

## **Ugandan delegation learns from the mainstreaming experience in Rwanda**

The PEI Uganda delegation attended a mission to Rwanda on 28-29 January 2008 to learn from Rwanda's experience of mainstreaming environment into national development policy and planning processes. The study visit was a part of an endeavour to facilitate cooperation and sharing of experiences among the seven countries that are implementing the Poverty-Environment Initiative in Africa.

The Ugandan delegation consisted of technical government officials from the environment sector participating in the PEAP revision process, representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the National Planning Authority which are leading the revision process, as well as the Vice Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources.

The delegation was hosted by PEI Rwanda team, and the programme included presentations and discussions with various stakeholders as well as a site visit to a warehouse in the context of the plastic bag ban initiative.

Rwanda has recently completed its second PRSP, called the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). With technical support from PEI, environment has been successfully mainstreamed into the recent Rwandan PRSP. The Government of Uganda, on the other hand, is currently undertaking a revision of its Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), and the process will lead to adoption of a new 5-year National Development Plan for Uganda in June 2008. This process is a critical entry point for PEI to support integration of environmental sustainability and poverty-environment linkages into the national development planning in Uganda.

Among the key observations of the study visit was that having environment as both an individual sector and a cross-cutting issue in the EDPRS deepens integration of environmental sustainability into the PRSP. In Rwanda, the active role of MINECOFIN, the ministry leading the EDPRS process, was critical in integrating the environment into the plan across sectors. The process also required persistent participation of environment technical officers at its various stages, including awareness-raising and capacity building of sectors.

The study visit also revealed that high-level political support, strong institutions and a culture of obedience to laws in Rwanda have been instrumental to promoting environmentally sustainable practices, as evidenced by the successful enforcement of the ban on plastic bags.