



---

# Achievements and Lessons Learned

2005–2018

# SUMMARY

---



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

Poverty-Environment  
Initiative



The Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) is a global United Nations effort that supports country-led efforts to mainstream poverty-environment linkages into national development planning. The PEI provides financial and technical assistance to government partners to set up institutional and capacity-strengthening programmes and carry out activities to address the particular poverty-environment context.

First edition. Published 2019.

© 2019 UNDP–UN Environment

Produced by the UNDP–UN Environment Poverty-Environment Initiative

*Writers:* Moa Westman, Regional Adviser for Africa PEI, and David Smith, Manager, Africa PEI, Nairobi, Kenya; guidance and inputs provided by Steve Bass, Senior Associate, International Institute for Environment and Development

*Edited and designed by:* Nita Congress

*Photos (clockwise from upper left):* © Marco Dormino/Mali/UN; © Curt Carnemark/World Bank 1993;

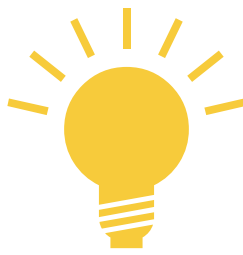
© Glenna Gordon/UNHCR; © Alberto Conti/Malawi FAO.

All dollars referred to in this publication are USD, unless otherwise specified. The term “billion” in this report means a thousand million.

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part and in any form for educational or non-profit purposes without special permission from the copyright holder provided acknowledgement of the source is made. The UNDP–UN Environment Poverty-Environment Facility would appreciate receiving a copy of any publication that uses this publication as a source. No use of this publication may be made for resale or for any other commercial purpose whatsoever without prior permission in writing from UNDP and UN Environment.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNDP and UN Environment. The designation of geographical entities in this report, and the presentation of the material herein, does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the publisher or the participating organizations concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

While reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that the contents of this publication are factually correct and properly referenced, UNDP and UN Environment do not accept responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the contents and shall not be liable for any loss or damage that may be occasioned directly or indirectly through the use of, or reliance on, the contents of this publication, including its translation into languages other than English.



The fundamental principle of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is that development efforts need to embrace economic, social and environmental sustainability equally. The poverty-environment nexus, which focuses on the interlinkages between poverty reduction, sustainable natural resource use and economic growth, is at the heart of this agenda.

The lessons learned from the joint Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme implemented in Africa from 2005 to 2018 highlight several exciting experiences for putting in place new and innovative ways of doing business that enable socially inclusive and green economies.

This report reviews the Initiative's successes and failures, and its responses to these. In so doing, it documents how robust and integrated evidence—along with changes in policy, budgeting, investment and monitoring frameworks and involving a diverse set of actors—has begun to shape the institutions needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The report offers a set of recommendations on how to achieve policy, budget and expenditure coherence for sustainable development using country-owned planning frameworks, new knowledge and tools, and building national capacities. It explores the importance of

building partnerships, committing to joint programming and developing a culture of adaptive management that focuses on generating results; these also contribute to UN reform and development partner effectiveness and coherence.

Following an introductory **Chapter 1** that examines how the concept of poverty-environment mainstreaming evolved over time, **Chapter 2** looks at what results were (or were not) achieved and how (or how not), barriers faced and lessons learned.

- It highlights PEI Africa's rich experience in integrating climate change and ecosystem values as these link to poverty reduction in national, sector and local planning systems.

Figure 0.1

## PEI Africa tackles the SDGs



- It shows how increased investments in climate, biodiversity and ecosystem management that decouple economic growth from environmental degradation and social injustice can be promoted.
- It points to avenues for strengthening poor women and men's climate resilience, food security and ownership and control over natural resources.

The experiences, barriers faced and strategies deployed to overcome these provides useful lessons learned for the achievement of several SDG targets.

**Chapter 3** looks at which approaches, tools and tactics for poverty-environment mainstreaming worked and which did not work. It also presents an in-depth exploration of the project management innovations PEI Africa employed.

