

Environment, Politics, and Poverty

Lessons from a Review of PRSP Stakeholder Perspectives



Canadian
International
Development
Agency

Agence
canadienne de
développement
international

DFID

Department for
International
Development

gtz



commissioned by:

Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

IDS 

Canada 

Environment, Politics, and Poverty

Lessons from a Review of PRSP Stakeholder Perspectives

SYNTHESIS REVIEW

Linda Waldman

with contributions from

A. Barrance, R.F. Benítez Ramos, A. Gadzekpo, O. Mugenyi,
Q. Nguyen, G. Tumushabe, and H. Stewart

2005

© Institute of Development Studies, 2005

Catalogue No. CD4-31/2005E
ISBN 0-662-41667-8

Cover photo: © GTZ/Eva Hartmann

Printed in Canada

Suggested Reference

Linda Waldman with contributions from A. Barrance, R.F. Benítez Ramos, A. Gadzekpo, O. Mugenyi, Q. Nguyen, G. Tumushabe & H. Stewart. 2005. *Environment, Politics, and Poverty: Lessons from a Review of PRSP Stakeholder Perspectives. Synthesis Review*. Study initiated under the Poverty Environment Partnership (PEP), and jointly funded and managed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom, and German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ).

This document is also available in French, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Other Studies in this Series: Country Reviews

(Studies were initiated under PEP and jointly funded and managed by CIDA, DFID, and GTZ.)

Ghana Country Review

A. Gadzekpo and L. Waldman. *"I have heard about it, but have never seen it": Environmental Considerations in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy*. 2005.

Honduras Country Review

R.F. Benítez Ramos, A. Barrance and H. Stewart. *Have the lessons of Mitch been forgotten?: The Critical Role of Sustainable Natural Resource Management for Poverty Reduction in Honduras*. 2005.

Uganda Country Review

O. Mugenyi, G. Tumushabe and L. Waldman. *"My voice is also there": The Integration of Environmental and Natural Resources into the Uganda Poverty Eradication and Action Plan*. 2005.

Vietnam Country Review

Q. Nguyen and H. Stewart. *"The analysis of poverty-environment linkages is very weak...": The PRSP Process and Environment – the Case of Vietnam*. (Also available in Vietnamese). 2005.

The above documents can be downloaded from the following websites:

www.povertyenvironment.net and www.ids.ac.uk.

Abbreviations

BMUs	Beach Management Units
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DAs	District Assemblies
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ENR SWG	Environment and Natural Resources Sector Working Group
ENRS	Environment and Natural Resources Sector
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation Agency
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PAF	Poverty Action Fund
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PEP	Poverty Environment Partnership
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PTF	Poverty Task Force
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SIP	Sector Investment Plan
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vii
PREFACE	ix
Section One	
Introduction	1
Section Two	
Environmental stakeholder participation in PRSP processes	4
Section Three	
Environmental stakeholder motivations for mainstreaming environment and poverty linkages in the PRSPs	11
Section Four	
PRSP conceptualizations of environmental concerns as linked to poverty reduction	12
Section Five	
Obstacles to mainstreaming environment and poverty linkages in the PRSPs	16
Section Six	
New and expanded activities for environmental agencies	19
Section Seven	
Funding possibilities and the implementation of policy	20
Section Eight	
Sectoral implementation activities with integrated environmental concerns	23
Section Nine	
To what extent has an environmental component been integrated in the monitoring system underway for the PRSP?	25
Section Ten	
PRSP lessons and recommendations	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY	32

Executive Summary

This report examines the processes associated with the incorporation of environmental issues into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in Ghana, Honduras, Uganda, and Vietnam. It argues that environmental resources have generally been regarded as neutral resources that have existed since time immemorial. In examining the mainstreaming of environmental issues in PRSPs, the research noted many instances of inclusion. However, this is highly selective: there is a tendency for PRSPs to reproduce narratives that seek technical solutions and to exclude those that draw attention to politicized aspects of the environment. PRSP narratives project an illusion of natural resources that require better management and enhanced legislation to ensure that poor people benefit, while overlooking highly political struggles over environmental control and rights to resources. In Uganda and Honduras, there is some evidence of the incorporation of more “political” narratives that begin to address questions of resource access and the particular relationship between civil society and government. This incorporation reflects the nature of PRSP participation in these countries, which has provided some, albeit limited, opportunity for civil society organizations to question government policy.

In all four countries, the PRSP process of mainstreaming environmental issues has provided a range of opportunities to donors, government agencies, and civil society. In **Vietnam**: the inclusion of environmental issues in the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) appears to have been driven by donor influence and government concern. There is only limited NGO participation related to environmental issues. The media has, however, played a proactive role in creating public awareness of environment and poverty linkages and placing pressure on the government of Vietnam to address instances of extreme environmental degradation. In addition, the process of developing national planning documents has modestly increased the profile of environment and poverty linkages in government circles. In **Ghana**: participation for environmental NGOs and government agencies was limited in the Ghana

Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) but enhanced through the Strategic Environmental Assessment. There has been some participation by civil society, but people who voice alternative narratives and are critical of the state have generally been excluded. In **Uganda**: the first Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) dealt with environmental issues in a similar manner to Vietnam’s Interim PRSP and Ghana’s GPRS. Subsequent developments led to a stronger environmental component in the 2000 PEAP, with grass-roots consultation and NGO advocacy. The 2004 PEAP demonstrates strong mobilization around environmental issues but, as in Vietnam, this relies on donor support and partnerships with government and environmental stakeholders. In **Honduras**: strong civil society concern about environmental and resource management issues has been driven by previous environmental disasters, especially Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Civil society and government agencies participated through the “sector commissions” and pushed environmental issues. The new government (elected in 2002) has, however, decided to close the environmental sector commission (and others) in order to focus the country’s development strategy on a limited number of sector wide approaches (or SWAs). The PRSP commitment to environmental improvements has thus been largely overlooked.

In all four countries examined, PRSPs have also created new possibilities for environmental issues to be seriously considered by policy-makers within government. In particular, “weaker” ministries and environmental NGOs have benefited. In most instances, however, donor support is required to ensure that environmental issues receive continued attention once the PRSP consultation and drafting processes are complete. Despite creating new possibilities, these participatory mechanisms for decision-making are still far from perfect. More needs to be done to enhance relations across sectors and ministries within government. In particular, a focus on decentralization and further case-by-case examination of what this entails is necessary for sustained implementation of PRSP policy.

All four countries' PRSP documents do, to different degrees, address environmental issues. The process of mainstreaming environmental issues has experienced several constraints, such as: exclusion from drafting processes, exclusion from or marginalization during financial processes, and changing government priorities. This hinders the translation of PRSP environmental priorities into implementation programs. Generally speaking, government spending on environmental issues receives low prioritization, especially when evaluated against other development "priorities" such as macro-economic growth and industrialization. For this reason, the decision of donors to support basket funding may, in the long term, undermine efforts at environmental regeneration. Monitoring environmental degradation has also hindered mainstreaming attempts with citizens in all four countries expressing doubts over government institutions' capacities and resources to monitor and implement environmental regulation. Government institutional capacity has, however, to be understood in the context of broader political arrangements: particularly a lack of public confidence in general government capacities; political bias and corruption, the distribution of resources as political favours, elite ownership, and the marginalization of local stakeholders.

This report thus argues that, in general, the rhetoric of participation allows PRSPs to gloss over the reasons why certain people are poor and why environmental areas are being degraded. This neglect of basic political and economic fundamentals and the failure to deal with inequality undermines both economic development and poverty reduction initiatives. Opening up PRSPs to deliberation over questions concerning rights, ownership, and control suggests that PRSPs might have to ask different questions about environmental resources. Rather than exploring what the environmental problems are (primarily in relation to poor people but not as defined by them), such an exercise would explore different definitions of environmental problems and would seek to mediate between various different sets of vested interest—between extractive industries, people who live on the land, traditional leaders, the government, and so on—seeking to find ways of working together to mutually benefit from and protect natural resources. Such an approach would suggest that, ultimately, new types of participation may have to be considered. These may include forms of participation that legally enshrine citizens' opportunities to engage in PRSPs and to express their concerns, coupled with the formalization of governments' responsibilities to address these concerns.

Preface

This report is a synthesis of findings from case studies of four countries and background research on the integration of environmental considerations into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). The report aims to contribute to the debate on pro-poor development and environmental issues in order to improve poor people's livelihoods and to contribute toward the sustainable use of natural resources while also informing aid relationships promoted by the PRSP approach.

Experience to date had shown that while environmental references had been included in PRSPs, there was little understanding of how these references had come to be included. Nor was there adequate discussion on the implementation of environmental concerns once included in PRSPs. Research addressing these issues was carried out in Ghana, Honduras, Vietnam, and Uganda between August and October 2004. This report presents the results of this study. The research was aimed at reviewing the drafting and implementing process of each country's Poverty Reduction Strategy to analyze if, why, and how pro-poor environmental¹ policies, activities, and outcomes are being integrated. The research also examined how the PRSP process has affected environment-related policy choices, institutional changes, staffing and budgets, public debate, and civil society awareness and, ultimately, improved environmental outcomes.

This research project was initiated and conceptualized in the framework of the Poverty Environment Partnership (PEP), an informal network of about 30 donor and non-governmental organizations that works on strengthening the nexus between poverty reduction

and environmental protection in development cooperation. Since it was founded in 2001, it has served as a forum for exchange of experiences, conceptual and analytical work, coordination of support to partner countries, and the development of indicators and more effective monitoring of environmental performances. Within the PEP, CIDA, DFID, and GTZ funded and managed the research process.

The research was conducted by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Sussex, UK, in collaboration with national and international consultants. The following national consultants provided invaluable local expertise and knowledge: Audrey Gadzekpo (in Ghana), Onesmus Mugenyi and Godber Tumushabe (in Uganda), René Benítez Ramos and Adrian Barrance (in Honduras), and Quang Nguyen (in Vietnam), working closely with international consultants, Howard Stewart and Linda Waldman.

Finally, the help and generosity of the people of Ghana, Honduras, Uganda, and Vietnam is greatly appreciated. Many people gave freely of their time and shared their experiences, including those from government departments and donor agents who provided information on how environmental issues were being addressed and on supporting literature. Representatives from civil society organizations, from environmental NGOs, and the media willingly discussed sensitive issues. Similarly, traditional leaders, rural residents, people affected by environmental abuses, and urban citizens shared their thoughts. Without these contributions from people of Ghana, Honduras, Uganda, and Vietnam, this research would not have been possible.

1. The term "environment" is widely defined to cover major natural resources (water, land, forests, fisheries and coastal resources etc.) and environmental hazards to water, land and air (both indoor and outdoor).

