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# Achievements and Lessons Learned

2005–2018

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Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

Poverty-Environment  
Initiative





Poverty-Environment  
Initiative **Africa:**

# **Achievements and Lessons Learned**

2005–2018

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.

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# Summary

**T**he 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.
- 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.

Figure 0.1

### PEI Africa tackles the SDGs





- 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.

# 1

# Report **purpose** and **context**

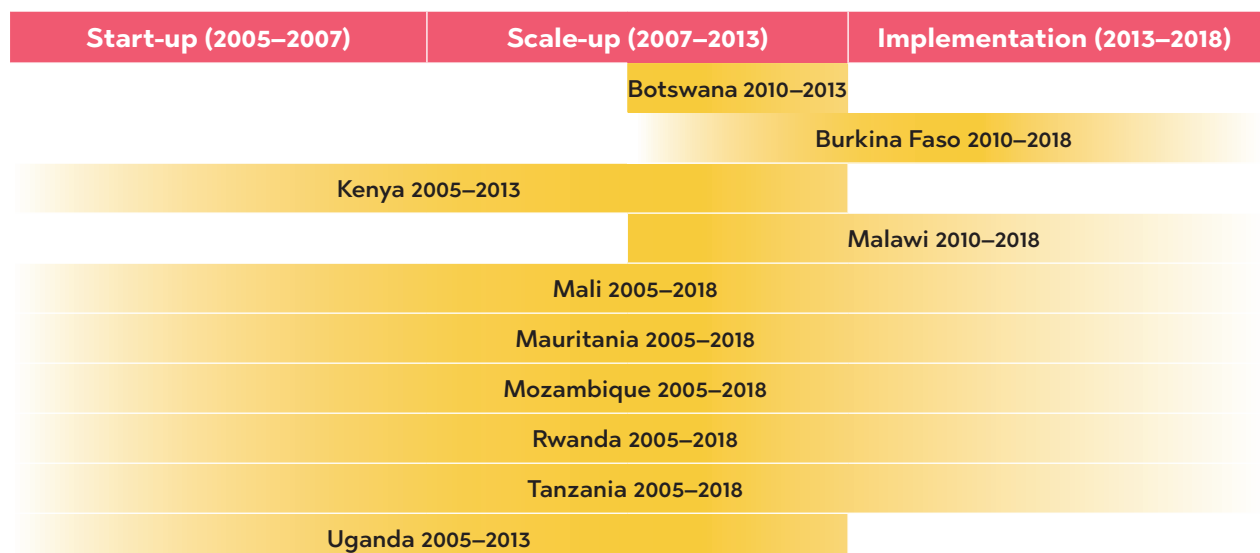
## 1.1 Why this report?

The Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) operated across 10 countries in Africa between 2005 and June 2018 (Figure 1.1). The work that African governments and the Initiative have done together offers many lessons on how to achieve sustainable development and highlights many elements that need to be put in place to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reform of United Nations (UN) development and management.



The aim of this report is to explore what the Initiative has achieved in Africa and pull together the main lessons learned. There is much to share with development professionals, UN colleagues and policymakers to scale up, and speed up, achievement of the SDGs and UN reform.

Figure 1.1



### PEI Africa country projects by project phase



The report applies a critical lens to review what PEI Africa and its government partners have achieved with regard to the PEI project indicators centred on bringing a poverty-environment focus to government policy, monitoring, budget and implementation frameworks. It specifically looks at the following:

- How has the concept of poverty-environment mainstreaming evolved over time? ([Section 1.2](#))
- What results were—and were not—achieved, and how? ([Chapter 2](#))
- Which approaches, tools and tactics for poverty-environment mainstreaming worked, and which did not work? ([Chapter 3](#))
- What barriers were faced, and how could these be overcome? ()
- What are the lessons learned from PEI experiences in Africa? ()

The report concludes ([Chapter 4](#)) with an outlook on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for implementing the SDGs and UN reform as well as a backward-looking review of relevant lessons of failure.

The report assumes that just as much—and sometimes more—can be learned from failure as from success. Case studies, examples and illustrations are provided throughout that document strategies and approaches that worked () as well as those that did not ()

## 1.2 How poverty-environment mainstreaming has evolved

The linkages between poverty and environment generally reflect the contribution of sustainable environmental and natural resource management to social and economic development outcomes. Addressing them draws on concepts of pro-poor environmental sustainability, including sustainable management of natural resources; mitigation of and adaptation to climate change; a focus on poverty reduction and equity, especially for marginalized groups such as women and indigenous peoples; working towards inclusive green growth (UNDP, 2010); as well as security, resilience and migration.

**Mainstreaming is one strategy used to address poverty-environment linkages.** Poverty-environment mainstreaming is a sustained iterative process of institutional change to integrate poverty-environment linkages into policy and planning, budgeting and implementation processes at national, subnational and sector levels.

## 1.2.1 The facts

The concept of poverty–environment mainstreaming has evolved over time in line with lessons learned from PEI implementation in Africa. During PEI start-up and its early scale-up, it was primarily understood as **mainstreaming the environment into poverty reduction and broader national development strategies**. Emphasis was placed on the inclusion of environmental sustainability objectives in national planning and budgeting processes (Bass and Renard, 2009; PEI, 2007; PEI, 2009).

From 2009 onwards, poverty–environment mainstreaming began to be referred to as an **iterative process of integrating poverty–environment linkages into policymaking, budgeting and implementation processes at the national, subnational and sector levels** (PEI, 2015). This signalled a shift towards integrating poverty and environment–linked objectives in policies, budgets and—importantly—implementation processes. This new focus on implementation brought with it a recognition of poverty–environment mainstreaming as a multi-year, multi-stakeholder effort involving government, non-government and development actors.

Since 2013, stronger references to poverty and equity for marginalized groups—including women and indigenous groups—became more prominent in definitions of poverty–environment linkages and mainstreaming (PEI, 2015; UNDP and UNEP, 2013). This was accompanied by global and regional gender and social inclusion strategies for poverty–environment mainstreaming (Box 1.1).

### Box 1.1

#### Mainstreaming gender–environment

**A**fter a midterm evaluation noted the lack of a gender focus in its work, PEI Africa developed and adopted a Regional Gender Strategy in 2014.

To implement the strategy, capacity building for country teams and national implementing partners was undertaken, aimed at integrating gender considerations into country-level annual work plans, budgets and technical outputs. Detailed gender–environment studies were also conducted in several countries, as were— together with UN Women—regional analyses on gender and agriculture, climate and energy.

As a result of these efforts, 36 country policies and monitoring frameworks integrated environment–gender objectives or targets. Beyond this country-level impact, the research helped influence the African Development Bank to consider issues of gender and climate-resilient agriculture in drafting its Feed Africa strategy, the Human Rights Council in drafting a UN Resolution on Human Rights and Climate Change (A/HRC/RES/38/4, 2018) and the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) to call for more gender-responsive and environmentally sustainable energy policies (AMCEN Libreville Outcome Document 2017).

## 1.2.2 Barriers



Poverty-environment mainstreaming has several of the characteristics of **“wicked” problems** (Australian Public Sector Commission, 2007). For example, it is non-linear, requires actions across government, has several connected elements with many interdependencies and multiple causes, and becomes more demanding as progress is made.



At times, **senior management were reluctant to accept** the long-term nature of poverty-environment mainstreaming, the great effort it required and the need for substantive engagement in national development planning processes over several years to achieve results. On the UN Environment side, this partly reflected the agency’s normative approach, which was not appropriate to generate results in country projects—a point cogently made by a PEI Africa donor country ambassador: “UNEP cannot expect to pick up its normative box and put it down in a country and generate impact.”

## 1.2.3 Lessons learned



**Lesson 1: Addressing the links between development and environment challenges is a complex process that requires institutional reforms and a conducive political-economy context.** Driving the evolution of the poverty-environment mainstreaming concept was a growing realization that it entails substantive institutional changes and is a political-economy as well as a technical exercise, and could take up to 15–20 years to complete successfully (Bass and Renard, 2009). Addressing development and environment challenges and the linkages between them is a complex process that requires working across government at national and subnational levels. It also becomes more demanding as progress is made and work is to be up-scaled across districts and sectors.



**Lesson 2: Attention must be devoted to ensuring that the different dimensions of sustainable development (social, environment and economics) are equally emphasized in mainstreaming efforts.** In some cases, particularly in its earlier phases, PEI Africa focused mainly on integration of environmental and natural resource sustainability into national, subnational and sector planning and budget processes. Nevertheless, the social dimension, poverty and gender equality have been at the centre of implementation of certain key activities, and various studies and assessments have clearly demonstrated how improved environmental sustainability can reduce poverty in both income and multidimensional terms.

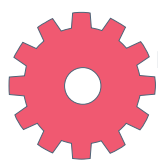
# 2

## What PEI Africa achieved

**M**ainstreaming poverty-environment objectives into the core development policies and activities of government is a demanding process of policy and institutional change. To undertake this task, PEI Africa followed a programmatic approach comprised of three main components (Figure 2.1). PEI's application of this programmatic approach to poverty-environment mainstreaming has yielded both robust results and important lessons learned across the national, subnational and sector levels, as delineated in this chapter.

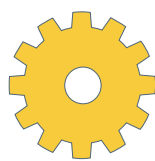
Figure 2.1

### The PEI programmatic approach



#### Finding the entry points and making the case

- Conduct preliminary assessments (e.g. poverty, social and environmental assessments)
- Raise awareness and build partnerships (e.g. implement communication strategies)
- Develop country-specific evidence (e.g. economic and poverty analysis of sustainable environment and natural resource management)
- Strengthen institutional capacities of stakeholders and coordination mechanisms



#### Mainstreaming in national planning and budgeting processes

- Inform and influence national and sector planning and monitoring working groups
- Conduct expenditure reviews and prepare budget guidance notes
- Conduct strategic environmental assessment/poverty and social impact analysis of policies and plans
- Influence national monitoring systems (e.g. indicators and data collection and analysis)
- Strengthen institutional capacities of stakeholders and coordination mechanisms



#### Mainstreaming into sectoral and subnational planning and budgeting, monitoring and private investment

- Conduct strategic environmental assessment/poverty and social impact analysis/cost-benefit analysis of sector policies and plans
- Conduct integrated ecosystem assessments and climate change adaptation planning
- Influence monitoring systems (e.g. indicators and data collection and analysis)
- Influence budgets and financing options (economic instruments, expenditure reviews)
- Strengthen institutional capacities of stakeholders and coordination mechanisms

## 2.1 Coherent policies for sustainable development: national level

See [Case Study 2.1](#) and [Case Study 2.2](#).

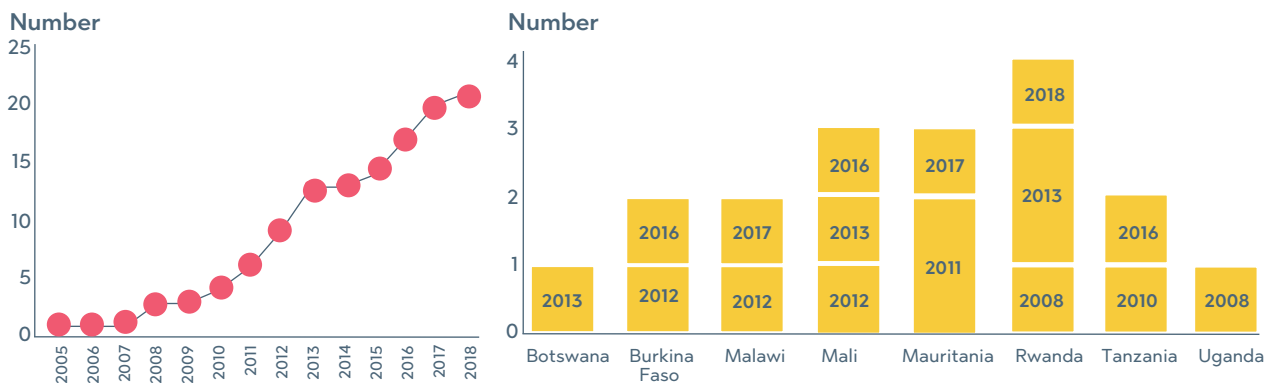
National development plans, coordinated by ministries of planning or their equivalents, are usually the core macroeconomic planning instruments in Africa. The plans reflect government's priority political-economy development objectives and set macro-level targets for a range of economic and other social indicators. They are the main reference document for prioritizing strategies, programmes and projects for inclusion in the national public budget. Influencing national development plans is hence of critical importance for any mainstreaming project, as they guide broader public policy, budget and investment processes across sectors and districts.

