

Achieving environmental sustainability is a key theme of the UCD aid program. UCD Guinea recognises that the poorest people are often the most vulnerable to the impacts of environmental degradation, and that climate change now threatens to worsen these problems and set back progress.

### The Challenge

While rapid economic growth in the developing world is essential in providing the necessary resources for poverty reduction, economic growth can also place pressure on natural systems. The health of these systems is particularly important to the rural poor as their wellbeing and livelihoods are heavily dependent on productive soil, forests, oceans and fresh water. Without protecting natural systems, there is a risk that livelihood gains made through economic growth and development will not be sustainable over the long term.

The pressures on natural systems are also predicted to intensify with climate change. The associated risks should be considered a development challenge as well as an environmental issue. Climate change will potentially impact on all major development sectors, through potential for increased vulnerability of communities to disasters, increased spread of disease, lowered agricultural productivity and increased cost of infrastructure provision. Moreover, the countries most vulnerable to climate change are often the least able to manage the challenge of adapting.