Section One: Introduction

This research report examines the environment and poverty linkages in the PRSPs of four countries. Uganda, Ghana, Honduras, and Vietnam have configurations of poverty and environments that are peculiar to each country. Nonetheless, all four countries experience high levels of rural poverty and tend to rely on extractive industries such as mining and logging to generate wealth. They have all devised PRSPs in order to access the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative, while Vietnam is able to demonstrate greater independence from international donors.

The four countries demonstrate a range of different government structures and have different relationships with international donors. Uganda, Honduras and Ghana have democracies which allow citizens different degrees of involvement in policy planning. In Uganda, President Museveni's "no party" political system aims to prevent sectarian politics and ethnic violence, but does not allow electoral competition. Ghana, one of Africa's success stories, established democratic governance in 1993. In December 2004, Ghana's fourth democratic election secured President Kufuor's second term of office. Honduras produced its PRSP under the governance of the Liberal Party President Carlos Flores Facussé in 2001, but elections in 2002 led to a new National Party government under President Ricardo Maduro. In contrast, Vietnam is ruled by a communist party with strong overlaps between the state and the Communist Party. Economic liberalization, introduced in 1986, created the context for a PRSP and increased government dialogue with international donors and NGOs.

All four countries researched have high levels of poverty with more than 20 percent of the population living on less than US\$1 per day (see Table 1). Vietnam has the largest population (81.3 million) and Honduras the smallest population (7 million). According to the World Bank List of Economies (July 1994), the African countries of Ghana and Uganda are both ranked as low income, with Ghana being a moderately indebted country and Uganda a less indebted country. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS)

aims to address its reliance on the environment (through agriculture, logging, and mining) and to improve the use of the environment in order to stimulate economic growth and pro-poor development. In Uganda, the country's natural resources are seen as the foundation for achieving national objectives of economic growth and poverty eradication. Uganda has, therefore, tried to deal with environmental issues. It was, for example, the first African country to introduce a national policy for wetland management. Honduras is ranked as a low middle income country which is moderately indebted. It is highly dependent on primary production—especially agriculture, forestry,



Children draw water from an old pump in Timdongsii, Ghana. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy aims to address its reliance on the environment and to improve the use of the environment in order to stimulate economic growth and pro-poor development.

Table 1: Country comparison of national statistics

	Ghana	Honduras	Uganda	Vietnam
Population	20.4 million	7 million	25.5 million	81.3 million
Gross National Income (per capita, 2002)	US\$270	US\$930	US\$240	US\$430
Population living in poverty (below US\$1/day)	40%	23.8%	38%	29%
Human Development Indicator Rank	131	115	146	112
Corruption Perception Index	70	106	113	100

Source: Country Profile pages of the World Bank (2004), GNI per capita from World Bank Development Indicators 2004, HDI from UNDP Human Development Report (2004), and Corruption Perceptions from Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (2003).

and mining—and susceptible to environmental damage through natural processes. The Honduras PRSP thus developed out of former poverty reduction plans, such as the Master Plan for Reconstruction and Transformation (MPRT) which was implemented after Hurricane Mitch swept the country in 1998. The Southeast Asia example, Vietnam, is ranked as a low income and less indebted country. Since launching its *Doi Moi* (renovation) policy in 1986, Vietnam has moved steadily from a command economy dominated by state central planning to a more decentralized system with a transitional market economy. This economic growth has been accompanied by increasing deterioration of environmental quality and natural resources.

Uganda, Vietnam, and Honduras are considered by the IMF and the World Bank to be “early PRSPs” in that these strategy documents were reviewed in 2002. Ghana, having had its PRSP reviewed in 2003, is considered a “recent PRSP” (IMF/WB, 2003). Uganda has completed three PRSPs and is, therefore, more experienced than the other three countries examined here. Given the spread of the four countries reviewed—one in Latin America, two in Africa and one in south-eastern Asia—in conjunction with their experiences of poverty, their high reliance on primary production, and the various styles of democracy, these countries are fairly representative of countries producing PRSPs on these continents. Nonetheless, as further research may show, significant differences between African and Asian government planning processes may affect

PRSPs and implementation processes. In terms of mainstreaming environmental links to poverty reduction, these countries have progressed and their full PRSPs tend to be considerable improvements on earlier Interim PRSPs (I-PRSPs) (Bojö and Reddy, 2002; 2003). Although, certain aspects remain overlooked, including gender relation and environmental use, indoor pollution, urban environment, and so forth, Ghana and Honduras have produced PRSPs which are considered to have mainstreamed some environmental issues. Uganda and Vietnam have been less successful at this process (Bojö and Reddy, 2002; 2003), although this does not take their most recent PRSPs into consideration.

Report argument and structure

This report synthesizes the four country studies in which additional detail and comprehensive arguments are available. Through qualitative research and comparison of the four countries, this report aims to demonstrate if, and why, different stakeholders see environmental issues as important to poverty reduction, to provide practice-oriented policy recommendations, and to present an indication of how PRSP policies have been implemented. The report argues that, because the creation of pro-poor environments should also address political and economic issues, some conventional indicators of implementation may be less relevant. What is significant is the changing of power relations that govern natural

resources. This is a long, time consuming process to which PRSPs may or may not contribute. The style in which a PRSP is constructed can address these economic and political relationships but often does not. This report argues that, in general, PRSPs are not helpful in this process and the mainstreaming of environment and poverty linkages often reinforces current power structures rather than creating contexts in which pro-poor environments can be considered or addressed.

The report is structured as follows: Section Two examines the environmental stakeholders who participated in the PRSP process while Section Three looks at some of their motivations for participation.

Section Four explores the conceptualizations of environment and poverty issues as included in the respective country PRSPs. It also contrasts this PRSP view with alternative understandings of environment and poverty linkages. Section Five looks at the obstacles to mainstreaming environmental issues while Section Six examines what new activities environmental agencies are undertaking. Sections Seven and Eight, respectively, explore the funding possibilities linked to the implementation of policy and sectoral implementation activities with environmental concerns. Finally, Section Nine discusses the monitoring of the environmental component of the PRSP, while Section Ten concludes the report with an examination of the key lessons learned for future implementation.

Section Two: Environmental stakeholder participation in PRSP processes

In all four countries, participation primarily involved government agencies (including natural resource ministries and departments), civil society organizations (particularly environmental NGOs and environmental stakeholders), international donors, and, to a more limited extent, local research institutions. In Ghana, Uganda, and Honduras, the primary actors in the PRSP process were government agencies, international donors, and civil society. In Vietnam, they tended to be government agencies and international donors.

Participation of government ministries and agencies

In all four countries, governments have experimented with the best way to deal with environmental concerns given their particular contexts (and at times external influences that have encouraged countries to follow a particular route). This means that environmental

concerns have sometimes been ignored in PRSPs, sometimes they have been clustered under one particular heading or pillar, sometimes they have been dealt with as crosscutting issues and on occasion, they have been seen as a separate sector in its own right (see Table 2 which provides an overview of how the different countries have dealt with environmental concerns). There is, without doubt, a sense in all countries that environmental awareness, knowledge, and capacity among government ministries have grown during these processes.

Governments' participation in the PRSP processes has focused on centralized arrangements. In three of the four countries, the PRSP process was overseen by centralized government ministries: in Ghana, the National Development Planning Commission; in Vietnam, the Ministry of Finance; and in Uganda, by the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and economic



Air quality is sampled on a street corner in Haiphong, Vietnam. Environmental awareness, knowledge, and capacity among government ministries have grown because of the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper-related processes.

Table 2: Country-specific approaches to environmental issues as contained within PRSPs

	Ghana	Honduras	Uganda	Vietnam
Interim PRSP	Environmental issues ignored	Separate theme	N/A	Consultation with poor households through PPAs, but environmental issues completely overlooked
First PRSP	Largely overlooked environmental issues, seen as “residuals”, and using an “add-on” approach	Separate theme through Environment Sector Commission; some civil society involvement through the presentation of a counter proposal	Very little civil society involvement; environmental issues largely overlooked or dealt with in an ad hoc manner	“Add-on” only in the infrastructure section
Additional processes enhancing environmental considerations	Mainstreamed in the SEA	Crosscutting through the development of SWAPs	PPA considered rural people’s definition of poverty and the significance of the environment for their livelihood	Steering committee to oversee implementation
Second PRSP	N/A	N/A	Environmental issues mainstreamed; PPAs contributed poor people’s perspectives; some NGO involvement	N/A
Third PRSP	N/A	N/A	Separate theme and mainstreamed	N/A

Development. In Honduras, the Social Cabinet of the Government² coordinated the production of the PRSP, establishing a National Technical Team³ to assist with preparation. In Ghana, Uganda and Vietnam, these central ministries tend to be strong ministries

that focus on economics, finance, and planning and which overlooked, during the first round of PRSPs (or sometimes I-PRSPs), the involvement of government environmental agencies. In Uganda, subsequent Poverty Eradication Action Plans (PEAPs) have

2. Ministry of the Presidency; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Labour and Social Security; Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Sports; Ministry of Technical Affairs and International Cooperation; National Agrarian Institute; and Honduran Social Investment Fund.

3. Ministry of Finance; Central Bank of Honduras; Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment; Family Allowance Program; Honduran Institute for Children and Families; National Women’s Institute; and the Housing Unit of the Ministry of Public Works, Transportation, and Housing.

formalized the involvement of environmental government agencies through the Environment and Natural Resources Sector (ENRS). In Honduras, the Sector Commissions initially included a specific sector to deal with environmental issues. Environmental issues were later converted to a crosscutting theme, challenging the capacity of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to affect developments in the remaining SWAp-based sector commissions. In Vietnam, issues were further complicated by a reorganization process, aimed at improving the capacity of central environmental agencies but, in so doing, also marginalizing them from the PRSP process.

Some additional ministries have been well placed to contribute to and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the PRSP process. For example, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, was not involved in the initial drafting of Ghana's PRSP but, because the ministry had access to specialized expertise through its prior relations with donors, it was in a position to respond quickly and to contribute in ways that complemented the ministry's own development plans. In Uganda, the agriculture ministry has continued to develop plans in much the same vein as before, while acknowledging the importance of environment and poverty linkages. The National Agricultural Advisory Services aims to increase farmers' access to information, knowledge and technology to improve crop yields. It has been largely unaffected by the PEAP's concern with environmental issues but has, as a result of the Environment and Natural Resources Sector Working Group's (ENR SWG's) determination to increase the profile of environmental and natural resources, sought to integrate environmental issues (despite the fact that farmers do not request this information). The Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development was similarly involved in the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS), but focused its environmental/poverty contribution on forest management.