### 2.1.1 The facts

In all countries where PEI Africa has worked (apart from **Kenya**), the project has successfully influenced national policies and development plans to include objectives related to poverty-environment (Figure 2.2). In those countries where PEI has worked since 2005, the Initiative has influenced two to three generations of development plans; these second- and third-generation plans reflect a deepening, more substantive integration of poverty-environment issues across development plans and including into monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The project has worked with the partner governments to make significant strides towards coherence and coordination of environmental and natural resource sustainability and poverty-linked issues.

Figure 2.2

**Number of national development plans with poverty-environment objectives in PEI Africa over time and by country and year**





## Case Study 2.1

 Working solely through environment ministries using traditional environmental assessments is not enough

**D**uring PEI's initial years, the project did not succeed in systematically influencing national development plans, as is evident from the data displayed in Figure 2.2. During this time, the project was primarily implemented by and through ministries of environment, which did not have the capacity to substantially influence the development planning process which is typically led by ministries of planning and finance.

PEI and the ministries of environment were using terminology and tools to make the case for environmental mainstreaming that did not resonate with planning and finance ministries. The tools PEI was relying on were various types of environmental assessments, which often emphasized the need for environmental protection rather than highlighting the links between sustainable environment and natural resource use, economic development and poverty reduction.

In some cases, environment ministries were more inward than outward looking, prioritizing work with the environmental community rather than promoting efforts to influence national and sectoral development plans. One of the underlying drivers here was the low public budget allocations to environment

ministries. Ironically, this resulted in ministries of environment focusing more on raising resources from environmental funds such as the Global Environment Facility rather than working strategically to try to increase public resource allocations for environmental sustainability work across sectors.

In response to these challenges, PEI began to focus more on building the institutional capacity of environment ministries to influence the national planning process. PEI, together with the ministries of environment, undertook a set of new studies that looked at the economic and poverty implications of unsustainable natural resource use and correlated this to current public environmental expenditure levels. Another tactic employed was to bring in the ministries of planning and finance as key implementing partners to more strategically position the Initiative and advance poverty-environment mainstreaming across government.

Once these tactics were rolled out—from 2010 and onwards—PEI Africa was much more successful in systematically integrating poverty-environment objectives into national development plans.

**Influencing national development plans is of critical importance for any mainstreaming project.**

**Case Study 2.2****Using economic evidence and forging stronger partnerships between the environment and finance ministries in Burkina Faso**

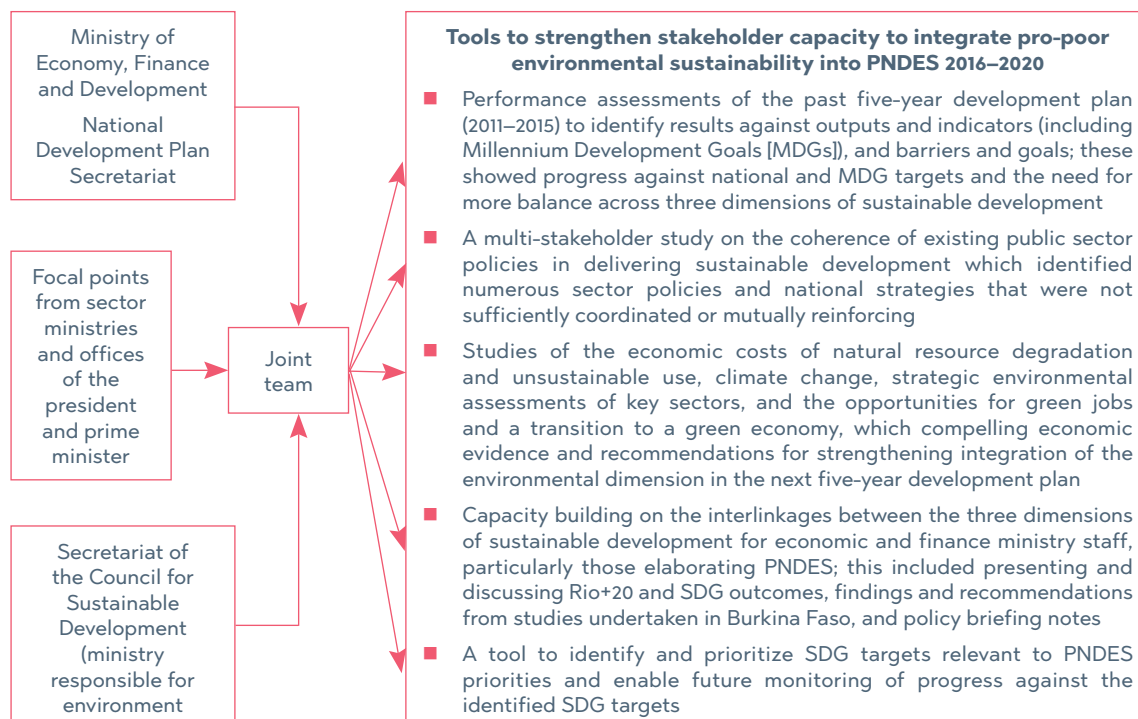
**B**urkina Faso's Five-Year Development Plan for Economic and Social Development (PNDES 2016–2020) effectively integrates pro-poor environmental sustainability. This is because the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Development worked together with the Ministry of Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change to make it so.

PEI studies showing the economic costs of natural resource degradation and climate change, combined with capacity building and planning tools developed in part by PEI to better integrate pro-poor environmental sustainability across top development priorities, were used to establish development priorities, including SDG objectives (see figure below).

The plan envisions Burkina Faso becoming “a democratic, unified and united nation, transforming the structure of its economy and achieving a strong and inclusive growth, through patterns of sustainable consumption and

production” with an objective to “reverse the trend of environmental degradation and ensure sustainable management of natural resources.” The plan puts a strong cross-cutting emphasis on “strengthening environmental governance and integration of the green economy in development policies towards achieving sustainable development.”

Applying an integrated cross-sectoral approach to sustainable development at the national level, coupled with high-level political leadership, is key. “The success of [environmental] mainstreaming is due to the good collaboration between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Finance, as well as the close collaboration with other key sector ministries such as agriculture and livestock,” explained the Minister for Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change, at a May 2016 speech at the United Nations Environment Assembly.



## 2.1.2 Barriers

**Environment ministries alone are not the most effective partner** for a project that aims to mainstream poverty–environment issues in national planning processes. This is due to their focus, as well as to capacity challenges in applying tools relevant to planning and finance ministries. Sector ministries alone can also be challenging partners, given their narrower focus on their own sector targets and resource needs.



## 2.1.3 Lessons learned

**Lesson 3: Making ministries of finance and planning poverty–environment champions is key to successful mainstreaming.** To successfully integrate poverty–environment objectives into national development plans, it is crucial to work with and through ministries of planning and finance rather than only ministries of environment. This realization triggered a shift from PEI being located within the ministry of environment to the ministry of planning and finance. This approach has accelerated and strengthened the inclusion of sustainability objectives in national development plans and strengthened the environmental sector itself—an essential foundation for sustainable development.



## 2.2 Coherent policies for sustainable development: subnational level

It is at the subnational and local levels that national development and sector plans are turned from blueprints into action. Local priorities and actions are usually set in district development plans, which should be guided by the national development plans. The objective of such “vertical integration” is to make sure there is consistency between national development priorities and implementation plans at subnational levels.

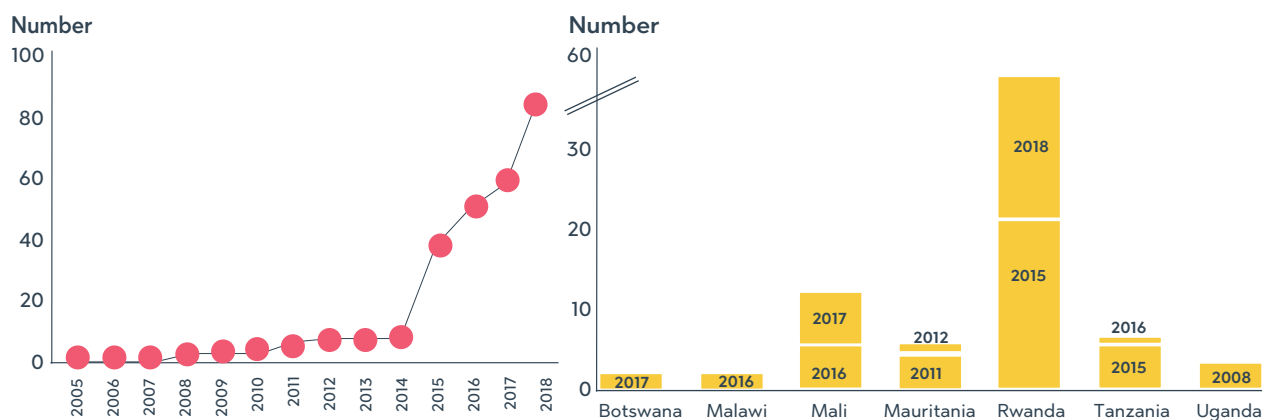
See [Case Study 2.3](#) and [Case Study 2.4](#).

### 2.2.1 The facts

Across the PEI Africa portfolio, only a few countries have included a targeted focus on district-level work (Figure 2.3). Most notably, PEI has influenced two rounds of 30 district development plans in **Rwanda** and 11 local economic, social and cultural five-year development plans in **Mali** to include poverty–environment objectives. In **Tanzania**, PEI has taken a broad approach to subnational work, targeting direct interventions, district policies and budgets as well as a regional investment framework.

Figure 2.3

### Number of subnational plans with poverty-environment objectives in PEI countries over time and by country and year



#### Case Study 2.3

### PEI did not fully grasp decentralization barriers and the limited trickle-down effects between national and subnational policies

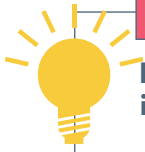
At the outset of PEI Africa, it was assumed there would be a trickle-down effect between national and subnational policies. However, in most countries, the trickle-down effect was limited, reflecting a lack of tools to ensure policy coherence and incomplete decentralization processes. The gap between assumption and reality meant that PEI did not invest enough time and resources to influence work at the district level.

Malawi offers an example of the impact of incomplete decentralization processes. PEI, with a view towards influencing district development plans, partnered with the Environmental Affairs Department and worked to include objectives related to poverty-environment in the 2013 District Environment Management Guidelines issued at the national level. PEI also supported district-level trainings on their use. These activities were aimed at ensuring that poverty-environment linkages were reflected in the district social economic profiles and state of the environment reports that serve as the background documents in preparing district development plans.

As of 2018, however, only two district development plans had been approved in Malawi. While both included poverty-environment objectives (such as the promotion of natural resource-based tourism to generate incomes for citizens), the time and resources PEI Malawi devoted to influencing district-level processes was disproportionately greater than the results thus far achieved.

The delay in developing district development plans is primarily related to a lack of public funds to support these processes. While this limiting factor is beyond the control of the PEI project, a more detailed institutional context analysis could have identified this risk and informed the project design to focus on other avenues in order to influence district actions.

Moreover, the fact that only 1 per cent of the country's environment and climate funds was allocated to the districts (Ministry of Finance, 2014) indicates a need to first strengthen broader decentralization processes before aiming at more specific poverty-environment mainstreaming efforts.



## Case Study 2.4

## Rwanda links national development plan with community-based interventions up-scaled through district policies

To transform the poverty-environment aspirations of Rwanda's national development plan into action on the ground, the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) wanted to showcase the benefits of an integrated approach to development. Together with PEI and a set of sector ministries, it began this work in the Gicumbi district.

Using a participatory planning process, the partners worked with Gicumbi district staff and members of the Rubaya community to identify development aspirations, challenges and opportunities. Together, they formulated an integrated local development initiative—the Green Village project—centred on improved environmental management and strengthening community governance and organizational capacities. To help the community run the green village, district authorities received technical support from sector agencies, such as agricultural extension workers and water ministry engineers.

The Green Village project was very successful, with tangible environmental gains and net economic benefits including poverty reduction. In Rwanda's green villages, environmentally sustainable solutions are reducing soil erosion and deforestation and thereby contributing to improved agricultural productivity. The installation of biogas and improved access to water has saved households—particularly women and girls—some five hours a day, freeing up time for productive activities. Cost-benefit analysis has demonstrated that having one green village in each of Rwanda's 30 districts would generate a net present value of about \$21 million and reduce extreme poverty nationally by about 0.7 per cent (Maradan, 2017).

