



PANAMA



Progress Towards Environmental Sustainability

Panama has gathered support from public and private sectors in order to progress towards environmental sustainability. It has done so by using its strategic geographical location to develop effective environmental programmes that help to achieve MDG 7.

In 1992, forests covered 44.5% of Panama's total land area. However, this proportion decreased to 40.4% in 1998. Despite all the international and regional agreements aiming to remedy this, Panama still suffers from high rates of deforestation, which have diminished natural resources and threatened biodiversity.

Governmental efforts have lessened the problem of deforestation, resulting in 29.7% of the total land area to be under protected area legislation. Economic resources are required to manage these national parks and biodiversity reserves, as well as to improve environmental education about the importance of these areas.

Most subsistence in rural communities is based on agriculture and livestock. Panama sees it as essential to adapt its economic and environmental strategies to agricultural production, in order to achieve economic growth and minimize its harmful effects on the environment.

While the proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water increased from 78.7% in 1990 to 88.2% in 2000, some rural areas and indigenous communities still suffer from lack of access to safe drinking water. To achieve this MDG target, it is necessary to allocate sufficient economic resources towards improved water pipeline infrastructure.

QUICK FACTS

CURRENT PORTFOLIO BUDGET

Total UNDP-GEF and Co-Finance:	\$3,037,700
Total UNDP and Co-Finance:	\$2,431,032
Total MPU and Bilateral:	\$265,152
Total:	\$5,733,884

Cumulative Total ODS Phased-Out: 59.2 ODP tonnes

In 2000, some authoritative studies revealed that 20% of the total population lived in slums. A decrease in this number in the last decade is intrinsically related to the high rates of individual property rights, from which more than half of the total population benefited. Despite these improvements, many indigenous communities are still mired in poor living conditions.

Efforts needed to achieve MDG 7 in Panama include: empowering indigenous communities; allocating economic resources to rural areas through well-planned programmes; and enforcing legal frameworks for environmental sustainability.¹

SPOTLIGHT

Ecotourism: Promoting Economic Development and Conservation²

Panama's geographic location, with both Pacific and Atlantic coasts, and its year-round warm climate has created a fertile environment for a vast array of biodiversity. However, insufficient funds, weak project planning and lack of private sector involvement has mitigated against any link between economic development and biodiversity conservation, despite governmental efforts.

The Sustainable Tourism Development Master Plan of the Las Perlas Archipelago and Isla del Rey was Panama's first ecotourism plan incorporating environmental considerations, and designed and implemented in collaboration between UNDP, the Government, and the private sector. With a total budget of US\$ 325,000, a new legal framework for land management is being introduced which will prohibit non-environmentally sustainable tourism projects. The new regulation will also ensure the installation of a waste management plant to generate renewable energy for the hotels and bungalows, thus minimizing the impacts on the environment. In the preliminary stages, the joint project will help promote ecotourism in low-biodiversity areas, while securing conservation of tropical forest habitats, coral reefs and endogenous species. Local communities are a fundamental part in the development of this project as they provide ancestral knowledge of flora and fauna and the coastal and marine habitats.

A major accomplishment of the project has been the high response of foreign investment towards the development of Las Perlas Archipelago, as well as the structured planning provided by the Government. Las Perlas now has the necessary foundations to involve the local communities and promote biodiversity conservation, while achieving economic growth. The success of this joint-funded project illustrates that an interdisciplinary approach, involving public and private sector information sharing, experiences and human resources can successfully achieve development and conservation.



Along with the Government, environmental organizations, as well as international organizations, UNDP Panama works actively in the areas of the climate change, the conservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity, and access to new forms of renewable energy.³ Also, Panama receives aid from UNDP for the development of better environmental management practices. UNDP, in partnership with UNEP, will continue to work with Panama to help the country evaluate its progresses and also to work on overcoming the many environmental challenges that remain.



Roberto Gálvez, Resident Representative

PORTFOLIO

FSSD*

UNDP is supporting the strengthening of environmental policies and managerial programmes in Panama through a government-funded project which includes the active participation of Panamanian NGOs.

WATER

UNDP is supporting the Regional Inter Ocean Authority through the “Coastal Zone Development Project,” which aims increase the regional development of the coastal zones by providing researching, planning and encouraging the participation of the private sector. This project is funded by the Government of Panama and the Inter-American Development Bank.

ENERGY

UNDP is assisting the government in integrating climate change adaptation strategies into national sustainable development, through the development of a National Adaptation Policy Framework for preparing adaptation strategies, policies, and measures. Another GEF-funded project is creating and improving permanent national capacities to enable Panama to meet its reporting obligations under the UNFCCC, leading to the preparation of Panama’s Second National Communication to the CoP. To improve access to sustainable energy and reduce GHG emissions, UNDP is working on a project, again funded by GEF, to remove barriers to commercial-scale, grid-connected wind power energy production in Panama, thereby reducing the need for fossil fuels and associated GHG emissions.

BIODIVERSITY

To promote biodiversity conservation, UNDP is supporting a Government-funded environmental education programme, which encourages a cultural switch towards biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources among students. UNDP is also supporting an ecotourism project (see Spotlight), while the “Central American Markets for Biodiversity” project is supporting the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use within small, micro- and medium-sized enterprise development and financing in Central America. Funding is from the World Bank and the Government, which is also funding the development of a conservation and management strategy in the Darien region, based on the application of scientific knowledge and the identification of options for biodiversity management, in cooperation with local communities.

CHEMICALS

UNDP has provided continuous support towards Panama’s compliance with the Montreal Protocol since 1993. Most recently, the implementation of the national phase-out plan includes an incentive programme for retrofitting fishing boat refrigeration systems; a technical assistance programme for the prevention of illegal CFC trade; and, a technical assistance programme for training refrigeration and air conditioning technicians. Such an approach has allowed stakeholders, both private and public to draw on a range of expertise available at the global level in order to maintain compliance with the Montreal Protocol.

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PARTNERS

Some of our Partners working with UNDP and the Government in Panama

UNFIP
 IDB

¹MDGR 2003 http://www.undg.org/documents/2763-Panama_MDG_Report_-_Panama_MDGR.pdf; ²UNDP Nicaragua Questionnaire 2005; INCAE, “Diagnóstico del Sector Turismo en Panamá, 2001: <http://www.incae.ac.cr/ES/clacds/investigacion/pdf/cen663.pdf>; ³http://www.undp.org.pa/pnudpanama/portal/lang__es/tabID__3345/DesktopDefault.aspx; *Frameworks and Strategies for Sustainable Development