



## IN BRIEF...

# The environment – a critical issue

Catastrophic floods, severe famine, millions of refugees... Environmental issues are of vital importance to all of us, but it is always the poorest that are hit first when natural resources dwindle and the climate changes. The international community is facing the challenge to halve poverty and reduce environmental destruction. The work Sida does on such critical issues as climate change, energy, clean water, biological diversity, organic farming and natural disasters is very wide-ranging.

### Why does Sweden support environmental protection and sustainable development?

Every day, fresh alerts are sounded about climate change and the condition of our planet. It is impossible to talk about the future or development without taking into account the conditions set by nature.

There is a close relationship between poverty and the environment. Poverty can cause environmental destruction, especially when people are forced to over-exploit their natural resources to survive. In turn, environmental destruction can lead to poverty. When the sea has been over-fished, the forests felled and the soil impoverished, nothing remains but poverty.

Since poor people are often directly dependent on what nature gives them for their survival, they are more seriously affected when resources start to decline.

Taking environmental issues into consideration is not a luxury that we can indulge in when we can afford to; it is critical to sustainable production, farming and economic growth. It will be impossible to win the fight against poverty if we do not take into full

account the natural resources and the environment upon which people are dependent for their homes and food.

Environmental destruction and the unsustainable use of natural resources have many consequences, amongst them:

- millions of people are forced to live in conditions of famine
- millions of babies and children die of diseases contracted from polluted water or lack of sanitation
- a greater risk of natural disasters and of the severity of their consequences
- a greater risk of armed conflict
- millions of environmental refugees
- undermined democratic systems, as people's living space shrinks

Furthermore, economic growth that occurs at the expense of the environment costs more than it is worth; it is expensive—and perhaps even impossible, —to repair the environmental damage.

### How long has Sweden been supporting environmental protection and sustainable development?

Sida has had a special environmental mission since 1988, whereby all

projects supported must be well-planned from an environmental perspective. Even though not all projects have an environmental component, Sida is required to have analysed if – and how – they will impact on the environment.

Sida's environmental mission was further developed in 2003 following a Riksdag decision on Sweden's Global Development Policy (PGU). This document, which aspires to help towards just and sustainable development around the world, comprised eight key policy points for combating poverty, one of which is the sustainable use of natural resources and care of the environment.

Other important bases for development cooperation are the Millennium Goals and international conventions, such as the Climate Convention, the Montreal Protocol (on substances that deplete the ozone layer), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Stockholm Convention (on restricting the use of certain chemicals), and the conventions on environmentally hazardous waste.

### The Millennium Goals – a joint commitment

The eight Millennium Goals that the world's countries agreed upon in 2000 represent the first ever international agenda for global development cooperation. The overarching objective is to halve poverty by 2015. The seventh goal is about ensuring environmentally sustainable development and protecting our common environmental interests,

such as a stable climate, biological diversity, forests and water.

## What does Sida do for the environment and sustainable development?

If there is to be any serious reduction in poverty, development must take place in harmony with nature.

Sida and other donors stress the responsibilities of each developing country in its fight against poverty and its sustainable use of natural resources.

Much of the support provided by Sida is designed to make it easier for developing countries to develop and adapt methods and know-how to their own local conditions. It cannot be taken for granted, nor is it even likely, that techniques and methods suited to Sweden can automatically be applied elsewhere. Because of this, support for capacity development is a more sustainable solution.

Sida also contributes to research and to the international debate on poverty and the environment.

Sida's work with the environment and poverty is far-reaching, especially given that the environmental impact of all projects is to be analysed and taken into consideration. Many projects are also specifically environmental. Roughly speaking (because distinctions are hard to make) Sida puts some two billion kronor into environmental projects.

The following examples will give an idea of the variety and geographical spread of Sida's work.

### Education programmes

Every year, Sida finances a large number of courses for people from its partner countries. One third of these courses deal with the sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection. The participants are often experts active in fields that are of strategic importance to sustainable development.

