

UN Development Programme and the Environment

By Arianna Lund

As we traveled to different United Nations programs and agencies, staff at the UN Development Programme, including 2003 UW-Madison alumna Shams Banihani, afforded us three hours of their valuable time. We learned of UNDP's goals to reduce poverty, assist with crisis prevention and recovery, protect the environment, and push for gender equality.

A main focus of the study tour was the Millennium Development Goals, therefore, it was of special interest to us to learn what UN agencies are doing to work toward the goals. Goal 7 – to ensure environmental sustainability – we learned, is of particular concern to the UNDP. It is critical because the poor are most affected by environmental degradation and it is vital for them to have access to clean, affordable water and energy sources. These issues go beyond the community or national level, to reach the global level. Care of the environment is a global matter because one country alone cannot solve ozone depletion, climate changes, and loss of biodiversity. The best way to overcome these concerns is to create integrated programs that present new policies, communicate practices that work, and connect partners through experimental projects. Programs need to focus on climate change, biodiversity, water, energy, dry lands, chemicals and the ozone.



A goal of development strategies is to begin gearing countries toward a more sustainable way of living. By partnering with other groups, the UNDP works in 140 countries worldwide to fund the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund. This allows countries to invest in green technologies and practices that contribute to environmentally sustainable development that is climate resilient and produces low emissions. In order for this strategy to succeed, negative policy and institutional barriers will need to be removed, regulatory and financial assistance given, and space for the private sector to invest in the fund will be need to be made available.

Through the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund and other projects, the UNDP works toward the goal of ensuring environmental sustainability by 2015. It is thought that by improving the environment, up to one-quarter of all diseases and deaths around the world could be prevented. Those living in poverty are most dependent on natural resources and as a result are disproportionately affected by negative changes in the environment. If the environment can be protected and further improvements made, help can reach those who need it most.