into PRSPs; economic arguments have been used to convince decision-makers to increase investment; key sector agencies have factored poverty-environment linkages into their programmes at the sub-national level.

These efforts alone will not in themselves deliver on MDG7 or other key MDGs. Rather they are steps in the right direction, signals to other actors that the case can be made and that decisions can be influenced, and indicators that a sustained effort to mainstream poverty-environment into planning decisions can result in increased investment.

The greatest challenge is scale. If we are to achieve the MDGs, how can we replicate these efforts; how can we leverage more impact from our resources; how can we engage other actors, such as the private sector, to amplify the potential result.

So here are some stories from the country level. Each one is a significant achievement in its own context. But we do need to build on these initial steps in order to travel further. For further information, please contact:

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# Bhutan

## I. What was achieved?

- Bhutan embraces environmental mainstreaming

### *How was it achieved?*

- Bhutan, which stands out for its efforts to preserve and conserve the environment, is now taking the step forward to integrate environmental considerations into its sector development plans.
- Efforts to mainstream environmental issues in national and sector development plans were initiated in May 2007 under a joint UNDP-UNEP initiative. The support initially targeted three line agencies in the preparation of policy guidelines and organising a series of workshops to create awareness and engage key government officials in broad-based dialogue on the concepts of mainstreaming environment. Concurrently, AusAid supported a capacity building programme to complement the UNDP-UNEP initiative through targeted training of a team of officers from line agencies on mainstreaming concepts.
- These initiatives have had a significant impact on the way environment is perceived by development planners in Bhutan. This approach to maximise both sustainable utilization and conservation of natural resources is particularly important for Bhutan as the country is encountering growing challenges of balancing development and livelihood opportunities against the need to conserve the environment.
- The Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC), Bhutan's apex planning agency has embraced the task of ensuring the integration of environmental considerations into all sector development plans. GNHC is the key implementing agency of the follow on Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI) programme which commenced in July 2008. Building on the outputs of the previous projects, GNHC aims to incorporate in the Planning Manual, a requirement that sector development plans must take into consideration poverty-environment concerns, as a condition for inclusion in future national development plans. A senior GNHC officer noted that, "It has been unfortunate that environment has been seen as a sector issue in Bhutan so far. But it is no longer treated that way."
- Bhutan today has the distinction of being the first country in the world with specific constitutional obligation on its people to preserve the environment. Article 5 of Bhutan's Constitution emphasizes the responsibility of all Bhutanese to protect the environment, conserve its rich biodiversity and prevent ecological degradation. It also stipulates that a minimum of sixty percent of the total land area must always be maintained under forest cover for all time to come. This forward looking and far sighted constitutional pledge is intended to ensure the long term sustainable use of natural resources in a manner that not only benefits present and future Bhutanese generations but also contributes in a small measure to global environment health.



# 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.

# Tanzania

## I. What was achieved?

- Through effective communication, the environmental mainstreaming effort helped bring about an increase of 800% in the budget for the Division of Environment in Tanzania

### *How was it achieved?*

- The PEI team's challenge in Tanzania was to make the case that the environment was important for growth and poverty reduction. This meant giving attention to how communication could support government environment mainstreaming efforts. Several tactics were employed to get the message across - with support from PEI. First, the team gathered supporting evidence through checklists, guidelines and indicators to highlight links between poverty and the environment. Second, environmental issues were then framed as part of wider goals and challenges linked to health, livelihoods, incomes, growth and security. Third, inclusion and transparency were key principles which opened the process of environment mainstreaming to a wide range of groups and organisations. Lastly, using the media through TV, print and radio, PEI publicised the environment by targeting events where there was ministerial involvement. The team described their work as one big communications task to bring about improved understanding, interest and political will on poverty-environment issues. Effectively communicating the importance of the environment to development and the economy contributed to a 800% increase in the Division of Environment's annual budget (from US\$400,000 to US\$3.2m) in 2006. In addition this effort galvanised a wide range of partners, both governmental and non-governmental, on the promotion of environment mainstreaming.



## 2. What was achieved?

- The Vice President's Office successfully reflected the contribution of environment to development by integrating environment into Tanzania's National Strategy for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty.

