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Mainstreaming into National Planning Processes

This chapter begins with a discussion of national development planning processes. It follows with guidance on how to integrate poverty-environment objectives into national planning processes, and concludes with a discussion of measures to facilitate implementation of mainstreamed national development plans.



4.1 Understanding National Development Planning Processes

For successful integration of poverty-environment objectives in government-led national development, practitioners need to identify and understand the various planning processes, timelines, institutions and actors involved. They also need to know the policies, plans and planning mechanisms already in place. The institutional and context analysis methodology described in chapter 3 and detailed in annex A can help in identifying and understanding these factors, including gender dynamics. Armed with this understanding, practitioners can knowledgeably and responsively integrate pro-poor environmental sustainability into national development processes. The following sections briefly describe the key components of national development policy and planning processes, and entry points for poverty-environment objectives.

National Development Plans

Governments draw up national development plans and strategies based on the perceived needs and priorities of their citizens. Typically consisting of a 5- to 25-year horizon, national development plans define desired development outcomes to be achieved, build consensus on the obstacles to and opportunities for achieving those outcomes, define the role and contribution of different sectors and stakeholders in achieving the outcomes, and provide a strategic framework within which more detailed planning and budgeting can take place at regular intervals. National development plans tend to focus on economic growth and job creation and thereby reduce poverty. Consequently, these plans incorporate targets that address GDP, rates of employment and poverty levels.

National development plans may take the form of a party political manifesto prior to an election or of a government action plan after an election. They are formalized as multiyear national development plans, typically covering a five-year or longer period. Countries usually have long-term, medium-term and annual planning processes. For example, governments can define a long-term vision of development over a 20-plus-year period that guides the economic and social development aspirations of the national society as a whole ([box 4.1](#)).

Box 4.1 Bangladesh Vision 2021



Bangladesh in 2021 shall be a country in which:

1. Every citizen has equal opportunities to achieve his/her fullest potential
2. All citizens enjoy a quality of life where basic health care and adequate nutrition are assured
3. All citizens have access to a modern, technical, and vocational education tailored to meet the human resource needs of a technologically advancing nation
4. Sustainability of development is ensured through better protection from climate change and natural disasters
5. There is respect for the principles of democracy, rule of law, and human rights
6. Gender equality is assured; so are the rights of ethnic populations and of all other disadvantaged groups including persons with disability
7. The diversity and creativity of all people are valued and nurtured

Source: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2012.

