

Asia Pacific Regional Poverty and Environment Initiative

Partnerships to fight poverty and sustain the environment



The Regional Poverty and Environment Initiative (PEI) aims at helping countries strengthen their capacities to fight poverty through sound and equitable environmental management, building partnerships and supporting learning and knowledge-sharing at local, national and global levels. If Asia-Pacific countries are going to achieve the MDGs, environmental outcomes that matter to poor people must be improved. Poor people in Asia and the Pacific often highlight the crucial role of natural resources and environmental change to their well-being and ability to control their lives. This is particularly the case for women, children and marginalised groups such as ethnic minorities. With the growth of government revenue in the Asia Pacific, increased decentralization and a vibrant private sector, it is important to improve development outcomes by better integrating ecosystems goods and services in poverty reduction efforts.

In order to address the challenges of mainstreaming, a strong partnership between UNDP and UNEP has been established through PEI. The UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok (RCB) and the UNEP Regional Office for Asia-Pacific (ROAP) have launched the joint UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative in Asia-Pacific. This is part of the scale-up of the Global PEI to support country-level efforts to mainstream environment into national planning processes through financial and technical assistance and capacity development.

What PEI Does

PEI's support to countries is envisaged in three phases: 1) support for the preparation of country programmes, including establishing links between environment and poverty, and promoting the role of environmental management in poverty reduction by integrating environment in national plans, budget processes, sector strategies and local implementation mechanisms; 2) country programme implementation phase with focus on integrating environment in PRSPs, regulatory reforms or national plans; and 3) a longer country programme implementation phase with a stronger focus on capacity development and policy implementation.

Crucial to this effort is identifying the underlying economic, social, and political drivers of poverty. Through country assessments, the PEI helps governments highlight poverty-environment linkages, drawing attention to the country-specific links between income generation, livelihoods, health, and the environment. This includes taking advantage of key entry points into the economic development planning process, raising awareness about poverty-environment linkages, building national commitment and, ultimately expanding budget allocations for the environment. PEI also facilitates coordination among government and donors around poverty and environment issues.

Management Arrangements

A joint Regional Team consisting of policy advisors from the RCB, UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo (RCC), and UNEP ROAP will provide technical and financial support to countries to strengthen their own capacity to integrate environmental concerns of the poor into national planning and policy frameworks. The Regional Team will be responsible for the overall PEI strategy in Asia-Pacific, and will engage with UNDP Country Offices and Country Teams, government and development partners in the preparatory phase.

Initial Progress

To kick off PEI activities, the joint PEI team has undertaken missions to Cambodia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Laos, and Nepal, resulting in draft concept notes, terms of reference, and workplans for the preparatory phases. A mission to Viet Nam scoped future collaboration with the on-going PEI programme in that country. Additional missions are planned for Afghanistan, China, Myanmar, Papua New-Guinea and Pakistan in the coming months. The team has also supported one regional workshop in 2007 on environmental economics, and will undertake at least one cross-country regional support event in 2008.

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