To this end, REMA has worked with the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Economy and Finance to include the establishment of at least one green village per district in the country's 30 district development plans as a means of implementing poverty-environment approaches. Indicators and a monitoring and evaluation framework to track implementation and impact have been put in place, and the level of progress on implementation is part of the district mayors' performance contracts. To facilitate replication, PEI, the Ministry of Local Government and REMA have developed a toolkit guiding the establishment of green villages.

To date, \$61 million has been allocated to green village replication through district development plans, and some 44 green villages have so far been established, benefiting over 2,000 households.

The following factors contributed to the success of the Rubaya demonstration project:

- It was conceptualized within the framework of the national development plan.
- It brought several sectors and the local community together to design and implement the project.
- Concrete evidence on the benefits of integrated environmental solutions for people, planet and prosperity could be demonstrated.
- Learnings and recommendations were integrated into the district development planning process, and a toolkit for replication produced.
- Multi-stakeholder efforts were made to mobilize resources for green village replication.

## 2.2.2 Barriers



A **lack of vertical policy coherence** reduces the catalytic effect of mainstreaming poverty-environment objectives into national and sector-level plans. Public policy gaps result when national policies are not implemented at the district level through district policies. In the African context, these gaps are often related to incomplete decentralization processes.



**Capacity gaps for development planning and poverty-environment mainstreaming at subnational levels** are substantive in most countries where PEI Africa operates. The capacity to implement development plans, including through quality projects, is frequently inadequate.



**Limited financial resources allocated to the subnational level** is a challenge for the implementation of poverty-environment actions. Additionally, funds allocated to districts may be disbursed by the finance ministry late in the fiscal year, making it more difficult for districts to use the resources before the end of the fiscal year.



The success of the Rubaya case study notwithstanding, **on-the-ground demonstration projects do not always influence district policies or catalyse further investment** in poverty-environment action on the ground. PEI demonstration projects in several countries, including Mozambique and Mauritania, had no significant impact on district policy processes and limited or no replication of their approaches and results.

## 2.2.3 Lessons learned



**Lesson 4: It cannot be assumed that there will be a trickle-down effect between national and subnational policies.** Institutional contextual analysis is needed to clearly identify vertical and horizontal policy and budget coherence gaps and trickle-down barriers—as well as to articulate actions to inform project design when aiming to generate change through the inclusion of poverty-environment objectives in policies and budgets. In the context of Agenda 2030, comprehensive capacity-building packages are needed for district planning and budget officers across sectors to enable them to adopt integrated approaches to district development planning and to prepare quality investment proposals.

**Lesson 5: Targeting national guidelines for district planning can be an effective way to influence subnational policies and actions.**

Integrating poverty-environment objectives in central government guidelines that are issued to all districts has proved to be the most realistic option for a small project like PEI to influence the adoption of an integrated approach in local-level development plans and budgets. Once such objectives are integrated in district plans, including accountability mechanisms for their implementation (e.g. in district staff performance contracts) is essential to ensure action. Replication and up-scaling of integrated poverty-environment actions are more likely if (i) real economic, social and environmental benefits can be demonstrated at the household, district and sector levels; and (ii) they can be communicated successfully to public policymakers and donor decision-makers locally and nationally.



**Lesson 6: Small projects like PEI should apply a partnership approach to all district-level work.**

A broad partnership approach that brings together different parts of the government as well as other donor projects is essential for a relatively small project to have an influence at the district level. It is often easier to have an impact at the district level in smaller countries such as Rwanda. To have a meaningful, sustained impact at the district level requires substantive financial resources.



## 2.3 Coherent policies for sustainable development: sector level

It is through sector policies and budgets that national development goals and targets related to environmental and natural resource sustainability and poverty reduction are operationalized. For this reason, it is important to mainstream poverty-environment issues into productive sectors such as agriculture, extractives, fisheries and forestry; this is also referred to as horizontal integration.

See [Case Study 2.5](#), [Case Study 2.6](#) and [Case Study 2.7](#).

### 2.3.1 The facts

Building on the achievements of its initial phase in influencing national development plans, PEI Africa began to systematically focus on sectors and to strengthen government cross-sector coordination mechanisms towards the end of its scale-up phase (2007–2013). The countries and mechanisms in and by which PEI Africa had the most success in influencing sectors are as follows:

- **Mozambique** and **Rwanda**, through the development and application of mainstreaming tools issued by the ministries of planning and finance for application across sectors
- **Malawi**, through deeper engagement in key poverty-environment sectors

Figure 2.4 shows that PEI Africa began to have a more systematic impact at the sector level in some countries around the start of its third phase of the project implementation. This reflects a couple of learnings and challenges. First, it reflects the time lag between a poverty-environment objective being integrated into a national development plan and its uptake in a sector policy/strategic framework. It also reflects a more conscious decision by PEI Africa to strategically focus on influencing

#### Case Study 2.5



### Assuming sectors would integrate poverty-environment objectives into sector plans and strategies once the national development plan included such objectives

**P**EI Africa was not successful in influencing sector-level policies in all countries it worked in, especially in its earlier stages. One reason for this was an initial underlying assumption that poverty-environment objectives at the national level would be implemented through sector and subnational plans. After it became clear that this assumption was incorrect, further challenges emerged in terms of influencing sectors. Notably, it became apparent that proactive, evidence-based engagement was needed. In some countries, the environment ministry did not have sufficient capacity or commitment to engage with sectors in this manner—including because this would mean sharing their budget with sectors such as agriculture:

- Early on, some environment ministries struggled to convince sectors they were not focusing merely on environmental impact assessments, but on sustainability to help achieve sector objectives.
- In one country, the environment agency developed a draft national environmental plan which referred to actions required by each

sector, without any substantive discussion with the sectors.

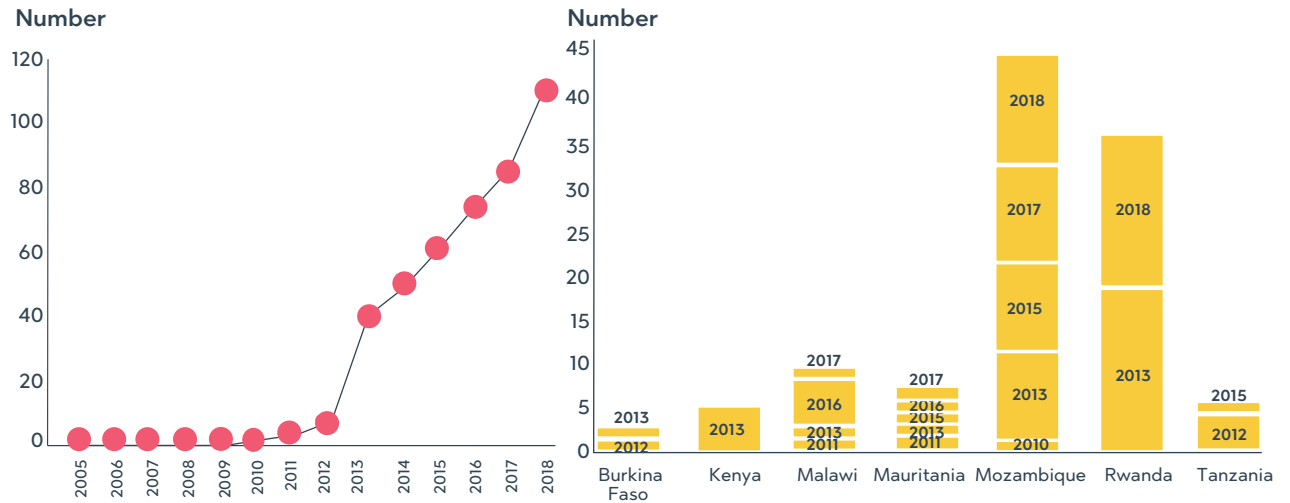
- In another country, the environment ministry carried out an environmental impact assessment of fertilizer use without substantive involvement from the agriculture sector; this resulted in protests from that sector.
- In a third country, a meeting between the environment and sector ministries resulted in commitments from the sectors to work with the environment ministry, but ministry follow-up was inadequate.

These challenges partly reflect a persistence on the part of some environment ministries to act as an implementing agency responsible for all matters related to the environment, rather than functioning as an institution that strategizes, coordinates and regulates environmental and natural resource matters across sectors. Moving the PEI lead agency to planning and finance ministries negated many of these challenges—and sectoral influence subsequently and markedly increased in most countries.



Figure 2.4

**Number of sectoral policies and plans that integrate poverty-environment objectives in PEI countries over time and by country and year**



**Case Study 2.6**

**Institutionalizing environmental checklists and focal points in sector ministries**

In 2011, the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA), together with the Ministry of Economic Planning and Finance, developed a checklist for the environment and climate to inform sector planning and budget processes.

To strengthen the capacity of sector ministries in applying the checklist, REMA and PEI deployed environmental graduates as interns in the sector ministries. The utility of these interns spurred Rwanda’s Ministries of Trade and Industry, Infrastructure, Agriculture and the Auditor-General’s Office, among others, to recruit their own environmental experts to replace the interns at the end of their term of service.

In collaboration with sector environmental experts and key ministry staff, REMA conducts annual sector performance assessments that

analyse the extent to which sectors and districts have integrated issues linked to poverty-environment into their annual plans and budgets. As reflected in the national development plan, poverty-environment objectives have been operationalized through the integration of corresponding elements into two rounds (2013–2018 and 2018–2024) of Rwanda’s 15 sector strategic plans. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture has increased soil conservation efforts and expanded crop varieties in support of local farmers; it is now looking to achieve a more balanced policy on inorganic and organic fertilizer use based on assessment recommendations. The ministry has established an internal working group on environment and climate change to monitor and review progress of the sector’s environmental management plan.

## Case Study 2.7



## National guidelines targeting all sectors and deep engagement in a priority sector

As in many African countries, Malawi's policy formulation processes lacked horizontal integration. This resulted in policies and implementation challenges which were neither thorough, comprehensive nor mutually supportive. To address this deficiency, the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) led the development of a handbook: *The Guide to Executive Decision-Making Handbook*. This handbook is the main reference document for public service senior managers on the government processes and procedures in elaborating a sector or national development policy.

PEI saw the handbook as an excellent entry point for poverty-environment mainstreaming across sectors in Malawi. To this end, PEI worked with the OPC to include a detailed annex, "Guidelines for Integrating Environmental Sustainability and Natural Resource Management in Policy-Making and Planning in Malawi." These guidelines include a 24-question checklist to help policymakers assess the environmental and poverty impacts of various policy options; these questions include the following:

- What are the likely impacts (negative and positive) of the policy option on the environment and natural resource management?
- What are the costs and financial benefits for natural resources and the environment?
- How will the financial benefits be used for improved livelihoods and environmental conservation and management?

- Will the policy affect the gender balance in terms of access, ownership and control over natural resources and benefits realized from them?

The OPC was receptive to the idea of including the annex in the handbook, as PEI had provided strong evidence of the importance of environmental sustainability to poverty reduction across key sectors in Malawi. For example, studies had shown that soil loss was reducing agricultural productivity and that addressing this could lift 1.88 million people out of poverty over a 10-year period (Yaron et al., 2011).

The guidelines have been supported with training modules in the government's curricula for policymakers.

Application of the guidelines has resulted in Malawi's new development strategy—the Third Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS III) 2017–2020—recognizing environment and climate change as a cross-cutting issue to be considered in the strategy's five key priority areas. In 2016, the ministries and departments of wildlife, irrigation, mining and agriculture used the environmental sustainability annex in formulating their respective sector policies. For its part, the OPC reviewed the compliance of its draft forestry, fisheries, climate change and agriculture policies with the environmental sustainability guidelines. These actions have ensured that these sector policies are in line with national development strategies and balance the environmental, social and economic aspects of development.