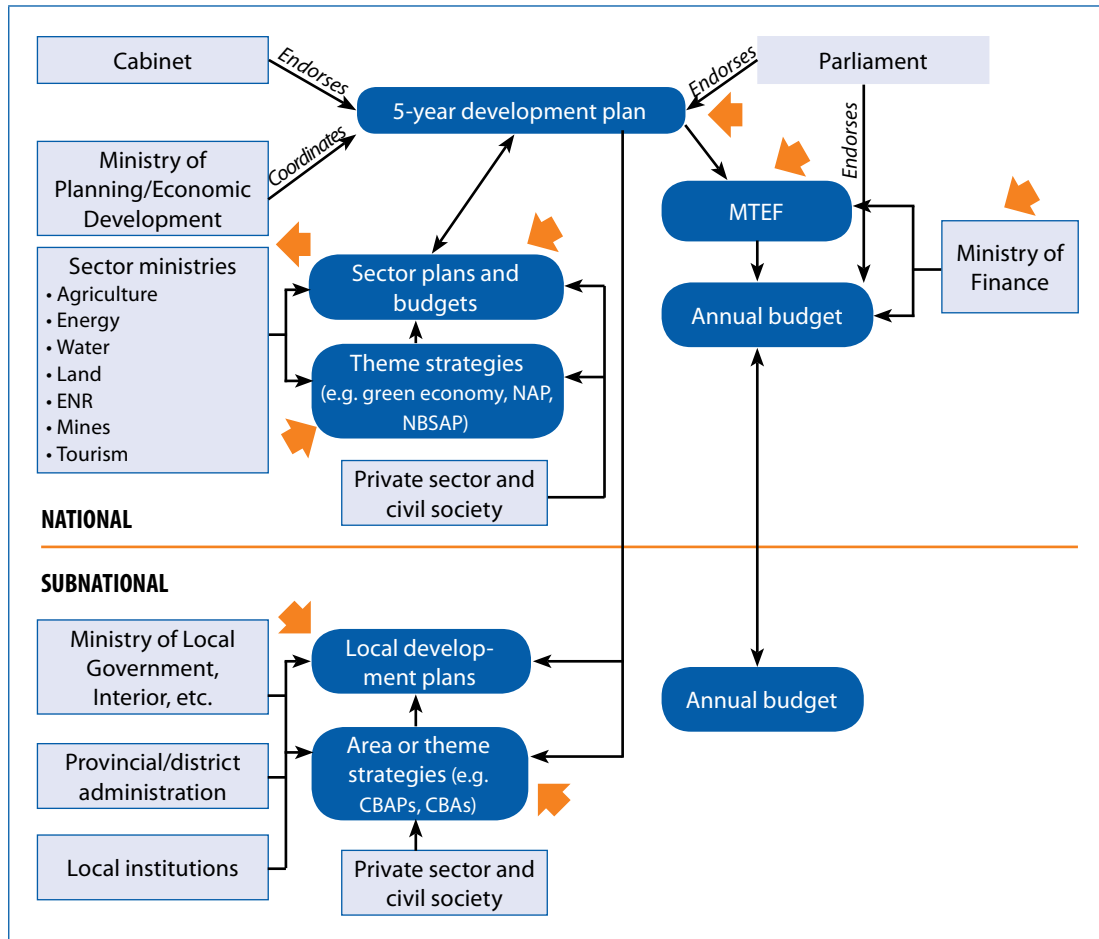


Governments, via the ministry or agency responsible for national development planning, prepare five-year economic or national development plans as a means to achieve a long-term vision. These plans articulate government's economic, social and environmental priorities, and in turn influence the areas of cooperation and support provided by government partners including donors, intergovernment institutions, UN organizations, the private sector and civil society. In least and more developed countries, national development plans tend to emphasize

economic growth and poverty reduction. Normally, the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) developed during the 2000s have been assimilated into these plans, like the Rwandan Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies for 2008–2012 and 2013–2018.

The five-year national development plans are implemented through three-year rolling budgets (medium-term expenditure frameworks) and the annual workplans and budgets (see chapter 5) of sectors and subnational structures (figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Poverty-Environment Mainstreaming Pathways into Policy, Planning and Budgeting Processes



Note: ➤ = poverty-environment entry point; CBA = cost-benefit analysis; CBAP = community-based adaptation plan; MTEF = medium-term expenditure framework; NBSAP = national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

National development plans are normally established through a cyclic process led by the national planning institution and entail the following steps:

1. Performance review of latest five-year plan against targets
2. Elaboration of next five-year plan
3. Monitoring implementation and progress towards targets
4. Periodic progress reporting and review; and then back to step 1

Every step of the cycle is an opportunity to integrate poverty-environment objectives.

Institutional Stakeholders

Many developing countries have planning ministries or commissions responsible for planning economic development priorities, including large capital expenditures such as infrastructure through a public investment programme. The ministry of finance may stress a short-term focus on managing macroeconomic indicators, not taking the longer view on economic and political trends and strategic public investment that a planning ministry provides. A planning ministry's perspective might also make it more likely to take into account the longer-term threats created by environmental and climate challenges. This is the case in China, which retains a strong planning ministry (the National Development Reform Commission) that is now leading the government's overall national response to climate change. In countries where planning is given much less prominence, mainstreaming of the environment and climate into planning processes can be less of a priority.

Sector Strategies

National development plans are often an amalgamation of sector (e.g. finance, agriculture,

health, environment, education) strategies and plans, and elements of cross-cutting development issues such as HIV/AIDS, gender and human rights—and increasingly, environmental sustainability. Sector plans, such as an agricultural strategy, endorsed during the preceding five-year national development planning cycle are likely to feature predominantly in the forthcoming national development plan ([figure 4.1](#)). Similarly, environmental policies and plans—such as national climate change strategies, revised national biodiversity strategy and action plans (NBSAPs), NAPs and nationally appropriate mitigation actions—provide valuable information, analysis and guidance to argue for the strengthening of environmental resilience and sustainability parameters in national development plans so as to influence government priorities and public sector financing. Poverty reduction strategies, gender and rights-based policies, land tenure policies and other social-oriented policy reform initiatives can also serve as opportunities for strengthening links to environmental sustainability and ENR management, and to inform development planning processes ([box 4.2](#)).

