ARMENIA

MDG7

Progress Towards Environmental Sustainability

The period of economic crisis after the declaration of Armenia's independence in 1991, the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh, the instability in the region, and the lack of appropriate capacities and experience precluded the incorporation of environmental concerns into the overall economic development and had a detrimental impact on the ecological situation. By signing the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Armenia has committed itself to the goals of Agenda 21. The strategy of the Government of Armenia, with UNDP's assistance, aims to help national institutions and civil society reconcile environmental concerns with the national economic development and poverty reduction goals and policies, in order to make progress on MDG 7 on environmental sustainability.

The geographical nature of Armenia has complicated efforts to increase access to water (Target 10 of MDG 7). Water reserves and sources on the territory are unevenly distributed. The mountainous relief and difficult access to mountainous villages impede water distribution as well.

Challenges to environmental sustainability in Armenia include the continued difficult socio-economic situation in the country, scarce budgets of local self-governance bodies responsible for providing basic services to the population, and weak organizational management of rural communities. However, the establishment of a State Commission on Water Resources in 2001 may enhance environmental sustainability prospects as well as a State programme on combating poverty, which envisions measures aimed at increasing access to household amenities and services for the most vulnerable parts of the population. Increased involvement of the private sector is also seen as a priority. In addition, reconstruction of the water pipe system in the capital, where more than 1/3 of the population is concentrated, will improve access to water and basic sanitation, two major targets of MDG 7.[1]

QUICK FACTS

Total UNDP-GEF and Co-Finance:	$14,481,191
Total UNDP and Co-Finance:	$214,477
Total:	$14,695,668
Cumulative Total ODS Phased-Out:	52 ODP tonnes

SPOTLIGHT

NCSA Process Gains Rapid Momentum[2]

The National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) process provides a unique opportunity for a country to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of their national capacity to fulfil their commitments under global environmental conventions in a coordinated and synergistic manner. Armenia has conducted studies and developed national reports and action plans under the three Rio Conventions, which provide the NCSA study with a solid foundation upon which to build the country's capacity assessment.

In 2003, Armenia was among the first countries to begin the NCSA process with a financial contribution from the GEF of US$ 197,000. The highly participatory self-assessment process brought together many key players: government agencies, academia, NGOs and the private sector. Each group identified critical capacity needs in order to fulfil Armenia's obligations under the conventions. The national capacity needs were assessed and prioritised based on the findings and recommendations of the assessment processes. The Government of Armenian fully supported the NCSA by decree and identified short, medium and long-term capacity building measures for implementation of the conventions.

UNDP-GEF support to early implementation of the NCSA included wide distribution of CD-ROMs containing convention documents, national reports and web-links, enabling the campaign to very rapidly reach a wide audience. The project outcomes and Framework Action Plan were presented to the National Assembly deputies in 2004. Armenia is now one step ahead, having embraced the process early on, and can now move forward and implement some of recommendations identified through the process. In particular, advancements have been made in forging stronger partnerships with NGOs and CBOs, such as the Forest Coalition and the Yerevan City Public Environmental Council. The development of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism was invaluable as it catalysed the process to identify the main bottlenecks and undertook measures to improve capacity to capture environmental statistics and efficiently manage information.

UNDP Armenia's Energy and Environment Programme supports the Government in the field of integration of economic, ecological, and social policies for sustainable development, as well as in creating legal and regulatory structures to stimulate the observance of laws, norms, and rules on environmental protection, assists in the implementation of the principles of environmental conventions, and works with the GEF on the implementation of global mandates and national strategies.[3] "At this stage in the country's transition, it is critically important to focus on the environmental aspects of economic growth."

Lise Grande, Resident Representative

PORTFOLIO

FSSD*

GEF is supporting Armenia's NCSA in order to determine the priority needs and a plan of action for developing Armenia's capacity to meet its commitments for global environmental management, with a focus on capacity related needs. UNDP and the OSCE is supporting Albania's Strategic Environmental Assessment, with the objective of improving the national decision-making and planning process.

WATER

Armenia's long-term objective is to ensure that the quality and quantity of the water throughout the Kura-Aras river system meets the short and long-term requirements for optimum ecosystem function as well as the needs of the communities using the river. This will be achieved with GEF's support.

ENERGY

UNDP and GEF are working to strengthen and maintain capacity for realization and transfer of technologies required for climate change adaptations. The overall objective is to identify gaps, uncertainties and needs to be undertaken by the SNC.

BIODIVERSITY

UNDP, FAO and DFID are working to better protect Armenia's biodiversity, especially by strengthening coordination capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture in the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Agricultural Development. GEF is also assisting Armenia in the preparation of its Third National Report on Biodiversity for submission to the Convention on Biological Diversity. This will be done through the preparation of national documents, synthesising biodiversity information and identification of main stakeholders involved.

CHEMICALS

With GEF funding, UNDP is assisting Armenia in meeting its phase-out obligations under the Montreal Protocol. Ongoing programming targets priority ODS phase-out activities in the refrigeration and aerosol sectors and proposes technical assistance at the institutional and enterprise levels to facilitate achievement of ODS phase-out . In an overarching manner, the project ensures availability of technical assistance to expedite the implementation of the country programme and develop national capacity.

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[1]Armenia MDGR 2004 http://www.undg.org/documents/2751-Millenium_Development_Goa.doc; [2]UNDP Armenia Country Office Questionnaire, available at http://ncsa.undp.org/docs/LESSONS%20LEARNED/NSCA_Armeni_revised.doc; [3]http://www.undp.am/?page=environment; *Frameworks and Strategies for Sustainable Development