## Case Study 2.7

**National guidelines targeting all sectors and deep engagement in a priority sector (continued)**

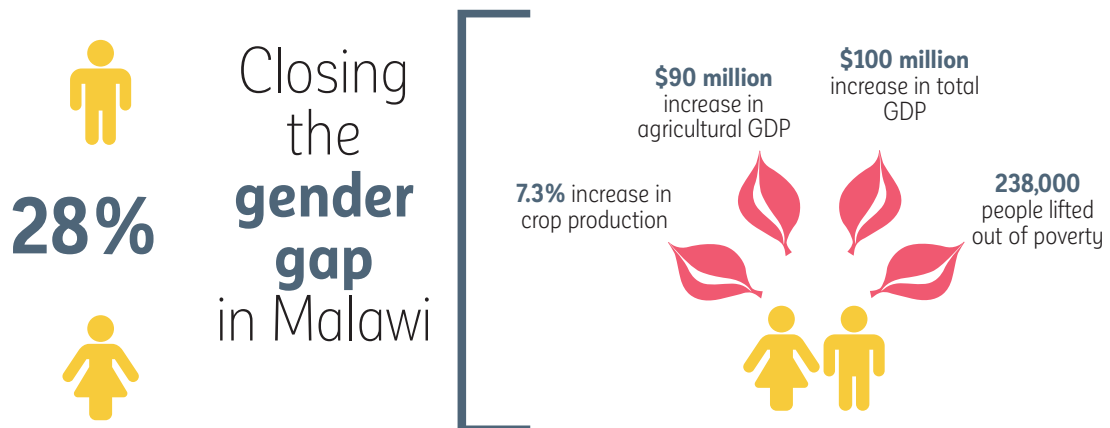
Because agriculture is the most important poverty-environment sector in Malawi, the PEI team, together with other UN partners, carried out additional studies targeting agriculture. These looked at soil loss and the gender gap in agricultural productivity, demonstrating that productivity in the sector could be improved by addressing these issues.

- The soil loss assessment conducted in 2016 by PEI and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations found that Malawi's soil loss had increased from 20 to 29 tonnes/hectare between 1992 and 2016, driven by unsustainable land use practices (PEI and FAO, 2016).
- Analysis of the gender gap in Malawi's agriculture sector, conducted by PEI, UN Women and the World Bank, found that closing the gender gap in agricultural productivity could increase crop production by 7.3 per cent, increase gross domestic

product (GDP) by \$100 million and lift 238,000 people out of poverty every year (see figure below).

The PEI team used the findings from the studies to proactively engage in agriculture sector working groups, providing detailed technical inputs to the development of a new sector policy, monitoring plan and investment framework. The resulting policy has a strong focus on empowering youth, women and vulnerable groups and promotes investments in climate-smart agriculture and sustainable land and water management. Indicators supporting those objectives include soil loss, area under irrigation and the ratio of women to men with access to, ownership of or control of productive agricultural assets.

The Government of Malawi has also adopted a new soil loss baseline and soil loss map as well as an improved methodology for developing and measuring the drivers of soil erosion.



Source: UN Women, UNDP-UNEP PEI and World Bank, 2015.

sector policies and a recognition that mechanisms for horizontal policy coherence, or the trickle-down effect discussed in the previous section, was insufficient.

### 2.3.2 Barriers



Public policy gaps deriving from **a lack of horizontal policy coherence** reduce the catalytic effect of mainstreaming poverty-environment objectives into national-level plans, as these objectives ultimately are not implemented through the sectors.



**Competition over the control of government, donor and global fund resources between environment and sector ministries** sometimes prevents effective cross-sector collaboration and mainstreaming. In some countries, ministries of environment are recommended to focus more on coordinating and regulating environmental and natural resource matters across sectors instead of seeking to be an implementing agency for all issues and topics related to the environment.

### 2.3.3 Lessons learned



**Lesson 7: Integration of practical poverty-environment mainstreaming tools in the machinery of government was a key success factor.** Creating parallel processes or mechanisms outside existing national systems is strongly discouraged. Rather, the most effective way to promote action to address poverty-environment challenges is by targeting existing planning, budgeting and institutional coordination mechanisms and tools and enabling them to better respond to these challenges. This approach helps strengthen institutional capacity and overcome the barriers related to high staff turnover and political changes common in the region's public institutions. PEI found the most effective way to influence several sectors was to work through ministries of finance and planning to influence the guidelines they issue to sectors for preparing their strategies, annual plans and budgets. In this way, many sectors can be reached with relatively limited financial and staff resources.

**PEI Africa's decision to strategically focus on influencing sector policies was based on a recognition that the trickle-down effect from the national level was insufficient.**

**Lesson 8: Deeper sector impact takes more effort and resources.** Sector-specific evidence and detailed technical inputs, made through close engagement in sector planning processes, underlie deeper sector impact. This takes time, as each sector has its own processes and working groups to prepare sector strategies and projects, entailing regular meetings, drafting and reviewing sessions. Tapping a maximum of three or four key sectors and forming partnerships with specialized UN agencies and other actors can enable deeper sector impact by overcoming some of the resource challenges. Additionally, building the capacity of environmental focal points in sector ministries is a good strategy on two levels to help integrate environmental sustainability into sector policies, plans and budgets: (i) it strengthens the capacity of individuals in practicing integrated cross-sectoral approaches for the environment and development, and (ii) it strengthens the capacity of the sector ministry to effectively respond to requirements for pro-poor environmental sustainability set out in national development plans.



**Lesson 9: Integrated, credible and sector-specific evidence can motivate policymakers to act.** When a ministry has concrete evidence about how sustainability in its sector can help achieve sector objectives, it can galvanize support from across sectors for integrated action to address poverty-environment challenges. Similarly, when the negative effects on sector targets of unsustainable use of natural resources and gender inequality are understood within a key economic sector such as agriculture, there is motivation to act to address these challenges. Good evidence should be integrated, targeted, clear, relevant and credible for policymaking.



## 2.4 Poverty-environment indicators and monitoring

What is not measured does not get done. National, subnational and sector monitoring systems track progress made against policy and development objectives; they also help identify where and what kinds of corrective actions may be needed. Including poverty-environment indicators in the national monitoring system helps maintain and improve understanding of poverty-environment linkages and how they can be measured. Monitoring enables policymakers and implementers to demonstrate the impact of policy measures put in place, share lessons learned, adjust policies, and guide budget and resource allocation. In most countries, the institution mandated with producing official statistics based on periodic surveys is the national bureau of statistics—which consequently becomes a guardian in defining what matters to the nation.

See [Case Study 2.8](#).

**Case Study 2.8**

## Challenges in collecting data on poverty-environment indicators

In 2005, multisectoral working groups with resource personnel from the Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics, elaborated indicators linked to poverty-environment for inclusion in the first National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty 2005–2010. The subsequent national strategies (2010–2015 and 2016–2020) maintained many of these indicators, modified some and introduced a small number of new ones.

A 2014 review of the relevance and effectiveness of the poverty-environment indicators in the first and second national strategies showed that their results have been mixed (URT, UNDP and UNEP, 2014). Of the 15 indicators linked to poverty-environment, 7 are reported on but demand a greater poverty-environment lens of analysis or require complementary indicators to improve their effectiveness; 5 proved difficult to operationalize by the responsible sector institutions and therefore no data were collected; and 2 should be abandoned, as they are poorly formulated and therefore could not be measured.

The review also highlighted a systematic institutional problem. Several monitoring tools and systems at the national and local levels are insufficiently linked. It also noted disconnects between national and subnational institutions in collecting, analysing and using data.

To address these challenges, efforts on how to align the data collection for the Local Governments Monitoring Database with the national poverty monitoring systems and relevant SDG indicators are under way.

### Examples of poverty-environment indicators in Tanzania's poverty strategy

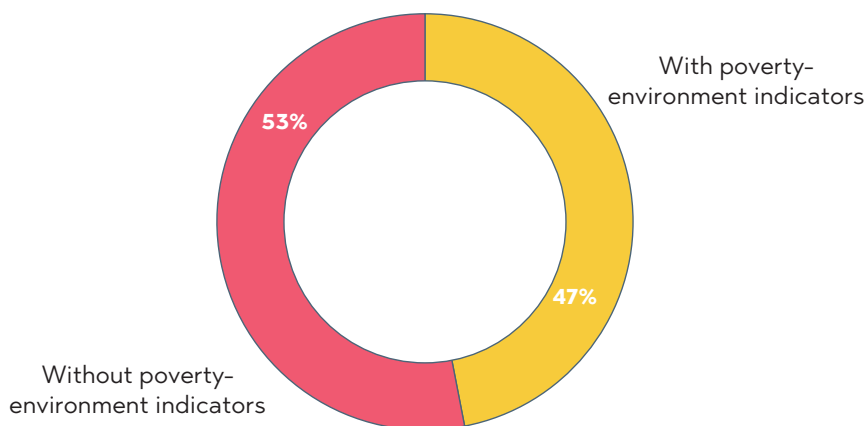
1. Proportion of enterprises undertaking environmental impact assessments complying with environmental regulations
2. Proportion of households whose main income is derived from harvesting, processing and marketing of natural resource products
3. Proportion of households in rural and urban areas using alternative sources of energy to wood fuel (including charcoal) as their main source of energy for cooking
4. Population with access to piped or protected water as their main drinking water source (30 minutes maximum collection time for walking and filling)
5. Proportion of households with basic sanitation facilities
6. Proportion of schools with adequate sanitation facilities
7. Number of reported cholera cases
8. Total area managed by mandated local institutions for community-based natural resource management
9. Proportion of females from small-holder households with land ownership or customary land rights
10. Total value of revenue received from concessions and licences for natural resources (forestry, fishing, wildlife, mining)

### 2.4.1 The facts

Most of the monitoring frameworks PEI Africa has influenced are those of the national, subnational and sector plans the project has influenced. However, fewer than half (47 per cent) of the policies and plans influenced have been reported to also integrate poverty-environment indicators in their monitoring and evaluation frameworks (Figure 2.5). This indicates either that PEI Africa (i) has mainly influenced core policy objectives but not succeeded in translating these into indicators and targets or (ii) has not properly documented its influence on monitoring frameworks. The truth probably lies somewhere in between.

Figure 2.5

#### Proportion of policies in PEI Africa countries that PEI has influenced that include poverty-environment indicators



### 2.4.2 Barriers

National bureaus of statistics and sector ministries face **staffing and resourcing challenges** in carrying out the kinds of data collection exercises needed to track integrated poverty-environment outcomes at the local level (e.g. household surveys, ecological surveys). In many cases where PEI Africa influenced the country's monitoring frameworks, the government did not have the required systems and resources to collect and analyse data to measure progress towards indicators.



### 2.4.3 Lessons learned



**Lesson 10: A more holistic approach to monitoring needs to be adopted in the context of integrated sustainable development goals.** If national development aspirations are to change substantially and reflect more interdependent outcomes, partnerships between statistics bureaus and their main user institutions need to be at the forefront of describing the changes. Based on these partnerships, plans, budgets, monitoring and institutional incentives and prerequisites can then be developed. For example, if statistics on soil nutrient levels are not collected, it is less likely that action will be taken to address it—even if soil nutrient decline is a serious problem. To ensure poverty-environment issues are monitored effectively and efficiently requires long-term engagement with the overall national monitoring and reporting cycle—including institutional capacity development within the national statistics office and agencies responsible for data provision. Strengthening data collection systems and capacities is a very expensive task, well beyond the means of a relatively small project like PEI. This underscores the need for partnerships with larger entities such as the World Bank and donors in order to have a meaningful impact on monitoring and similar systems.

## 2.5 Budgeting for poverty-environment activities

See [Case Study 2.9](#) and [Case Study 2.10](#).

Integrating inclusive environmental and natural resource sustainability into national development plans and sector strategies does not generate change on the ground without the complementary step of securing the necessary financing for their implementation.

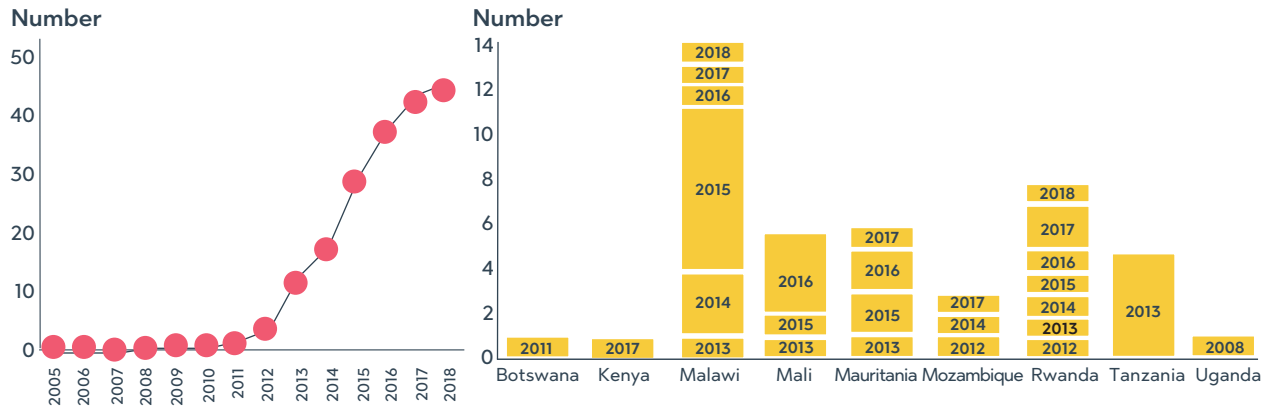
### 2.5.1 The facts

In 2012, almost seven years after the start of the project, PEI Africa started to see results in terms of influencing budget and expenditure processes (Figure 2.6). This followed the institutional shift of the project from ministries of environment to ministries of planning and finance at the beginning of the scale-up phase in 2009. All countries that continued to implement the project after 2009 have influenced some type of in-country budget and expenditure processes at either the national, district or sector level. For example, in **Malawi** and **Rwanda**, poverty-environment issues have been systematically integrated into the annual budget guidelines issued by the finance ministry. They have been integrated into expenditure tracking systems in **Mozambique**, and into medium-term expenditure frameworks in **Mali** and **Mauritania**.



