

Integrating sustainable development principles into the policies and programmes implemented by individual countries is crucial, but how is it to be done? Environmental challenges are often visible only in a long-term perspective, while political planning is often short term, pandering to electoral pressures. Moreover environment

ministries are often seen as less powerful than other ministries, with little contact with economic players. So, apart from talk about "mainstreaming the environment into policies" there is little practical guidance for conducting meaningful analysis. Currently few countries have attempted to deal with the environment in a strategic way.

## Can Environmental Assessment reduce poverty?

By **Ineke Istenhauer**, Netherlands Commission for Environmental Impact Assessment

In 2002 Ghana published a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), as a framework for national economic policy and all development assistance to Ghana. But little attention was paid to the environmental impact of policies, such as improving transport, intensifying farming and developing the private sector. This may ultimately harm or even stop economic growth. Moreover the strategy did not explore the potential contribution of natural resources to the economy. The government therefore decided to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to adjust the strategy as required. The SEA was applied at national and district level, with options that favour both the poor and the environment. They may be used to update the strategy and enhance the sustainability of more than 100 district development plans.

The prime aim of the SEA was to bring parties together and build up mutual understanding on poverty reduction and the environment, a process that started with the make-up of the SEA team itself, combining environmental and economic planning expertise.

The team doing the assessment had six members: three from the Environmental Protection Agency and three from the National Development Planning Commission. They enjoyed the support of a local and an international consultant and the advisory services of the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Impact Assessment. A steering committee provided regular inputs. The team did all the actual

groundwork, to ensure the process and results were completely "Ghana-owned". Hiring a foreign consultant would have been easier, but far less effective in terms of scope for training-on-the-job and commitment to using the outcomes.

The relevant ministries came onboard right from the start, with the organisation of a national workshop. It set out to explain how an SEA enables the environment to be integrated in framing policy and planning. The findings of a preliminary pilot assessment showed how a more detailed assessment could provide an opportunity for all sectors to pool their energies and discuss common issues – especially those that give rise to conflict or can mutually reinforce each other to achieve sustainable poverty reduction. A number of conflicting policies were identified. For example the Ministry of Food and Agriculture's policy of rehabilitating existing irrigation facilities conflicted with the Ministry of Health's malaria control policy. Similarly the Ministry of Lands and Forestry's establishment of plantations and the Ministry of Works and Housing policy of acquisition of land for housing may compound land availability problems.

The workshop produced a consensus on the key recommendation that the SEA should proceed, involving district assemblies, due to their responsibility for framing District Development Plans, the main way of implementing the PRS. Ultimately all 27 ministries and 108 out of 110 districts participated.

At national level ministry staff, supported by the expert team, reviewed all policies, plans and programmes in the

strategy. Each review sought to modify and improve policies to make them facilitate, rather than hinder, environmental objectives. In the meantime guidelines, manuals and training material were produced on how to apply the SEA to all ministry staff.

On the basis of this exercise the expert team suggested measures to refine policies in line with environmental risks. The assessment clearly demonstrated the link between over-exploitation of natural resources including soil, water and forest cover and environmental hazards such as bushfires and drought, and the resulting hardship faced by subsistence farmers. The team consequently recommended developing specific programmes and policy measures to help subsistence farmers improve soil quality and reduce exposure to hazards. It also suggested alternatives to the most hazardous policies, with greater potential for assisting the poor and protecting the environment. The relevant ministries discussed these options, leading to practical recommendations endorsed by the expert team. For example the overall objectives of the medium-term macro-economic framework should include increased government expenditure on natural resource conservation, sustainable development initiatives and enhancement of degraded environment to support agricultural production. Small-scale business development proposals that should provide incentives for community-based initiatives to manage natural resources, such as agro-forestry, wetland conservation and eco-tourism.

At district level, District Development Plans were reviewed and improved. District staff assessed the plans directly, after

prior training on assessing the sustainability of programmes and budgets.

The SEA has resulted in broad awareness and recognition of the importance of integrating environmental issues in plans and policies at national and district level. It even convinced ministries which once thought the environment did not concern them. It also led to clear recommendations for a more sustainable PRS for 2006-8.

The expert team is currently fully involved in framing the new strategy as members of "cross-sectoral planning groups". There is good reason to hope results will play a key role in the new PRS.

At district level the SEA led to a better grasp of how district plans can be made more sustainable and some districts have adjusted plans and budgets to incorporate environmental activities.

