OUTREACH

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STAKEHOLDER FORUM

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Strengthening the Environmental Pillar of Sustainable Development: The Challenge for the International Community

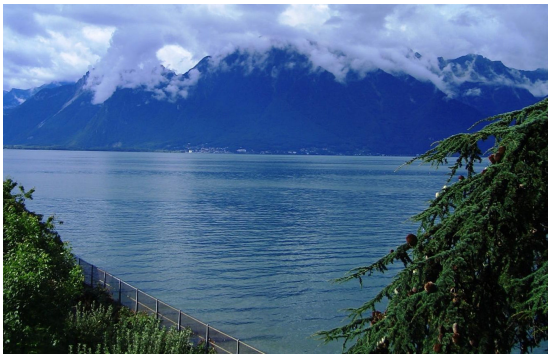
This year, governments have gathered at the Annual Ministerial Review to 'assess the internationally agreed goals and commitments on sustainable development'. Eight country governments have presented voluntary national reports assessing progress towards the 7th Millennium Development Goal 'to ensure environmental sustainability.'

By: Hannah Stoddart, Stakeholder Forum

Stakeholder Forum co-ordinated an international consultation with stakeholders in preparation for the Annual Ministerial Review, seeking feedback on issues relating to the targets under MDG-7. Overwhelmingly, stakeholders emphasized that the achievement of MDG-7 – which includes commitments to reverse biodiversity loss and to integrate sustainable development into national strategies – is integral to the achievement of all the other MDGs. While all the MDG targets are intimately connected and should be viewed holistically, MDG-7 covers some of the most important environmental prerequisites to achieving sustainable development and poverty alleviation. ECOSOC should be congratulated for giving emphasis to the environment through the focus on sustainable development at the AMR this year. However, all-too-often this fundamental component to the achievement of all the MDGs is sidelined in favour of primarily economic, and to a lesser extent social, considerations.

The overarching threat of climate change should act as a stark warning to all governments that sustainable development strategies that consider the environment must be integrated into all national planning. Cutting carbon emissions is one critical aspect of this, yet it cannot be seen in isolation from other measures to preserve biodiversity and protect ecosystems. These can provide the basis upon which poverty-reducing development rests, and also provide natural regulating services such as carbon sequestration. The present strategy of economic growth on the one hand, and gestures towards cutting carbon on the other, too often ignores the underlying causes of global climate change: biodiversity loss, the over-exploitation of natural resources and rapid deforestation, to name but a few.

Those who contributed to the Stakeholder



Forum consultation stressed that the overarching objective of economic growth and poverty reduction drives the expansion of cultivated areas, the building of roads, and the exploitation of natural resources, with little consideration of the longer-term environmental implications. It was further highlighted that despite the rhetoric around climate change and sustainable development, there continues to be a global reliance on fossil fuels, which in turn leads to a heavy emphasis on the extractive industries in developing countries, and limited investment in renewable energy sources. The lack of agreement on what a low-carbon development trajectory looks like compounds this problem further.

It has become clear that a major challenge is to approach sustainable development through the lens of the preservation and protection of biodiversity. Whilst the profile of climate change and cutting carbon dominates the debate at an international level, this welcome focus must be complemented by an equal emphasis on the ecosystem services that underpin human well-being. Such terms can be alienating for policy makers, as they are often considered to be preserve of the scientific community. However, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provides a model of how complex scientific observations can be integrated into policy making, and the same should be true for the concept of

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Outreach is the civil society newsletter produced by Stakeholder Forum and ANPED at the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review.

Outreach aims to report with attitude, from the global scene of sustainability.

'ecosystem services'. Many stakeholders emphasized that there is a significant opportunity presented by the valuation of ecosystem services for achieving the MDG-7 biodiversity target. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature stated that:

"Economic valuation of ecosystem services is the most important pre-requisite for achieving the 2010 biodiversity target. Knowledge of the economic value of different components of biodiversity, providing vital ecosystem goods and services, is critical for its conservation. In the absence of this, the tangible economic benefits due to any development activity outweigh the resulting biodiversity loss."

