

Policy Briefing 1: Decreasing Vulnerability

Poverty-Environment Mainstreaming

The process of integrating poverty-environment linkages into policymaking, budgeting and implementation processes at national, sector and subnational levels. It is a multi-year, multi-stakeholder effort that entails working with the government, nongovernmental actors (civil society, academia, business and industry, the general public/communities and the media and the development community.*

Sustainable development is largely dependant upon environmental mainstreaming and the successful integration of the environment into economic planning and decision-making. In recent years the key goal of environmental mainstreaming has been reducing poverty through responsible environmental management.

The management of scarce resources can directly improve livelihoods and income opportunities of the poor and other vulnerable groups, including women and marginalized populations.

*Mainstreaming Poverty-Environment Linkages into Development Planning:
Handbook for Practitioners, 2009

Environmental Vulnerabilities

What are they?

Environmental Vulnerabilities (EVs) can be a variety of factors including, but not limited to:

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Earthquakes | Volcanoes | Lowlands |
| Coastal land | Dry periods | High winds |
| Endangered species | | Intensive farming |

By measuring these vulnerabilities a country can determine how sustainably humans are living within their environment because it looks at current conditions, while at the same time trying to predict how the environment will cope with future events.^[1]

Why do they matter?

In order for development to be sustainable and the natural resilience, hazards and acquired resilience must be measured and examined. When the vulnerabilities are measured and examined strategic plans can be created on how best to plan for and protect the environment.

By examining the tendency for something to be damaged or affected a forward-looking approach can be taken to plan strategically.

The poor depend upon the environment for their livelihood, therefore, the reduction of vulnerabilities helps to create a dependable environment in which livelihoods can flourish and grow.

[1] The Environmental Vulnerability Index and Profiles: Outcome-focused Environmental Management at the Scale of Countries; Ursula L. Kaly and Craig Pratt; Small Island Developing States Network

Id/SDT: VULNERABILITIES MADE REAL

Poor people are more vulnerable to natural disasters, effect of climate change and environmental shocks which can damage livelihoods and undermine the security provided by the environment.[1] If not protected from or anticipated, environmental vulnerabilities can lead to conflict and instability. The recent earthquake (13 January 2010) which hit Haiti exposed some of its major environmental vulnerabilities and demonstrated on a massive scale how the inability to have proper planning at all levels can create conflict, cripple development and displace populations.

Deforestation in Haiti dating back to the late 1950's left the nation with less than 2 percent forest cover, which has contributed to erosion which has undermined the food output. Asif Zaidi, Operations Manager of the post-conflict and disaster management branch of the UNEP said, "We need to work...to create mechanisms that reinforce better use of natural resources. Prior to the quake, a two-year project starting in 2010 was developed with UNEP to bolster Haiti's environment, from forests to coral reefs.

Quick measures being promoted to help reducing some of the vulnerabilities are the provision of propane to encourage a shift from charcoal-burning stoves to investments in renewable energies such as solar or wind power. In turn this could in the long term contribute to reforestation.

Aside from earthquakes, Haiti faces annual exposure to hurricanes and due to the deforestation hurricanes are more damaging to Haiti than in neighboring Dominican Republic. Forest cover helps to reduce the risk of flash floods by diminishing erosion.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with the majority of its population living in rural areas and dependant upon the environment; and years of weak governance and the lack of clear laws regarding land rights after years of misrule under the dictatorship of Francois Duvalier (1957-1986) has led to many of the country's shortcomings.

For example, the UN-backed campaign to plant trees, which has registered over 7.8 billion trees planted – that is more than one for every person on the planet, has only planted 140,000 in Haiti, a country whose population is 10 million.

Haiti is listed as number two out of 166 countries in their vulnerability to climate change, behind only Somalia and ahead of Afghanistan and Sierra Leone.



[1] Environmental Vulnerability Index – <http://www.vulnerabilityindex.net>

Progress in Rwanda

The EDPRS incorporates a number of cross-cutting issues (CCI) including environment, HIV/AIDS, gender, social inclusion and youth; significant work has been done on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS and gender issues throughout government policy and planning. Now the focus is on mainstreaming environmental policies government-wide and at all government levels.

