

**UNEP Contribution of Poverty-Environment Action to Secretary General Report on  
Implementation of the United Nations System-wide Plan of Action for the United Nations  
Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)**

**13 May 2024**

As the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution continue to persist, the poorest populations disproportionately face the harshest impacts. The urgency of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to integrate poverty-environment concerns into mainstream development initiatives cannot be overstated. Enhanced efforts are essential to ensure that environmental sustainability and poverty eradication are woven seamlessly into the broader narrative of economic growth and conventional development strategies. This aligns with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025, which commits to intensifying efforts to 'Leave No One Behind' and focuses on the specific needs of disaster- and conflict-affected States<sup>11</sup>. This commitment also supports UNEP's engagement in the United Nations System-wide Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027), as well as the recent [UN General Assembly Resolution 76/300 on the Right to a Healthy Environment](#), both aimed at building resilient and inclusive economic and societal structures across the globe.

To alleviate poverty, protect the environment, and combat climate change, integrated approaches that position these objectives at the core of national and subnational planning, policy making, budgeting and public and private financing are essential. Notably, the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals (2018-2023) and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) [website](#), have played pivotal roles in advancing the integration of environment and poverty reduction strategies. These programs exemplify UNEP's commitment to harnessing synergies across different sectors to foster sustainable development.

Since UNEP's last input on progress made in implementing the inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for eradicating poverty, the following workstreams have been implemented:

- i. UNEP published the 'Inclusive Wealth Africa 2024: Moving beyond GDP' Report, an effort to evaluate national capacities and performance in terms of measuring economic sustainability and well-being. The data in this report present an urgent call for leaders and decision-makers to move beyond the measure of GDP growth in Africa, and to monitor African inclusive Wealth growth as an index for poverty and inequality alleviation. This report demonstrates that the focus on GDP growth to develop policies in Africa may not be conducive to reducing poverty and inequality. The Inclusive Wealth Index provides a more inclusive measure of the economies of African countries, particularly given that low-income earners are among the most vulnerable to the depletion of natural capital for economic growth.
- ii. Jointly implemented by UN Women and UNEP, the EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies programme Phase II (EmPower) aims to strengthen gender equality and human rights in climate change and disaster risk actions in the Asia and the Pacific region.

The EmPower programme works on three outcomes:

- Women and other marginalized groups in Asia-Pacific engage in climate-resilient livelihoods.
- Asia-Pacific actors increase action on gender responsive climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Women in all their diversity and other marginalized groups are represented as key environmental actors in climate and DRR decision-making.

Through the first phase of **EmPower (2018-2022)**, UN Women, UNEP and partners successfully engineered alternative livelihoods for vulnerable communities, reduced emissions through renewable energy and sparked intergovernmental commitments to ensure gender-responsive policies and actions in the Asia-Pacific region. In the second phase of EmPower (2023-2027), UNEP and UN Women are scaling up the lessons learned, and the approaches developed for a gender just energy transition. This involves working with the financial sector to enable access to finance for renewable energy systems for underserved communities. Additionally, EmPower aims to foster use of renewable energy for women's economic empowerment and climate resilient livelihood while focusing on access to finance, providing appropriate skills and facilitate the transition to low carbon, sustainable development and enhance climate resilience. In the first phase UNEP played a crucial role in Kenya by providing training to women engaged in sustainable fishing practices, boosting their incomes, and contributing to the conservation of depleting marine resources. Furthermore, in Rwanda, Togo and Uganda, UNEP and its partners launched a programme providing grants to electric mobility start-ups with a focus on creating employment opportunities for women. The second phase of the [EmPower](#) project (2023-2027), is helping women in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam purchase small-scale renewable energy equipment, like solar-powered water pumps. Some 100,000 women are expected to benefit from this initiative.

- iii. **Building resilience of the most vulnerable to climate change.** UNEP is supporting countries and stakeholders in emissions reduction and adaptation to climate change through more effective interactions between science, policy, finance, technology, and the economy. UNEP gives special attention to inclusive decision-making, and addressing structural inequalities that are root causes of vulnerability, into the core of adaptation action. Considering the ongoing project portfolio, UNEP plans to benefit around 3.67 million people, to restore 179,000 hectares of land, improve climate adaptation knowledge of 110,000 people and 140 institutions, and build over 154 water harvesting structures. Three areas of this work are:
- **Early Warning Systems** - UNEP led the establishment of early warning systems for climate-related disasters in the Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Timor-Leste, and Tuvalu. One example is a web-based forecasting system that warned Cook Islanders of coastal flooding during a May storm, in 2023. UNEP is implementing similar projects in 19 other countries, as part of a broader UN push to ensure [early warning systems](#) protect everyone on Earth by 2027.
  - [Strengthening adaptation planning by assessing climate vulnerabilities](#)<sup>1</sup> and identifying adaptation options at the sector, subnational, and national levels. This process is based on the analysis of current and future climate change scenarios, and in enhancing adaptation planning and implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Policy Brief - National Adaptation Planning: Emerging Lessons Learned from UNEP Projects

- **Building climate resilience through increasing access to finance for adaptation efforts, including through innovative financing mechanisms for the most vulnerable such as:** small loans schemes, insurance solutions, blended mechanisms, and integration of the private sector, among others).
- iv. UNEP hosted Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) helped developing countries leverage technology to mitigate and adapt to climate change, with interventions projected to benefit the most vulnerable and prevent the emission of 21 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent annually – the same as taking 4 million cars off the road. Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe received CTCN support to develop minimum energy performance standards for refrigerators and transformers for the most vulnerable people.

UNEP will continue approaching integrating poverty and inequality from a multi-dimensional perspective. This will include incorporating a people-centred, social, and economic development approach into its narrative, relevant strategic documents, project design and implementation. The work will guide UNEP on how to further internalize development to ensure that the environmental goals of UNEP projects and initiatives are at the same level of relevance and importance as LNOB objectives. The work will also ensure broader UN system integrates environmental outcomes into their programming based on the strong interdependence between people and healthy ecosystems.