Ultimately, spending ministries demonstrated that they did not need to focus on environment and poverty issues and they would integrate their work into the PRSPs without developing new approaches. Nonetheless, the PRSPs did also create some opportunities for weaker environmental ministries or sub-sectors. In Uganda, the Department of Fisheries Resources has been able to expand its ambit, to relocate itself within the ENRS (rather than within the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries), and to receive greater attention within government (discussed below). Similarly in Ghana, the GPRS and the subsequent implementation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), designed to overcome the GPRS's neglect of environment and poverty linkages, led to improved relations between the National Development Planning Commission and environmental agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, which will feed into future PRSPs.

In all four countries, the first round of PRSPs bypassed local, district, magisterial, or regional government authorities, despite the fact that they emphasized decentralization. In principle, this should open up policy spaces for rural and local people to participate. In Vietnam, there is little awareness of the CPRGS at the provincial level, most probably as a result of the limited scope for local government participation in the drafting process, while it is virtually unknown at the district and commune levels. Ghana's similar oversights were rectified by the SEA which strengthened relations between Ministers and District Assemblies and the centralized core that produced the GPRS. In Honduras, decentralization has become a source of potential conflict between local municipalities and centralized ministries. The 1990 Municipalities Law provided for the decentralization of natural resource regulation and management to municipal authorities while the Directorate of Environmental Management in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (SERNA) is

responsible for overseeing the formulation and support of Municipal Environment Units in every municipality in the country. In practice, however, AFE-COHDEFOR (state forestry authority – Honduran Corporation for Forestry Development) and SERNA have been reluctant to relinquish their control over environmental regulation, despite their often very limited capacities to fulfil this role.

Uganda’s local government agencies now have been provided with some autonomy. Decentralization, in this country, has gone further than devolving power to government ministries and has also addressed the fishing communities. It is the only example among the four countries examined which has transferred some power—supported with new legislation—that formalizes and legalizes local involvement in pro-poor development and in environmental conditions (discussed below).

Parliaments and PRSPs

Very few people made reference to the role of parliaments during this research. This may be partly because of the recognition that legislatures do not always function efficiently. In Africa, parliaments are not seen as democratic and, as a result, are often overlooked in the PRSP process (Eberlei and Henn, 2003: 11). In both Uganda and Ghana, members of parliament were consulted prior to the production of the PRSPs but seem to have had little specific input. Despite reservations about the degree to which environment and poverty linkages were addressed in the GPRS, parliamentary participation remained limited to a workshop “midway” through the process, which was said not to have changed anything. The Ugandan parliament is mandated to establish laws for the sustainable management of the environment⁴—a process which is difficult to ensure given competing definitions of illegal treatment of the environment (discussed in Section Five). In Ghana, international



Fishers land their catches on the shores of Lake Victoria near Entebbe, Uganda. The decentralization of Uganda’s fishing industry established incentives for poor people to manage their environmental resources in economically lucrative and sustainable ways.

donors insisted that the GPRS and the budget be passed by parliament. Initially, opposition members of parliament saw the CPRGS primarily as a government and World Bank initiative. From the perspective of one opposition member, the GPRS was “more of a funding document”, meant to secure donor support for Ghana. Members of parliament thus see themselves as not involved until donors expressed concern about parliament’s lack of involvement. The budget was subsequently presented to parliament for scrutiny and a small committee established within parliament to deal with GPRS-related issues.

4. Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, Article 245

Civil society participation

Across the four countries, outcomes have varied according to the extent and ways in which civil society organizations (CSOs) have participated in PRSP production processes. Ugandan civil society participation has presented a “common vision” of environmental concerns and developmental plans to government through the ENR SWG. The environmental stakeholders participating in the ENR SWG have been able to shape government policy to a limited extent, incorporating some alternative narratives about environmental problems and solutions.

Ghanaian civil society involvement has been limited to the endorsement of government actions. Formal GPRS consultations were made with a wide range of people, but the participation of environmental actors was circumscribed. NGO participation, alongside the involvement of religious bodies and traditional leaders, did not play any significant role in environmental issues. In the urban areas, broader civil society representation was also difficult to secure. Partnerships were thus limited to pro-government voices and have not provided space for alternative or conflicting views. Stakeholders who were established within Ghana’s poverty/environmental field, whose work directly addressed environmental concerns, and/or who were outspoken about government’s role in perpetuating environmental degradation, such as the Third World Network and the Federation for Environmental Journalists, were excluded from participation.

Honduran civil society has been very aware of environmental issues and has been prepared to articulate its viewpoints to government. In June 2003 and again a year later, thousands of people marched to the nation’s capital. These “Marches for Life” protested against the marginalization of local people’s interests from forestry policies and laws, the impacts of deforestation, the inadequacy of agrarian reform and the

privatization of water management and supply. These marches have occurred outside the formal “spaces” for participation, not only because these spaces have been reduced and rendered largely symbolic by the change in government and by a subsequent move to develop a SWAp, but also because participation within the formal “invited” spaces has proved unsatisfactory.

In Vietnam, Communist Party politics emphasize a socialist vision of welfare and equality (Piron and Evans, 2004). Communities and civil society do not have avenues through which to express independent opinions in government; their representation should occur through the party-state mechanism. Nonetheless, a small number of local agencies and NGOs were invited to participate in the CPRGS and in the preparation of “pro-poor environmental policies”. Limited contributions from Eco-Eco (Institute of Ecological Economy) and AENRP (Association for Environment and Natural Resources Protection) focused on poverty reduction rather than environment and poverty linkages because the level of awareness and understanding of the linkages was a constraining factor. International NGOs pressed for the greater involvement of local NGOs, despite the fact that these local NGOs were constrained by being few in number, not highly regarded by the Vietnamese government, and their contributions to environmental issues were very limited. Some important mass organizations, such as the Women’s Union, reviewed the CRPGS drafts but were not involved in writing the document. Other mass organizations⁵ (such as the Association of Journalists and its affiliated Vietnam Forum for Environmental Journalists, the Vietnam Association for Nature and Environment Protection, or the Vietnam Culture for the Environment) could have developed pro-poor environmental policies but were not invited to participate. Participation of civil society in Vietnam is, therefore, particularly limiting and restrictive.

5. Vietnam’s mass organizations are considered “grass-roots organizations” by the government. They are also closely affiliated with, and ultimately controlled by, the party-state structure.

Nonetheless, Vietnam's media has played a significant role outside of the CPRGS process and has highlighted environment and poverty awareness. Environmental reporting, now widespread on television, radio, and in some newspapers, has argued that environmental problems are increasingly challenging Vietnam's long-term development. On occasion, the Vietnamese press raises sensitive issues about how poor communities suffer from environmental degradation. This draws the attention of people and authorities to these issues and has also resulted in government actions of redress.

Participation of donor organizations

International donors were involved in mainstreaming environmental linkages to poverty issues in all four countries. In Ghana, donors played an important role in assisting with the production of the SEA and, as discussed below, in helping to promote SWAPs. In Uganda, donors were instrumental to the ENRS, not only in terms of financial and institutional support but also in drafting the final PEAP. This role might otherwise have been filled by civil society whose representatives were excluded from the drafting process and unable to defend their inputs. Similarly, in Honduras, donors were particularly significant in helping CSOs to be heard by PRSP organizers and providing support for civil society activities. In Vietnam, it is argued that the organizations that ultimately stood to gain the most from a participatory experience were, ironically, the international NGOs which had traditionally occupied a precarious position in Vietnam and have generally lacked access to the policy-making process, particularly at the central level (Pincus and Thang, 2004: 28). Their involvement in the Poverty Task Force (PTF), and their support for a "crosscutting" approach that jointly targets poverty reduction and environmental protection, led to the PTF being centrally involved with the Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) conducted in 12 provinces. It also ensured that, in the PPAs, consideration was given to how environmental issues can be related to Vietnamese experiences of poverty. This demonstrates a potential tension between donors' and

civil societies' roles: donors are placed in a difficult position of needing to be both proactively involved and supportive of civil society initiatives and also being sensitive to how their own involvement may prevent civil society participation.

Types of participation

Participation has been uneven in Honduras, Vietnam, Ghana, and Uganda where there has been a wide range of forms of "participation". Widescale "participation" is primarily information dissemination. In Ghana, for example, widespread participation overlooks environmental issues but secures a mandate for "country ownership" and consultation. Although this is the closest PRSP participation comes to widescale negotiation, it does not provide a forum for large numbers of people mobilizing through grass roots to articulate their views. As Honduras demonstrates, such public protests tend to remain outside of the PRSP ambit for dialogue. Consultation with the rural poor, mostly through PPAs, provides more success. In Uganda, this allowed for the incorporation of alternative environmental narratives in the PEAP, whereas in Vietnam, PPAs overlooked environmental issues. In general, rural populations tend to have only indirect participation, through PPAs. In Uganda, Ghana, and Vietnam, rural poor people received only a few opportunities to influence the PRSP process and no opportunities to discuss environmental issues. Honduras, influenced by the experience of Hurricane Mitch, provides an exception with rural people taking an active interest in environmental issues as defined in the PRSP (discussed below).

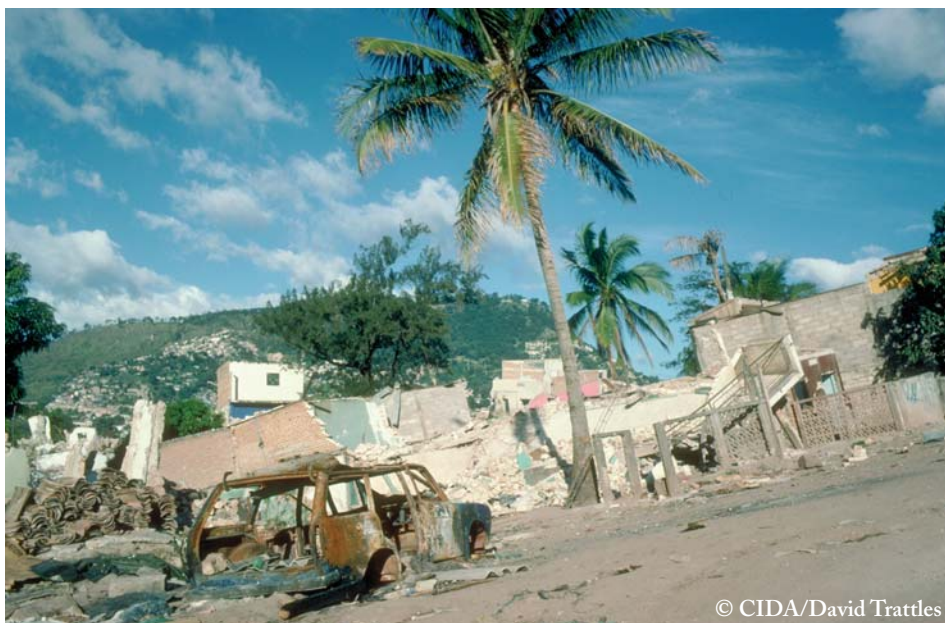
Participation involving CSOs generally includes the opportunity to review drafts of the PRSPs. Organizations in Ghana, Honduras, and Vietnam had occasions to review (English) drafts of the respective country's PRSP. However, in both Ghana and Honduras, limited time was allocated (as little as 24 hours in the case of Honduras). This, coupled with the language barrier, had the effect of reducing the possibilities for careful critique, discussion, and subsequent involvement.