Figure 2.6

### Number of national budget and expenditure processes in PEI Africa countries that reference poverty-environment, over time and by country and year



#### Case Study 2.9

### Challenges to systematically increasing budget allocations

While PEI Africa after 2012 succeeded in influencing budgeting guidelines and frameworks to promote investments in poverty-environment actions, the increases in actual budget allocations and expenditures was not as systematic.

Almost all the PEI Africa countries recorded increases in budget allocations at some point; however, budget allocation trends have fluctuated from year to year and not in a linear progression.

There are several reasons for this. Competition for scarce funds is chief among these. Normal expenditures will be prioritized over those for environment when resources are particularly scarce, and recurrent expenditures will dominate development expenditures if overall resources decrease. In addition, there are coherence gaps between what is stated in budget guidelines, budget processes and their application.

The case of one PEI Africa country is illustrative. This country made good progress in terms of environmental mainstreaming and making the case to its finance ministry to invest in environmental sustainability. The national budget call circular thus included a directive for sectors to mainstream environmental sustainability into sector budgets and plans. The budget director requested the environmental ministry take the lead in providing concrete costed proposals for poverty-environment investments. Studies and research undertaken by PEI and the environmental ministry provided most of the information, data and justifications to prepare credible proposals.

However, the ministry never took up this opportunity to develop the proposals despite offers of support from PEI. It appeared that the ministry was not sufficiently interested in preparing the proposals, as the investments would be channelled through sectors and not the environmental ministry itself.

## Case Study 2.10



## Using the budget call circular for poverty, climate and environment in Rwanda

In Rwanda, an environment and climate checklist was added as an annex to the budget call circular issued annually by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. All sectors and districts must therefore not only plan for environmentally sustainable and climate change-resilient actions but also budget for their implementation. Notes the acting Director General for National Budget in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, “If the budget call circular does not consider environment and climate change, then most probably environment and climate change are not going to be taken into consideration by any sector or district. But now, since it is a requirement, it is therefore the role and responsibility of everyone.”

In 2017, Rwanda’s Parliament adopted a resolution calling for all sectors and districts to include an environment and climate change budget statement when submitting their annual plans and budgets for approval; the intent was to reinforce application of the guidelines in the budget call circular.

Jonathan Nzaikorera emphasizes the importance of having tools that are easily used by sector specialists (e.g. budget and planning

checklists, environment and climate change budget statements) and of building sector and district staff capacities for applying such tools. Having the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning lead and guide the process—with support from environmental specialists—was significant to its success. The diligence of this effort is bearing fruit: 50 per cent of the environment and climate change activities planned by sectors and districts were implemented in 2015–2016. And the 2018 national investment guidelines included a section on environmental and social safeguards. This means that before a government institution can receive internal or external finances to implement a project, it must demonstrate that environmental and social safeguards are in place, what the potential poverty impacts will be, and how social inclusion will be promoted through the project; it must also provide assurance that the project is environmentally sustainable. The Public Investment Committee uses compliance with the guidelines as a criterion in selecting public projects that are to be funded through the national budget or with external finance sources.

### 2.5.2 Barriers



Even if poverty-environment objectives are included in national development plans, that does not mean significant resources will be allocated to implement them. In many countries, there are **inadequate coordination and monitoring mechanisms between national development plans and budget processes** at the sector and subnational levels.

Budget guidelines issued by ministries of finance are not always properly applied by sectors and districts and not systematically enforced by ministries of finance, which may reflect **weak horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms**. Thus, influencing a budget process does not necessarily lead to changes in budget allocations.



Budget allocation processes are substantially political-economy processes and **require more than technical analysis and evidence to generate changes in priorities**.



### 2.5.3 Lessons learned

**Lesson 11: Practical tools for poverty-environment mainstreaming within existing budget processes and strengthened collaboration between ministries of environment and finance are needed.** It is crucial that ministries of finance and environment work together to promote increased budgeting for environmental sustainability within existing government frameworks and systems, rather than creating parallel processes. The development of simple and practical tools—such as budget checklists and budget codes—along with relevant and timely technical support over a sustained period is key to integrating pro-poor environmental sustainability into budgeting frameworks. Linking environmental and climate policy to the budget further ensures that environmental and climate strategies are prioritized and costed, and helps measure performance. This linkage requires coordination by finance and planning ministries, with technical input from the environment and other relevant sector ministries.



## 2.6 Influencing private sector investment frameworks

Private sector investment has the potential to be a key contributor to the implementation of poverty-environment actions. From a PEI Africa perspective, the most important private sector groups are small-holder farmers and associated actual or potential value-added businesses—reflecting the fact that agriculture is the most important poverty-environment sector in the region.

See [Case Study 2.11](#).

### 2.6.1 The facts

Influencing the private sector—which is here defined as small, medium and larger-scale businesses—did not receive sufficient focus by PEI Africa. Some activities targeting the private sector were undertaken in **Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania**.

## Case Study 2.11



### Targeting regional investment guides in Tanzania

In Tanzania, PEI helped four regions (Simiyu, Mara, Kilimanjaro and Mwanza) develop regional investment guides. These guides target investors along the value chain with the aim of attracting sustainable investments into the respective region.

The guides highlight the need for investments in poverty-environment actions such as fish cage farming, beekeeping and biogas technologies, informed by the demonstration of the social and environmental benefits from

PEI-supported pilot interventions in these areas. PEI pilots have helped reduce illegal fishing and deforestation, and have led to savings of 3–10 hours per week for women and children engaged in firewood collection—thereby helping enable women to be more economically active and allowing children more time for school work. The aim is that these practices will be further scaled up through the regional investment guides, just as they have influenced national and district development plans.

## 2.6.2 Barriers



While it has been conceptually recognized that poverty-environment mainstreaming is a multi-stakeholder effort involving non-state actors and the private sector, such efforts have been limited. This may reflect **staff lack of experience in engaging with the private sector**.



The **informal, highly distributed nature of many elements of the private sector** in Africa—especially in the agricultural sector—and the lack of suitable private sector umbrella organizations makes it challenging for a project like PEI to find entry points to work with the private sector.



In some cases, **governments did not want the UN substantially involved in processes related to guiding private sector investments**—particularly in the extractives sector, which is an important sector for poverty-environment mainstreaming. This reflected higher-level political-economy and governance factors, which include the potential for rent seeking. For more on this, see Africa Progress Panel 2013, 2014).

### 2.6.3 Lessons learned

**Lesson 12: Environmental fiscal reform offers an entry point for influencing the private sector.**

To influence the private sector in the African context requires an approach that recognizes political-economy and governance realities. Relevant higher-level policies, regulations and other incentive mechanisms such as environmental fiscal reform, which can put frameworks in place that encourage the private sector to invest in poverty-reducing environmental sustainability, are a potential entry point. Opportunities to influence investments in specific sectors created by government initiatives to improve investment standards should be seized on, with a view to include poverty-environment criteria. Influencing private on-farm investment to implement poverty-environment actions should be the priority; a focus on fisheries and forestry should also be considered, as should support to governments to distribute environment and natural resource revenues in a manner that helps reduce poverty and improve environmental sustainability.



## 2.7 Increasing public environmental and climate expenditures

Integrating inclusive environmental and natural resource sustainability into national development plans and sector strategies does not generate change on the ground without the complementary step of securing the necessary financing for their implementation; Box 2.2 provides select examples.

See [Case Study 2.12](#), [Case Study 2.13](#) and [Case Study 2.14](#).

### 2.7.1 The facts

Because poverty-environment issues have been incorporated into various aspects of national policy and budgetary processes, five PEI Africa countries (**Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda** and **Tanzania**) have recorded public increases in expenditure on the environment and climate change at some point between 2011 and 2015. In **Burkina Faso** and **Mali**, increases in budget allocations were also recorded, but it has not been confirmed if these changes also led to increased expenditures.

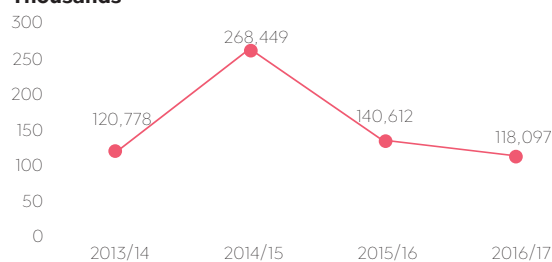
**Case Study 2.12**

## Expenditures do not always follow budgets, and increasing expenditure trends are not always linear

**E**xpenditure trends on environment and climate are not always linear, with an increase in one year, and a decrease in other years, reflecting changing political priorities and broader public budget changes.

As an example, the policy and budgetary changes PEI helped influence in Tanzania resulted in expenditures on the environment and climate change by the National Environment Management Council and the Vice President's Office more than doubling between 2013/14 and 2014/15. However, the total amount spent on the environment and climate dropped in 2015/16

**Thousands**



(although it was still higher than the 2013/14 baseline), reflecting the overall reduced budget for sector activities in the country, as significant portions of the public budget were allocated to other new demands.

**Case Study 2.13**

## Generating consistent increases in expenditure in Rwanda

**P**EI-influenced policy and budgetary changes in Rwanda have led to a continued, albeit slow, increase in government expenditures on the environment, natural resources and climate change. These expenditures accounted for 0.4 per cent of Rwanda's total budget in 2009/10; this percentage jumped to 2.5 per cent three years later and was 2.7 per cent in 2015/16.

Although these percentages are well below the 6 per cent allocated for the environment and climate, these expenditures are nonetheless contributing to progress on broader development goals. Poverty has declined from 44.9 per cent in 2012 to 39 per cent in 2015, 2,400 hectares of ecosystems have been rehabilitated, forest coverage has increased by 0.3 per cent and the number of people with access to electricity has risen by 23 per cent.

Many reasons contributed to Rwanda's ability to sustain a positive trend of increasing

environment, natural resource and climate change expenditures, including the following:

- A high-level **government commitment** to environmental sustainability as a means to reduce poverty and achieve other development goals
- Strategic thinking on the part of the Rwanda Environment Management Authority and its **willingness to work closely** with the Ministry of Economy and Finance and other sectors to influence and improve their environmental management procedures
- **Sustained integration** of poverty-environment mainstreaming tools and capacity building for their application over several years within the government planning and budget system, coupled with accountability mechanisms
- A **favourable political-economy context** and the absence of political, economic, environmental or social shocks

## Case Study 2.14



## Environment and climate budget codes to track budgets and expenditures

Mozambique's expenditures on environment and climate change more than doubled between 2010 and 2012, with the most significant increase being for investments in sanitation. Environmental expenditure was thereafter maintained at 0.45 per cent of the state budget. Given that the country experienced a severe financial crisis in 2015, with many government priority areas consequently suffering severe budget cuts, this sustained level of expenditure for the environment should be considered an achievement.

The ease with which the Government of Mozambique can now track and analyse public expenditure on the environment and climate derives from a commitment to transparency and budget coherence across sectors.

In 2012, PEI and Mozambique's Ministry of Environmental Coordination Affairs (reconfigured in 2014 as the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development) took a close look at how the economy was treating natural resources. It carried out two studies: an environmental economic analysis of natural resource management and a public environment expenditure review (PEER). These assessments found that a huge amount—the equivalent of 17 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP)—is lost each year to environmental degradation and the inefficient use of natural resources. Further, while only an estimated 9 per cent of GDP would be needed to remediate these damages,

the average environmental expenditure for the period 2007–2010 was just 1.4 per cent of GDP.

The review findings led to a dialogue between the ministries of finance and environment, which prompted the establishment of a budget classification sub-code in the country's financial management system. The code enables tracking of expenditures on climate change. The Ministry of Economy and Finance appointed two environmental focal points in its Budget Department to take the lead in introducing and operationalizing the new budget code. The Ministry of Environment decided to test the feasibility of a wider range of environmental budget codes.

