

# Tackling the two together

Poverty and environment must be addressed together in all national and local policies, programs, and projects

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**P**overty alleviation and environment sustainability are two primary objectives that have featured in most government plans but are seldom addressed in an integrated manner.

A research and evaluation document on poverty-environment mainstreaming states the linkage between poverty and environment can be conceptualized in terms of their relationship to livelihoods, resilience to environmental risks, health, and economic development.

Poverty-environment mainstreaming is defined by the United Nations Environment Program as an iterative process of integrating poverty-environment linkages into policymaking, budgeting, and implementation processes at the national, sector, and sub-national levels.

The process involves acknowledging and establishing the linkage between poverty and environment. In other words, it is about viewing the environment as a productive resource for all aspects of development and using it sustainably.

The government is currently conducting exercises with the ministries and multiple sectors for the application of the poverty-environment mainstreaming guidelines in order to achieve the objective of sustainable development.

Dr. David Annandale, a UN consultant, said there is a need to think about going beyond “safeguarding” (that is, focusing on compliance with standards and mitigation of adverse impacts) to identifying environmental sustainability as an objective of the development process.



» A man weaves bamboo mats

“It requires a focus on proactive investment in policies and projects that promote integration of environment sustainability into development strategies themselves, rather than as an ‘addon’ component to policies or projects conceptualized without reference to environmental sustainability,” he said. Dr. David Annandale said the focus is on understanding the logic of the policymaking process, deciding when to start, and understanding the receptiveness of different policymakers.

He said an unfortunate side effect of establishing environment ministries is the perception that there is an ‘environment sector’ that is de-linked from economic drivers, as well as the perception that addressing environment issues is the exclusive responsibility of environment authorities.

As a result, government ministries dealing with other sectors are not held accountable for the environment sustainability of the policies and projects

that they promote.

Dr. David Annandale said the development objective needs to be framed around the services to be delivered, rather than investment in a particular solution. “There is a need to go beyond the sector-level approach,” he added.

The inception report prepared by the government presents the approach to poverty-environment mainstreaming that shall be undertaken in implementing all future policies, programs, and projects at the central and local levels.

Further, under the poverty-environment mainstreaming guidelines, the capacity development needs of various sectors and local authorities will be identified. The trial application of the guidelines will be undertaken during a series of workshops.

Poverty-environment mainstreaming is aimed at improving future strategic planning processes. As a consequence, it does not make sense to apply mainstreaming concepts to strategic plans that already exist.

With regard to the 10th Plan, I:CP (Environment, Climate and Poverty) thinking will only be applied in relation to refinements that will be made to programs and activities after the mid-term review slated to begin toward the end of 2010.

During consultations with the ministries and sectors the focus will be on processes that can be used to better mainstream ECP in the 11th Plan.

The numerous consultations with ministries and sectors will also help identify existing capacity assets (strengths) and capacity gaps (weaknesses) for ECP mainstreaming, and outline actions to address the identified capacity gaps.