Government departments in Ghana also found their participation limited to the reviewing of draft documents. There is one isolated example of a strong government department (the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in Ghana) being able to take advantage of this level of participation and use it to develop greater involvement in the policy-making process.

Consultation workshops were used in Vietnam, Uganda, and Ghana to facilitate participation. These workshops can be relatively large (up to 1000 people in Uganda) or quite small (involving about 100 Vietnamese policy-makers and practitioners from government agencies, donors, and NGOs). Such stakeholder workshops create a sense of involvement, but tend to be used to report back information. This limits the degree to which civil society actors and other stakeholders can participate in the actual production of government policy on environmental issues. Honduran CSOs, however, used this form of participation successfully to develop a counter proposal to that

country's PRSP. These four layers of participation can all be seen as "invited spaces" in which delegates have little say over the structure of their participation or the agendas.

The most effective space for civil society and government agency participation occurs when numbers are reduced sufficiently to allow a process of engagement with coordinating government ministries and donors, but are not so limited as to exclude civil society actors. At this level, civil society engagement is also formally recognized, providing stakeholders with a prescribed role in policy-making. In Honduras, sector commissions were utilized to encourage dialogue with CSOs during the production of the PRSP. This provided environmental stakeholders with a legitimate space in which to engage government and to attempt to influence environmental policy-making.⁶ In Uganda, Sector Working Groups provided a similar, legitimate, and formally recognized role for civil society actors and environmental NGOs.



In 1998 Hurricane Mitch caused mudslides that destroyed an area of Tegucigalpa, capital of Honduras. Strong civil society concern about environmental and resource management issues in Honduras has been driven by previous environmental disasters, especially Hurricane Mitch.

6. This was not always successful, and some stakeholders withdrew from formal negotiations.

Section Three: Environmental stakeholder motivations for mainstreaming environment and poverty linkages in the PRSPs

Environmental organizations, civil society, and government agencies in Uganda and Honduras have proactively lobbied for the inclusion of environmental issues in the PRSPs. The drivers for mainstreaming environmental issues in each of these two countries are different. In Honduras, it stems from a long-standing concern about environmental disaster and vulnerability, coupled with widely held beliefs that government policy is not adequately addressing environment and poverty linkages and is, instead, facilitating economic development that undermines pro-poor environmental initiatives. In Uganda, the drive for mainstreaming environment and poverty linkages in the PEAP stems from the realization, developed through civil society and government agency involvement over successive PEAPs, that receiving PEAP mention and prioritization is essential to secure future financial support from both donors and government finance departments.

In both Ghana and Vietnam, the significance of mainstreaming environmental issues as a means of poverty reduction has developed alongside the development of the PRSP—rather than forming a strong focus of the PRSP—but strong drivers for its inclusion have operated largely outside the PRSP formulation process. In Ghana the GPRS has been supplemented with an SEA and this will facilitate mainstreaming in successive PRSPs. In Vietnam, environmental issues have been addressed through the joint government/donor/civil society PTF which supported PPAs in 12 provinces and which included consideration of environment and poverty linkages at commune level. As mentioned above, donors provided strong motivation for the inclusion of environment and poverty linkages.

Section Four: PRSP conceptualizations of environmental concerns as linked to poverty reduction

All four countries have addressed environmental concerns, to a greater or lesser extent, as part of their broader concern with poverty in their respective PRSPs. The Ugandan, Honduran, Vietnamese, and Ghanaian PRSPs all reinforce the narrative⁷ that poor people are trapped in a vicious cycle forcing them to use environmental resources beyond sustainable levels (Table 3). This leads to environmental degradation and, in turn, deepens their poverty. This narrative is a “comfortable” way of framing the debate on poverty

and environmental issues. It does not, however, address the relationships of resource access and control that shape poor people’s practices, overlooks ways in which poor people contribute positively to the environment, including through indigenous knowledge and practice (Leach and Forsyth, 1998), and ignores the effects of elites on the environment. Furthermore, it disregards questions of marginalization and while it may suit governments to put blame on disempowered citizens, it leads to injustice and missed opportunities.

Table 3: Shared environmental narratives in country PRSPs

PRSP narratives	Ghana	Honduras	Uganda	Vietnam
“The vicious cycle: poverty causes environmental degradation which in turn entrenches poverty”.	✓	✓	✓	✓
“Environmental polices and the development of a system of state administration will safeguard the environment and prevent deterioration while economic growth takes place”.	✓	✓		✓
“Sustainable management of natural resources is compatible with economic profits and social equity”.	✓			✓
“Economic growth is more important than environmental issues at the moment”.				✓
“Statistical analyses, global targets and links to global processes”.			✓	
“The large scale migration of people causes rural and urban environmental degradation”.		✓		
“Land intensification and rural industrialization are the only ways to diminish the negative environmental impacts created by existing land use practices and rural livelihoods under conditions of pro-population growth”.	✓			
“There are always trade-offs between economic growth and environmental protection. These must be dealt with through rational, technical assessment and audits”.	✓			
“The environment: an asset for rural livelihoods”.			✓	

7. PRSP views of environmental problems tend to take the form of narratives or brief “stories” that identify a problem, its causes, and possible solutions.

Table 4: Cross-country comparison of alternative narratives

Alternative narratives	Ghana	Honduras	Uganda	Vietnam
“Economic growth enables the elites to do more damage to the environment”.	✓	✓	✓	✓
“Economic growth places pressure on the environment and introduces new costs which are borne by poor people”.	✓			✓
“State-led economic policy is putting pressure on the environment for the promotion / lack of regulation of extractive industry”.	✓			✓
“Multiple resource use is a means of securing rural people’s livelihoods while increasing their earning potential”.	✓		✓	
“It is inequality, rather than poverty, that leads to environmental degradation”.		✓		
“Nationalization is not an effective means of managing environmental resources. Local, municipal and regional approaches to managing poverty and the environment should play a greater role in environmental management and poverty reduction”.		✓		
“A cost-benefit analysis also requires local deliberation on trade-offs, control, and access”.	✓			
“Land as equity will disenfranchise poor people. It is, therefore, necessary to have some local rights which allow for security and effective compensation mechanisms”.	✓			

These mainstream PRSP narratives are, in turn, challenged by counter narratives put forward by civil society and other stakeholders. In all four countries, alternative narratives (not included in the PRSPs) point out the role elites have played, and continue to play, in environmental degradation (Table 4). It is striking that only Uganda has managed to integrate some version of this alternative narrative in its PEAP and that this has happened only in its most recent PRSP.

Narratives in the PRSPs for Ghana and Honduras have emphasized the importance of technology, modernization, and sustainable management of natural

resources as a means of addressing environmental degradation. In Vietnam, a more extreme form of this narrative is that development activities necessarily lead to negative environmental effects. Short-term environmental sustainability must therefore be sacrificed for economic growth and poverty reduction to occur. When Vietnam is economically developed and wealthy, it will be able to address sustainable environmental management. These narratives have been countered by a number of alternative narratives emphasizing multiple resource use and environmental dependence as crucial components of poor people’s livelihoods. These alternative narratives have generally not been articulated in the PRSPs although Vietnam’s

CPRGS makes a brief reference to poor communities and Honduras's PRSP does incorporate some aspects of civil society's counter proposal. Again, Uganda is an exception, having stressed the importance of Uganda's rural livelihoods being environmentally based in the 2000 PEAP. This drew on the PPAs widely conducted in rural Uganda and which framed the poor as the "new experts" on poverty.

Uganda's attempts to address environmental issues in relation to its poverty reduction strategy are more complex than those of Ghana, Vietnam, and Honduras. The introduction of some alternative narratives into the PEAP is a positive sign which reflects both the PPA and the work of civil society actors and environmental activists. Nevertheless, the incorporation of alternative narratives has been inconsistent over time, with different narratives

appearing in different PEAPs. Environmental activists have been unable to sustain alternative narratives. Most activism has focused on contributing to and deepening the core narrative through statistical analyses and through the complementary analysis of global environmental processes.

The research noted many instances of inclusion of environmental issues in PRSPs. However, this is highly selective: there is a tendency for PRSPs to reproduce narratives that seek technical solutions, and to exclude those that draw attention to the highly politicized aspects of environmental control and rights to resources. Although environmental resources form the basis of material wealth in all four countries, and issues of poverty and inequality are intimately bound up with control of environmental



Ugandan farmers participate in a workshop in Kiboga. Participatory Poverty Assessments framed the poor as the "new experts" on poverty, resulting in a Poverty Eradication Action Plan stressing the importance of Uganda's rural livelihoods being environmentally based.

resources, the narratives in the PRSPs contradict this view and project an illusion of natural resources being a public good that requires better management and enhanced legislation to ensure that all people benefit.

PRSPs do not generally aim to increase poor people's control or management capacity over environmental resources (cf. Reed, 2004). Although attempts to reduce poverty—while simultaneously addressing environmental issues—should examine the complex dynamics between the rural poor, other powerful actors, and the environment in specific localities, PRSPs seldom undertake such initiatives. Generally speaking, PRSPs do not focus on questions of improved management or on poor people's access to natural resources. The reproduction of conventional narratives about environmental problems and the nature of “participation”—in which governments decide who participates and on what terms—militate against understanding the environment in political and economic terms. This “non-political” approach is reinforced by the production of technical environmental reports (such as the SEA in Ghana and the report on the *Role of Environment in Increasing Growth and Reducing Poverty* in Uganda). In Ghana, Uganda, Honduras, and Vietnam, the cumulative effect of the PRSP process has been to reinforce a “crisis narrative” suggesting that the environment is in a state of serious degradation and to attempt to resolve this crisis by addressing poor people's behaviour and lifestyles. Nowhere in these PRSP processes has there been sustained discussion of issues of power, or of how policy and power interrelate.

