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United Nations Development Programme

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY THEMATIC TRUST FUND 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

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FOREWORD: MOVING TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, recognized that an era of transformative change is upon us. We can no longer continue down a path of unbalanced patterns of consumption and production, with gaping inequities and the inefficient use of scarce natural resources. We cannot hope for human well-being and irreversible poverty reduction in the midst of environmental degradation and destruction.

The conference underlined that we must leave the time of treating the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development as isolated pillars and instead take an integrated approach. When actions to advance economic and social progress accompany those to protect the environment, developmental gains for all can be sustained.

Both Rio+20 and more recent global discussions on the post-2015 development agenda have affirmed that sustainable development is about making links. Environmental protection has ties to employment, education, political participation and gender equality, for example. Energy production has a profound impact on the environment through greenhouse gas emissions, and is vital to human development.

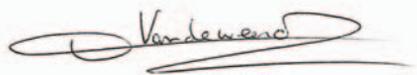
Other links include those across the institutions that traditionally and separately work on different aspects of sustainable development, between countries and the global commons, among many public and private partners, and even between short and long term goals.

UNDP, with its long history of development support in over 170 countries around the world, is taking these connections to heart in its forthcoming strategic plan, where sustainable development is a primary focus. The organization's Environment and Energy Group has stood behind the plan's shift to integrated programme areas, and has often spearheaded new and integrated approaches as a regular witness to how closely environmental and development issues interact.

The Group's Environment and Energy Thematic Trust Fund (EETTF), the subject of this report, is an existing funding mechanism that has as its main objectives to bridge diverse issues, work across practices and regions, and be innovative and catalytic. It deliberately seeks to invest in new approaches and learning. And as an active supporter of programmes in different environmental and geographical areas, it fosters collaboration and cross-fertilization, across the global, national and local levels, from capacity building to gender inclusion while providing livelihoods for the poor and the vulnerable through sustainable management of natural resources.

I am pleased to present this report, which this year focuses on a few key examples of how the EETTF in 2012 propelled progress towards sustainable development and the integrated and focused approach proposed for the next strategic plan. The achievements build on those reported in previous annual reports of the EETTF and further support the implementation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2013.

The Environment and Energy Group is grateful for the contributions that have been made to the Environment and Energy trust fund, and even more so for the clear improvements in human and environmental well-being that stem from them.



Veerle Vandeweerd

Director, Environment and Energy Group
United Nations Development Programme

OVERVIEW

Rio+20 highlighted the urgency of shifting the world towards sustainable development. Only by linking the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development can we ensure that we live within planetary boundaries. Otherwise, we risk reversing decades of hard-won development gains, and depriving future generations of full opportunities to live and thrive.

Reflecting this understanding is a 2012 world-wide survey conducted in the framework of the QCPR which reported that a vast majority of developing countries see the environment and sustainable development as the foremost priority for United Nations support.¹ UNDP has long been a leading provider of this assistance and requests for its support only continues to grow. Demands are outstripping available resources. Currently, we aid 150 countries in linking strategies and implementing programmes that advance both human development and environmental stewardship. Assistance in this area rose by more than 50 percent between 2008 and 2012.

In all countries, sustainable development could not just be an aspiration, but a feasible goal. Towards that end, UNDP works to embed the key principles of sustainable development in all levels of development debate and action, from the local to the global levels. Within countries, we help develop appropriate institutions, expertise, plans and policies, and financial mechanisms to forward an integrated approach towards sustainability.

The EETTF plays an important role in the quality and responsiveness of UNDP programmes on environment and energy. It offers relatively fast and flexible access to funds for initiatives that are innovative and/or promise to catalyse far-reaching changes. Small, carefully chosen investments can generate big impacts, as shown in this report. Because of the EETTF, different areas of UNDP work are better aligned and coordinated—core to effectively assisting sustainable development.

In 2012 EETTF continued to support the UNDP 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, with four key result areas: mainstreaming environment and energy into development, mobilizing environmental finance, promoting adaptation to climate change, and expanding access to environmental and energy services for the poor. Activities to achieve these goals include policy advice and advocacy, strategic planning, the sharing of new thinking and knowledge, and the fostering of human and institutional capacities, often geared towards helping countries make sound policy and investment choices. In many cases, the fund aids in linking national programmes with global policy processes, both to broaden space for country perspectives on the international stage, and to encourage national actions consistent with global commitments.

Since 2011, resource constraints have shrunk the scope of EETTF activities. This has been both a concern and an opportunity to define a more strategic focus. There has been a shift towards innovative programme areas that work across sectors (environment, resilience, capacity building, poverty reduction, governance) and are most in demand by countries, namely climate change and the mainstreaming of environment and energy in development plans and actions.

1 Report of the Secretary-general on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System. The survey carried out to prepare the report involved 111 developing countries.



Santona Begum harvests okra in Gaibanda, Bangladesh. © IFAD/GMB Akash

Funds have been targeted to activities with a greater chance of impact and successful replication. Policy advocacy offers the possibility for setting agendas that influence a wide array of actions, moving beyond the project-by-project approach. Capacity development allows change to take root and continue over the long term. Bringing people from different countries together helps them learn from each other to solve common problems. Partnerships result in closer coordination and collaboration, and by pooling funds, activities and accomplishments can be scaled up and replicated.

This report presents five stories highlighting some EETTF-supported activities in 2012. A full list of results supported by the EETTF appears in the annex as well as the progress against the 2012 indicators and targets. The main text focuses on how the fund, for example, made meaningful contributions to Rio+20, such as through a massive global dialogue and the creation of a platform to register conference commitments for sustainable development—both activities were the first of their type. Other resources went towards supporting the launch of the UN Secretary-General’s Sustainable Energy for All initiative and the initiation of related national plans. While the Mainstreaming of Sound Management of Chemicals’ programme came to a close in 2012, as part of a drive for more targeted EETTF support, it has aided 12 nations to significantly improve oversight in this area.

OVERVIEW

A growing number of countries are equipped to access financing so they can better afford the huge costs of mitigating and adapting to climate change. Five countries are piloting the innovative Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review developed in part with fund resources; for the first time, it allows an assessment of spending on climate change against national development objectives. Local governments in several countries have explored new strategies for climate risk assessments, vulnerability mapping and planning to increase resilience.

The EETTF continues to back knowledge products that are often unique resources, such as a toolkit on green growth requested by the G20, and the first guidebook on environmental financing tools. Support in 2012 went to some of the first regional dialogues around the emerging loss and damage agenda in the area of climate change.

All EETTF activities in the end speak to the heart of the UNDP vision—to help countries reduce poverty and exclusion through sustainable development. Moving forward, the fund will continue to make essential contributions, strategically leveraging investments that, step by step, help fuel the transformative changes that a sustainable future requires.

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