It is to be welcomed that the roundtable for the AMR was dedicated solely to a discussion on the role of ecosystem services, and that governments are increasingly talking about the need for the economic valuation of ecosystems However, as the development of the concept of ecosystem services is still at a relatively early stage, standards and indicators need to be established so that there is some kind of consistency in valuation across different areas, and more significantly, capacity has to be built for effective evaluation to occur. This

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involves the inclusion of a range of stakeholders, not least local governments who can administer evaluation at a local level.

The valuation of ecosystem services also needs to translate into meaningful consequences – it is not sufficient for governments to put a price-tag on ecosystem services without creating an enabling environment in which that price can become meaningful. Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) is a framework under which the valuation of ecosystem services can be translated into economic transactions that help to enhance the profitability of investment in ecosystems and as such provides more incentives for their protection. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development and IUCN both emphasize the opportunities of markets for ecosystems services, either through direct payments, through taxes and subsidies that help to reflect the true value of ecosystem services, or through tradable permits similar to carbon credits that inflate the value of those services and encourage investment.

It is clear that there is a long way to go before effective mechanisms can be found that facilitate the true valuation and consideration of the environment in all development strategies, but the international community should be reaching a point where biodiversity, ecosystems and the very biosphere that underpins all economic growth are not considered in an isolated bubble, but are integrated into all discussions around development. Only at this point will true sustainable development, and the long-term poverty alleviation that this ensures, really happen.

T*his article draws on the findings from the Stakeholder Forum consultation with global stakeholders on MDG-7, in preparation for the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review 2008. To find out more about the consultation and to read the full document, please visit*

http://amr.stakeholderforum.org

Should You Eat Your Keyboard?

or: Delivering sustainable transferable technologies in a connected Global space.

By: Tim Garbutt, Integrity Agency

I only tried to eat my keyboard twice before Xmas in the UNEP forums on sustainable development.

Sometimes it's easy to forget that what we do at home – in this case Canterbury, England – resonates around the world. The strength of the e-forum debate was the almost real-time interconnections between academics, UN colleagues and students.

However a few days into the process I started to feel a bit lonely in the debate - I think I was the only businessman. And an advertising man at that.

Well, let me fly the flag for the economics of sustainable change and transferable technologies – not just from the Global North to South - but the other way too. And let me mention a couple of specifics here in Southern England and some Best Practice from the Global South.

"If we all believe in the UN MDGs and universal education then technology transference, increased web-capability and eco-technologies are essential."

And why eating my keyboard? Well, are we really maximising results for both economic potential for technology transference – as well as Best Practice examples?

How many times can UNEP say it – Must try harder

Here's the view from Kent and England. We're a fairly affluent county of 1.2M – in the Golden Triangle between London, Brussels and Paris.

Environmental pressures are increasingly severe: water metering last year, eco-regeneration featuring strongly in the Thames Gateway – the largest construction project in Europe - which leads into East London and the 2012 Olympics, and issues around regional aviation expansion.

Aside from affluence, Kent is a region of small market towns – even Canterbury has barely a 100,000 population. And we're the only Euro-region in Britain: the International County.

And of course we're historically known as the Garden of England – hops, apples, wheat and so on.

Are we pushing the eco-envelope in Europe's first green county?

Of course, in lots of ways – inward investment is increasingly focused on "Green Growth" sectors such as biotechnology R&D, at Pfizer the largest US investment in Europe - the home of Viagra

but also HIV and Malaria research with advanced bio-processes eg Discovery High Throughput Screening. This bio-tech tool speeds up research scientist breakthroughs by providing them with a multitude of target compounds to pursue run screens and post critical data up to the global database for all research teams to view – for real-time Global research.

The 20th century carbon industries are being overhauled in ventures such as the Kings Hill development at West Malling to revamp a former WWII airfield with more bio-industries and financial data services companies. From swords to ploughshares, and now onto nanometers.

And nearby Sittingbourne Science Park is the home of innovative land decontamination companies such as Ecologia, and white-hot start-ups like Oil Drum whose bof-fins have adapted hydrogen from the combustion chamber of lorries and buses, resulting in 20% in-creased fuel efficiency and reduced emissions.

Alongside companies such as Moovera wireless GPS networks for fuel and transport location measurement, and Kent's Envirogroup fuel programmes for reclaiming food oil there are a host of inter-related biotech and transport synergies. As the UK faces fuel maximisation issues then such companies are best-placed to deliver these services and further innova-tions to the South.