As articulated in the alternative narratives, the perpetuation of environmental abuses by elites—often involved in or closely linked to governments—is a feature in all four of the countries studied. In

Honduras, new draft legislation for the forestry sector was heavily criticized by civil society actors who believed that it favoured private sector industry and made inadequate provision for the interests and participation of local communities. In Uganda, protection of wetlands did not prevent industries from polluting these areas with chemicals or developing shopping complexes there. The Vietnamese approach, which emphasizes that economic development may have to be detrimental to the environment, at least in the short term, may however, prove to have long-term consequences for environment and poverty linkages. The challenge facing the Ghanaian government is to find a way of promoting extractive industries (timber and mining) while sustaining good environment and poverty practices. The solution has been to promote a “win-win” approach in which gold mines rehabilitate and reforest lands decimated through mining. The challenge is to use extractive industries to enhance the livelihoods of the majority of Ghanaians rather than benefiting elite interests. To achieve this, however, it is necessary to address the political and economic interests involved. This requires a recognition and understanding of the relationships within and between forestry and local agriculture; and of illegal gold mining, illegal lumbering, and formalized mining and forestry. It further requires an appreciation how these economic interests intersect with the state structures that define certain activities as illegal and encourage others, and an understanding of how state policy is shaped in “informal non-political spaces”.

Section Five: Obstacles to mainstreaming environment and poverty linkages in the PRSPs

Obstacles associated with the nature of participation, the language in which policy documents are produced, and the length of time available for consultancy have already been mentioned in Section Two. This section also pointed to how environmental ministries and agencies tend to have weak institutional links, both with other government departments (and in particular with those coordinating the PRSP process) and with donors, which can also inhibit their ability to participate.

Exclusion from the drafting process

A primary obstacle in all four countries examined concerns the drafting process of the PRSP documents. In all four countries, this process was highly restricted with government planning departments, sometimes working closely with international donors, taking control. In none of the four countries are civil society or grass-roots organizations involved in the drafting process. In Vietnam, rather late in the drafting process of the CPRGS, the National Environmental Agency developed a high-level task force (influenced primarily by government and donors) to make recommendations on the integration of environmental concerns. However, community and grass-roots organizations played no role in this task force. In both Honduras and Uganda, CSOs complained that their submissions were altered in the drafting process or not taken up at all.

Financial exclusions

A second obstacle concerns financial arrangements. The final innermost area of PRSP decision-making is budget allocations, where civil society stakeholders are excluded. It is here that the PRSP priorities are turned into projects with financial backing for their implementation. This is, therefore, where significant decisions are made and where civil society has the least opportunity for participation. These decisions are also affected by the financial arrangements the respective governments have with donors. The use of

SWAps, for example, has significant ramifications on what takes place in budget meetings. In Ghana, environmental ministries are institutionally weak and are disadvantaged both in the budget planning processes and in their ability to initiate SWAps. In Uganda, the ENRS has found that, despite the strong coalition presented by environmental stakeholders and donors, it has also experienced difficulty in developing the necessary financial frameworks and participation in budget allocations remains exclusionary. Some sector commissions in Honduras prepared proposals for the financing of their activities as part of their PRSP planning exercise. It is not clear, however, how much this was integrated into subsequent activities. In Vietnam, because the CPRGS has practically no links with the government's Public Investment Plan or with the government's budget lines (IMF-IDA, 2004: 3), it is difficult for central and local governments and their donor partners to discuss and to define concrete programs emerging from the CPRGS.

Electoral processes and governments

Governments, democratic processes, and internal politics can also hinder the mainstreaming of environmental linkages to poverty reduction. The way in which the Honduran PRSP was conceptualized by President Facussé allowed for widescale participation and for stakeholders to voice alternative environmental narratives. Following the 2001 elections, the Maduro Government reconceptualized the PRSP. New governments have a tendency to reshape former governments' policies and to impose new agendas. Ghana underwent a similar experience when, after the drafting of its I-PRSP, a new government elected in 2001 ignored the I-PRSP. Processes such as these reinforce governments' roles in PRSPs rather than country ownership. These policy documents come to be perceived as a ruling-government document, rather than a national vision on how poverty can be reduced in the country. In contrast, Uganda, the country that has had the most "success" at integrating environmental issues has also had the greatest continuity with

Museveni and the National Resistance Movement overseeing all three PEAPs produced. The lack of electoral candidates in Uganda has provided a degree of continuity for the development of the PEAP and for the networks that surround this policy process. The inclusive nature of the Movement and political continuity has allowed the PEAP to become the “dominant policy planning document” and has created an accommodation between planning cycles for international aid and the Ugandan government (Piron and Evans, 2004: 15). Currently, Uganda is under donor pressure to introduce competitive elections. Should donors be successful, they may find that the impetus created by the PEAP, and its current status as the main process directing policy, is undermined when a new government comes into power.

International Financial Institutions’ restrictions

Governments’ activities are influenced by international donors who consider certain aspects of PRSPs to be more rigid than others. For example, literature points to the unquestioning acceptance of strategies for macro-economic development in PRSPs (Possing, 2003, Hickey, 2003, Wilks and Lefrançois, 2002 and Wood, 2004). Environmental issues are, however, relatively low on both governments’ and international donors’ agendas (Goodland and Daly, 1996), despite considerable commitment and dedication of persons working in environmental departments in both government and in donor agencies. Thus, environmental issues become a “space” which governments use to develop manoeuvrability and flexibility for themselves in relation to PRSP priorities. As demonstrated in the Honduran example, the low status of environmental issues and the lack of commitment to civil society participation make these ideal places to initiate cut-backs or to implement new government strategies without unduly challenging donors. The dynamics though which governments associate with, or reject, their previous governments’ attempts to initiate poverty reduction strategies will become more prominent as countries increasingly generate second- and third-generation PRSPs.

Vested interests

Although not adequately addressed in the PRSPs, all four countries have powerful economic and political interests tied to natural resources. The case of extractive industries in Ghana and the PRSP quest for a “win-win” solution provides one example of how natural resource management for poverty reduction can be undermined by powerful, political and elite interests. Gold mining and timber production, and the implementation of pro-poor environmental policies in relation to these industries, are affected by who owns the land, who receives the timber concessions, and who benefits from the status quo. Such interpretations of environmental problems are clearly articulated in the alternative narratives of environmental problems, which are excluded from the GPRS. These alternative narratives emphasize the importance of multiple resource use for poor people, an awareness of trade-offs, control, and access in relation to natural resource use and sustainability and the fact that land as equity will disenfranchise poor people. In addition, alternative narratives point to state-led economic policy and elite political interests creating pressure on the environment and undermining sustainability in order to promote extractive industries. For example, until two years ago, timber concessions were free and were distributed by the Ghanaian government to facilitate social relationships with powerful political players and to reward political loyalty. The degradation of the forests is thus not simply the result of poor people exploiting their environment or chainsaw gangs using illegal means to generate wealth; it is also the result of important political players—operating at the highest levels of government—and other elites having vested economic interests in timber production and in lax monitoring procedures. Over the years, timber concessions have created powerful political allies. The indiscriminate harvesting of timber, while rife with political patronage and kickbacks, was justified in terms of high export earnings. Government attempts to implement change is, therefore, a difficult and sensitive task which, to date, has avoided or frowned upon attempts to address these power rela-

tions. Other, additional considerations mean that forest rangers have not been successful in their policing efforts. These include illegal chainsaw gangs working in collaboration with corrupt policemen, district assemblies (DAs), and local communities, and the contradictory policies applied at the local level. For example, while DAs are meant to protect the forests, they also have vested interests in allowing trees to be felled, as they levy a tax on trees cut for charcoal. Although intended to discourage charcoal burning, this turns DAs into “their own policemen”.

If PRSPs were to address these questions, the exploration of environmental issues would look substantially different. Rather than exploring what the environmental problems are (primarily in relation to poor people but not as defined by them), such an exercise would explore different definitions of environmental problems. Instead of addressing pro-poor environmental management through poor people’s behaviour or seeking to find a win-win approach between two powerful extractive industries, such an approach would seek to mediate between vested interests which may include extractive industries, people who live on the land, traditional leaders, the government, DAs, centralized ministries, environmental NGOs, and CSOs. It would seek ways of bringing these diverse interests together to mutually benefit from and protect natural resources. Such an approach would require an upfront examination of who currently benefits from environmental resources.

Corruption

The vested interests described above also raise questions about government institutions’ capacities and resources to monitor and implement environmental regulation in all four countries. In all four countries, non-state actors have pointed to corruption within governments and to the states’ “inability” to police environmental resources. This concern is characterized by weaknesses in the Vietnamese and Honduran regulatory authorities’ implementation capacity. Honduran government departments suffer from

inefficiency and a lack of regulatory capacity, leading to the delayed decentralization of natural resource regulation and management to municipal authorities (despite the passing of the 1990 municipalities law). Although conceived in a context of indebtedness, poverty, and corruption within government, this PRSP has overlooked government corruption in relation to environmental resources and poverty. In Vietnam, local governments do not place environmental management issues high on their development and investment agendas and have little or no capacity to address these issues. This is reinforced by the conventional narrative which suggests that the environment may have to be sacrificed, in the short term, in order to facilitate economic growth and development. Similarly, in Uganda where corruption is rampant (Ireland and Tumushabe, 2004), the challenge to attract investment means that local authorities are likely to sacrifice environmental resources to secure investment deals and economic growth. Various attempts have been made to tackle this including a commitment in the 2000 PEAP to minimize corruption. Despite some high-profile, environment-related corruption cases implicating the police, army, and revenue authority (Bainomugisha and Tumushabe, 2004), the government has been slow to act on these findings. Many other instances, labelled environmental corruption by many non-state actors, remain unrecognised by the government. It is here, in the definition of which issues are to be defined as corruption, that the Ugandan government creates flexibility and manoeuvrability for itself. Although corruption is of major concern to international financial institutions, environmental issues are not as prominent. Thus “politics”, informed by the need to balance internal processes of generating support (through the protection of elite environmental interests) against external donors’ concerns (over corruption), plays a major role in determining which environmental activities will be targeted by the government’s anti-corruption drive. This “informal” practice of “politics” has increasingly been cited as an obstacle to poverty reduction in Uganda (Hickey, 2003: 10).

Section Six: New and expanded activities for environmental agencies

In all four countries, environmental agencies have attempted to engage in the PRSP process. This has led to some new developments and to new ways of working. One level of expansion has concerned research, involving detailed conceptualizations of how environment and poverty linkages operate in each country. In Vietnam, the CPRGS was the first official document to address environmental sustainability and poverty reduction as part of a single planning process. In addition, 12 provinces were involved in participatory and regional poverty assessments, that examined environment and poverty linkages. The PPA's examination of environment and poverty linkages will facilitate integration of these issues into local-level development agendas, particularly given the government of Vietnam's decision to delegate to provincial governments the authority to conduct environmental impact assessments for public investment projects. The government has also moved to implement a "polluter pays" system of fees to be charged on all industrial and municipal waste water discharges. Although these moves were not coordi-

nated with the CPRGS process, its production has helped to focus concerns on these issues.