The manuals, guidelines, reports, checklists and training material produced in the course of the assessment have helped to raise environmental awareness. This is a prerequisite for real changes in activities on the ground and the relevant ministry and district budgets, ultimately decisive for poverty and the environment.

Non-governmental organisations have played an active role and the public sector is starting to take the environment seriously.

It is too early to say whether the SEA has really contributed to reducing poverty in Ghana, but there are signs of some promising spin-offs. Some ministries have used SEA methods for internal planning purposes. The environment has thus been integrated in planning. But the SEA

has also made for more transparent and participative planning, thanks to dialogue with other ministries. Some ministries have included new budget lines for environmental activities, or strengthened or upgraded in-house environmental units. Having their own budgets and units, rather than relying on the Ministry of Environment, will show how the environment can contribute to poverty reduction.

There is clearly room for further improvement. For example, most of the assessments were based on qualitative expert judgement. Additional justification and supporting evidence would probably have made the conclusions more objective and convincing as a basis for decision-making. The same is true of the cost of implementing recommendations, which the SEA overlooked.

District and sector pilot assessments will be undertaken in a follow-up phase. They will be an opportunity to develop more concrete policies in favour of the poor and the environment and to gain a clearer idea of the budgetary consequences of recommendations. Pilot studies will also be used for capacity building, through learning by doing.

Another priority is to develop and implement a system to monitor SEA impacts. This is important to determine whether the new PRS performs better than the existing strategy. It could also check whether programmes, projects and district development plans, resulting from the strategy, pay more attention to the environment than current plans. This will ultimately lead to tangible improvements in the conditions vital to successful poverty reduction.

*"Fighting poverty, promoting sustainable development and eliminating environmental degradation is far too important a job to be left to bureaucrats, diplomats and civil servants."*

Bono

*"It is evident that many wars are fought over resources, which are now becoming increasingly scarce. If we conserved our resources better, fighting over them would not then occur."*

Wangari Maathai

### Donor commitments

The way development cooperation is being provided is changing to increase effectiveness and support progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Many donors are shifting their support to comprehensive strategic planning frameworks such as poverty reduction strategies and sector-wide development plans. These are framed and led by the developing country partners and implemented through national and local bodies. The changes encourage better coordination and pooling of resources among donors. They lower the administrative burden on aid recipients and maximise the potential benefits of development initiatives. However they also require new approaches when it comes to ensuring long term environmental, social and economic sustainability.

In February 2005 the High Level Forum on Joint Progress toward Enhanced Aid Effectiveness took place, with donors harmonising their approach to environmental impact assessment, including the relevant health and social issues at project level. However what works for a project has only limited value when designing tools for strategic programmes. Donors and partner countries consequently made a joint commitment to "develop and apply common approaches for strategic environmental assessment at the sector and national levels."

The OECD/DAC Good Practice Guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) aims to support this process. It promotes the practical use of SEA in the context of development co-operation. It focuses on harmonised approaches that recognise the importance of sticking to developing countries' own priorities and other key principles underpinning development cooperation efforts. The guidance will be finalised in spring 2006.

**Mapping Poverty and Environment**  
for a better understanding of food security, livelihoods and vulnerability

**Poverty maps are spatial representations of poverty assessments.** The assessment information comes from a variety of sources and can be presented at various levels from global to local. Indicators of income poverty, such as GDP per capita or daily subsistence levels, or of well-being - life expectancy, child mortality, or literacy, are most frequently used in poverty maps, and are derived from national census data or household surveys. Sometimes various indicators are combined to give an index of poverty or human development, like the Human Development Index, a composite of life expectancy, literacy and income.

**Poverty is a multi-faceted problem and its levels tend to vary considerably over space.** There is often limited information on the relationships between poverty reduction and ecosystem change, on the trade-offs and synergies of different poverty interventions, and the relation with ecosystem conditions.

**Poverty maps are being used and have impact in developing countries**

- Improved and validated geographic targeting
- Made resource allocation more accountable, transparent, and equitable
- Ignited national and local-level debate
- Encouraged broader participation
- Facilitated coordination between institutions
- Improved credibility of institutions
- Supporting strategic decision-making

**The poverty map.net web-site features examples of poverty maps from all over the world, as well as a library of publication on mapping poverty, food insecurity and vulnerability.**