Today, 21 government institutions are using the environment and climate budget codes. Consequently, the Government of Mozambique can, for the first time, easily assess its budget allocations and expenditures on climate change and improve the analysis of its public environmental expenditures.

"I believe that the introduction of budget codes for cross-cutting issues (like climate) was brilliant—transparently responding to the new five-year development plan priorities. With a single click, it is possible to verify allocated resources and who specifically responded to environmental and climate change objectives," explained an official in the National Directorate for Planning and Budget.

## 2.7.2 Barriers



Even when public budgets are allocated to support implementation of poverty-environment objectives, expenditure does not necessarily match these allocations due to **competition over funds**. Further, budget allocations and expenditure trends for the environment and climate are not always linear.



**Funds in developing countries are limited**, and sector ministries are faced with many competing priorities. Sectors often receive a smaller allocation than was initially requested in the budget. Objectives that are not central to sectors' regular work are not prioritized when resource allocations are tight.



While increased expenditure on environment and climate change is an important indicator for PEI, **many factors beyond PEI control affect expenditure levels**.

## 2.7.3 Lessons learned



**Lesson 13: More needs to be done to ensure that environment and climate-related interventions are prioritized during budget shortfalls.** Changes in budget allocations do not necessarily lead to changes in expenditure. Concurrently, if a budget process and corresponding allocations are not influenced, increased expenditure on sustainability actions are very unlikely. Linking environmental and climate policy to the budget ensures environment and climate strategies are prioritized and costed, and helps measure performance.



**Lesson 14: Climate and environment budget codes can help improve tracking and justify the need for larger investments.** Budget codes can improve the evidence and level of awareness on how public funds are used and how effective and efficient (and sometimes, equitable) the results are. The analysis enabled through budget code use often reveals how low funding has been in relation to the national importance of environmental assets or threat of climate change, and can justify increasing public funds for environmental sustainability and climate change resilience across sectors, districts and institutions. The introduction and/or improved application of budget codes can help close both the funding gap and the coherence gap across policies, budgets and expenditures. Further, once a time series is established, they hold the potential for improving the efficiency of expenditure allocations to institutions and projects based on their respective environmental performance. Substantial capacity building for staff responsible for budget preparation as well as for sector environment units/focal points so they can correctly assign environmental and climate budget codes will be needed.



**Lesson 15: More analysis is needed on the links between increased public environment and climate expenditure and reduced poverty, enhanced climate resilience and improved environmental outcomes.**

The key assumption behind the PEI Africa theory of change is that increased public expenditure on environmental sustainability and climate change will reduce environmental degradation and enhance the productivity of the natural resources on which vulnerable groups depend their incomes and livelihoods. Limited analysis has been undertaken to determine whether the increased public expenditure on environment and climate change has had a direct impact on poverty and environmental outcomes. More efforts are needed in analysing these links, along with a determination of which methodologies would be most appropriate to undertake such analysis.



## 2.8 Catalysing investments and actions

The PEI Africa theory of change held that by mainstreaming objectives related to poverty-environment into government policy, planning, monitoring, budget and implementation frameworks, investments in poverty-environment actions that could generate change for vulnerable groups would be catalysed. See Box 2.2 for some examples.

### 2.8.1 The facts

PEI Africa catalysed investments of \$183.9 million by development partners, inspiring other actors to financially support poverty-environment actions through four main avenues:

- Linking pilot interventions with district, sector and national policies (**Rwanda** and **Tanzania**)
- Ensuring the participation of local communities in the development of district and local plans (**Mali**)
- Providing support for the establishment and operationalization of environment funds and ensuring vulnerable groups access to such funds (**Burkina Faso** and **Rwanda**)
- Commissioning research and analysis (**Mauritania**) and supporting policy changes (**Malawi**)

**Box 2.2****Investments in poverty-environment actions catalysed by PEI Africa**

- **\$87 million to Rwanda’s Green Fund (FONERWA) for implementation of environmental sustainability and climate actions that help reduce poverty.** Since 2012, FONERWA has financed 33 projects to improve livelihoods and the environment. Results include 21,847 hectares of land reforested; 17,449 families connected to off-grid electricity; 12,998 hectares of watersheds and waterbodies restored; and 89,694 green jobs created.
- **\$61 million for replication of green villages in Rwanda.** The Green Village project has been replicated in 44 locations, benefiting 2,020 households. See [Case Study 2.4](#) for more information.
- **\$31 million from the Government of China and the World Bank to implement inclusive and sustainable fisheries practices in Malawi.** Following the integration of poverty-environment objectives in Malawi’s 2016 fisheries and forestry policies, \$16 million was mobilized from the World Bank, the Government of China and civil society organizations to implement inclusive and sustainable fisheries practices. Construction of 210 deep fish ponds has led to an increase in annual fish production from aquaculture from 4,742 metric tonnes in 2014 to 7,646 metric tonnes in 2016. Also, sustainable forestry is being applied more widely. These positive changes motivated China to invest another \$15 million in a drought recovery project that will, among other things, scale-up deep pond aquaculture.
- **\$3.5 million through Burkina Faso’s Environment Intervention Fund.** Since the launch of the fund in 2015, 173 environment projects have been approved. Through PEI capacity-building trainings, women’s and youth associations, civil society organizations and local municipalities in six regions have improved their ability to prepare proposals, which will ensure that the fund reaches the country’s poor and vulnerable.
- **\$1.2 million from the European Union’s Global Climate Change Alliance to increase the climate resilience of vulnerable populations in Mauritania.** This project has increased the resilience of 18,333 people by undertaking direct interventions and building capacity for climate-resilient practices in the agriculture, water, livestock and environmental sectors.
- **\$163,900 from UN Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations–Kenya and UN Environment for joint research on the cost of the gender gap in agricultural productivity.** Following up on the initial research on the topic by PEI, UN Women and the World Bank, these three UN agencies and PEI committed additional funds to deepen the research in the three original countries of Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda, with a stronger focus on climate resilience; they also expanded the research to Ethiopia and Rwanda.
- **\$52,000 by the UN Environment’s World Conservation Monitoring Centre to support work on integrating environmental sustainability into multidimensional poverty measures.** See [Box 3.1](#) for more details.

## 2.8.2 Barriers

While the amount of funds mobilized for poverty-environment action is significant, 80 per cent of it was catalysed in Rwanda. **Insufficient time has been dedicated to understanding PEI successes and challenges in catalysing investments** at the country level.



## 2.8.3 Lessons learned

**Lesson 16: There is a need to better understand what catalyses poverty-environment investments.** More time and money need to be invested in understanding how PEI catalysed actions that have an impact on poverty and environment outcomes on the ground. More systematic engagement with development partners in country by PEI country and regional teams could be a solution, while being mindful of One UN country-level resource mobilization policies.





# 3

## How PEI Africa achieved what it did

**T**he PEI project used a range of tools, tactics and strategies to achieve the poverty-environment mainstreaming results summarized and highlighted in the previous chapter. This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the tools, capacity-building approaches and project management innovations employed.

### 3.1 New knowledge and tools

When poverty-environment linkages, their implications for the achievement of national development objectives and their causes are understood, decision-makers are much more likely to support policy and budget actions to address them. However, the effect of this understanding—or new knowledge—on policymaking will greatly depend on the evidence being clearly relevant to decision-makers' concerns, interest and mandates.

See [Case Study 3.1](#).

#### 3.1.1 The facts

PEI Africa has employed a broad range of different approaches and tools to achieve its poverty-environment mainstreaming objectives. A variety of country-specific studies have identified detailed poverty-environment linkages and the interconnections between sustainable environment and social and economic development (Box 3.1). These studies have been accompanied by recommendations and guidelines on how to mainstream poverty-environment objectives into policy, planning, monitoring, budget and implementation frameworks.

Moreover, and critically, the Initiative has strategically and proactively used such knowledge to catalyse modifications of existing government planning and budgeting tools and systems. The tools used will be described in detail in the forthcoming poverty-environment tools compendium and include the following:

**Box 3.1****Developing and using innovative methodologies for connecting the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development**

**P**EI Africa has been at the forefront in developing and using innovative methodologies to link the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development. One of the most recent such initiatives entails work on how multidimensional poverty measurements can better capture the importance of the environment for human well-being.

Multidimensional poverty measures currently encompass social and economic dimensions, but fail to adequately capture poverty-environment linkages. PEI Africa partnered with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) to assess whether the environment and natural resources (ENR) could be integrated into its Multidimensional Poverty Index. OPHI found that a more practical option was to combine or overlay ENR and

household survey data in order to measure ENR-multidimensional poverty linkages.

In 2017/18 PEI partnered with the UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre and researchers from several U.K. universities to carry out more targeted work at the country level. Together with government officers and local communities in Malawi and Rwanda, the team identified country-specific poverty-ENR indicators; it then worked to develop guidelines and build capacities for integrating ENR into country-specific multidimensional poverty measurements. The guidelines suggest how these measures could be incorporated into national statistics and reporting to support governments' efforts to achieve and monitor progress towards poverty reduction and the SDGs.

**Case Study 3.1****Tools that primarily focused on the state of the environment**

**F**rom its start, PEI relied on integrated ecosystem assessments (IEAs), applying the tool in several countries. IEAs used the concept of ecosystem services to attempt to highlight poverty-environment linkages. However, this concept was often not used or understood by key sector ministries and did not resonate with ministries of finance and planning.

A further difficulty was that, often, the recommendations and follow-up actions proposed by the IEAs entailed creating poverty-environment mainstreaming mechanisms that were not embedded in existing government planning mechanisms.

For these reasons, the IEAs had limited impact. PEI and its partners found instead that tools using the language and approach of economics to highlight links between sustainable environment and natural resource use, economic development and poverty reduction were much more effective. Over time, PEI transitioned to the use of different types of economic and social assessments of environmental sustainability, public environmental policy, budget and expenditure reviews and the development of different types of localized guidelines.

- Institutional context analysis
- Poverty-social impact assessments
- Vulnerability assessments
- Strategic environmental assessments/integrated socioeconomic environmental assessments
- Economic assessments of (un)sustainable natural resource use
- Cost-benefit analysis—including cost of the gender gap analysis
- Public environmental and climate expenditure reviews
- Reviews of environmental economic instruments and environmental fiscal reforms
- Poverty-environment indicator studies
- Policy reviews from a poverty-environment-gender perspective
- Integrated ecosystem assessments
- Poverty-environment mainstreaming guidelines and checklists targeting specific policy, planning, monitoring, budget and implementation frameworks
- Regional and national poverty-environment mainstreaming training packages based on studies and guidelines
- Environment and climate budget codes
- Participatory diagnosis and policy dialogue with local communities and civil society
- Outreach through parliamentary committees, local champions and media

### 3.1.2 Barriers

**Traditional environmental tools and approaches were not effective** for mainstreaming poverty-environment issues in national development plans (see [Case Study 3.1](#)). The data needed to undertake economic and social environmental analysis, including gender-disaggregated data, were often not readily available. The extensive time and resources put into generating the evidence required for successful poverty-environment mainstreaming sometimes derailed timelines and the achievement of results. And in some cases, the data gaps were too big for undertaking the desired analysis to be cost-effective.





**Finding qualified and experienced consultants** who could undertake integrated economic and social environmental analysis was sometimes a challenge, reflecting a broader need for more cross-disciplinary research and work teams.



**The use of poverty reduction targeting and assessments linked to poverty-environment are virtually non-existent** outside of specific UN and donor-funded initiatives like PEI. Household surveys collect poverty-related data focused on income measurements and needs strengthening in terms of measuring non-monetary and disaggregated poverty data. Environment and poverty linked data is often impractical to collect through household surveys, as key data such as soil fertility levels cannot be easily estimated by households.

### 3.1.3 Lessons learned



**Lesson 17: Integrated economic, social and environmental assessments, tools and guidelines were more effective in advancing poverty-environment mainstreaming than traditional environmental tools and approaches.** Integrated evidence is vital in making the case for poverty-environment mainstreaming. Targeted, detailed economic evidence of the development benefits of implementing poverty-environment objectives remains the most powerful tool in convincing relevant decision-makers to commit the necessary resources to address poverty-environment challenges. To generate change, the right evidence must be used in a proactive and strategic manner directly targeting the policymakers involved in drafting the policy to be influenced. Staff time, commitment and access to the relevant policymakers are all needed to be successful in using evidence to generate change.