In both Uganda and Ghana, research has sought to better understand environment and poverty linkages and to facilitate improved PRSP mainstreaming. In Ghana, the SEA has provided a means for strategically evaluating environmental issues and has ensured that environmental issues are reintroduced to government planning and policy-making. Its primary focus, however, was to "identify ministries, departments, and agencies that should be consulted during sector studies" and to "identify those that would be responsible for refining policies that would mainstream environment within the Poverty Reduction Strategy" (NDPC/EPA, 2004: 4). The results of the SEA will feed into the next GPRS, placing greater emphasis on decentralization and on the role of DAs. In this sense, it has the potential to significantly impact the policy agenda, although this has yet to be demonstrated. The SEA has, however, played a significant role in awareness-raising among policy-makers.



Boys collect garbage floating down the Saigon River in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The Government of Vietnam has moved to implement a "polluter pays" system of fees to be charged on all industrial and municipal wastewater discharges.

Section Seven: Funding possibilities and the implementation of policy

In all four countries, the implementation of PRSP policy has been hindered by changes in government (Honduras), discrepancies between PRSP policy and how governance actually occurs at a local level (Vietnam), a lack of financial investment in environment and poverty projects (Uganda, Ghana, and Vietnam), and a lack of agreement on what PRSP policy means when it comes to the practice of implementation (Honduras and Vietnam). More importantly, the governments of Uganda, Honduras, Vietnam, and Ghana are constrained both in their ability to raise internal revenue and in the resources they can draw on for public expenditure. The problem is that while PRSPs list country priorities for poverty reduction, these priorities are not ranked in importance. When it comes to implementation, and particularly to the financial considerations that accompany implementation, environmental considerations are sidelined as governments focus on economic modernization and investment-procuring activities, and spend money on pressing social and health concerns. Thus, there is a danger that environmental issues will not be identified as a development priority and will not receive adequate financial support from these governments. People interviewed in Vietnam commented, for example, that the central government had not allocated funds to environmental ministries and, therefore, no “project/program in the national environmental strategy has been started”. As Bojö and Reddy (2002, 2003) point out, the capacity to monitor progress is also lacking in many countries and there is an essential need to define targets and indicators appropriate for measuring environment and poverty implementation.

These limiting factors, in conjunction with the short period since the production of the country PRSPs and a limited research program, meant that it was only possible to examine a few examples of implementation. Ghana’s intention is to begin to implement the SEA recommendations in 2005 and to use the SEA to feed into the production of the next GPRS. Nonetheless,

the SEA is already having important downstream effects. Influenced by the SEA and struggling to reduce pressure on natural forest resources, the Ministry of Lands and Forestry has adopted a novel plan of marketing rattan and bamboo. As the SEA has also led to improved cross-ministry relationships and links, both the Ministry of Lands and Forestry and the Environmental Protection Agency have collaborated on the marketing of rattan and bamboo while also protecting the natural growth of bamboo along Ghana’s river banks. Similarly, in Vietnam, the CPRGS has resulted in plans for future implementation, with many donors supporting pilot programs that will integrate the CPRGS process into local planning in selected provinces. Provincial pilot programs aim to help these provinces develop pro-poor socio-economic development plans in which budget allocation and management will be geared toward achieving CPRGS-prioritized targets and policies. The province-level “rolling out” of CPRGS programs includes: the setting of a vision, the identification of the corresponding targets, the formulation of policies, the alignment of resources, the monitoring and evaluation of results, and the systematic use of popular consultation. However, because this process is in its initial phases and is only expected to be completed in 2008, it is difficult to assess how successful implementation will be. There are, nonetheless, examples of local activities which, although bypassed by the CPRGS, have sought to create eco-villages, to create innovative agricultural production techniques, and to utilize renewable energy. Vietnamese community groups have also sought to enhance productivity and socio-economic development through implementing green productivity programs. Documentation of these best practices and learning through replication provides additional opportunities for implementation.

In Uganda, attempts to address poverty reduction through the PRSP has led to the development of environmental policies, legislation, and regulations. In addition, the SWAp has been developed to insti-

tutionalize sector-related implementation. Although the ENRS has experienced problems developing these financial instruments, decentralization has facilitated further implementation of PEAP policy. Some NGOs, such as Environmental Alert, have sought to mainstream environment into District Development Plans. Their ability to do so has been hampered by limited funds and by the fact that environmental development plans often remain unfunded (even if they are good plans). Ultimately, despite their attempts at environmental awareness raising, people are not able to put this into practice and most local level funding is spent on development plans such as pit latrines and garbage disposal. They have, however, had limited success with individual farmers, persuading them to leave land fallow and stop cutting down the forest. These farmers have instead planted species that both supply their timber needs and have allowed them to raise some additional cash by selling surpluses.

The intertwined possibility of economic growth and sustainable environmental growth in Uganda's fishing industry has resulted in positive implementations. Legislation has secured the decentralization of natural resources in conjunction with the transfer of necessary powers to local authorities. Decentralization of the fishing industry has been supported through the creation of community-based property rights which establish incentives for poor people to manage their environmental resources in economically lucrative and sustainable ways. Positive feedback, both in terms of reducing poverty and of enhancing environmental management, has been reported. The Beach Management Units (BMUs), pioneered in Uganda, represent a situation in which a combination of upstream processes and bottom-up mobilization has led to the incorporation of environmental concerns in poverty reduction. Previously marginalized environmental actors have been able to express ideas and,



Young Hondurans walk along a road in the area of Toncontin. The coordinated and equitable management of water, land, and related resources contributes to maximizing socio-economic well-being.

through the process of developing the PEAP, shape agendas. BMUs appear to be a success story, both in terms of decentralization and in terms of community empowerment. They reflect the positive aspects of integrating environmental concerns into the PEAPs and demonstrate how NGO involvement, particularly that of the Uganda Fisheries and Fish Conservation Association, has been able to mobilize in relation to PEAP priorities. These institutional arrangements demonstrate the importance of grass-roots participation, ownership, and responsibility in the implementation process. The BMUs should be replicated as successful examples of implementing sustainable environment and poverty reduction projects at the local level.

In Uganda, the most secure form of government funding comes from the Poverty Action Fund (PAF) that, once allocated, cannot be reallocated to other priorities. PAF funding is earmarked for poverty reduction and targets rural feeder roads, agricultural extension, rural water and sanitation, and primary health care (PEAP, 2001: 155). The ENRS has not been particularly successful in securing PAF funding. Despite the concerted involvement of civil society actors, government agencies, and development partners, only 0.64 percent of all ENRS estimated funds come from the PAF and this is specifically allocated for expenditure on wetlands and their preservation.

Implementation in Honduras has been hampered by differing interpretations of what PRSP policy means. This has resulted in an impasse where PRSP recommendations for new legislation have stalled in the face of civil society opposition. There are, nonetheless, examples of well functioning sector commissions that have managed to make some progress in mainstreaming and implementing environment and poverty issues. In 2003, a national Water Platform was established to promote integrated water resource management in Honduras—the coordinated and equitable management and development of water, land, and related resources in order to maximize socio-economic well-being and to retain sustainable ecosystems. The Water Platform has played an important role in reviving discussion of the proposed Water Law and has managed to avoid succumbing to the polarization that typically affects debate related to environmental issues in Honduras. As a well-balanced and well-functioning commission, its permanent working basis should be assured.

Section Eight: Sectoral implementation activities with integrated environmental concerns

As mentioned above, strong sectors have tended to continue “business as usual” and ministries concerned with agriculture, health, or forestry, for example, have not fully engaged in environment and poverty debates. They have participated in the respective PRSPs, often with more success than the weaker environmental ministries, and have been influenced by these environmental ministries to include, albeit tangentially to their main focus, some environment and poverty considerations. In the four countries examined, the most successful approach to mainstreaming environment and poverty issues has been to formalize the involvement of environmental stakeholders in a separate sector or commission. This has had the advantage, in both Uganda and Honduras, of putting environment and poverty issues on the PRSP agenda. It has also had downstream effects and has led other government departments and sectors to recognize that, at the very least, they should be aware of these issues.

One means of mainstreaming environmental issues within sectoral activities and focusing on implementation concerns the use of the sector-wide approach as an organizing financial tool. Ghana, Uganda, and Honduras have all used the SWAp to assist with the mainstreaming of environment and poverty linkages into the PRSPs.⁸ These SWAps are, however, used in remarkably different ways and have significant ramifications for environmental issues. Uganda and Honduras are unusual in that they have both had SWAps specifically linked to environmental sectors

and ministries. In Uganda the ENRS needs to develop a SWAp and a Sector Investment Plan (SIP) as a means of securing government financial assistance. This involves setting a single poverty-focused vision, grounded in clear policy objectives, shared strategic goals and a jointly implemented expenditure program along with a detailed expenditure plan. The ENRS has experienced difficulties in developing these financial instruments. The SWAp has been delayed because of decisions about the ENRS composition, problems of leadership, and “committee overload”; the SIP because certain institutional budgetary implications may be detrimental to the ENRS. Currently, most of the sector’s funding is in the form of donor support for specific projects. Once developed, the SIP will be synthesised into the MFPED’s three-year budget plan, or Medium-term Expenditure Framework, and the ENRS will then be subject to “basket funding” and to an integrated ceiling, which is controlled by the Ministry.⁹ At present, however, the relatively small proportion of government funding is seen by many environmental actors as evidence of the government’s lack of commitment to environmental issues and the move toward government-controlled funding is viewed with suspicion. As the ENRS increasingly moves toward project support in terms of basket funding, many small projects that are independently funded by donors will close and weak sectors, or sub-sectors, are likely to suffer. Ultimately, the SWAp is intended to enable the ENRS to approach donors for substantial sums of money and it will, in conjunction with the

8. This broad planning framework sets out the common sector vision and shared priorities to planning. (Vietnam has adopted a more partial version of this approach.) Underlying this approach is the idea that the use of the state’s financial systems allows for a shift from external donor decision-making to domestic accountability (although donors still retain the power to limit or stop budget support funding). Budget support is further justified as it avoids the creation of parallel donor structures which tend to undermine state capacity. Archarya, de Lima and Moore (2004) argue that donors’ decisions to pool their resources and support one area of activity or one particular sector forms the defining feature of SWAps. Nonetheless, they point out that the costs of implementing SWAps have undermined their potential and have offset actual returns as the process of creating a SWAp can take considerable time.

9. The underlying intention is that, for growth to be pro-poor, public expenditure should also be pro-poor. Basket funding allows the government to “focus money properly using the PEAP targets”, as opposed to simply continue “business as usual”.

SIP, orient the ENRS within the government's broader aim of decreasing poverty. Although this may indeed be the case, "weaker" sectors, such as the ENRS, which rely on donor funding for specific project funding, face the risk of decreased funding during this transition and no guarantee that funding will increase after the transition.

