

Evaluation of the Contribution of UNDP to Environmental Management for Poverty Reduction (2004-2009: The Poverty and Environment Nexus)

Country-based Case Studies Terms of Reference

I. Mandate

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has four priority areas in its country activities: democratic governance, poverty reduction, environment and sustainable development, and crisis prevention and recovery. It has been increasingly recognized that the connections among these areas are critical to assuring effective implementation of UNDP programmes and achieving sustainable results. The UNDP Strategic Plan for 2008-2011 (extended to 2013) underlined the need “...to strengthen national capacity to manage the environment in a sustainable manner while ensuring adequate protection of the poor”, including “...expanded access for the poor to fundamental environmental and energy services”. Governance is essential to managing resources and implementing poverty programmes, and concerns about climate change involve crisis responses. The Poverty Environment Nexus (PEN) evaluation is being undertaken to determine progress to date and to provide lessons for future strategies and programming.¹ Its TOR are attached.

The objective of this PEN evaluation is to assess UNDP’s integration of the PEN into its programming at global, regional, and country levels; assess its experiences with the Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) and other programs that integrate poverty and the environment, adaptation to climate change, and other PEN related issues; enhance its performance on positioning PEN issues in the UN system; and broaden the understanding of effective ways to address PEN issues and overcome extant challenges to better integration of poverty reduction and environment management into country programmes. A major element in this evaluation is to understand how results are achieved at the country level, so the country case studies will be a major input into the evaluation.

Given the importance of examining country level outcomes, it was decided to undertake ten country studies by teams of local experts to get a broader view of the country programs.

The countries proposed by UNDP region are (They are yet to be finalized):

¹ This evaluation follows the recent Evaluation of the Role and Contribution of UNDP in Environment and Energy (UNDP Evaluation Office, August 2008), and draws on its results.

- *Africa*, Mali, Rwanda, and Tanzania
- *Asia and Pacific*, Bhutan, Malaysia, and Vietnam
- *Latin America and the Caribbean*, Haiti and Bolivia
- *Arab States*, Morocco
- *Europe and CIS*, Kyrgyzstan

II. Background

Both environmental management and poverty reduction have featured in the thematic areas of UNDP work for decades. The linkages between them have been recognized, as have the challenges of dealing with the complex relations of the poverty-environment nexus. Programmes designed to reduce poverty may pose threats to the environment. Programmes to protect the environment may also cause problems for the poor. And where environmental degradation results from other development policies, it can also aggravate poverty. These challenges facing the PEN are receiving increasing attention. At the same time, it is recognized that sustainable management of the environment and natural resources is critical for poverty reduction. Especially since poor people tend to be highly dependent on the environment for their livelihoods.

Dealing with the PEN requires careful design of programmes in different sectors to find ways to achieve positive benefits for both the environment and poverty alleviation, or effectively mitigate unavoidable negative side effects. This requires effective coordination of policies and assistance at the global and regional levels, which must be translated into effective integration of programmes at the country level. These issues were high on the agenda of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and they received broad support. Following the conference, however, most additional financing for environmental issues was channelled through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).

The recent UNDP evaluation of Environment and Energy found that the GEF has focused primarily on global environmental issues, and as a result, has not placed a high priority on local poverty alleviation. Since UNDP has been one of the primary implementers of GEF projects, it has been influenced by this orientation in order to obtain the GEF funding for projects. The introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2000 increased the focus on certain aspects of poverty and did include the environment as Goal 7, but integration of the PEN was not yet a high priority. Most major donors have been giving more attention to poverty reduction and many aspects of the environment, often addressing aspects of the PEN. However, studies have shown that the conventional economic development financing in their programmes does not generally devote a great deal of attention to the PEN in their efforts to promote economic growth.

Entering the 21st Century, several programmes were launched by highly committed individuals and organizations to focus more attention on the links between poverty and the environment, leading to the Poverty Environment Partnership between UNDP, UNEP, and others, and to the Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI) to coordinate UNDP

and UNEP work by funding programmes at the country level to build local capacity and implement projects that contribute to both alleviating poverty and protecting or improving the environment. This integrated approach tries to improve public policies and management, private sector involvement, information dissemination, and donor support and cooperation. In addition, the Small Grants Programme (SGP), funded by GEF and implemented by UNDP, addresses the PEN in many of its projects.

Many of these new programmes are still in early stages of implementation. PEI projects are underway in about 40 countries, and some countries have become highly active in addressing the PEN. The growing concerns about adapting to climate change, not just mitigation, has also increased attention to the PEN in country and donor programmes since the poor are likely to be most exposed to the adverse affects of climate change and suffer the most. While mainstreaming the environment into poverty reduction programmes has received a lot of attention in global discussions and strategic papers, recent evaluations have indicated only limited success on the ground in achieving results. This has been due to problems in cooperation among various UN agencies and among donors; to structural problems within UNDP; and to limits on country capacity or interest in addressing this issue, which does not always have highly visible short-term results.