### Disaster prevention

At least a quarter of a million people are affected each year by natural disasters such as severe storms, drought and floods. As the climate changes, extreme weather conditions become more common, and it is always the poorest that are hit the hardest. Sida works to strengthen its partners' ability to prevent natural disasters and mitigate the consequences for poor people.

### Clean energy – a viable alternative

Today's energy consumption is causing a dramatic increase in level of atmospheric greenhouse gases, despite the fact that much of the world's population contribute only marginally to emissions. Sida supports its partner countries' efforts to develop clean energy sources and to instruct people in methods of saving energy.

### Agriculture – supporting life

In many of Sida's partner countries, poor people are dependent on farming. Sida supports efforts to develop new cultivation methods and to encourage organic farming.

### Clean water – a matter of life and death

Access to clean drinking water is essential to people's lives. Sida contributes on several fronts to the development and improvement of methods for making best use of available water resources.

### Biological diversity

Over 12,000 species of animal and plant are on the brink of extinction around the world. Sida contributes through the Swedish International biodiversity Programme (Swedbio) to efforts to strengthen and protect the world's natural resources and ecosystem services, such as air and water.

### The marine initiative

The depletion of fish stocks is threatening to cause the malnourishment of 400 million people in the poorest countries of Africa and Asia. Sida's marine initiative promotes sustainable ecological and economical use of the sea and coastal waters.

### Trade and environment

Sida works to develop a better understanding of the complex relationships between trade and the environment amongst representatives of countries and companies in both the northern and southern hemispheres. This it hopes to achieve by supporting research, dialogue, seminars and information campaigns.

### Further reading

The Sida website contains more examples and texts on its work with the environment and development. More detailed information can be found in *The Environment – Ideas for sustainable development*, which can be downloaded from our "Publications" page.

*Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development.*

*Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.*



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## DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT – SOME KEY RATIOS

One weakness of today's models for calculating economic growth is that they do not factor in the depletion of the environment or its ecological services. The World Bank has compiled numerous facts and figures in its *Little Green Data Book 2006*. Here is a sample to give an idea (by no means a complete one) of the situation in Sida's top 20 recipient countries.

The top 20 recipients of support from Sida	Fresh water m <sup>3</sup> /person	CO2 emissions per person	Electricity cons. per person (kwh)	Endangered mammalian species	No. of cars per 1,000 people	GNS*
1. Tanzania	2,232	0.1	54	34	**	2.0
2. Mozambique	5,164	0.1	339	12	**	-1.0
3. Sri Lanka	2,575	0.5	325	21	13	10.4
4. Ethiopia	1,744	0.1	30	35	1	-3.2
5. Uganda	1,402	0.1	**	29	2	-2.9
6. Russia	29,981	9.8	5,480	43	140	-4.4
7. Bosnia & Herzegovina	9,080	4.7	2,096	8	**	**
8. Afghanistan	1,925	0.0	**	12	**	**
9. Sudan	845	0.3	81	16	**	-9.4
10. Kenya	619	0.2	125	33	8	10.5
11. Vietnam	4,461	0.8	433	41	**	14.6
12. Nicaragua	35,293	0.7	361	6	16	1.8
13. Westbank & Gaza	13	**	**	**	**	**
14. Zambia	6,987	0.2	576	11	**	1.4
15. Serbia & Montenegro	5,401	**	3,975	10	**	**
16. Bangladesh	754	0.3	128	22	0	18.7
17. Rwanda	1,070	0.1	**	13	**	9.1
18. South Africa	984	7.6	4,509	29	92	5.6
19. D.R. Congo	16,114	0.0	87	29	**	-3.3
20. Mali	4,572	0.0	**	12	**	4.4
Sweden	19,017	5.8	15,403	5	453	19.4

\* Genuine national saving (GNS) identifies a country's true state of national saving by adjusting gross national saving for the consumption of coal, oil, gas, timber and minerals, carbon dioxide emissions, and the depreciation of buildings and infrastructure. Investments in education are also taken into account, but on the plus side. \*\* information not available