And companies like ADM Computing provide both IT innovation and recycling with the Computers for Africa charitable programmes.

Integrity Agency (www.integrityagency.eu) was established to help focus on green and ethical marketing issues.

The view from the Global South can actually be better

As my half-chewed keyboard will testify though, there are superb initiatives in places like Kent – but much more can be done. EDF Energy are a proactive energy supplier with perhaps the finest social marketing programme we've seen – yet even there the amount of renewable energy development is still too low – barely 1% of EU supply against a target of 20%.

John Lane of Inevitablygreen.com describes the situation as: "more to be done in providing unambiguous direction for the renewables industry".

The need for renewables is surely imperative: my wife is Thai-Cambodian so we've seen first-hand the massive deforestation

"The need for renewables is surely imperative".

of Thailand and increasingly Cambodia. Aside from the climate cost and need for both reforestation and renewable power, we're witnessing increased poverty – hence establishing the Surin Village School Charity

www.surinschoolscharity.org to build village schools in the 80 poorest UNDP nations (essentially those ranked below

Thailand), and link them to Kent schools for mutual development.

Now that's all very nice and worthy but if we all believe in the UN Millennium Goals and universal education then technology transference and increased web-capability and, eco-technologies are essential.

Gordon Brown and the UK Government are sincere in doing more to achieve these goals whether it be increased aid, or the recent Call to Action of responsible business in London earlier this month (Pfizer again to the fore).

And the main parties are both sincere in increasing Third Sector involvement (either charity or volunteer-led). Kent Council is a 4-star public sector organisation leading with 22% of education-charity links – still low but far better than the pitiful 5% of such Education-Third Sector links across UK.

A more informed model: the eco-web.

Across the Greater Mekong region's eco-technology sphere we're seeing real-world examples of grassroots technologies especially in Thailand – when local rice farmer collectives across a district see the benefits of say powering the electric fence for their cows with ultra-modern solar panels, and Europe isn't, then something is wrong.

And if Spain and the Sahara are developing solar farms with proven technology from California then Europe's renewables policy looks not only weak – but a missed opportunity to create stability and economic growth in the sub-Saharan states.

Again, whether the growth is philanthropic, renewable energy or secu-rity-based, the opportunities are still greater than the applications to date to provide decentralised solar and vegetable oil energy systems for Africa.

And, while transferable social technologies for justice, security and engagement are on the rise in UK and Kent, the key models are from South America: whether it be the Dept for Local Government investigating Brazilian-style "participatory budgeting" and wider local democracy in the UK.

Renata Albuquerque of London School of Economics described the Brazilian Landless Movement's, or MST educational program providing both justice for the land-less and education tools "in the world's 4th most unequal nation".

One opportunity gap here – the MST programme requires codifying and developing online. Again programmes such as ADM Comput-ing in Kent to the South should be more closely linked on a Global scale.

So where does the UK and Kent stand in the UN club? Strong standards of innovation certainly, yet far more can be done to provide specific examples of Global South success stories perhaps facilitated by the Global North. KCC's closer involvement with the UN for empowerment though internet technology is already underway and wel-come.

As never before, we have a golden opportunity to empower both groups with both eco and web technologies to deliver UNDMG-specific programmes.

Perhaps then I can replace my half-chewed keyboard.

Tim Garbutt is the Founder of Integrity Agency a leading Green and Ethical adver-tising agency based in Canterbury, Eng-land and winners of every creative and effectiveness award across UK, Europe and USA: www.integrityagency.eu

Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?

The Role of National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in Sustainable Development

By: Henry Ekwuruke, Development Generation Africa International

In his book, Which World? Scenarios for the 21st Century, Allen Hammond paints three scenarios for Africa, based on the 2050 workshop held in Harare in 1994. They are:

Scenario one: High growth, led by Southern Africa – South Africa is the main engine of growth, with a strong common market. Nigeria awakening and pulling its weight in western Africa. A strong African common market is emerging.

Scenario two: An escalation in ethnic conflict and sporadic government collapse discourages private investment, beginning in western Africa and spreading to central and eastern Africa.