The lead ministry or agency normally establishes sector-based working groups comprised of technicians from the planning and/or strategy units of sector institutions to provide information and content for the national plan. The lead institutions typically provide directives and guidance to the sector working groups on how to conduct their work, incorporate cross-cutting issues (e.g. HIV/AIDS, gender and human rights, and environmental sustainability including climate change) and prepare and submit sector-based contributions to the national development plan. From a mainstreaming perspective, it is vital to engage with both the lead institution coordinating the planning process and the sector working groups engaged in the planning process.





Box 4.2 Mainstreaming Gender, Climate Change and Pro-Poor Environmental Sustainability into Planning Processes in Mozambique

In 2007, the Global Gender and Climate Alliance began a campaign that advanced gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of environmental policy. With support from UN Women and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Mozambique's Ministry for Coordination of Environmental Affairs developed the Strategy for Gender, Environment and Climate Change, and subsequently a Climate Change Gender Action Plan to enhance the strategy, in a highly participatory manner. Some lessons learned from the experience include the following:

- Strategies should be revised periodically, and there should be

a gender-inclusive and gender-responsive approach to them.

- Specific implications for key sectors should be identified in taking gender and climate change from concept to action, ensuring alignment between strategies as early and as consistently as possible by communicating strategic directions on gender and climate change with other actors.

- Mainstreaming gender in the environmental sector is as important as mainstreaming environmental management in the social sector.

- Defining clear institutional arrangements, in particular those regarding monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management

(including dissemination), contributes to mobilizing sectors and leaders in capturing mainstreaming achievements and in their reporting.

Complementing these efforts, PEI supported the training of more than 50 planners at the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs at the national and provincial levels on mainstreaming gender and pro-poor environmental sustainability perspectives in their planning processes. As a follow-up to the 2012 training, the ministry identified equitable distribution of natural resources for pro-poor growth with a greater focus on marginalized groups—including women—as one of its strategic objectives.

Source: Perch and Byrd 2014; and PEI Africa.

National development planning often aims to combine both top-down and bottom-up planning processes. A given country approach will often reflect a balance between these two extremes.

4.2 Integrating Poverty-Environment Objectives into National Development Planning Processes

Once practitioners understand the national development planning process as described in [section 4.1](#), they need to map out and apply a mainstreaming strategy to inform and

influence the content of national development plans. The primary activities and considerations involved in this are described below.

Select the Target Policy and Planning Process

Timing, particularly when seeking to mainstream long-range climate change issues, is important. It would be counterproductive to present evidence and justifications aimed at suggesting that national development objectives should reference climate change resilience when the central coordinating unit and sector working groups have already formulated the key development objectives of the next five-year development plan.

However, if the current five-year plan is ending within 18–24 months, this could constitute an ideal target and give sufficient time to gather evidence for arguing and demonstrating the benefits of integrating sustainable land or watershed management into the objectives of a national development plan. It also can provide enough time to support and strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders so as to generate a process of reform and strengthened planning from within national institutions rather than be solely dependent on external agents.

If the five-year development plan process is only in its first or second year, it might be worthwhile to target the budget process aimed at implementing the national plan (see chapter 5), its implementation at the subnational or sector level (see chapter 6), or its monitoring and review (see chapter 7). After gaining traction at these levels, the focus can then shift to informing the national development planning process 18–24 months before the end of the current development plan.

Select Mainstreaming Tools and Information Sources

Different types of information can be used to inform and influence the integration of pro-poor environmental sustainability into the national planning process, and eventually into the plan itself. In some cases, it might be most effective to commission a study on the economic costs and benefits of ENR to the national economy—particularly in key sectors such as agriculture—and to society in terms of jobs, livelihoods and the impact of environmental degradation. Alternatively, a study could be commissioned that determines the costs and benefits of embarking on an inclusive green economy strategy.