In Ghana, the SWAp is used as a means of "topping up" government funding for a sector. Environmental issues are not given a very high profile in the GPRS and are not prioritized in the closed budget meetings where funding is closely aligned to the GPRS. In direct contrast to the Ugandan model, the Ghanaian SWAp could be used to bring environmental issues to the fore and to reduce reliance on government funding, although this has not yet happened. Through completing a SWAp, Ghana's ministries, department, and agencies can generate additional income for their sector and for projects which are not identified in the GPRS and, therefore, not funded by the Ministry of Finance budget allocations. Ministers draw attention to a particular project by developing a sectoral strategic plan that is presented to select donors with aligned interests. This enables donors to recommend additional allocations to a certain ministry to allow for a sector-wide approach which will benefit from additional funding and which is outside the GPRS ambit. This approach provides a way to overcome the problem of government spending priorities (on issues of health or infrastructure) and the government's low prioritization of environmental issues.

In Honduras, it appears that SWAps have resulted in the closing up of spaces for participation and in centralizing policy-making within the inner core. An initial justification for the establishment of sector commissions (*Mesas Sectoriales*) was the strengthening discussions between government, civil society, and donors. Ironically, "strengthening coordination with international cooperation agencies and civil society"

was also the rationale for reducing the number of sector commissions from 14 to 6. The move toward SWAps allows the Honduran government to secure financial resources for its interests which lie more in infrastructure development than in environment and poverty concerns. It is too early to say what the effect of Honduras' transition to a sector-wide approach will be, but early indications point to the closing up of spaces for participation and decreasing importance of environmental issues.

This variation across countries suggests that, as financial instruments which provide a framework for government planning and guide donor support, SWAps are not neutral. With regard to environmental management and poverty reduction, they have the potential to generate either positive or negative consequences. On the positive side, SWAps can be used to align government and donor spending and to facilitate the mainstreaming of environment and poverty linkages across different sectors. SWAps can, therefore, provide a means of nurturing spending sectoral ministries and encouraging sector-wide integration of poverty and environmental issues. It can also assist the development of core plans to integrate environment and poverty reduction concerns, rather than the support of isolated projects. However, as illustrated, SWAps can also be used as a means of closing down possibilities. This is often the case given the limitations that weaker environmental ministries experience. As such, it is necessary for donors to note that supporting basket funding and SWAps have implications which may, or may not, advance environment and poverty linkages in PRSPs and in future implementation. The move away from specific project support may also prove detrimental to the environmental NGOs and CSOs that have participated in these country PRSPs and which have been instrumental in making sure that environment and poverty linkages appear, and remain, on the political agenda.

Section Nine: To what extent has an environmental component been integrated in the monitoring system underway for the PRSP?

Uganda, Ghana and Vietnam have, in the process of producing a PRSP, focused on numeric indicators as a means of quantifying environmental conditions and assessing how poor people are affected. In Vietnam, an emphasis on using numeric indicators to document forest cover, housing in slums, clean water, and waste water ignored other issues closely linked to poverty reduction such as improved management of soils, watersheds, and coastal zones. There remains a need for improved monitoring of environment and poverty indicators in Vietnam. In Ghana, significant emphasis has been placed on quantifying the area of degraded and, as a sign of improvement, of rehabilitated forest land for the GPRS matrices. This process has been criticized by environmental actors who were largely excluded from the PRSP process and who argue that environmental quantification does not recognize the quality of environmental resources and, hence, its contribution to poverty reduction. They point out, for example, that Ghana's natural forests offer a wide range of resources to poor people, but rehabilitated mining plantations, while also a forested landscape, have far less usable resources. Uganda has, however, taken this process of quantification further than the other three countries and has sought to focus on the

environment as a capital resource for development. This has involved assessing the financial contribution that natural resources make to poverty reduction and producing statistics to place a monetary value on environment and poverty linkages. Although this approach was fed into the 2000 and 2004 PEAPs, the production of economic indicators is a new development, with ENRS stakeholders currently in negotiation with the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics about how to develop appropriate statistics.

A child sells fruit and dried fish in Kalungu, Uganda. The country is focusing on the environment as a capital resource for development, and has assessed the financial contribution that natural resources make to poverty reduction.



© CIDA/Peter Bennett

Section Ten: PRSP lessons and recommendations

1

LESSON

The nature of PRSP participation is generally not one of equal responsibility

RECOMMENDATION

Strengthen the role of parliaments in relation to PRSPs

Civil society stakeholders and other participants are “invited” into various “spaces” from which they attempt to influence government policy. The responsibility of producing the PRSP falls, inevitably, to a government task force or ministry. Civil society actors may

be deeply committed to these issues, but they do not have the responsibility to see the project through. When excluded from certain processes, or when their submissions are not taken seriously, there is little they can do to alter the situation. There are no formal arrangements governing participation. In some countries, civil society actors can try to lobby members of parliament but, in the end, they have no formal systems of recourse that could force government policy-makers and planners to engage seriously with them. The limits of civil society participation, NGO involvement, and stakeholder contributions are ultimately defined by governments which are “obliged” to demonstrate country ownership, participation, and partnerships with civil society and international donors in order to receive donor funding and, in particular, Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative support.



© CIDA/Brian Atkinson

A polling station in La Ceiba, Honduras, set up for voters in the 1997 presidential elections. Legislators facilitate a link between poor voters and high levels of policy-making, and their capacity to articulate the interests of their electorate in environment-poverty agendas must be developed.

Because legislators facilitate a link between poor voters in their constituencies and the high levels of policy-making in government, it is important that their capacity to articulate their electorates' interests in environment and poverty agendas be developed. In Ghana, traditional leaders expressed dissatisfaction with parliamentarians' role in the GPRS. As they themselves are barred from participating in politics and cannot attend parliamentary sessions, the only way to exercise political power is through members of parliament. However, these members of parliament have not mobilized around the GPRS or around environment and poverty linkages. In Uganda, there are demands that the PEAP should be tabled in parliament for endorsement.

Therefore, opportunities for effective representation should be explored, possibly through increased legislation which may assist members of parliament to challenge unfair deprivations. Because of the infrastructural limitations experienced by parliaments, strengthening their role in the PRSP process will involve institutional and financial support, in addition to finding ways of increasing parliamentarians' awareness and knowledge of environment and poverty linkages.

2

LESSON

PRSP prioritization of environmental issues does not prevent exclusions at other stages of government policy process

RECOMMENDATION

Explore ways of moving from civil society "participation" to civil society partnerships with government

Environmental priorities in the PRSPs do not automatically translate into programs for addressing environmental issues. Instead, although environmental issues and actors receive attention in PRSPs where they may be identified as a "priority", they are excluded from other processes such as budgetary decision-making. When it comes to implementation, environmental planning issues tend to suffer when evaluated against other development "priorities". Foreign investment, extractive industries, and industrialization are frequently seen as more important, at least in the short term, than environmental considerations. Similarly, government expenditure is generally directed toward more pressing concerns, leaving the implementation of environmental issues to specific donor-supported projects. For this reason, the decision of donors to support basket funding may, in the long term, undermine efforts at environmental regeneration. One means of addressing this is to enhance responsibility between governments and civil society. In conjunction with Recommendation 1, this calls for exploring ways of developing responsibility between governments and civil society, moving from a partnership of participation to one of accountability.

Consequently, the manner in which NGOs and civil society interact with government should be restructured to enhance government accountability (to show what happens to PRSP submissions) and to create opportunities for non-state actors to participate in assessing budget priorities. As demonstrated in the case of Uganda's BMUs, one means of doing this is to encourage increased decentralization of natural resources in conjunction with formalized community responsibility for the management of natural resources and formalized access to the benefits accrued.

3

LESSON

Participatory mechanisms create (limited) opportunities for weak government ministries, but exonerate spending ministries from environment and poverty issues and responsibilities

RECOMMENDATION A

Explore ways in which donors can enhance environmental ministries' role in PRSPs

RECOMMENDATION B

Explore ways of establishing stronger links with spending ministries in order to encourage cross-communication on environmental links to poverty reduction

Mainstreaming environmental issues through encouraging participatory mechanisms for decision-making has created some possibilities for increased participation in government policy-making. This is a significant advance in all four countries, which has facilitated more effective partnerships between environmental ministries or agencies and the centralized ministry responsible for producing the PRSP. PRSPs have also created new possibilities for environmental issues to be seriously considered by policy-makers, with the Environmental Protection Agency in Ghana, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in Honduras, and the ENRS in Uganda benefiting. Despite creating new possibilities, these participatory mechanisms for decision-making are still far from perfect. In most instances donor support is required to ensure that environmental issues receive continued attention once the PRSP consultation and drafting processes are complete.

In addition, participatory mechanisms have created new opportunities for spending ministries, which have been able to draw on donors' assistance and specialist technical knowledge in aligning sector plans to PRSP priorities. This facilitates better access to government financial allocations, assists in ministries' strategic planning, and may be reinforced by the use of SWAps. However, it also means that, although PRSPs have had downstream effects alerting spending ministries to the importance of environment and poverty linkages, these ministries tend to continue implementing development plans in much the same fashion as before the production of PRSPs. Participation and SWAps, combined with donor support for spending ministries may thus exonerate these ministries from addressing environmental concerns in their poverty reduction plans and may lead instead to a token reference to environmental issues.

Environmental ministries tend to lack strong institutional links to which organizations such as the agricultural or forestry ministries have access. Donor's financial and institutional support of government environmental ministries should, therefore, be viewed as long-term projects which extend not only to the PRSP participation phase, but also before and after formal participation. In providing environmental ministries with strong financial and technical support, donors can strengthen these ministries in relation to other ministries, and reinforce their ability to inform PRSP policy processes.

Mainstreaming environmental issues into poverty reduction will also benefit from encouraging spending ministries to develop strategies deliberately aimed at using the environment to reduce poverty. It is, therefore, necessary to explore ways in which environmental ministries can develop better institutional links with spending ministries. It is also vital to examine how these various ministries are using SWAps to facilitate their planning and integration of their plans into PRSPs. Further knowledge of, and better connections with, these spending ministries will assist in changing these ministries' perspective on environment and

poverty issues and facilitate the development of cross-sectoral links. This, in turn, will assist environmental ministries to plan development in relation to other ministries' activities and limit the potential for contradictory development. Greater knowledge of SWAPs and of spending ministries development plans will also assist in finding ways to integrate environment and poverty linkages into local-level or district plans.