**Lesson 18: Consultative and inclusive research that substantially engages relevant stakeholders is more likely to generate change.** In the experience of the PEI, integrated social-economic-environment evidence that demonstrates the links between poverty and environment is more likely to be used for policymaking if it is the result of a consultative process that involves the target audience and government officials. This facilitates the acceptance of evidence even if it challenges current policy discourse and/or practices. The extra time of this approach requires is worth it—not least as poverty-environment mainstreaming is a political-economy exercise and strong ownership is particularly important to generate change.



**Lesson 19: Enhanced application of poverty assessment and poverty reduction targeting is required in the design of plans, policy, strategies, programmes and projects.** Poverty eradication in all its forms where-ever it occurs is the umbrella objective of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. This implies that the causes and drivers of poverty need to be identified and used as a basis for multidimensional poverty reduction targeting. Ministries of Planning/Finance are urged to substantively strengthen the use of poverty assessment and poverty reduction targeting tools for example poverty-social impact analysis, cost benefit analysis that include distributional impact analysis—for example, poverty-social impact analysis, cost-benefit analysis that include distributional impact analysis. To support such efforts the international community can support a major capacity building project at country level on the use of such tools.



## 3.2 Enhanced capacities and the people

It is people who make up institutions and it is people who craft policies, set budget priorities and decide to use—or not use—new knowledge and tools for poverty-environment mainstreaming. Without the commitment and actions of people, institutions and policies cannot change.

### 3.2.1 The facts

Through the course of its implementation, PEI Africa worked closely with people from ministries of finance, planning, environment and key sectors and built their understanding of, and capacities for, poverty-environment mainstreaming. One of the main strategies in doing this was to place the PEI country teams within the implementing ministries. Other strategies deployed have included placing environmental interns in sector ministries, as in **Rwanda**; and capacity building of environmental focal points in sectors and line ministries, as in **Mozambique**. An even broader approach to working with individuals across different spheres of society was employed in **Burkina Faso**. Here, high-profile poverty-environment champions—drawn from among parliamentarians and religious, civil society and community leaders—were made partners in efforts to raise public awareness of poverty-environment issues and call for action.

Building and managing substantive, genuine and collegial relationships with government counterparts is vital to success. As a former PEI Africa regional adviser observed, “Success in this business is all about managing relationships.” Empathy on the part of UN officials for the people and circumstances in country also helps, a point made by both a former UNDP PEI director and an Irish ambassador in a PEI country.

### 3.2.2 Barriers



**High vacancy rates in government ministries and staff turnover**, especially following national elections, are a challenge for individual and institutional capacity building. For example, one ministry of finance and planning with which PEI Africa worked reported at one time a 40 per cent vacancy rate, due to the difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff and the impact of HIV/AIDS.



The **motivation of often poorly paid civil servants** is an important issue, particularly for a process as complex as poverty-environment mainstreaming, which demands a considerable amount of time from civil servants.

### 3.2.3 Lessons learned



**Lesson 20: Ownership and motivation from the bottom to the top is very important.** Working through key individuals/poverty-environment champions as an entry point to build broader institutional capacity for poverty-environment mainstreaming has been essential for the success of the project. However, it is of crucial importance that the champion is used as an entry point for broader engagement to mitigate against the risk of losing the achievements made if the individual leaves his/her position. Hence, ownership and motivation at different levels from the bottom to the top is very important—at the level of decision-makers and at the level of the officials who will do most of the mainstreaming work.

## 3.3 PEI project management innovations

All projects require a management structure that is appropriate to the nature of the challenge being addressed (Box 3.2). A project like PEI, aiming to address development issues spanning across the three dimensions of sustainable development, has to break down the silos between environment and development actors as well as between the environment and development ministries.

### 3.3.1 The facts

The management structure and delivery model of the PEI project have evolved over the years, reflecting an important journey towards an adaptive management process (Box 3.3). The primary project management innovation was the launch of a fully joint initiative between UNDP and UN Environment—representing One UN in action. The PEI has been governed by a joint UNDP-UN Environment management board and guided by a global Poverty-Environment Facility with UNDP and UN Environment co-directors. Country implementation has been spearheaded by government partners supported by PEI country teams hired by UNDP but located within the implementing government ministries. To create regional synergies and provide PEI countries with technical support, a UN Environment–based Africa regional team was established with at least one UNDP staff member. All scale-up funding, whether mobilized by UNDP or UN Environment, was pooled into a global account—facilitating transfers to the country level and ensuring the ability to monitor the use of funds through the UN Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers system administered by UNDP at the country level.

See [Case Study 3.2](#).

#### Box 3.2

#### Wicked problems require adaptive management

Complex—or “wicked” policy challenges like poverty-environment mainstreaming need the right methods so they can be successfully addressed (Hummelbrunner and Jones, 2013a, 2013b). These include adopting what the literature refers to as a “design approach” (Roberts, 2012), which places a very strong emphasis on understanding a problem and its causes in depth, and then responding to these in a flexible manner.

Other methods for managing the complexity of mainstreaming include non-linear, adaptive management. This technique is characterized by continuous learning and responding to lessons learned by adjusting implementation and seizing on opportunities to advance poverty-environment mainstreaming.

Successful ongoing learning and adaptation means being open about problems and about

things that are not working so well—as Ban Ki Moon urged senior UN managers in a 2008 speech in Turin, Italy, egos need to be left behind. Experimenting during implementation is also useful for addressing complex problems.

Organizational culture—which includes the values, attitudes, expectations and way an organization conducts its business—matters. And the goal is not just to reflect a results-focused culture, but to become, in the term coined by the International Institute for Environment and Development, “policy entrepreneurs”: managers and staff who seek out opportunities and are willing to take some risks and identify innovative solutions—and who are open and honest about what is not working, as well as understanding what is.

**Box 3.3****PEI Africa’s evolution from a pilot to a global project**

UNDP began supporting poverty-environment mainstreaming work in Kenya and Tanzania in 2003. In 2004, UN Environment designed a poverty and environment project focusing on Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique and Rwanda, as well as Kenya and Tanzania, taking a top-down approach from the regional level. As this model faced substantive implementation challenges due to its limited country presence, and recognizing the close linkages between the work of the two agencies, the joint UNDP–UN Environment Poverty-Environment Initiative Africa project was launched as a pilot in September 2005. The concept of a joint project was strongly supported by donors, and relevant senior UNDP and UN Environment management recognized the risk of duplicated effort and the benefits of a joint approach.

**The PEI Africa Pilot (2005–2007).** A regional team was established to oversee PEI delivery in Africa. The team provided project management and technical support to country projects as well as to UNDP Country Offices, coordinating with UN Country Teams, participating in UN Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF) processes, and providing inputs on poverty-environment mainstreaming to the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office. Detailed PEI projects were developed at the country level in close consultation with government partners. These were integrated in UNDP Country Office project documents and UNDAF. The projects were governed by a steering committee, bringing together ministries of planning/finance, environment and key sectors as well as UN Environment and UNDP staff members. Country project teams—typically a technical adviser, a project manager and a finance assistant—were hired by UNDP; these were generally based within the implementing ministries to deliver the projects.

Because the two agencies have different project and financial management systems, moving to a fully joint activity was challenging. In the early stages of the pilot phase, the PEI country project documents had to be prepared in both UNDP and UN Environment formats and approved through two separate processes. This duplicative system ended when UN Environment agreed to use the UNDP Country Office project documents for project review and approval—a key step towards fully joint programming. However, funding for PEI from the two agencies was not pooled into a single project account, resulting in high transaction costs.

**Scale-up and implementation phases (2007–2018).** The growing success of the PEI Africa project, and communication of this success through the Poverty-Environment Partnership, led donors to suggest scaling up in Africa and creating a global project. Thanks to the strong commitment to joint programming, backed by the innovative and flexible leadership of relevant UNDP and UN Environment senior managers, the project management challenges faced in the pilot phase were addressed and project management processes streamlined. All project funding was pooled into a UNDP account. One remaining challenge was that budgets were centrally controlled by the Poverty-Environment Facility, which in the final stages also increased the direct management of the country budgets.

**Conclusion.** PEI’s overall success was due to strong, innovative, flexible leadership, backed by results-focused project management and strong donor support. Donors have called on UNDP and UN Environment to apply the PEI Africa model more broadly within the two agencies. However, this vision has not been actualized, due to changes in senior management and a consequent decline in a commitment to joint programming.

## Case Study 3.2

## Project management issues that were not resolved at the country level

**P**EI was phased out in two countries primarily because of issues related to project management and funding. The challenges faced included declining senior management support from the UN, and disagreements about the institutional location of the projects and how to engage with sector ministries.

**Country 1.** The PEI project started very promisingly, with strong programmatic and financial support, and the ministry of planning/finance taking the lead.

But with senior UN management staff changes in the country, support for the project declined. The UNDP Country Office was not able to disburse the funding committed to in the project budget, and the PEI country team was unable to address the issue. The government then decided to move all development partner projects with a poverty focus to the president's office. This move was apparently not supported by the ministry of planning/finance, and the office did not have the necessary project implementation capacity.

Many discussions took place trying to resolve the issues, but to no avail, and relationships with key officials in the government and the UNDP Country Office deteriorated significantly. As a compromise way forward, the full PEI Africa country project was closed, with an offer from PEI Africa to continue with more targeted technical advisory support to the government. Despite follow-ups on the offer for technical assistance, the government did not confirm its interest in such support—which hence did not materialize.

**Country 2.** A lesson PEI learned from its early implementation was to work more closely with the ministries of planning/finance and other

sectors. In Country 2, the environment ministry that served as the lead PEI agency resisted requests to do so, apparently seeking to keep the PEI country project—and its corresponding budget, as well as broader environmental sustainability investments—to itself. It placed increasing pressure on PEI Africa to allocate a substantial amount of the PEI country project budget to small-scale efforts such as tree planting.

When PEI sought to launch the country's scale-up phase which would focus more on influencing budgets, it set as a condition for support that the planning/finance ministry have a lead role. Careful negotiations ensued with the environment ministry and the planning/finance authorities to achieve agreement; these negotiations were so prolonged, the project document preparation process was delayed.

During this lag time, a donor requested that substantive amounts of earmarked funding for PEI scale-up be transferred to the core UN Environment budget. Accommodating this request meant that PEI was no longer able to finance all the country projects initially envisioned; consequently, those countries for which new project documents had already been completed were prioritized.

The Country 2 government and UNDP partners were understandably troubled by this situation, and made repeated requests over several years to restart the project. Funding shortages meant that PEI Africa was not able to substantively respond to these requests.

The experience showed that failure to honour written commitments to provide funding creates major and lasting reputational damage—and should be avoided at almost any cost.

### 3.3.2 Barriers



Senior management **commitment to joint programming was not sufficiently institutionalized** in the two UN agencies and fluctuated with management changes. The joint programming model was consequently not applied more broadly in either agency, despite calls for this by donors and evaluations—resulting, on occasion, in declines in donor contributions (UNDP, 2010). This is part of a broader cultural challenge within the UN organization itself, which is dominated by agency and project perspectives rather than a One UN approach, as advocated by the UN Secretary-General in his recent United to Reform initiative.



**Managing country project budgets centrally** at the global level proved cumbersome, leading to delays in disbursement and budget revisions—which in turn led to frustration and, in some cases, implementation delays.



**Higher-level internal restructuring and other government changes** that have nothing to do with a project like PEI can have a major impact on smooth operations and delivery of results. Being caught in the middle of such restructuring can harm relations with one or more government partners. Pressure from government partners to use funds from a mainstreaming project to finance concrete actions on the ground is a related challenge.

### 3.3.3 Lessons learned



**Lesson 21: There is much power in One UN programming.** Commitment by senior leadership, regional and country teams to joint programming where agency interests are left behind and a focus on results was essential for successful delivery of the project. The close and collegial cooperation between the UNDP country offices and the UN Environment-UNDP Africa team was integral to the success of the project. This made it possible to effectively identify and overcome project management related bottlenecks and operational issues as well as identifying synergies with other UNDP in-country initiatives. In Mozambique, this for example led to the PEI project being part of a larger UNDP umbrella framework ensuring coordinated efforts towards common goals, coherent support to the Government of Mozambique and efficient use of financial resources. Along the same lines, close engagement with the Resident Coordinators Office, was an important success factor in terms of securing their guidance and support which was highly valuable support for in the engagements with ministers and senior civil servants. When donors witnessed this commitment to joint programming, they offered very strong moral support and funds.

