Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
A REFORMED UNITED NATIONS FOR ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENT-DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES – A CASE STUDY APPROACH

A Thesis Presented in Fulfilment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Economics at Massey University, Manawatu New Zealand

David Hardie Smith

2015
ABSTRACT

The unsustainable use of natural resources is a serious and worsening problem worldwide, affecting the life and health of many millions of people. It is seriously undermining wealth creation in many countries and contributing to violent conflicts and is also a human security problem. Such problems – where the environmentally unsustainable use of natural resources has a direct or indirect negative impact on the achievement of development objectives – are defined as Environment-Development Problems.

The UN plays a significant role in attempts to deal with environment-development problems (EDPs), leading international initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals and leading or participating in many programmes to address them. It also has a very important role in catalysing other entities, including governments and donors, to address EDPs and other development problems. The fact that EDPs are worsening in many developing countries, particularly in Africa, raises questions about the effectiveness of the UN in addressing EDPs. The focus of this thesis is on assessing the effectiveness of the UN in dealing with EDPs and identifying ways to improve its effectiveness.

This research takes a mixed methods approach to assess the level of UN effectiveness in addressing EDPs and the reasons for UN effectiveness. The research found that, overall, the UN has been less than moderately effective in addressing EDPs but that it has achieved some successes. One success is that the UN had developed and applied an effective model for addressing EDPs that, if enhanced and applied broadly, would significantly improve UN effectiveness in addressing EDPs. The research also found that development aid design, organisational culture and complexity were significant explanatory variables for UN effectiveness. Further, it also identified programme and project implementation modalities, national capacity and donors as explanatory variables. It concluded that many of the factors inhibiting UN effectiveness in addressing EDPs are general UN factors. Therefore, significantly increasing UN effectiveness requires addressing both EDP specific and more general UN effectiveness factors.

A number of recommendations for improving UN effectiveness in addressing EDPs and more generally were made. It was concluded that if the reforms needed to significantly improve UN effectiveness are not implemented, then the UN should phase out its operational development activities, given the magnitude of the need for reform.
This research is dedicated to

Theodore ‘Theo’ Marama, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment

And to the memory of

Peter H Liotta, United States Air Force

Warriors, Teachers and Wise Men
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to my supervisors, Professor Anton Meister and Associate Professor John Holland for their great support, guidance and patience. Without this, the thesis would not have been completed. I owe Professor Anton Meister a special thank you for his support over the years, starting during my undergraduate days. I thank Sue Edwards for all her help with ensuring the thesis was put together in a readable, correct format. I thank also the Doctoral office for their support.

This thesis would not have been possible without the experiences and thoughts of many individuals in the United Nations, the broader development community and in a number of developing countries. I am most grateful for their insights. The late Professor Peter Liotta and the late Senator Claiborne Pell, were an inspiration, both of who strove for a more effective United Nations.

I would also like to make a general acknowledgement to Massey University, in particular to the former Department of Agricultural Economics, which provided me with the right balance of theoretical and practical education that led to my career and to this thesis, along a somewhat long, bumpy and winding road.
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<td>BOD</td>
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