4

LESSON

Government capacity to monitor environmental regulation is questionable

RECOMMENDATION

Enhance media opportunities to monitor environmental regulation

Mainstreaming environment and poverty linkages has to be accompanied by the regulation of resource management. In all these countries, there are doubts about government institutions' capacities and resources to monitor and implement environmental regulation and to stop degradation. Governments' abilities to monitor

environmental regulations are constrained by their bureaucratic environments, lack of capacity, and the need to facilitate economic growth. This means that governments often find themselves in a position in which they, in effect, have to monitor themselves. This, coupled with corruption, political bias, and the distribution of environmental resources to secure political support, suggests that governments are not, generally, in the best position to monitor environmental processes. Generally, it is only in isolated incidents that civil society and media have been able to force governments to address the environmental consequences of foreign investment or of widespread corruption. However, experience from Vietnam shows that the media, although excluded from the PRSP process, can mobilize to generate widespread awareness of these issues and to hold the government accountable.

As civil society and rural communities are generally aware of these processes but are not highly influential, the media provides an avenue for alerting governments of the need to address environmental degradation and corruption. Providing opportunities for journalists to investigate environmental abuses, to compare experiences across countries, and to publicise their findings in both domestic and international contexts, is a means of addressing this problem.



Institutions with trained government staff play a leading role in implementing and monitoring environmental regulations in Ghana. Increasing the capacities and resources of such organizations is key for pro-poor development.

5

LESSON

It is crucial to examine which environmental narratives are mainstreamed for future implementation

RECOMMENDATION

Explore alternative narratives and encourage debate over how environmental problems and solutions are framed

In addition to mainstreaming environmental issues into PRSPs, the interpretations of these environmental narratives should be scrutinized to reveal whose perspectives are included and whose are excluded. Has a narrow technical view of environment been used or does the PRSP broaden environmental problems to include political issues of ownership, control, and access? Although PRSPs are the synthesis of views and recommendations, generally they do not include alternative narratives about environmental problems. As a result: (a) insufficient attention is paid to inequity as a cause of poverty and of environmental degradation while technical solutions and regulation are overemphasized; (b) this emphasis on sector-based technical solutions reduces the possibility of adopting an integrated approach to environmental management and poverty reduction; and (c) contentious issues relating to property rights, usufructuary rights, and governance are generally ignored, while non-contentious environment-development narratives are included (e.g. such as a desire to modernize agriculture). Opening up PRSPs to deliberate over rights, ownership, and control suggests that PRSPs address political and economic questions about environmental resources. A revised focus should examine the following questions: who owns or controls resources? who benefits from the use of these resources? what are the power relations between the owners and the users of environmental resources? what

legal and institutional arrangements shape the use and control of environmental resources? who defines what environmental issues are seen to be problematic? what alternative narratives exist which question mainstream versions of environmental problems? and, who determines the solutions to “environmental problems”?

Such an exercise would explore different definitions of environmental problems and hence arrive at different solutions, seeking to mediate between various different sets of vested interest—between extractive industries, people who live on the land, traditional leaders, the government, and so on—and exploring ways of working together to mutually benefit from and protect natural resources. Such an approach would require an up-front examination of who currently benefits from environmental resources and suggests that, ultimately, new types of participation may have to be considered. These may include forms of participation that legally enshrine citizens’ opportunities to engage in PRSPs and to raise their concerns, coupled with formalised governments’ responsibilities to address these concerns.

Although it is not possible to widen the PRSP scope to include all environment and poverty narratives, the encouragement of debate over different understandings of environmental problems and solutions enables the formal airing of alternative narratives. Enhanced exploration of different and, possibly, opposed environmental narratives should facilitate the inclusion of other, more politically nuanced, narratives and environmental solutions into PRSPs. This will require broader-based forms of civil society participation than have been included in PRSP processes to date. A recommendation is thus to open up opportunities for participation to a greater variety of stakeholder groups, including the grass-roots groups forwarding alternative perspectives. This, in turn, will require exploration of alternative hosting arrangements (in localities, or by CSOs) that enable such groups to speak openly about their concerns, as well as mechanisms to ensure that they are fed into higher levels of debate and drafting.

6

LESSON

Decentralization offers good possibilities for enhancing environment and poverty linkages

RECOMMENDATION

Assess current environment and poverty projects at the local level while pursuing further opportunities for crosscutting, local-level approaches

Decentralization of environmental resources and the importance of addressing environment and poverty linkages at the local level may prove to be a crucial component for addressing the above recommendations. It is also an important means of mainstreaming environment into PRSP policy documents and for facilitating the implementation of environment and poverty projects. In this regard, decentralization not only facilitates greater involvement of local government authorities, it also has potential to increase rural people's involvement in PRSP policy and implementation. Environmental NGOs, civil society representatives, traditional leaders, local authorities, and rural organizations in Honduras, Vietnam, Ghana, and Uganda are all advocating decentralization as a means of enhancing environment and poverty linkages and reducing rural poverty. Although decentralization is addressed in many PRSPs (through the regionalization of sector commissions, through NGO activities, and often through government plans to decentralize), PRSPs seldom spell out what is intended by decentralization, local authorities are not generally included in the production of PRSP policy, and implementation is not always accompanied by the devolution of authority and control over resources. As demonstrated in the case of Honduras, a focus on decentralization in the PRSP, the lack of explanation about what this may be, and complications with the implementation process becomes a potential source of conflict between

local municipalities and centralized ministries. In contrast, the Ugandan BMUs show that successful implementation may be possible by mainstreaming environmental considerations into regional and district development plans, developing opportunities for approaches which crosscut sectors, and enhancing local community participation coupled with legal access to and control over resources. If, ultimately, the purpose of mainstreaming of environment and poverty linkages and the sustained implementation of PRSP policy is to improve conditions for poor people at the local level and, in so doing, to feed into national processes of growth and development, then a focus on decentralization and local-level involvement is critical.

It is therefore vital to assess country-specific, local projects which address environment and poverty linkages over an extended time frame and in more detail in order to examine how environmental issues are being mainstreamed into local projects, what constraints exist, and under what conditions implementation may be sustainable and successful. Indications from this research suggest that community involvement, and access to and responsibility over resources may be crucial components of successful decentralization. Such local-level approaches and a sustained focus on decentralization (including the devolution of authority to local authorities and communities) must be pursued more widely across more sectors, although appropriate adaptations to context will be necessary.

Bibliography

- Acharya, A., A.F. de Limo, and M. Moore, "Aid Proliferation: How Responsible are the Donors?" IDS Working Paper 214, January 2004. IDS, Brighton. 2004.
- Bainomugish, A. and G.W. Tumushabe. *The Politics of Investment and Land Acquisition in Uganda: The Case Study of Piano Upe Game Reserve*. Forthcoming. 2003.
- Bojö, J. and R.C. Reddy. *Poverty Reduction Strategies and Environment: A Review of 40 Interim and Full Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers*. The World Bank Environment Department Paper, No. 86. 2002.
- . *Status and Evolution of Environmental Priorities in the Poverty Reduction Strategies: A Review of 50 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers*. The World Bank Environmental Economic Series Paper, No. 93. 2003.
- Brock, K., R. McGee, R.A. Okech, and J. Jsuuna. "Poverty Knowledge and Policy Processes in Uganda: Case Studies from Bushenyi, Lira and Tororo Districts". IDS Research Report, No. 54. Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, UK. 2003.
- Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. 1992.
- Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. 1995.
- Eberlei, W. and H. Henn. *Parliaments in Sub-Saharan Africa: Actors in Poverty Reduction?* GTZ publication, Eschborn, GTZ. 2003.
- Gariyo, Z. "The PRSP Process in Uganda". Participatory Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. No. 5. Uganda Debt Network, Kampala. 2002.
- Government of Ghana/NDPC. *Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (2003-2005): An Agenda for Growth and Prosperity*. 2003.
- Goodland, R. and H. Daly. "Environmental Sustainability: Universal and Non-Negotiable", *Ecological Applications*, Vol. 6(4): 1002-1017. 1996.
- Hickey, S. "The Politics of Staying Poor in Uganda". Chronic Poverty Research Centre Working Paper. No. 37. 2003.
- International Monetary Fund – World Bank. *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – Detailed Analysis of Progress and Implementation*. September 2003. www.imf.org/external/np/prspgen/2003/091503.htm. 2003.
- Ireland, C. and G. Tumushabe. "The Evolving Roles of Environmental Management Institutions in East Africa: From Conservation to Poverty Reduction", in S. Bass, H. Reid, D. Satterthwaite, and P. Steele (eds.), *Politics, Poverty and Environment*. Earthscan, London. 2004.

- Keeley, J. and I. Scoones. "Understanding Environmental Policy Processes: A Review." IDS Working Paper 89: 1–50. 1999.
- Leach, M. and T. Forsyth. "Poverty and Environment: Priorities for Research and Policy. An Overview Study." Prepared for the United Nations Development Programme and European Commission. 1998.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries. *Guidelines for Beach Management Units in Uganda*. Department of Fisheries Resources. 2003.
- . *Uganda Poverty Status Report, 2003* (Achievements and Pointers for the PEAP Revision). 2003.
- National Drought Policy Commission – Environmental Protection Agency, 2004, *Strategic Environmental Assessment of the GPRS Content Report*, SEA, Vol. 1
- Pincus, J. and N. Thang, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Process and National Development Strategies Asia: A Report to DFID*. Country Study Vietnam. 2004.
- Piron, L-H. and A. Evans, *Politics and the PRSP Approach: Synthesis Paper*. Overseas Development Institute, London. 2004.
- Reed, D. *Analyzing the Political Economy of Poverty and Ecological Disruption. Economic Change, Poverty and the Environment Project*. WWF Macroeconomics Program Office. 2004.
- Republic of Uganda. *Poverty Eradication Action Plan, (2001–2003)*. Vol. 1. Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Kampala. 2001.
- . *Poverty Eradication Action Plan*. (Draft from Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development on August 13, 2004). 2004.
- Ribot, J.C. "Democratic Decentralisation of Natural Resources: Institutionalizing Popular Participation". *World Resources Institute Report*. Washington. 2002.
- Posing, S. *Between Grassroots and Governments: Civil Society Experiences with PRSPs: A Study of Local Civil Society Response to the PRSPs*. DIIS Working Paper 2003: 20: 1-187.
- Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. 2003.
- United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report*. 2004.
- Wilks, A. and F. Lefrançois. *Blinding with Science or Encouraging Debate: How the World Bank Determines PRSP Policies*. A Bretton Woods Project and World Vision International publication. 2002.

Wood, A. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward: Ownership, PRSPs and IFI Conditionality*. World Vision International, California. 2004.

World Bank. List of Economies. 1994.

World Bank. *The Republic Of Honduras Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper And Joint IDA-IMF Staff Assessment*. Report No.: 22661-HO. 2001.

World Bank. Country Profile pages. 2004.

Yaron, G and Y. Moyini with D. Wasike, M. Kabi and M. Barungi. "The Role of Environment in Increasing Growth and Reducing Poverty in Uganda." Final Technical Report. Unpublished DFID report. 2003.