Because commissioning studies can be time consuming and expensive, in some cases it

might be best to draw on existing studies and materials produced under other national or subnational initiatives that also aim to contribute to the mainstreaming agenda. Examples of such national sector or theme strategies that seek to inform and influence national development planning and budget processes include NBSAPs, national climate change action plans, green economy strategies and NAPs ([box 4.3](#)).

Institutionalize Mainstreaming within the Planning Process

Institutionalizing mainstreaming into national planning processes makes the effort more internalized, more replicable and more sustainable. Once institutionalized, a particular set of institutions continues to stress environmental and climate issues once external support has ended. Institutionalization also means that planning processes can be dynamic and flexible so as to best respond to new data and risks over time and address uncertainty within climate models.

In Bhutan, the UN and other development partners have supported a Mainstreaming Reference Group chaired by the country's planning commission. This group has been mandated by a prime ministerial decree to support mainstreaming into the five-year plan and related policies and programmes. In some countries—as in Rwanda—the environment ministry or agency can play this lead coordinating role; this requires an institution able and willing to be proactive once external support for mainstreaming ceases.

Determine the Modes of Communication

Successful mainstreaming in national development planning processes requires careful consideration of how to convey the essential benefits of integrating pro-poor environmental sustainability into national development



Box 4.3 The Use of the NAP Process in Mainstreaming

The main objectives of the NAP process, which was established in 2010 under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, are:

- ☀ To take a medium- and long-term approach to reducing vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change
- ☀ To facilitate the coherent integration of climate change adaptation into relevant new and existing policies, programmes and activities—particularly development planning processes and strategies—within all relevant sectors and levels as appropriate

It is too early to draw lessons from the process's application in different countries. What is clear is that the NAP process emphasizes several aspects that reflect a main-

streaming approach, including the following:

- ☀ NAPs entail institutional capacity development and greater coordination between actors—e.g. the planning, finance, environment and local government ministries.
- ☀ The NAP process implies changes in policies, systems and capacities to support iterative planning. These changes relate to addressing climate risk in ongoing planning, annual budgets, and long-term public investment and expenditure frameworks.
- ☀ NAPs focus on identifying climate change adaptation options at the national, subnational and sector levels, which need a high degree of participatory planning.

- ☀ Reviewing and appraising climate change adaptation options requires capacity within the planning, finance, environment and sector ministries for cost-benefit analysis as it relates to climate. Among other things, this means greater capacity to use climate information and climate scenarios for planners in all sectors.

- ☀ NAPs require sustained investment and, therefore, the integration of climate change into budgeting processes.

Significant lessons have been learned from the NAP process; more channels and opportunities for knowledge sharing across countries are needed to communicate these lessons.

Source: UNDP GEF.

plan objectives, priority programmes, targets and indicators. Before beginning the consultation/negotiation process, produce and share evidence to influence key decision-makers of the need to incorporate poverty-environment priorities into national development planning documents. For instance, accompany commissioned technical reports with concise and clear briefing notes that elucidate the essential findings and recommendations. Tailor the language of these communications to the intended audience and their interests. Generally, economists and development planners have relatively little familiarity with environmental terminology and jargon. Express findings and recommendations in economic terms (e.g. number of households

taken out of poverty due to improved land management, percentage increase in maize production as a result of smart climate change-resilient rain-fed agriculture) that can be more easily assimilated by those driving the national development planning process. See annex F for more guidance.

Establish Relationships and Trust

The primary individuals within institutions who are part of the national development planning processes need to be identified, along with their roles in mainstreaming. For mainstreaming to take hold in public sector processes effectively, technicians and decision-makers

need to become mainstreaming champions in the central coordination unit leading the planning process as well as in sector working groups. Individuals in civil society organizations, academia, research organizations and private sector associations (e.g. national association of manufactures) can also become effective champions for mainstreaming. High staff turnover in public sector institutions can limit mainstreaming efforts; a mitigating tactic is not to rely on any one individual to drive the process but to continuously seek to widen the group of individuals engaged in the mainstreaming process across public sector institutions and government partners in civil society, academia and think tanks, and the private sector.

