

# MAINSTREAMING ENVIRONMENT INTO GHANA'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA/STRATEGIES

## Introduction

Ghana in the last 30 years has been making attempts to mainstream environment in national development agenda. A number of methods have been adopted including the voluntary measures, legislation and establishment of environmental desks. A pilot activity was undertaken to apply the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS).

SEA is a tool that offers opportunities for mainstreaming environment and sustainability into a country's development agenda to achieve sustainable growth. It was thus applied in Ghana to the GPRS, which is the Country's main development agenda. It is also used for assessing the impact of Policies, Plans and Programmes, to ensure there are more environmentally sustainable.

The tool helps to identify risks to the environment, the scope for mitigation, opportunities for avoidance of adverse impacts, through the refinement of policies, plans and programmes, and opportunities for enhanced environmental management leading to sustainable growth. A key aim was to achieve greater integration between national policy goals and practical delivery of sustainable development on the ground. This was to ensure a balance between the three pillars of sustainable growth i.e. social, economic and environment.

The SEA was carried out simultaneously at the three levels national regional and district (Ministries Departments and Agencies, 10 regions and 110 districts through "learning-by-doing).

Extensive consultations and participatory approach was carried out with a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society organisations, and the private sector on results of SEA and the recommendations for endorsement by all stakeholders.

The SEA created the opportunity for the country to apply sustainable development and principle.

Lessons from the conduct of the SEA, show that all sectors realized that the tool has value in ensuring sustainable development, and offering opportunities for creating links and synergies. This drove the desire of sectors to internalize the process thus leading to the conduct of sector specific SEAs such as water, mining and energy sectors.

Water and sanitation plans at the district level will use health impacts in priority setting to address environmental sanitation issues as an integral part of the district plans. Capacity in SEA will be built in the Environmental Sanitation Unit of the Policy Directorate of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD)

The pilot should indicate there are direct links between water, health and poverty. Access to water, which is a livelihood issue, is linked to water quality, quantity and sanitation, which are an important component to the quality of health, a major poverty-environment dimension. The Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit of the MLGRD is supporting Regional Environmental Health Officers and District Environmental Health

Unit to provide inputs on health impacts on environmental sanitation in district planning processes

In the area of energy commission has developed a draft strategic energy plan 2000-2025 for Ghana. The plan is in four parts (i) electricity (ii) petroleum (iii) renewable energy (iv) policy. The strategic national energy plan has as its aim the supply of energy for Ghana's economic and social development and to ensure timely investment in the energy sector.

## **(2) MAINSTREAMING AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The lessons and experiences gained from the pilot is being incorporated into the new version of Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2006-2009) The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) is being supported by a sub-committee on environment, to ensure that SEA policy recommendations are incorporated into the update of the GPRS. The SEA principles have been infused into the NDPC planning process and Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning financial guidelines for the preparation of Medium Term Development Plans at National, Regional and District levels.

## **(3) REPLICATING THE INITIATIVE**

The SEA can be replicated at the national, level through sectoral policies, at the district level through the district development plans and at the community levels through community programmes. This can be carried out through the following steps:

- Incorporate SEA principles into the next version of the GPRS (in progress)  
Institutionalize the SEA process at all levels of Governance
- Supporting actions may include: coordination between Government agencies, capacity building of government staff, as

well as awareness raising within other key decision-makers, such as Ministers, Parliamentarians and District Chief Executives. There is the need to broaden engagement within civil society and businesses.

To implement SEA in a specific Sector to demonstrate its effectiveness at various levels of application –(national, district and local)

The SEA is to be applied to the water sector, which is deemed as a crosscutting issue at:

- **National level** – new national water policy to ensure sustainability
- **District level** – to existing District Water and Sanitation Policies to ensure that all relevant components are duly integrated
- **Local level** – river basin level using Integrated Water Resource Management Programmes