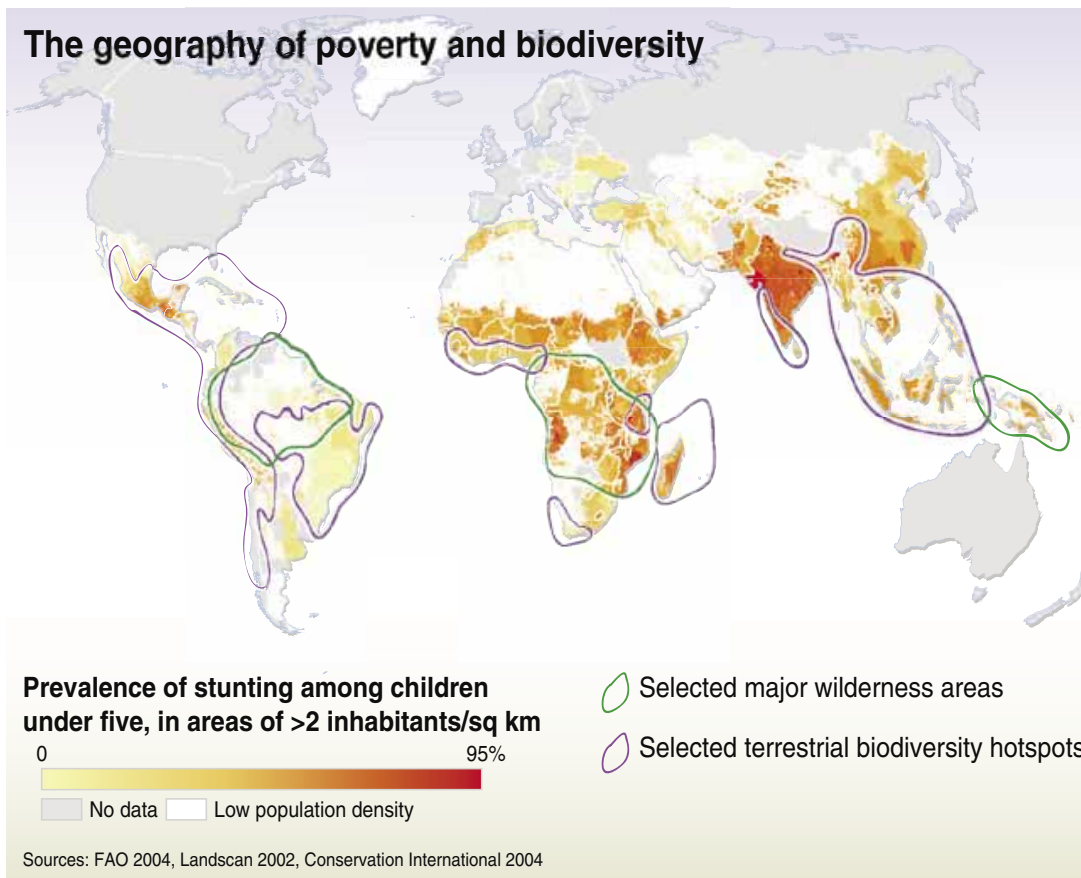
<http://povertymap.net>

**Why Use Poverty Maps?**  
Poverty maps allow easy comparison of indicators of poverty with data from other studies - such as access to infrastructure or services, availability and condition of natural resources, and distribution of facilities. Poverty maps can quickly provide information on the spatial distribution of poverty that in turn guides the targeting of intervention or development projects. Geo-referenced information can feed analysis from the restrictions of fixed geographical boundaries.



Goal 7

*"We should live here on Earth as though we were intending to stay for good."*



Human development has stood against conservation in many places. The creation of national parks or protection of certain species have robbed local peoples on sources of food and income. Sustainable management principles can, if implemented properly, provide food, shelter, income and water for the local population. This can be implemented in many ways, such as through communal resource management or the creation of new means of income in tourism and as park stewards. The global situation, depicted in the map, shows that some of the world's most important riches in biodiversity and wilderness are located in places with high population density and high incidence of poverty (stunting in children as a poverty indicator).

# Environment key to poverty reduction in Tanzania

By **Blandina Cheche** and **David Howlett**, Poverty Environment Officers, Vice President's Office

Three years after adopting the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) approach, Tanzania will be taking another step, embarking on the second phase with a nationwide framework putting poverty reduction high on the country's development agenda.

The National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) or MkuKuta as it is known in its Swahili acronym builds on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of 2000, which was linked to debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). The MkuKuta represents a new, more comprehensive approach to poverty reduction. Although it is built on its predecessor, it differs in a number of key areas. In particular it pays greater attention to cross-the-board issues such as environmental sustainability that contribute to both poverty reduction and growth.

