

## Energy and Environment

### The Challenge

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has enjoyed, over the past few decades, a sustained period of rapid economic growth, which has resulted in high per capita income, a strongly positive balance of trade and no public debt. This process, largely fuelled by oil revenues, has been accompanied by high rates of population growth and increasing pressure on the country's natural resources. The potentially adverse environmental impact of unregulated economic growth was clearly recognized in the Development Plans for the Kingdom, which emphasizes the crucial importance of achieving sustainable development through the conservation and prudent management of its natural resources. The 8th Development Plan stresses on protecting the environment and developing systems consistent with sustainable development.

Environmental current issues include desertification; depletion of underground water resources; the lack of perennial rivers or permanent water bodies which has prompted the development of extensive seawater desalination facilities; coastal pollution from oil spills and coastal developments, air pollution, GHG emissions.

Saudi Arabia is party to the following conventions: , Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution

### The Response

Despite the fact that the Saudi economy depends largely on oil, the Kingdom has spared no efforts to address global environmental issues such as climate change and Biodiversity. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1994 and the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2001. Based on this, UNDP in partnership with the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment (PME), the National Commission for Wildlife and Development (NCWCD), King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), the Ministry of Water and Electricity (MOWE) , the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals (MOPM) and other partners, assists the Government of Saudi Arabia to achieve the creation of an enabling environment for the Kingdom to meet its environmental priorities within

the Eighth National Development Plan and the 2010 - 2015 9th Development Plan soon to be published. Technical assistance provided to the various government entities mentioned above is at the core of UNDPs work in the Kingdom.

In Biodiversity, projects aim at ensuring the management and operation of protected areas training centers. One of the major targets of the basic environmental strategy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of wildlife in order to maintain ecological equilibrium, particularly with respect to rare, vulnerable and endangered animal and plant species. In the energy sector, UNDP works with King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) to meet the rapidly growing power and energy demand through efficient and rational consumption patterns. The management of the water sector is another area where UNDP provides a direct support to the development of strategic water sector management policies through extensive in-country consultations of the MOWE-WB Cooperative Program. The overall objective is to ensure the provision of a sustainable development in terms of water Consumption.

### ▪ Strengthening National Climate Change Policies and Partnerships

Ensuring the Kingdom meets its global engagements is addressed via a number of our projects. The First National Communication on Climate Change was submitted to the UNFCCC and received positively by the international community. Work is currently ongoing for the production of the Second Communication by mid 2010. This project aims at assisting KSA with the enabling activities necessary to prepare and report the Second National Communication to the Conference of Parties in accordance with guidance of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The National Coordinator works with experts from international organizations and institutes to initiate the process of cooperation between the Saudi team and international experts to develop the scope of work for various subjects of the Second National Communication. The activities included developing an inventory of GHG emissions and removals, assessment and evaluation of steps taken by KSA to address mitigation; evaluation of vulnerability of KSA to climate change; collecting and describing the national programs being designed and initiated to facilitate adaptation to climate change.

In addition to this, the **National Energy Efficiency Program** focuses on end-use energy efficiency, as it is the single most effective way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change.

### ▪ Energy Efficiency in Industry and Expanding Renewable Energy Use

With increased economic growth, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also has experienced growing levels of energy use. This brings challenges for sustainable use of oil reserves. In 2003 the **National Energy Efficiency Program** was launched. Foci of the project include: achieving reduced per-capita use of oil and natural gas in energy-intensive sectors like heavy industry and construction; promotion of energy service industry; energy efficiency labels and standards for new equipment; energy efficient design and construction for new buildings; increased awareness of and strategic action on energy efficiency issues; technical and management training of key energy centers.

Recently The UNDP has been requested to provide information on our global experience and expertise in the field of Clean Development Mechanisms. UNDP is working both at the national level and the international level with regional organizations such as the International Energy Forum (IEF)

### ▪ Water, Environment and Biodiversity

The unrestrained use of groundwater and lack of information during the last two decades have given rise to serious concerns for the long-term viability of the non-renewable groundwater resources in the Kingdom. The **Integrated Water Resources Management** project, launched in 2004, focuses on: a retrospective groundwater abstraction estimate and mapping across KSA; preparation of the economic and financial evaluation of present and alternative policy options; development of an institutional strengthening and individual capacity-

building programme aiming at enhancing the abilities of institutions and people in the water sector towards more efficient and effective decision making and job performance; and assisting the Ministry of Water and Electricity in monitoring the progress of the groundwater evaluation projects.

As a step towards the proper implementation of the strategy, phase two of our project will be focusing on capacity development, individual and institutional.

The **Jeddah Environmental Master Plan** was launched in 2008 in light of the special challenges Jeddah faces in the wake of fast and unprecedented socio-economic growth. This comprehensive environmental action planning programme deals with these challenges by involving all stakeholders concerned and as a city moving forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century towards better sustainable livelihood for its residents and prosperity for its socio-economy. This project aims at developing an Environmental Master Plan for the city of Jeddah promoting Environmental Protection while ensuring the Sustainable Development of the City and the sustainable livelihoods of its men and women. The project prepared and verified issue-specific environmental profiles in a participatory process, prepared an Environmental Master Plan, developed capacities of stakeholders for planning, implementation and monitoring, and established a planning decision support system.

UNDP in partnership with the **National Commission for Wildlife and Development (NCWCD)** established a program aimed at the management and operation of protected areas. A training Center was established within NCWCD and a number of staff and Rangers have been professionally trained to manage and operate properly the protected areas in the Kingdom.

To contribute to this initiative, or to find out more about the programme, please visit our website or contact Ms. Mayssam Tamim, Assistant Resident Representative at (966-1) 488 5301 Ext. 323 or [mayssam.tamim@undp.org](mailto:mayssam.tamim@undp.org)

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