### *How was it achieved?*

- The development of a new poverty reduction strategy presented the Vice President's Office (VPO) with a key entry point for integrating the environment into the development planning process. In order to do this successfully, the VPO team supported by PEI, needed to analyse the contribution of the environment to livelihoods, health and economic growth and to build this analysis into the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Research helped the team to increase the understanding of how environmental issues affect livelihoods and the economy. The team then assessed government provisions for planning for the environment and also supported a public expenditure review to ascertain the extent of 'value for money' from environmental investments. From this, the team developed poverty-environment indicators and guidelines for mainstreaming the environment into the formulation of Tanzania's National Strategy for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), targeting the key working groups responsible for the formulation of the NSGRP. Suddenly, the team was regularly making presentations, lobbying and influencing through the working groups. Momentum had built up and the environment was being represented and argued for in government reviews, in donor meetings and in civil

society forums where the rationale was put forward as to why environment was key to growth and poverty reduction. The result was a poverty reduction strategy that focused on sustainable development as an underlying principle, with 15 specific environment targets.

### 3. What was achieved?

- The key poverty-environment linkages were built into the newly designed Poverty Monitoring System in Tanzania.

#### *How was it achieved?*

- The Vice President's Office environmental mainstreaming team in Tanzania had ensured that the National Strategy for Growth and the Reduction of Poverty embodied a strong focus on how environment contributes to poverty reduction and sustainable growth. The team, supported by PEI, were well aware that the targets in this strategy would be monitored through a newly designed Poverty Monitoring System (PMS) and success would depend on ensuring that the targets were well reflected in it. Having built up a sound working relationship with the Poverty Eradication Department (PED) which was responsible for the PMS, the VPO team were able to follow up the earlier work with a focus on the poverty-environment indicators that would be used to monitor the implementation of the targets in the strategy. With the help of the PED, they organised a key brainstorming meeting which resulted in agreement to include 10 indicators in the PMS which specifically focused on the most significant poverty-environment targets in the strategy. Furthermore, additional poverty-environment indicators were also developed to be monitored at the sectoral and local government authority levels.

## Uganda

### 1. What was achieved?

- After the Ugandan environment authority, NEMA, had worked hard to integrate of environment into the PRSP, they seized an opportunity to include environment into Uganda's national budget

#### *How was it achieved?*

- A key deadline for finalising the government's budget in Uganda was imminent. After working hard on integrating environment into the PRSP, the mainstreaming team in the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), supported by PEI, saw an opportunity to better integrate environment into the government's budget. NEMA's Executive Director made a phone call to the Budget Director at the Ministry of Finance explaining the importance of environment to development as well as the costs of 'no-action.' The Budget Director was convinced and immediately accepted the idea of adding guidelines for environment into the Budget Circular. Ever since, the Budget Director has been challenging environmental actors to give him more concrete, detailed and costed proposals on which environmental interventions should be prioritized by sectors and local governments. His leadership has been extremely positive and had promised a future for PEI and government mainstreaming efforts in Uganda.



# Kenya

## I. What was achieved?

- The Kenya government developed an Environment Policy that draws on poverty and environment linkages and aims to support Kenya's sustainable development aspirations through integration of environment across sectors

### *How was it achieved?*

- With support from PEI work on poverty and environment linkages drawn from local and national level assessments, the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources mandated that the forthcoming Environment Policy should draw on both environment and development principles and clearly articulate objectives and priority action that contribute to the country's development aspirations. He commissioned the National Environment Policy Steering Committee, made up of 15 eminent Kenyans and supported by PEI and others, to prepare an environment policy that guides the integration of environment and pro-poor development across key sectors of the Kenyan economy and contributes to achieving all MDGs. The draft Environment Policy was submitted to the Minister for Environment and Mineral Resources on 30th June 2008.



# Mozambique

## I. What was achieved?

- In Mozambique, the environment ministry together with the planning ministry jointly contributed to poverty reduction by enabling a community to halt environmental degradation at the local level

### *How was it achieved?*

- As part of PEI support to the Ministry of Planning & Development and the Ministry for Environmental Affairs, a pilot project was initiated to address specific environmental problems identified by a local community in the town of Madal in Mozambique. The problem was that during the rainy season, homes and roads were often washed away with severe impacts on livelihoods. The team helped the local community to identify its root cause which was soil erosion, and then supported the community to take remedial action. By planting trees and stabilising the banks of the river, soil erosion was significantly reduced. On seeing the results, the PEI project coordinator in MICOA, the environment agency, stated that, "People can solve their environmental problems with local initiatives if people are well informed and trained because they then have a positive, proactive attitude and can see the benefits to their well-being." One of the beneficiaries of the project said, "The initiative awoke awareness amongst villagers on environmental protection and a better perception on how environmental degradation can affect income generation."