Scenario three: Episodic crisis continues, debts are cancelled but new loans and private investment are scarce and export markets continue to shrink. But a new generation of pragmatic leaders emerges. There is far more self-scrutiny and consensus for change among the people of Africa. Economic reforms are pursued and deepened, with governments making education and other basic social services a high priority.

I cannot help but feel that although the third scenario is a safer bet, the first scenario is plausible, especially as we know that Nigeria is really awakening. This must be a source of hope for western Africa, as South Africa's emergence proved to be for southern Africa.

Perhaps, I am just an 'optimist for Africa'. As former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan pointed out, "optimism is not the same as romanticism, since it is tampered by realism." Mr. Annan also said that, "the difference between an optimist and a pessimist is that while both are often wrong, the optimist dies happier." And since I'm likely to be around in 2050, "all things being equal", I choose to be an optimist and I'm happy for it. The central issue is whether Africa has a positive future and can claim the 21st century.

I believe, yes, Africa can claim the 21st century. But it is a rather qualified "yes", conditioned on Africa's ability, with assistance, to seize the moment. And since the moment is now, we are looking at the national sustainable development strategy plans and the poverty reduction strategy papers to show us the roadmap to sustainable development.

"The abyss can only be avoided through sufficiently strong and broad-based growth that our NSDS and PRSPs visualize."

Why now? First, the international development agenda is now focused on issues where Africa stands to gain and secondly, because Africa is at a crossroads. More and more African countries have started to demonstrate their ability to adopt sustainable reforms and achieve structural diversifications. Many other countries now show prospects for a sustainable take-off in the years ahead. On the political front, there is greater democracy, more participatory development and greater local responsibility. While these economic and political trends are clear, they are not entrenched. Thus, while we have clearly come a long way I think that we may need to look beyond the PRSPs and the NSDS towards a Marshall Plan for Africa.

This Marshall Plan must mean a lot of foreign aid but it would have to be more sophisticated than that. This Plan is necessary as it was in Western Europe when it was at a crossroads in which democracy and a free market orientation were at stake. There was a clear realization then that the cost of the Plan would be high, but the costs would be far higher if there were no Plan.

Today, we in Africa were able to begin focusing on poverty reduction as the primary tool for sustainable development. Our political and economic commitments are at turning points. We face our abyss: the prospect of high population growth gobbling up our natural resources. The abyss can only be avoided through sufficiently strong and broad-based growth that our NSDS and PRSPs visualize. There are real prospects for success, but there will be staggering costs if we fail.

We have asked for a global compact with Africa for its development, a situation where rich countries would be willing to invest their resources, including aids, debt -relief and market access, to give African economies the jump-start they need, then much of Africa should be able to put the necessary political and economic reforms to ensure that their economies take off.

Africa needs to increase her investment from 19% to at least 25% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). We have seen an era where we see how development can take place without reliance on aid alone. It is happening in Latin America and many parts of Asia.

The need for political reform is crucial. We have moved forward from having only a handful of countries with elected governments to a situation in which the reverse is now the case. We now need to forge ahead, to move beyond counting ballots to making efficient the links between voting, participation, accountability, transparency and good governance and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We must put policies in place that attract private investment, stimulate diversifica-

tion and make our PRSPs work. We also need to consider trade liberalization, so that trade stimulates growth and development. We have to eliminate conflicts and address the infrastructure gaps – which most PRSPs identified as vital in fighting poverty.

Let me conclude by recalling a reality taking place in Calabar, Southern Nigeria, where with little formal education, a young entrepreneur with assistance from our organization and a loan from a microfinance bank, has started a flourishing tourism business. She takes foreign and other visitors into her modest home, feeds them traditional foods and takes them to the game parks and other sites. Her website can claim this to be a truly African experience. Recently, she has also started organizing visits to a neighbouring country. By any yard-stick, this young woman is running a thriving ethno-ecotourism venture enhanced by e-commerce and regional cooperation. Is globalization passing her by? No. with little help, she found a way of turning what she has – pride in her African identity – into a global market commodity.

"May we find the strength to move from our current crossroads. May we seize this moment to move towards a secured future."

