

situation analysis

Human security and environmental stewardship are two sides of the same coin. The poor depend on the natural environment and the continent's rich biodiversity to provide them with resources used for energy, food, shelter and medicines and for the supply of ecosystem services like pollination of crops and regulation of water supplies.

Access to clean, safe and affordable energy services is a necessary condition for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) because energy allows people to light up their homes and schools, feed their children and stay in good health. Yet many people in Africa do not have access to these services. For instance, 80% of rural population of Africa has no access to electricity and the average electrification rate in rural areas is only 10%. Lack of access to energy, especially in rural areas, also accounts for further environmental degradation and low household productivity and it impacts on the situation of women and young girls, who are often charged with the collection of traditional fuels such as wood.

Environmental shocks and stresses will be exacerbated by climate change, adding to the vulnerability of the poor in Africa through changes in rainfall patterns, rising waters, more serious and prolonged droughts, increases in the frequency of natural disasters, new epidemics of mosquito-borne diseases and the loss of ecosystem services. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that by 2020, 75-250 million people across sub-Saharan Africa could face water shortages and 600 million more people could face hunger by 2060.

The main challenges in Africa will include:

- Promoting decentralized access to energy
- Ensuring that sound environmental management is integrated into poverty reduction efforts
- Developing low-carbon and resilient development plans that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote socio-economic progress; Maintaining carbon reservoirs in forests and other ecosystems
- Securing a deal at the upcoming Copenhagen climate talks that will generate significant development and environmental opportunities for the region.

UNDP's mission and work on the ground

UNDP is strengthening the capacities of African countries to tackle both environmental and energy challenges so as to build sustainable livelihoods for their citizens.

Increasing the poor's access to energy services will remain an important priority for UNDP. The organization is working with regional institutions and countries to build local capacity for the delivery of energy services - like water pumping, agro-processing and lighting - that are accessible to all. For example, the organization has been helping regional institutions like the Economic Community of West African States and the East Africa Community to foster legal arrangements and policies that can ensure that energy services are delivered to the broader population, the majority of whom have no access to grid connection.

In addition, UNDP has been helping countries in the region develop the capacity to access international sources of funding for climate change adaptation and mitigation – through arrangements like the Clean Development Mechanism - to improve environmental management and help ‘green’ their economies. UNDP has been helping African countries to develop the right institutions and market conditions to attract further investments in renewable energies such as wind power and energy-efficient electricity. It has also provided technical and financial support to strengthening Africa’s voice at the upcoming Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, which will lay down the rules for a new climate regime.

UNDP is assisting African countries to build the capacities needed to manage natural ecosystems and farmlands so as to sustain the supply of ecosystem services that underpin national economies and the livelihoods of the poor. UNDP is helping countries across Africa to establish the policies, and strengthen the institutions to manage natural ecosystems leverage finance to meet the environmental finance needs of countries. This includes establishing markets for environmental services so as to make tangible the values of these ecosystem services.

UNDP has worked to ensure that environmental issues are built into the foundations of all development planning in Africa. For instance, the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative has been supporting eight countries in Africa in designing poverty reduction strategies and budgets that fully incorporate environmental protection and climate change.

In addition, UNDP has been assisting African countries in addressing increasing threats from climate change. With a \$92 million grant financed by the Government of Japan, the organization is currently assisting 21 countries in Africa on devising and implementing adaptation strategies. At the national level, UNDP is helping countries to develop what is known as National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) to build climate change threats and opportunities into development. Through “Community-Based Adaptation”, UNDP is also working with the Global Environment Facility and UN Volunteers to directly help the least equipped communities to develop climate-resilient strategies for the management of land, water and biodiversity. <http://www.undp.org/africa/environment.shtml>