In 2008, Rose Mukankomeje, Director-General of REMA, stated “Activities affecting ecosystems, beyond the national context, have sub-regional and global impacts, hence the need for solidarity and an international commitment to save the planet.”

Soil regeneration efforts and the declaration of ‘protected areas’, particularly in the marshlands, have restored crop production and it has increased two or three-fold on the slopes of the hill sides according to REMA.

During the period January – June 2009 the production of ortho-pohots was completed for 70% of the country, 67% of land titles were issued and a report was completed and critically degraded ecosystems were rehabilitated.^[2]

Despite the challenges the UNDP has stated Rwanda is ‘very likely to achieve’ MDG goal number 7.

[2] Report of the X. Joint Budget Support Review, MINECOFIN; November 2009.

Focus on: Tanzania

In 2005, Tanzania published its National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), it is the country’s second national poverty reduction strategy for putting the focus on poverty reduction and shows the strong links between vulnerability,

poverty and the environment. The security and livelihoods the environment provides is also evident in the Tanzania Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), which identified five key environment-related links between poverty and vulnerability:

1. **Declining quality of natural resources** – Poor quality natural resources, such as poor soil quality as a result of overfarming land leads to diminished food quality which has a direct effect on health and the livelihoods of the poor.
2. **Vermin and wild animals destroying crops** – The inability to limit the effect of crop devastation due to wild animals and vermin can lead to food shortages and can directly impact an entire population.
3. **Natural disasters and climate changes** – The force of natural disasters, such as floods, can be heightened by environmental mismanagement such as deforestation.
4. **Bush fires which destroy biodiversity** – The lack of strategic planning such as creating barriers to slow the spread of fires and lead to extreme environmental devastation in addition to the loss of life.
5. **Environmental pollution** – The failure to properly manage human/industrial waste can lead to the contamination of the environment which can impact on water quality and health.

Floods and droughts are an increasingly common phenomena in Tanzania which directly affect food security and livelihoods of many poor people. These weather extremes along with other environmental vulnerabilities such as deforestation, degrading of soils and pastures and over-fishing have greater implications on public health and well-being which directly affects the development of the country.

The increased attention to ensuring environmental sustainability issues into planning has enabled Tanzania to see aspects of Millennium Development Goal number 7 within reach. In relation to drinking water (Target 7c), it is unlikely Tanzania will attain the 74 percent in the rural mainland, but the estimated proportion of people in urban areas who use drinking water from improved sources has increased from 68 percent in 1990, through 73 percent in 2003 to 83 percent in 2008, equivalent to about 15 percent increase of coverage in a period of 18 years.^[1]

Additionally, the focus on the reduction of land degradation, the conservation of ecosystems people depend upon in the NSGRP acknowledges that these resources that people rely heavily upon are the most vulnerable to external shocks and environmental risks.^[2]

[1] Millennium Development Goals Report: Mid-way Evaluation: 2000-2008; United Republic of Tanzania.

[2] National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), Vice President’s Office, June 2005; United Republic of Tanzania.

About the Poverty and Environment Initiative

Better environmental management can improve the livelihoods, health and well-being and contribute directly to pro-poor economic growth; thus, environmental sustainability is a ‘cross cutting’ issue and should be an integral part of all sectors fundamental policies.

The Poverty and Environment Initiative (PEI) is a UNDP-UNEP joint program which was formally launched in 2005 and is working directly with the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA). The program provides support to the Government of Rwanda (GoR) to build capacity for mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages into the national development planning processes to implement EDPRS.

REMA is implementing the project with the overall strategic guidance provided by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MINIRENA). Additionally, PEI is providing support to MINECOFIN, sectors and relevant stakeholders on environmental mainstreaming into the budget and planning process and is giving guidance on international best practices to help sustained sector engagement for planning, budgeting and monitoring for the environment at both the national and local levels.