May we take heart from this youth and proud daughter of Africa. May we find the strength to move from our current crossroads. May we seize this moment to move towards a secured future. I have come to the conclusion that as African people, we must do a lot of original thinking, accept our limitations and peculiar challenges and look for drastic, preferably our own way, out of our basic problems. The Africans can make it. But our people need the hurricane type of change known as revolution. What the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan called, "a uniquely framed African revolution." And ours I believe is a generation against time.

One last important area is identifying strategic entry points for mainstreaming youth policies programmes into national policy frameworks like the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) and national sustainable development strategies (NSDS), as these documents present an integrated and multi-sector framework; and finally, multi-stakeholder partnerships need to be leveraged to attain the highest level of development impact as I have always recommended.

Investing in the future of Africa calls for among other factors, the effective and positive impact on youth development programme and projects. This in turn requires building on successful practices that have contributed to youth participation, development and leadership.

Henry Ekwurke is the Executive Director and co-founder of the Development Generation Africa International (DGAi). He is the Programme Coordinator of SPEAK Nigeria Initiative and Chairs the committee on Abia Youth Development and Engagement Forum.

A Happy Ending for the Sustainability, Peace and Growth Mystery?

By: James Greyson, Sustainability Analyst at the UK think-tank BlindSpot

Our global predicament is like the plot of a detective thriller, with economic, ecological and social casualties piling up and a trail of clues that hides as much as it reveals. The story over recent decades has been exciting as a cast of the usual suspects were pursued in the hope of making a difference. Now the plot is at its dramatic climax; everything we value is in peril and time is running out to finally resolve the mystery.

In the role of detective we can try working out how to turn things around before it's too late. Firstly, what has been missed so far? The clues (such as rising emissions, wealth inequalities and unresolved disputes) and the casualties (such as climate instability, food riots and armed conflict) don't come ready-labelled 'a piece of a big picture'. Problems appear separately and fool us into treating them as separate issues. This is convenient for compartmentalised organisations and specialist expertise. It's also psychologically appealing to imagine that problems can be tackled a bit at a time with everyone doing what they can.

"The essence of unsustainability is that it can't go on. Any system that runs on things that run out cannot expect a happy ending."

People try to frame problems to fit their habits of response rather than framing responses to fit the problems. This reveals why conventional policy-making hasn't worked for global issues. So let's review the scene of this mystery, looking at world-wide issues as an indivisible whole. A global security goal-set combining energy security, sustainable development, economic growth, national security and climate stability is paradoxically more achievable than any of these goals pursued separately.

This is the moment in the human story when solutions on a new scale of effectiveness are both necessary and possible. Curiously, this may be easier to achieve in practice than it is to imagine in advance. Suitable globally-applied small changes could trigger cascades of benefits across a range of issues. The most exciting changes would clear long-standing obstacles by switching situations from chronic failure into rapid recovery. Such potential changes are best described by giving examples.

The three examples offered here were presented in the ECOSOC 2008 Annual Ministerial Review E-discussion and included in the final report. The first two proposals were developed through a European Advanced Research Workshop and published by the NATO Science Programme. More information can be found in the BlindSpot Climate Briefing at the UNEP Climate Neutral Network and

at www.BlindSpot.org.uk.

Old economic growth is ending - in with the new!

The essence of unsustainability is that it can't go on. Any system that runs on things that run out cannot expect a happy ending. A glance at almost any newspaper shocks us with the way problems pile up long before things actually run out. Commodity speculation, dry credit markets, declining economic growth, the retreat of democracy, weapons proliferation, unaffordable food, shrinking rainforests and disappearing polar ice are among a multitude of symptoms. The seriousness of the problems is so obvious everywhere that it is now possible to discuss a historic switch of economic activity from problem causing to problem solving.

Economic, ecological and social goals could be permanently aligned by global adoption of the goal of 'circular economics', which is market reform that allows material resources to meet people's needs without accumulating as wastes in the air, land and waters. The practice of 'linear economics' can be phased out to avoid further undermining ecological, social and financial stability. This switch is achievable with a simple market-based (non-tax) instrument called precycling insurance, which obliges producers to insure against the risk of their product becoming waste. Premiums would be invested in ecological, community and industrial capacity to meet people's needs whilst joining up the resource loop. These investments add to growth immediately and the expanding capacities add to long-term growth.