This follows the realisation by the government of Tanzania, national stakeholders and development partners that the first PRSP failed to properly address the environment and other important major issues, essential to achieving sustainable poverty reduction and growth.

A key feature of the review leading to the NSGRP was national ownership and the implementation of extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders on content and focus. The strategy also makes ex-

PLICIT mention of sustainable development as a basic principle. Allowance for the environment complies with the requirements of target 9 under MDG 7.

A number of factors explain the need to integrate the environment in the NSGRP. The majority of the population depends on the environment and natural resources for its livelihood, with use of the environment and natural resources accounting for 66% of gross domestic product. Conversely poor environmental conditions are a major cause of ill health. A proper supply of water is needed, for drinking, irrigation and hydroelectric power. Much as elsewhere, the poor in Tanzania are at the greatest risk from environmental disasters, and the country has suffered from the increasing frequency of droughts and floods. With respect to governance, access, rights and control over the environment and natural resources are key factors in the development of sustainable livelihoods. Lastly the abundance and, more commonly, scarcity of natural resources has previously triggered conflicts in the mining and water sectors.

To integrate the environment into the poverty reduction process, a programme was developed at the Poverty Eradication Division in the Vice President's office with the support of the UNDP, DFID, Danida and now UNEP. The programme has three parts.

The first priority is knowledge and a better understanding of the links between poverty and the environment. Work has included studies of connections between

poverty and environmental policies, and the first public review to establish levels, trends and distribution of environmental expenditure and revenue. The potential of a Strategic Environment Assessment for poverty reduction in Tanzania has also been considered.

Second, environmental data is being integrated in poverty reduction and local planning to determine the impacts of policies and plans on related issues. In particular a preliminary set of poverty-environment indicators has been added to the poverty monitoring system. Linked to the NSGRP a major study is underway to further refine this indicator set and link it to routine data collection and reporting on the MDGs. To obtain a national baseline for the environment and livelihoods, key questions were included in the 2003 agricultural survey. They will also be added to the environment module of the Tanzania Social Economic Database.

Finally capacity must be built at national and local level to better address poverty and environmental issues in future interventions. A new environmental management system has been developed to protect the environment and livelihoods. The government has set up an environment working group with broad membership, the aim being to promote integration of environmental factors into development policies, with plans to achieve sustainable use of the environment and natural resources for poverty reduction.

The programme on poverty and the environment and the focus on cross-

the-board issues is directly responsible for the inclusion of the environment in the NSGRP. As part of the consultation process, civil society organisations and an environment working group submitted proposals on the environment and natural resources. Among others they explained how enhancing the environment, natural resources and conservation can contribute to achieving the new strategy's goals and targets. This is an essential step as it focuses thinking on how the environment contributes to the NSGRP clusters and outcomes.

It is worth noting that 15 of the NSGRP's 108 targets are directly related to the environment and natural resources, and that interventions on the environment are expected to contribute to other targets.

Efforts have focused on work that will help achieve the goals and targets under each of these clusters of broad outcomes. For example one cluster aims to promote sustainable, comprehensive growth, targeting 6-8% growth in GDP growth by 2010. To achieve this the NSGRP will be working on the sustainable management of catchments to ensure water and energy services are provided for the economy and to support livelihoods. Under the fourth goal – raising income among men and women in rural areas – the NSGRP will seek to increase jobs related to the use of natural resources, with a greater share of benefits from wildlife, forests and fisheries for local communities. Under the second cluster the NSGRP has a specific environmentally related goal of giving all men, women and children

access to clean affordable safe water, sanitation, decent shelter and a safe and sustainable environment, thereby reducing vulnerability to environmental risks. The cluster includes a target for reducing pollution levels and vulnerability to drought and flooding, with subsidiary strategies on pollution control and prevention, sanitation and solid waste management, desertification and drylands. Similar interventions are expected to contribute to the second goal of reducing infant, child and maternal mortality, morbidity and malnutrition.

Importantly action on the environment is expected to help achieve governance and accountability goals. For example attention will focus on access to and control over natural resources and reducing related corruption, for instance for illegal logging.

Although Tanzania has taken significant steps to make the environment a key element in future policy, there are still challenges to implementing the measures defined by the NSGRP and developing operational guidance at a local level. The main challenges are integrating the environment in policy, regional and local planning, and budgets; making it an essential component of growth and development policies, notably public health; increasing community-based programmes for managing natural resources that impact on livelihoods and growth; reducing vulnerability to environmental risks; and collating data for poverty and environment indicators and reporting on MDG 7.