Mutually beneficial relationships should be established between those directing the national planning process and those who aim to influence the process with a mainstreaming agenda. The latter need to strategize on providing inputs that will both carry the mainstreaming agenda forward while contributing to the work of the national planning process—and ideally result in an improved development plan that is well received by decision-makers, and therefore more easily endorsed by them.

Work Towards Breaking Down Sector Silos

Sector ministries are sovereign with regard to developing their sector policies in a more sustainable and coordinated way. An agricultural sector policy centred on increasing production, added value and integrating climate change adaptation will include significant cross-sectoral linkages with water resource management, infrastructure, agro-business and industry, among others. Therefore, critical to the success of implementing the agricultural sector policy is concerted coordination with other sector ministries (e.g. environment,

water, industry, infrastructure and transport). To support this coordination, partners should determine how to bring evidence to all sectors and stakeholders so they can together define and agree on national priorities through a mainstreaming process (see chapter 5).

Envisage Proposed Objectives, Targets and Indicators

In general terms, national development plans consist of a set of development objectives to be achieved by the end of a five-year cycle, reflecting government and society's economic, social and environmental aspirations. These plans articulate priority themes, results or programmes to be implemented by various sectors and partners to enable achievement of the objectives. In order to integrate pro-poor environmental sustainability into one or all of these objectives, and to suggest relevant programmes and projects aimed at implementing pro-poor environmental sustainability, it is highly useful to anticipate the likely narrative and content of the plan at an early stage of its development. This helps in preparing documentation and arguments on the benefits of mainstreaming and suggesting formulations for objectives, priority themes, indicators and targets, and programmes/projects that can be more easily assimilated into the final national plan document. Revisiting past national development plans is one way to do this. Engaging with the central coordination unit leading the national development planning process, the national statistics office and key sector working groups is another useful source of information. See chapter 7 for guidance regarding national indicators and monitoring systems.



4.3 Identifying Opportunities for Implementing Mainstreamed National Development Plans

After pro-poor environmental sustainability has been integrated into national development plan objectives, priority programmes/projects, and indicators, measures and opportunities to support its successful implementation must be identified. Some general considerations in this regard are described below.

Understanding Institutional Capacity, Laws and Regulations

Institutions, laws and regulatory frameworks can support and facilitate all aspects of poverty-environment mainstreaming. At the highest level of governance, laws create rights and obligations for individuals and public, private and civil society sectors. They also promote sound policies, standards, institutions, governance and institutional systems. Laws facilitate efficiency and productivity; and enable fiscal, financial and economic instruments and other measures to be complied with and enforced. Laws protect the poor and vulnerable, create access and ownership of land and property rights to natural resources, and protect consumers and people's coping mechanisms.

The institutional settings in which laws are enacted need to be adaptive and flexible. Laws and institutions need to facilitate the implementation of new policies and support the private sector in adopting voluntary self-complying measures through partnerships. Linking laws to the goal of eliminating poverty plays an important role in promoting an inclusive green economy, as well as in the use of social protection policies to address inequality. Many countries supported by PEI have made significant progress in this regard;

their experiences can be shared in relevant South-South exchanges ([box 4.4](#)).

Secure Funding to Enable Implementation

The lack of available funding, either from the public sector (i.e. national budgets prepared by the ministry of finance) and/or grants or loans from development partners, is often cited as the reason why certain priority programmes in national development plans are not achieved by the end of the five-year cycle. Indeed, for a number of least developed countries, there tend to be inadequate links between planning and budgeting processes. Consequently, it is imperative to work with ministries of finance at an early stage to influence national budget processes so as to allocate public finances in support of mainstreamed programmes contained in the national development plan (see chapter 5).

Maintain Cross-Sectoral Coordination

Sustaining cross-sectoral and integrated engagement at the planning stage and during implementation of national development plans is critical in ensuring positive economic, social and environmental benefits. The ministry of planning should be supported in continuing the efforts of engaging with sectoral working groups to coordinate national development plan implementation across sectors at the national level, and through subnational administrations and their coordination focal points.