Although circular economics is not designed as a climate change policy, surprisingly it would do that task better than existing climate policies. Attempting to limit the prevailing waste-based economic model would limit economic growth and for the past 15 years has made such policies self-limiting. Circular economics provides the basis for continuing growth and recognises that climate change is not just about energy or carbon, it's about all human activity and all resources. Circular economics is also essential for having any hope of an adequate response to climate instability which requires not just lower emissions but lower atmospheric concentrations of waste gases.

Take your pick - global security or massive weapons spending

If circular economics is implemented quickly then many of the current threats to international security will fade. However investment in a sustainable future would still be held back by massive and growing global spending on weapons. This creates a cycle of ever stronger cultural dependence upon armed force and ever weaker trust between communities. However a simple macro-economic correction could quickly inspire the global cooperation that has eluded 63 years of arms control agreements. This could offer hope to populations living in fear of violence and free up funds on a vast scale for productive uses.

"An additional global action is vital to launch the era when humanity learns to cooperate with nature."

The national income statistics used to measure economic growth include an unintended perverse incentive in favour of spending on weapons. This can be reversed according to research published by NATO. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) currently includes weapons-related spending, which gives nations with high dependence on military 'solutions' higher economic growth and the illusion of greater economic success. The international removal of weapons-related spending from GDP would provide a powerful signal to politicians that lower military spending is desirable. Nations could signal their peaceful intent by adopting Gross Peaceful Product and be rewarded for lower weapons spending with higher economic growth. A cycle of less weapons spending and more cooperation would be instituted just when it is most needed.

Reversing the global loss of nature

There remains a risk that some governments and land-owners could destructively cash-in on the market value of natural resources or land. An additional global action is vital to launch the era when humanity learns to cooperate with nature. People need a renewed self-image, not as masters of the planet but as guardians. As a rhetorical gesture this is meaningless but as an international treaty it would be profound. All land, sea and non-renewable resource ownership title would be interpreted as a title of guardianship of the ecological capital on behalf of future generations. All rights for access and use of natural resources would be interpreted as applying only to the renewable harvest, which diminishes neither biological diversity nor productivity.

Where ecological capital has been damaged, a suitable remedy would be for access to transfer to a community-based trust (of landless people). Since this reduces the land's market value there is an economic incentive for owners to protect ecological capital. A further incentive could be provided for resource and land owners without an interest in guardianship. They could bid for a proportion of available investment flows (from the above two proposals) which would compensate them for the transfer of title to a community-based trust. This scheme could run as a Dutch auction with lowest bids winning a share of funds. Such a bid has already been made by Ecuador to keep their oil in the ground.

BlindSpot provides research and advice on unexplored opportunities for rapid sustainability. James takes part in the UK Sustainable Development Panel, the NATO Science Programme and the UN Climate Neutral Network.

Food at Any Price is Not Sustainable

The AMR this year is focusing on the seventh MDG of ensuring environmental sustainability. A crucial part of the fight for environmental sustainability is what is happening in agriculture, a cornerstone of many developing economies and also the way a nation grows food for itself. Problems caused by unsustainable agricultural practices can be a huge threat to environmental sustainability, so it is right to examine the role agriculture has to play within the forum of the Annual Ministerial Review.

By: Patrick Mulvany, Practical Action

Hunger, social divisions and environmental destruction will increase unless there are radical changes in the way agriculture is developed, practised and protected. This is the stark conclusion of the first international assessment of agricultural knowledge, science and technology for development (IAASTD), published in April 2008, and sponsored by FAO, GEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, the World Bank and WHO. It concludes that unless agriculture is fundamentally changed, it will not be possible to feed the projected 9 billion world population and sustain the planet. The levels of degradation of soils and water, to mention but two resources under threat, is alarming.

Recognising the threats, IAASTD confirms that biologically diverse "agroecological" farming and grazing methods, especially those that are practised sustainably by small-scale food producers, in particular women, makes agriculture more resilient, adaptive and capable of eliminating hunger and rural poverty. Even though these methods of crop and livestock production can help reduce hunger and inequality in the face of global warming and reverse environmental destruction, they are being virtually ignored in international research, agreements and programmes, which are now being re-branded in the white heat of the current food crisis, to promote more of the same technical solutions that lie at the root of the social and ecological crisis. The report confirms that policy and institutional failure has limited the use of sustainable practices; it could also be argued that this is the underlying reason why people are malnourished, farmers are poor and the price of food is rising. In particular, unfair trade agreements are identified as causes of current economic problems.

