

Asia 2015: Managing the Environment for Development and to Sustain Pro-poor Growth

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Summary

Introduction

Asia's environmental resources have contributed enormously to economic growth and poverty reduction. A quarter of total national wealth in Asia is comprised of environmental assets such as fertile soils, rivers, forests and mineral deposits. These natural assets are often critical for the livelihoods of many poor people with few other assets.

Main findings

Resource-intensive development has been achieved at significant environmental cost. This was the conclusion of the 2005 Asian Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development. Environmental issues such as deforestation, pressure on water supplies, and pollution from industry and energy use pose real limits to further economic growth. In many Asian countries, the cost is equivalent to one third or more of Gross National Savings. They also exacerbate Asia's high vulnerability to natural disasters. (Asia already suffers 90 per cent of all climate-related disasters, and this is likely to increase with climate change.)

The challenge for governments and policymakers is to use natural wealth to generate growth and to enable the poor to benefit from this growth, while at the same time sustaining its capacity to produce these benefits into the future. Such 'green growth' has been called for by the Asian Ministerial Conference can be achieved through improvements in three key areas: institutions, investment and international partnerships.

Key research findings

Significant Asian scientific and institutional innovations have already shown what progress can be made. This paper highlights the potential for further progress through international partnerships that build on existing initiatives in:

- environmental health
- energy and climate change
- sustainable forestry and eradicating illegal logging
- sustainable fishing
- transboundary rivers management
- disaster preparedness
- greening Asia's financial markets and private sector
- pro-poor conservation.

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