

Contribution by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment programme to the Report of the Secretary-General on Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)(A/RES/74/234) on progress made in implementing the inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for eradicating poverty

The system-wide plan of action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027) is founded on 10 basic principles that guides the work of the United Nations system collectively and the individual contributions of UNEP.¹²

I. UNEP Key activities

United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolutions

Policies and strategies that contribute to the eradication of poverty in all its forms are embedded in many of UNEA's resolutions, but more specifically, in the UNEA resolution on the Poverty-Environment Nexus (UNEP/EA.4/Res.18) which calls for practices and policies to be put in place for sustainable agriculture, fisheries, management of extractives, forest management and energy solutions. It also considers environmental factors affecting migration and displacement of people.

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1. Poverty is multi-dimensional in the forms it takes and its underlying causes, and new forms are emerging;
2. Integrated economic, social and environmental policies are needed nationally and internationally;
3. Sustained and inclusive economic growth that narrows inequalities is necessary and entails structural transformation to generate full and productive employment and decent work for all;
4. Respect for internationally recognized human rights is an essential foundation for action;
5. Gender mainstreaming is vital for policy design and implementation;
6. Discrimination, marginalization and exclusion are major causes of poverty and the barriers to the full participation in society and the economy of poor people and people in vulnerable situations, and must be removed;
7. Inclusion and empowerment of those left behind is a priority, targeting those furthest behind;
8. The role of the United Nations is to support nationally owned strategies and strengthen capacities for the realization of internationally agreed development goals and targets, including the Sustainable Development Goals, based on high quality research and the promotion of good governance, human rights and the rule of law;
9. The United Nations development system organizations will bring together their special expertise and policy portfolios to focus on integrated system-wide action that enhances efficiency, coherence, impact and adaptability to emerging trends;
10. Inclusive and strategic partnerships based on these principles will pull together resources and deliver action globally, regionally, nationally and locally.

UNDP UNEP Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals

Through this collaboration, 10 projects are being implemented in Africa and Asia-Pacific countries. The projects deal with, *inter alia*, economic empowerment of women through the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices (together with UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa Region); enhancing investments in sustainable environment and natural resource management to accelerate poverty reduction in Africa as well as work on social protection, women's energy entrepreneurship and multidimensional poverty.

Poverty-Environment Action is further engaged in revision of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) which is part of broader efforts to capture the economic value of nature through standardized accounting systems, launched in 2018 as agreed by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its 49th session..³

Analysis of the Economics of Land Degradation

Amongst all environmental problems, land degradation is one of the most fundamental, as it has far reaching impacts on the livelihoods of those that depend on the land, especially the poor. UNEP has conducted studies on how land degradation neutrality can help eradication of poverty in Africa (42 out of 54 countries) and Asia (44 countries) and has presented the findings to UNGA and the UNCCD COP.

The Partnership for Action on Green Economy PAGE

PAGE brings together five UN agencies, UNEP, ILO, UNDP, UNIDO and UNITAR.

PAGE has directly supported the development of the Marshall Plan Against Poverty and Exclusion, launched with the 2016-17 national budget, and the drafting of targeted policy measures to prevent extreme poverty. Its most important proposal, the Marshall Plan Social Contract, provides financial assistance to households found eligible under the Social Register of Mauritius for families in poverty.

PAGE also seeks to reduce poverty through the promotion of inclusive, sustainable economic growth (SDG 8) and supporting the development of national plans which target green job growth, through partnerships with governments, private sector, academia, and civil society.

To assist policy development, PAGE has developed guidance manuals which help governments assess existing skills and employment potential, and model social and employment outcomes from sustainable development policies.

To advance gender equality, PAGE has worked on mainstreaming gender dimensions into national policies and promoting the participation of women in training workshops to improve employment outcomes

³ More details are here: <https://seea.un.org/content/seea-experimental-ecosystem-accounting-revision>

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Reports 2018-2019

UNEP co-hosts the Secretariat of the IPCC together with the World Meteorological Organization. In 2018 and 2019 the IPCC produced three Special Reports on climate change⁴ which all factor in sustainable development and poverty eradication in their assessments.

II. Assessment of results / impact

The links between management of environmental and natural resources (ENR), climate change and poverty are made clear in UNEP's activities.

There is now a substantive amount of concrete evidence of the degree to which unsustainable ENR can worsen monetary and multi-dimensional poverty over time and how appropriate interventions can improve ENR sustainability/climate resilience and contribute to monetary and multi-dimensional poverty eradication.

Methodologies are being made available to measure ENR/climate poverty links and thus better target poverty reduction through ENR sustainability/climate resilient interventions. The UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment programmes has initiated and led development of methodologies to include ENR in multi-dimensional poverty measurement.

Closing the gender gap in agriculture in Africa, will lift people, particularly women and children out of poverty.

In some countries steps to improve ENR sustainability have been taken based on evidence of ENR/climate-poverty linkages – most of these steps involve adopting objectives in policies and plans.

Climate change impacts and responses are closely linked to sustainable development and consideration of ethics and equity can help address the uneven distribution of adverse impacts associated with 1.5 degrees C and higher levels of global warming, as well as those from mitigation and adaptation, particularly for poor and disadvantaged populations in all societies.

III. Gaps and challenges

⁴ Global warming of 1.5 degrees C. An IPCC Special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. // Climate Change and Land. AN IPCC Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems. //The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate. Special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Inadequate application of poverty assessments and poverty reduction targeting has led to, *inter alia*, assumptions that economic growth will be sufficient to reduce poverty through the trickle-down effect. This has proven to be incorrect in most LDCs with substantive inequalities and significant pockets of very poor people.

Most measures of poverty focus on monetary measures, rather than taking a multi-dimensional approach.

Gender disaggregated data is insufficiently collected and analysed.

Capacity in the LDCs is weak in terms of applying multi-dimensional poverty measurement and very weak in terms of applying poverty reduction targeting in plans, strategies, programmes and projects – with capacity challenges at sector and sub-national levels particularly weak.

There is a mismatch between stated political ambition level and action on the ground.

There is inadequate measurement of ENR/Climate poverty linkages at all levels (national, sector and sub-national).

A challenge is how to scale up efforts to measure ENR-multi-dimensional poverty linkages and then apply the findings to better target ENR sustainability/climate resilience interventions.

IV. Key policy messages and recommendations

Sustainable use of environmental resources and the reversal of land degradation have far reaching impacts on the livelihoods of those that depend on the land, especially the poor. Much more needs to be done to leverage integration and working across the poverty-environment—development nexus, in terms of resources and UN system wide partnerships.

The feminization of poverty persists and the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is an indispensable requirement for women's economic empowerment and sustainable development.

Achieving SDG1 – both globally and in the continent – will require accelerating the pace of poverty reduction and GDP growth, with specific attention being paid to pathways to a green economy.

Policy coherence and a coordinated approach that involves participation at all levels by all actors to promote an enabling environment for sustainable development, through provision of support to member States in planning, budgeting and finance of SDG actions is needed;

Strengthening national statistical capacity and monitoring systems to ensure access to data that are of high quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts, are required to craft gender- and other vulnerable communities sensitive policies and investment to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