IAASTD acknowledges the importance of agricultural knowledge, science and technology to the multifunctionality of agriculture and its intersection with other local to global concerns, including loss of agricultural biodiversity and agroecosystem functions, climate change, and the concentration of ownership of land and water resources and the food chain. These conclusions are, of course, not new. Any smallholder farmer organisation will say that this has been their message for decades; but their voices have been marginalised. What is new is that following four years of rigorous evidence gathering and analysis by scientists, IAASTD has confirmed the views of small-scale food providers and their organisations.

"Unless agriculture is fundamentally changed, it will not be possible to feed the projected 9 billion world population and sustain the planet."

Four hundred natural and social scientists, biologists and economists, biotechnologists and anthropologists from all regions of the world worked on the assessment. Their report was peer reviewed twice. Furthermore, IAASTD was overseen by a 60 member Bureau made up of 30 governments, and the same number of public research bodies, the private sector and NGOs. The Bureau set the rules for the methodology, analysis and how to deal with any conflicts of interpretation of the evidence - which proved an important safeguard in the process of adopting the report - ensuring the authors' views prevailed.

The result is a report of over 2,000 pages which builds up to summaries, intensely negotiated line by line, of 22 Key Findings covering all aspects of food and agriculture policy, rural development and scientific research; and a Synthesis Report focusing on seven key themes ranging from bioenergy, trade and markets to traditional and local knowledge and community-based innovation. While 57 governments approved the report, a few disagreed with specific wording in particular paragraphs and recorded their reservations. Australia, Canada and USA did not adopt all the conclusions nor the summary reports, variously citing concerns about the report's findings on trade, transgenics and the imperative for fundamental change. At the time of going to press the UK had still not approved the report, with ministers having problems swallowing the IAASTD's assessment of the failures of GM crops.

This assessment provides the evidence that donors, UN organisations, inter-governmental processes, research institutions, NGOs and others can use to justify why it is essential to transform agriculture, policy and institutions in order to realise vital social and sustainability goals concerning hunger, poverty, equity and the environment: essentially, to support food sovereignty. It will also help them with arguments about how to do this through increasing support for smallholder farmers who are producing affordable food in ways that are environmentally sustainable, while protecting them from the corporate-controlled, industrial food system.

This article originally appeared in the magazine of the Food Ethics Council.

The World's Poor are Feeding the Rich

In the absence of 14 extra planets to cater for our over consumption, we might do good to let Cuba light our way…

By: Andrew Simms, New Economics Foundation

Using the ecological footprint measure, if the whole world wished to consume at the level of the United States – a consumption pattern which has been fuelled, incidentally, by the credit binge which led to the current economic crisis – we would need, conservatively, over 5 planets like earth to support them. But, under the current pattern of unequally distributed benefits from growth, to lift everyone in the world onto a modest $3 per day, would require the resources of around 15 planets like ours.

Where, you might ask, will the other 14 come from?

Flood Up vs. Trickle Down

Unlimited economic growth is defended as necessary to tackle poverty. And, conventional economic growth will happen in poor countries as a consequence of effective poverty reduction. But at a global level, the policies designed to pursue growth have become a mask for making the rich, richer, whilst leaving the poor with few benefits and abandoned to deal with the environmental consequences.

During the 1980s, the so-called lost decade of development – from every $100 worth of global economic growth, around $2,20 found its way to people living below the absolute poverty line. A decade later that had shrunk to just $0,60c, and the actual mean income of those living under $1 per day in Africa also fell.

There has been, in effect, a sort of 'flood-up' of wealth from poor to rich, rather than a 'trickle-down'. It means, perversely, that for the poor to get slightly less poor, the rich have to get very much richer, implying patterns of consumption which, in a world facing climate change, cannot be sustained. It now takes around $166 worth of global growth – made up of all those energy-hungry giant flat screen TVs and sports utility vehicles – to gener-

Rich vs, Poor

ate a single dollar of poverty reduction for people in absolute poverty, compared with just $45 in the 1980s.