- It emphasizes the usefulness of integrated economic, social and environmental assessments, tools and guidelines and inclusive research that engages relevant stakeholders for generating change.
- It focuses on the importance of ownership, motivation and mutual respect from the bottom to the top across government, UN agencies and development partners for sustained success of sustainable development efforts.

The report concludes in **Chapter 4** with an outlook for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead in implementing the SDGs and UN reform. It points out the importance of Goal 17 in

ensuring synergies across the SDGs and preventing progress on one goal from negatively affecting progress on another.

By focusing on the systemic issues around policy coherence, integrated data and monitoring and capacity building for adopting integrated approaches that balance and mitigate trade-offs among the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development, PEI Africa and its government partners can offer six recommendations towards meeting Goal 17 and **shaping the institutions necessary to achieve the SDGs:**

1. **Government, development actors and researchers should aim at incorporating and generating integrated evidence in national information and analysis frameworks.** This will help to build national capacities to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable integrated data for use in policymaking.
2. **Statistical agencies, governments and development partners need to adopt a more holistic approach to monitoring and statistics.** This can be achieved by strengthening the partnerships between statistics bureaus and key user institutions such as ministries of environment. Efforts to integrate environmental sustainability into multidimensional poverty measurements need to be up-scaled.
3. **Reform institutions and ensure a conducive political-economy.** Institutional context analysis should be conducted to identify vertical and horizontal policy and budget coherence gaps, trickle-down barriers, cross-sector trade-offs and actions to address these. Ministries of planning

and finance should take the lead in sustainable development across sectors and districts and put in place better incentive structures for coordination to break down sector silos.

4. **Modify existing public decision-making tools and approaches to respond to sustainable development.** Enable existing government planning, budgeting and institutional coordination processes to better manage the three dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated manner. Practical tools and methods for accomplishing this—including planning checklists, sector focal points, budget guidelines—exist and should be further used.
5. **Ensure that sustainable development interventions are prioritized during budget shortfalls.** Budget codes that track budgets and expenditures on poverty, gender, health, environment and climate can help improve monitoring and justify the need for higher investments in sustainable development. Linking sustainable development policy objectives to the budget by strengthening planning and budgeting coordination mechanisms can ensure that such objectives are prioritized and costed.
6. **Tap private sector funding.** Sustainable development fiscal reform that incentivizes the private sector to invest in activities consistent with sustainable development goals can be one avenue to ensure needed financial resources and partnerships for the SDGs.

As one of the first robust joint UN projects, the lessons learned from the way in which PEI was managed and designed offer relevant recommendations for development projects and ongoing UN reform. Three recommendations are particularly

applicable to the **UN reform** agenda drawn from PEI Africa experience regarding systems, leadership and culture:

- 1. Committing to and adopting joint programming.** Focusing on the strategic benefits of joint programming—without letting operational difficulties detract from these benefits—is important. “UN rather than agency” needs to become the mindset with an emphasis on results.
- 2. Relying on adaptive management and drawing on a culture of results-based management.** Rigorous monitoring, learning and adapting are important, as is being honest about what is not working and promptly addressing issues to improve results. Admitting failure, looking for root causes, focusing on learning and then adapting is the recommended approach.
- 3. Building partnerships.** In countries where official development assistance is a significant factor, coordinated UN donor support to governments for SDG implementation will generate substantially better results. The UN can bring government and donors together and take the lead in drawing up a joint Agenda 2030 implementation support plan.







European Union



Sweden  
Sverige



GOBIERNO  
DE ESPAÑA

MINISTERIO  
DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES  
Y DE COOPERACIÓN



cooperación  
española



from the British people



Irish Aid

Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

THE BELGIAN  
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION **.be**



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

**Poverty-Environment  
Initiative**



Poverty-Environment Facility  
P.O. Box 30552 - 00100 Nairobi, Kenya  
Fax: +254 20 762 4525  
E-mail: [facility.unpei@unpei.org](mailto:facility.unpei@unpei.org)  
Website: [www.unpei.org](http://www.unpei.org)