The most important level where challenges must be overcome and results achieved is among the poor in developing countries. This is where integrating poverty and the environment in actual projects and programmes has to take place and where results must be obtained on the ground. The bulk of UNDP's work also takes place at the country level. Hence the emphasis on the country studies in this PEN evaluation and the decision to engage local expertise in the studies. Further background information is in the TOR of this evaluation and in the recent Evaluation of Energy and Environment.

III. Approach

The Core Team, consisting of Yolanda Kakabadse (Team Leader), John Shilling and Michael Stocking, and Juha Uitto (Task manager), will conduct the overall reviews and analysis and write the main evaluation report. The Core Team decided that a significant amount of country level analysis about how PEN issues are addressed is necessary for this evaluation, hence the ten country level studies. Given the time and background knowledge constraints, it was also decided that teams of country experts should carry out the country studies, which will be major inputs into the final report.

Members of the Core Team will conduct a pilot workshop with the Tanzania country team (which may do other Africa studies). It will also work with that country team in launching the pilot Tanzania study, review some of the preliminary results on site, and on this basis, decide on further improvements in approach and methodology. Subsequent workshops may be conducted with the other country teams when they are selected.² Or available Core Team members will meet with the other country study teams in order to review the objectives and scope of the country studies; to refine the methodology, which is described in greater detail below; and to discuss the data gathering, analysis, writing

² If other country teams are selected and able to attend the Tanzania workshop, they will be included.

assignment, and timetables. Country teams may be contracted to do more than one country study to gain some economies of scale and consistency in the evaluations.

IV. Objectives and Scope

The first objective of the country studies is to determine what progress has been made at the country level in integrating environmental management into country poverty reduction programmes and in integrating poverty alleviation into environmental programmes. It is broadly recognized at senior policy and research levels that the PEN is central to assuring sustainable development³. A primary focus therefore will be to examine how well these strategic goals are being achieved in countries where UNDP and its partners operate and what role the UNDP country office plays in helping achieve them through programmes like PEI and by integrating PEN into its other programmes and projects. The country studies will examine overall country experiences and examine what activities have succeeded in promoting the PEN, where there are gaps and shortfalls that need to be addressed, and how these challenges could be overcome.

A second objective is to analyze the extent to which the UNDP country office was able to increase the government's capacity and attention to addressing PEN issues, change its mix of proposals to UNDP toward more PEN based activities, and shift its own programmes and budget in that direction. This will take account of the extent to which the current UNDP country programme is shaped by the government's proposals.

The third objective is to focus on the relation of country level UNDP activities to the global and regional inputs from UNDP and other agencies, especially the assistance provided by the regional bureaux at headquarters and the regional service centres. Each country study should consider the relations of the UNDP country programmes with UNEP (through PEI and PEP), with GEF (through environmental projects and SGP), with FAO (through REDD), and other relevant agencies. It should consider both functional coordination and how access to funding from these sources affects UNDP's priorities and application of PEN goals. The country case studies will not undertake project-specific evaluations, although some project examples may be presented to illustrate key findings.

The scope of the country studies is both retrospective and prospective, i.e. taking stock of progress in the past while looking into the future regarding UNDP's role in the field. The country studies will focus on the period since 2004, though relevant earlier activities may be noted. They will focus on a detailed analysis of UNDP country office policies, strategies, and programmes for integrating the principles of sound environmental management into its poverty reduction programmes and for integrating the principles of effective poverty reduction into its environment and energy programmes. The evaluation

³ Sustainable development is a broadly used term. Here we take it to mean that improvements in living standards of all, and especially the poor, are achieved in a way that properly protects, manages, and sustains ecosystems and natural resources so that the conditions for continued development will be maintained indefinitely. The world's expanding population adds challenges to making development sustainable. This also needs to be addressed, though not as a main theme in this report

will also assess the extent to which UNDP regional bureaux at headquarters and the regional centres have contributed to integrating PEN into country-level programmes.

V. Key Issues for the Evaluation

The main country level issues to be addressed are

1. what key PEN issues the country faces;
2. how the government has tried to address them (policies and, programmes);
3. what the UNDP Country Office has done on its own and with the government, other UN agencies, major donors, local and international NGOs, and civil society on these issues;
4. what has been public support for PEN issues; and
5. what has been the progress made, results achieved, and challenges encountered.