Drive Implementation at the Subnational Level

The implementation of priority programmes contained in national development plans is essentially undertaken at subnational levels by local administrations and by lead sector ministries at national and subnational levels. The level of decentralization varies by country, and



Box 4.4 Strengthening Poverty-Environment Mainstreaming Capacity in Africa and Asia through South-South Cooperation

PEI supported a cross-regional South-South exchange in 2011, centred on Rwanda's increased emphasis on private sector development as an engine of sustainable economic development. Rwandan officials visited three Asia-Pacific countries—Lao PDR, Nepal and Thailand—to learn about their poverty-environment mainstreaming experiences and to present their own achievements. This South-South exchange introduced Rwanda to the positioning of PEI Asia-Pacific programmes within planning and investment departments—excellent entry points to subnational planning for poverty-environment outcomes.

The Lao PDR experiences were of particular interest to Rwanda. Government officials and national PEI teams exchanged expertise on local development planning, sustainably managing private and public investments, and greening budgeting processes.

Rwanda shared its experiences on how its public environmental

expenditure review (PEER), environmental fiscal reform, and valuation of integrated ecosystem services and poverty-environment indicators have each helped make a case for the creation of a sustainable financing mechanism for environmental sustainability and climate resilience—i.e. FONERWA, the National Climate and Environment Fund.

The establishment of this fund provided some useful insights to Lao PDR in setting up its financial mechanisms on monitoring and evaluating the social and environmental impacts of investments—an effort that is now conducted by the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The Rwandan experience of economic valuation of water services also informed work on the valuation of land use changes in Lao PDR's Oudomxay province.

Nepal benefited from Rwanda's PEER experience. The exchange fostered support for Nepa-

lese government officials engaged in pioneering work on climate change expenditure reviews and climate change budgeting; this now serves as a prototype in scaling-up climate public expenditure and institutional reviews (CPEIRs) in the region. Furthermore, Rwanda's economic valuation work stimulated new ideas on mainstreaming that have since been taken up in planning processes. In 2013, the National Planning Commission of Nepal looked into access to and availability of water as one of the environmental causes of displacement and has allocated \$2.5 million to address the problem in some of the districts suffering from water shortage.

Thailand learned from Rwanda's experience in advocacy and outreach, particularly in the way the PEI Rwanda team successfully secured the engagement of high-ranking government officials in its poverty-environment project.

Source: PEI Africa and PEI Asia-Pacific.

can influence the effective translation of the national development plan to district and other subnational plans and sector workplans. Also, institutional, legal and financial bottlenecks can undermine effective implementation of national and sector policies at the local level.

The conversion of national sector policies into local policies requires an effective decentralization process and the active participation of all stakeholders—including civil society, the private sector and local authorities. See chapter 6 for additional guidance.

Quick Reference Checklist:

Mainstreaming into National Planning Processes

Understanding national development planning processes

- Is the national development plan connected to the budget process and likely to drive policy change in the country?
- Has the national development planning process been mapped out and analysed with a view to identifying mainstreaming opportunities?
- Have the linkages with national budgeting and monitoring processes been identified and analysed?
- Have the institutions and actors been identified, and their relationships and mandates determined?
- Have existing policies and plans been assessed to determine linkages to development policy and planning processes?

Integrating poverty-environment objectives into national development planning processes

- Has a particular policy and/or plan been selected?
 - ✓ Is the timeline realistic for influencing this policy and/or plan?
- Have mainstreaming tools and information sources been considered and selected?

- Have the institutional drivers been analysed with the aim of identifying the country institution to lead the mainstreaming agenda?
- Have modes of communication been considered in light of the messages and target audience?
- Has a strategy for establishing and building relations and trust been defined?
- Has a cross-sectoral coordination mechanism been identified and put in place?
- Have options for mainstreaming objectives, targets and indicators been formulated?

Identifying opportunities for implementing mainstreamed national development plans

- Have institutional capacity and legislative requirements for enabling implementation been identified?
- Have funding sources been identified?
 - ✓ Public finance sources
 - ✓ Loans/grants from development partners or global funds
 - ✓ Private-public sector partnerships
- Have subnational implementation arrangements been identified?