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Sustainable poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals

Poverty generally means a lack of resources to meet elementary basic needs. Yet poverty is not manifested in low income alone, but also in limited opportunities to participate in political and economic life, and in a lack of access to natural resources, educational opportunities and health services. Reducing poverty is therefore an overarching task of development policy. Measures to promote sustainable development (environmental acceptability, social equity, economic efficiency) contribute to this task, as do measures to establish the political framework conditions needed to foster democracy and the rule of law.

The international community has adopted concrete development targets in the form of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed at the Millennium Summit held in New York in 2000. The MDGs seek to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, the discrimination of women and the loss of natural resources. They are an important framework that guides German Development Cooperation.

Poverty Reduction

Biodiversity and Poverty

The conservation of biological diversity not only means the protection of natural resources. Above all, it secures the livelihood base of people in developing countries. The poor depend upon biodiversity, particularly in rural regions.

A broad diversity of cultivated varieties and species not only makes a key contribution to food security, but also safeguards the productivity and adaptability of crops. It also reduces the risks posed by pest infestation and changes in environmental conditions, such as floods and periods of drought. Intact ecosystems are the very basis of human survival, far beyond their defined boundaries – for instance as the most important “producers” of clean water, fertile soil and oxygen.

Species diversity in the shape of animals and plants living in the wild also contributes to improving the nutritional situation of people, especially when harvests are poor. Moreover, the natural environment provides fuels and construction material as well as medicinal plants – usually the only form of medicine available. A vicious circle often results: Poverty forces local people to overexploit natural resources and thus accelerates the loss of biological diversity. When people’s livelihood base narrows, their poverty deepens further.

Poverty and the Biodiversity Convention

The objective of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is to conserve biological diversity worldwide, promote its sustainable use and ensure the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. This applies particularly to the development of medicines or agricultural products for the world market. The task of the state parties to the convention is to develop a fair and transparent regime governing access rights and equitable benefit-sharing, in order that the utilisation and marketing of genetic resources or of the traditional knowledge of local communities can generate further sources of income. The CBD explicitly promotes in this context the support and recognition of the contributions made by indigenous peoples and traditional communities, who often live in areas that are hotspots of biological diversity. In that endeavour, the establishment and co-management of protected areas, e.g. in the tourism sector, can be important tools combining the conservation of biological diversity with the improvement of the living conditions of local people.

While the bulk of biological resources resides in the developing world, their use for biotechnological and genetic engineering purposes takes place mainly in industrialised countries. The application of genetic engineering, however, can have far-reaching impacts especially in developing countries. For instance, it must be feared that smallholders in particular will become economically dependent due to the introduction of genetically modified seed. In the same vein, the “genetic contamination” of traditional crop varieties and the associated endangerment of local gene pools remain an unresolved problem. To address this issue, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety has been developed under the CBD. The protocol regulates the transboundary movement of living modified organisms (LMOs). Under the precautionary principle established by the protocol, state parties are permitted to impose import bans even if there is no conclusive evidence of potential hazards.

commissioned by



Programme Implementing
the Biodiversity Convention



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

Contributions by the programme 'Implementing the Biodiversity Convention' (BIODIV)

Acting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the programme works at both the German and international levels to mainstream the protection and conservation of biodiversity more firmly within other policy areas and within national-level development plans and strategies.

To mainstream the objectives of the Biodiversity Convention (CBD) in development cooperation activities beyond the programme itself, collaboration has been established with bilateral and regional projects and programmes. In addition, the programme supports pilot projects aiming to implement the CBD worldwide, for example activities to foster traditional knowledge, to mitigate the risks associated with genetic engineering, and to elaborate and implement rules governing access and benefit-sharing in relation to the utilisation of genetic resources. All of these measures also contribute to the overarching objective of German Development Cooperation – poverty reduction.

Furthermore, Germany joined the Equator Initiative in 2003. This initiative, which brings together donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under the umbrella of the United Nations

Biodiversity and the Convention on Biodiversity

The term "biological diversity", or short "biodiversity", encompasses the diversity of life on earth, ranging from genetic diversity and diversity of species to the diversity of ecosystems. The Convention on Biodiversity adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 comprises three elements: the conservation of biological diversity, its sustainable use and the equitable distribution of benefits arising from its use. In the meantime, 187 countries and the European Union have joined the Convention. By signing the Convention, Germany has agreed not only to conserve biodiversity on its own territory but also to support developing countries in implementing necessary measures.

Development Programme (UNDP), aims to help local communities in the tropics to reduce poverty by means of the sustainable management of biodiversity.

Action Required to:

- implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) with its three objectives: conservation, sustainable use of biological diversity, and equitable sharing of benefits and profits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources (benefit-sharing)

- elaborate and implement a statutory framework binding in international law to regulate access

to genetic resources and benefit-sharing

- implement and further develop the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

- mainstream CBD objectives within national-level development plans and strategies

- foster biodiversity conservation through protected areas whose future viability is safeguarded

- support indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles

- ensure that local people have a greater share in the value derived from biological diversity and in the sustainable use of biodiversity

- identify and utilise synergies with other environmental conventions, for instance in the field of adaptation to climate change

Further Information

Publication of the Poverty Environment Partnership (2005):

www.undp.org/pei/pdfs/InvestingEnvironmentalWealthPovertyReduction.pdf
www.undp.org/pei/pdfs/AssessingEnvironmentsRoleinPovertyReduction.pdf

UN-Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

Publication of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED):

www.iied.org/Gov/mdgs/documents/mdg3/11000IIED.pdf

Equator Initiative:

www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/pdf/Timmer_Juma.pdf
www.equatorinitiative.org

Linking Poverty Reduction and Environmental Management (2002):

europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/publications/docs/brochure_linking_poverty_en.pdf#zoom=100

Department for International Development (DFID):

www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/biodiversity.pdf



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