**Lesson 22: Placing project teams within implementing ministries builds trust with partners and opens up the possibility of engaging in otherwise closed policy and budget development processes.**

For the Initiative in Africa it has been one of the most successful strategies to further poverty-environment mainstreaming. “Success with Poverty-environment mainstreaming is all about managing relationships”—building and maintaining a collegial and trusted working relationship with government is essential.



**Lesson 23: Strong regional and country teams are important.**

Poverty-environment mainstreaming is a staff time-intensive process that involves engaging in development planning and budgeting processes at the national, subnational and sector levels. As the work across these levels, the workload increases geometrically as capacity gaps becomes greater and more processes need to be followed. Proactive, evidence-based, technically robust engagement with government officials and donors is essential. Substantive regional support to country teams was an important success factor—particularly in highly specialized areas such as poverty-environment-gender, economic analysis and poverty analytics.



**Lesson 24: Delegating budgets to the country level resulted in great efficiency and accountability.**

Since 2015, delegated budget authority to the UNDP Country Offices was piloted in Mozambique and Tanzania, and proved to be a smoother budget modality than one that is centrally managed, with lower transaction costs for all parties. The use of UNDP Country Office systems and UN Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers assessments, combined with proactive monitoring and quality control, has been highly effective in ensuring funds were used appropriately.



**Lesson 25: An open and collegial working relationship with donors proved very successful.**

After early donor concerns were forthrightly addressed, the PEI-donor relationship evolved into a partnership, with most donors very interested in the technical work and actively seeking PEI input on their own initiatives. For example, the U.K. Department for International Development led a group of donors in analysing the impact of different donor aid disbursement modalities on the environment at the country level.



**Lesson 26: It is important to know when to phase out a project.**

If there are significant changes in either a government or the UNDP Country Office, the implications of these changes—and their likelihood to reduce results—should be frankly assessed. If the assessment indicates that the chance of achieving results has significantly decreased, the project should be downsized and/or phased out. It is important to set clear parameters and to politely, but firmly, decline to support activities that are not consistent with successful poverty-environment mainstreaming.







# 4

## Lessons for the opportunities and challenges ahead

### 4.1 Looking backward: lessons from failure

Over its years of implementation—as documented in the case studies and discussion presented in Chapters 2 and 3—PEI Africa tried numerous approaches and tools in poverty–environment mainstreaming that did not work, encountered unforeseen or underestimated barriers, and accepted assumptions that ultimately did not hold true. These experiences prompted modifications to the PEI mainstreaming model and ways to deliver it.

In particular, assumptions around the following five areas had to be revisited, leading to substantial changes in the strategies and tactics used by the Initiative:

- **Which tools to use.** One of PEI’s earliest lessons was that to influence policy, budget and investment frameworks that were beyond the ministries of environment required tools and analysis that brought environment, economic and poverty data together in an integrated manner. The lack of systematic application of poverty reduction targeting tools and analytics within governments meant that PEI needed to adopt a much more focused approach to the poverty side of poverty–environment mainstreaming than originally thought. It also implied that finding the entry points and appropriate methodologies for integrating environmental and natural resource sustainability into multidimensional poverty measurements was not as straightforward a task as originally conceived.





- **Availability of integrated data.** As integrated data and analysis were scarce, PEI Africa had to invest much more than originally anticipated in generating the evidence needed to inform policymaking. As mainstreaming progress was made at the national level, more detailed evidence was required to support deeper mainstreaming efforts at the subnational and sector levels. An “onion peeling” situation emerged, as each layer of poverty-environment mainstreaming revealed another. A related realization was that supporting major enhancements to data collection and analytical systems is beyond the scope of a small project like PEI, and that bringing in partners and convincing other donors would be essential in making the needed changes.



- **Whom to work with and how to operate.** The way PEI has evolved over time reflects adaptive management approaches that have been applied throughout its life. These shifts in operation and partnership are evident from its start as two independent projects with similar objectives implemented separately by UNDP and UN Environment to its status today as one of the best examples of One UN in action. Similarly, it shifted from being implemented by ministries of environment to having ministries of finance and planning in the lead.



- **The readiness and capacity of national institutions, policy and budget processes.** The assumptions that needed to be revisited the most and which had the greatest impact on the project were those regarding the readiness and capacity of national institutions for poverty-environment mainstreaming. The human resource capacity challenges—particularly at the district level for poverty-environment mainstreaming, but also and more broadly for project design and implementation in line with national policies—were substantive.

The lack of coherence between various policy frameworks horizontally (national to sector) and vertically (national to district) meant that the assumption that changes in sector and district plans would automatically follow changes to national plans was flawed. In fact, PEI had to provide detailed support to specific sector and district processes to ensure that poverty-environment objectives in the national plan were reflected in sector and district strategies. This of course required more time and data as well as staff resources than originally envisioned.

Moreover, the assumption that budget and expenditure priorities would automatically follow from policy changes was also incorrect. This meant not only that PEI needed more time to achieve its

objectives, but also required a reprofiling in staff and expertise to centre more around public budgets and investments rather than environmental managers. PEI Africa was not proficient in finding successful strategies for influencing investment frameworks, specifically in the private sector.

- **The process of mainstreaming.** In the early stages, there was an overall assumption that poverty–environment mainstreaming was a linear process. However, after 13 years of project implementation, it is evident that mainstreaming is a dynamic process with continuous feedback loops. Some feedback loops can be identified in advance, but others—particularly ones driven by political–economy factors—are more difficult to identify and prepare for. Overall, these feedback loops added time and complexity to project implementation and required adaptive management.



The story of PEI Africa is thus one of adaptive management, with original assumptions revisited on an ongoing basis and strategies and actions redefined. 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 (IFAD, n.d.). Not only results-based systems needed, but also a results-based culture (Bester, 2016).

## 4.2 Looking forward: recommendations for SDG implementation

As countries move ahead with SDG implementation, many are dividing the goals across different sector ministries and addressing each separately—forgetting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’s principle that addressing the three dimensions of sustainable development requires an “integrated, indivisible and transformative approach.” Similarly, development partners—including within the UN—are dividing the goals among different actors and agencies.

Experience from implementing the Millennium Development Goals indicates that when the emphasis is on individual goals rather than the Agenda as a whole, the environmental dimension of development often gets marginalized. Cross-linkages and interdependencies between sustainable environmental, social and economic development are not realized.



PEI Africa has a particularly rich experience in integrating climate change and ecosystem values in national and local planning systems (SDG Targets 13.2/B and 15.9) and promoting increased investments in climate, biodiversity and ecosystem management (13B and 15A) aiming to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation (8.4) and strengthen poor women and men’s climate resilience, food security and ownership and control over natural resources (1.4, 1.5, 2, and 5A), as illustrated throughout this report.

To ensure synergies across the SDGs and to prevent progress on one goal from negatively affecting progress on another, the experiences of PEI Africa highlight the significance of **Goal 17—Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for development**.

By focusing on the systemic issues around policy coherence, integrated data and monitoring, and capacity building for adopting integrated approaches that equally balance and mitigate trade-offs among the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development, PEI Africa and its government partners helped shape the institutions necessary to achieve the SDGs. From these experiences the project can offer several recommendations towards meeting Goal 17.

#### 4.2.1 Collecting and analysing data and measuring progress



**Target 17.18:** By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.



**Target 17.19:** By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries.

An underlying requirement in adopting an integrated approach is to understand how current environmental, social and economic goals are linked in local and national contexts. The work of PEI Africa clearly demonstrates the importance of environmental sustainability and climate action to reduce poverty in a multidimensional sense and transition to a green economy. Recommendations based on PEI

experience for generating better data and analysis and improving monitoring systems follow:

- **Government, development actors and researchers should aim at incorporating and generating integrated evidence in national information and analysis frameworks.** It is important to build the capacity of national institutes to apply tools and approaches that generate and/or use integrated evidence linking the three dimensions of sustainable development to inform policymaking. Credible and sector-specific evidence linking such information with sector goals and targets is particularly effective in motivating policymakers and other stakeholders to adopt an integrated approach. ([Lesson 2](#), [Lesson 9](#), [Lesson 17](#), [Lesson 18](#))
- **Statistical agencies, governments and development partners need to adopt a more holistic approach to monitoring.** Efforts to integrate environmental sustainability into multidimensional poverty measurements need to be up-scaled. If national development aspirations are to change substantially and reflect more interdependent outcomes, partnerships between statistics bureaus and key user institutions need to be enhanced, including capacities for cross-sector analysis. Overall statistical capacities also need to be strengthened. ([Lesson 10](#), [Lesson 19](#))

## 4.2.2 Enhancing policy, budget and expenditure coherence

**Target 17.14:** Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.

**Target 17.15:** Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

**Target 17.9:** Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.



Horizontal and vertical policy coherence gaps lead to implementation challenges for the SDGs. PEI experience indicates that a trickle-down effect between national, sector and subnational policies cannot be assumed when it comes to objectives related to sustainable development. Moreover, policies are often not coordinated across sectors, resulting in actions that are at cross purposes. Exacerbating the situation, many countries have inadequate coordination and monitoring mechanisms between national development plans and

budget and expenditure processes. Changes in policy priorities do not automatically result in changed budget and expenditure priorities. Ultimately, if expenditure patterns are not changed, improvements in social, environmental and economic outcomes for people and planet will not be achieved.

A UN-led working group is developing a framework for measuring and reporting on mechanisms that countries have in place for policy coherence supported by adequate and sustainable financial resources. This framework will be instrumental in guiding country efforts to achieve policy coherence for sustainable development. In the meantime, following are recommendations based on PEI Africa experience for tools and approaches that can be used to accelerate policy, budget and expenditure coherence efforts for sustainable development:

- **Reform institutions and ensure a conducive political-economy.** Sustainable development requires institutional reforms and a conducive political-economy context. 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. Substantive capacity building for national decision-makers on policy coherence and integrated approaches to sustainable development is also essential for SDG implementation design. ([Lesson 1](#), [Lesson 4](#))
- **Ministries of planning and finance should take the lead in sustainable development.** These ministries should assume a lead role in promoting a balanced approach to economic, environmental and social development across sectors and districts. Better incentive structures for coordination need to be put in place and sector silos broken down. ([Lesson 3](#), [Lesson 5](#))
- **Modify existing public decision-making tools and approaches.** 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 and budget guidelines—have been highlighted in this report and can inspire further innovations. ([Lesson 5](#), [Lesson 7](#), [Lesson 11](#))
- **Budget codes that track both budgets and expenditures on poverty, gender, health, environment and climate can help improve monitoring and justify the need for higher investments in sustainable development.** These codes can improve the evidence and levels of awareness on what public funds

are used for and how effective and efficient (and sometimes how equitable) the results are. ([Lesson 11](#), [Lesson 14](#))

- **Ensure that sustainable development interventions are prioritized during budget shortfalls.** Linking sustainable development policy objectives to the budget by strengthening planning and budgeting coordination mechanisms can ensure that such objectives are prioritized and costed and that performance is tracked. More needs to be done to analyse the cross-sectoral impact of expenditure, e.g. what effect does increased expenditure on the environment have on poverty, to motivate and up-scale integrated actions. ([Lesson 13](#), [Lesson 14](#), [Lesson 15](#), [Lesson 16](#))
- **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 the needed financial resources and partnerships for the goals. ([Lesson 12](#), [Lesson 16](#))

### 4.3 PEI Africa as a successful model for revitalized UN reform

UN reform is under way, with a focus on improving the effectiveness and coherence of UN delivery at the country level. This includes strengthening both the role of the UN Resident Coordinator and a culture of results-based management. PEI Africa has been identified as a model for UN reform and referred to as One UN in action since 2006. It has been held up as a template for how UNDP and UN Environment should work together.

The lessons and experiences of PEI Africa centred around systems, leadership and culture can offer some recommendations that are highly applicable to the UN reform agenda:

**“I do not want to hear you talk of UNEP, I do not want to hear you talk of UNDP; as far as I am concerned, you are all UN and you are here to support my country”  
—former Minister of State for Environment, Rwanda**

- **Committing to and adopting joint programming.** Real, collegial and energetic commitment to joint programming by staff and management at all levels is needed. 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. UN inter-agency projects should adopt joint programming models in which project budgets, document formats, reporting and approval procedures are channelled through one modality.
- **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 (IFAD, n.d.). This reflects that not only results-based systems are needed but also a results-based culture (Bester, 2016).
- **Building partnerships.** Agenda 2030 highlights the importance of partnership to the achievement of the SDGs. 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 is unlikely to be able to adequately fund implementation at the country level, but it can bring government and donors together and take the lead in drawing up a joint Agenda 2030 implementation support plan. The UN should focus on building partnership with donors from the earliest stages of SDG support projects.



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