The main focus of the work would be point 3, but the other points provide the necessary country background and circumstances to evaluate the PEN related activities of the UNDP country office. In addressing these issues, the country team should consider how and where the country office has addressed poverty and environment issues separately, addressed them jointly, and integrated PEN issues into other projects. The assessment of the separate poverty and environment activities it to determine how that work affects the office's movement toward the PEN, not separate evaluations of these areas. More detailed approach in these areas would include:

PEN Issues Facing the Country: The level, distribution, and change over time of poverty should be reviewed, along with the key environmental challenges facing the country; focusing especially on water; land use and management; agricultural productivity; deforestation; natural resource degradation; biodiversity; energy availability, type, and efficiency; chemical and persistent organic pollutants; threats from climate change; and other relevant issues. This analysis should highlight key PEN issues that should be addressed in the country, the extent to which these are recognized as important, and if/how they are being addressed already. The extent to which threats from natural or civil crises related to PEN issues should also be noted where relevant.

How the Government Addresses PEN Issues: The priority the government has given to PEN issues in the country in legislative, regulatory, and executive activities; the role and institutional capacity of the Ministries of Planning, Environment, and other relevant agencies; the extent of cooperation among ministries addressing PEN issues; and the quality of government staff, training programmes, and work in this area need to be assessed. Any changes in the government's consideration of PEN concerns in recent years should also be noted, along with the major reasons why such changes occurred and its responsiveness to UNDP initiatives in this area.

What the UNDP Country Office Has Done for PEN Issues: The major focus of the country level evaluation will be on the role of the UNDP country office in promoting and implementing PEN policies, programmes, and projects. This will cover how the country

office treats PEN in its own goals and priorities, what work on the PEN issues it has initiated, and how well it is staffed to pursue these issues. The share of environmental expenditures in the country programmes and their allocation should be reviewed. Consideration also should be given to how projects are classified, as many that cover several areas are listed in only one category. Projects that do address PEN issues thus may not be classified as environmental or poverty. The support the country office receives from regional bureaus and regional service centres should also be considered.

The country study will also address how well UNDP country offices communicate PEN priorities to the respective governments; including which ministries and at what level, how government priorities are influenced by UNDP objectives on PEN, how well the country office has been able to encourage the government to make greater efforts on PEN if the government is not initially disposed to do so, and how much government capacity building in this area the country office has tried to do. The relations of the UNDP country office with other UN agencies, especially UNEP, should be considered: in particular work on the PEI if there are PEI projects, and if there are not PEI projects, why not. In addition, the country study should examine what other types of PEN activities the country office undertakes with other UN agencies and how they are initiated and implemented. The relations of the UNDP country office with GEF is also an important factor to be considered to see how GEF priorities and programming affect the country office's priorities in relation to the environment and the design of projects. The study should examine to what extent the country office has tried to incorporate PEN aspects into GEF projects (including those of SGP).

The country study also must address the relations of the UNDP country office with major donors (World Bank, regional development banks, bilateral donors, international NGOs, and private donors) concerning PEN issues. It should assess the extent to which the country office raises these issues in its cooperation with these agencies, and how it, in turn, is affected by their programmes in relation to the PEN. It should address the country office's relations with local environmentally focused NGOs and civil society groups, consider how well it works with these groups, and how it helps disseminate information about how PEN activities help promote sustainable development. Where relevant, the country study also may have to address if and how special interest groups that may oppose PEN programmes are dealt with.

Public Support for PEN: The country study should address to what extent there is public support for PEN activities, how this has evolved, and what major factors have contributed to increasing this interest. It is likely that there will be different levels of support from different groups. It will be important to see how well the poor understand these relationships and are willing to see environmental measures addressed, so long as such initiatives help alleviate poverty. The country study should also try to determine the basis on which the public support is built and the roles that the government and the UNDP country office have played in building public awareness and interest.

Progress, Results, and Challenges: Finally, the country study will have to estimate how much progress has been made in the country to elevate PEN priorities, to undertake more

PEN-friendly projects, and to adapt other activities to address PEN issues. Also, the study should assess what the results of PEN-related projects, programmes, and non-programmatic activities have been thus far. The role of the UNDP country office and regional service centre in this progress should be assessed; and the elements that contribute to success should be identified and described as lessons that could be applied elsewhere. The challenges that remain should be identified, and new approaches or different incentives that could further progress should be recommended.

VI. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The country studies will take into account the standard criteria for objectives-based evaluations, i.e., relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The country approach will be organized to focus on a specific set of evaluation questions presented below to address these criteria. The questions are intended to give a more precise and accessible form to the evaluation criteria and to articulate the key issues of concern to stakeholders, thus optimizing the focus and utility of the country studies.

- Relevance and UNDP's value added: the country study should consider how integrating PEN issues into the UNDP country programme helps achieve UNDP's overall country goals, takes advantage of its strengths relative to other UN agencies and aid donors, and builds on relevant synergies. The study will also assess UNDP's strategic positioning vis-à-vis national needs regarding PEN issues. The country study will examine the effects of the changing global environmental and poverty debate, as well as the evolving international concerns and priorities. This should also highlight what can be learned from the experiences of UNDP and other agencies who address PEN issues.
- Effectiveness: the country study should consider what have been the results of the country PEI programmes (where applicable) on both poverty alleviation and environmental protection; the success of mainstreaming PEN into other UNDP and government programmes, including application of Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) and including PEN issues in PRSPs; the effects of other programmes, such as GEF, UN-REDD, climate change adaptation, and energy access for the poor, on efforts to pursue PEN programmes; and the impediments to more effective implementation of PEN programmes. Note that these activities can be either thematic, in terms of adjusting policies and approaches, or programmatic, in terms of projects on the ground. The effectiveness of support from regional centres and of government capacity building should also be addressed. Since effectiveness is more qualitative than quantitative, care will have to be applied in the analysis and presentation of these elements to describe the outcomes, how UNDP actions helped achieve them, and lessons to be learned about how to improve effectiveness.
- Efficiency, the country study should consider how efficient the country office approaches to applying PEN have been in terms of results in relation to the allocation of resources. The efficiency of financial, staff, and regional office

resources applied to PEN activities should all be considered and their relative importance assessed. The effects of the PEN programmes on overall improvements in sustainable development should be considered to the extent possible, in terms of making significant shifts in a country's development path to a more sustainable one at a reasonable cost. Since quantitative indicators of the PEN results are hard to come by, these estimates will be approximate. And it would be useful to recommend appropriate indicators for future work.

- Sustainability. The country study should consider how sustainable the PEN activities are in terms of their own continuity and of their contribution to increasing the attention devoted to sustainable development in the country. This would include the extent to which PEN is being integrated into UNDP and other UN country assistance and planning frameworks and budget allocations, the advice and capacity development provided for decision-making, and the continuation of necessary support in the UNDP country office and regional service centres. Impediments to this mainstreaming should also be reported.

VII. Methodology

These will be objectives-based country studies focusing on progress to date in UNDP's country strategies and programmes and whether they are likely to achieve stated objectives. The country studies will comprise broad research, data collection and analysis of UNDP country activities and contributions of the UNDP regional centres.

Basic data about UNDP and related agency programmes in the country will be provided, along with access to country reviews, evaluations, etc. from UN sources. The country team will need to review other relevant documents prior to visiting the country and collect additional material in country. Its research in country will involve interviews with relevant managers and staff in UNDP and other UN agencies, government officials, civil society leaders, and other experts. A list of core indicators on poverty, the environment and how they are integrated will be provided prior to the pilot workshop. The team will conduct site visits to gauge results and the reactions of those involved in or affected by PEN related activities.

The country report should summarize the key findings of the country study, conclusions about progress made and challenges that remain to be addressed, and the recommendations derived from the study about how to overcome the challenges and improve progress on PEN issues in the future.

VIII. Expected Output and Timeframe

The main output of each country study will be a report of about 25 pages, excluding the annexes, covering the topics noted above, with primary focus on item 3 and the recommendations. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study should be presented in an Executive Summary of about 3 pages.

The ten country studies will provide essential material for the main evaluation report, and their results will be properly summarized in the overall analysis. In addition, each

country study will be attached as an appendix to the main report in its final form with full recognition of the authors.

The initial full draft of each country report should be delivered two months after the contract is signed and the work begins. The core team will review all the submitted drafts and make recommendations for revisions to be done by the country team, and a core team member may visit some of the teams and countries being studied after the first draft to validate results and examine the situation in relation to the findings and recommendations. The overall time frame for submitting the final draft would be about 4 months. Note that the time from for the overall evaluation has been extended from that shown in the TOR.

IX. Country Study Team

Each country team should be composed of two or three professional with expertise in the key areas related to poverty and the environment in relation to overall development. They do not need to be from the country being studied, but should have considerable experience in that country and capacity to contact and interview the key people involved. They should be able to speak the official language of the country, and they, or at least the primary writer, should be able to write clearly in English.

It would be preferable for a team of consultants to be able to do country studies in two or three countries in a region to gain economies of scale and consistency in approach. In such cases, the time frame would be extended somewhat.

X. Relation to Overall Structure

The country study teams will report to the Team Leader for the PEN evaluation, and work with Core Team members as appropriate. The Task Manager from UNDP will provide assistance as needed in contacts with the UNDP offices and others as appropriate. The review structure of the overall evaluation is described in the TOR. The evaluation audience will include the UNDP executive board; the management; the headquarters bureaus; regional centres; and country offices involved in policy making, programming and implementing programmes; and the partner countries. The final report will be made public, including the country appendices. UNDP management and staff are expected to derive lessons from the evaluation, which should improve performance in the future.