If we are serious about tackling poverty in a carbon constrained world, then, we need a new development model, better measures of progress, and a shift from relying on unequal global growth towards serious redistribution. If we think of the planet as a cake, we can slice it differently, but we cannot bake a new one.

Cuba – a real life laboratory

One country, very much and long maligned, provides a glimpse of what the near future may hold for others. Cuba has already lived through the economic and environmental shocks that climate change and peak oil hold in store for the rest of the world. Its sudden loss of access to cheap oil imports and its economic isolation were so extreme in 1990 at the end of the cold war, and its reaction to the shock was so contrary to orthodox approaches, and successful, that it was dubbed in Washington DC the 'anti-model'. It is as near as we have to a laboratory example in the real world.

Cuba grew heavily dependent on cheap Soviet oil for its transport, industrial export-oriented farming and wider economy. Also, it sits in the flight path of the annual hurricane season, regularly contending with extreme weather events.

Then oil imports dropped by over half. The use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers dropped by 80 percent. The availability of basic food staples like wheat and other grains fell by half and, overall, the average Cuban's calorie intake fell by over one third in around five years. But, serious and long-term investment in science, engineering, health and education meant that the country had a strong social fabric and the capacity to act. Successive reforms dating back longer reduced inequality and redistributed land.

Before their local 'oil shock,' Cuba had investigated forms of ecological farming far less dependent on fossil fuels, and had in place a system of 'regional research institutes, training centers and extension services ' to support farmers.

The Anti-Model

At the heart of the transition after 1990 was the success of small farms, and urban farms and gardens. State farms later followed their example. Food programmes that targeted the most vulnerable people, the old, young, pregnant women and young mothers, and a rationing programme that guaranteed a minimum amount of food to everyone averted immediate crisis. Soon, half the food consumed in the capital, Havana, was grown in the city's own gardens and, overall, urban gardens provide 60 percent of the vegetables eaten in Cuba.

Interestingly, Cuba's experience both echoes what America achieved in a more distant time of hardship during World War II, when Eleanor Roosevelt led the 'victory gardening movement' to produce between 30-40 percent of vegetables for domestic consumption.

Cuba's demonstrated that it is possible to feed a population under extreme economic stress with every little fossil fuel inputs.

The approach was dubbed the 'anti-model' because it was highly managed, focused on meeting domestic needs rather export oriented, largely organized and built on the success of small farms. The same countries' approach to disaster preparedness and management is also instructive.

Compared to the deaths and destruction in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, when Hurricane Michelle hit Cuba in 2001 only 5 lives were lost, in spite of 20,000 homes being damaged, and recovery was quick. It was due to proper planning, and a collective approach managed by government, but owned at the local level.

As disaster expert Dr. Ben Wisner commented on the evacuation of 700,000 of Cuba's 11 million population, 'This is quite a feat given Cuba's dilapidated fleet of vehicles, fuel shortage and poor road system.'

Forty years ago Robert Kennedy said that economic growth measured everything apart from that which really matters. But it is possible to assess if we are achieving human development whilst living within our environmental means.

Radical change necessary

The UN faces huge challenges. Not least is how to recognize and protect the large and growing number of people we can expect to be displaced in a warming world. The climate refugee crisis will dwarf that of political refugees. What will happen to the nationhood and economic areas of countries that could disappear entirely, like Tuvalu?

How can we change our locked-in thinking about economic development, and reorganize around the principles of resilience, social justices, sufficiency, ecological efficiency, and the capacity to adapt?

At the very least, to achieve poverty reduction in world threatened by climate change, we know that rich countries must radically cut their own consumption to free-up the environmental space in which others can pursue, as a first step, the Millennium Development Goals.

Impassable ecological obstacles lie on the path down which we chase the shadows of overconsumption to deliver our well-being, and expect the poor to be grateful for crumbs falling from the rich man's plate. The good news it that another way is not only possible, as the philosopher A. C. Grayling writes, its better, richer and more enduring.

A Cuban farmer

Integrated Water Resource Management: Partnerships

By: Chris Tydeman, WWF International

With Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) plans in place, what are the next steps countries need to take in order to implement their plans and what kind of international support would be most helpful? It is worth considering the following two points. Firstly, we must recognize that there are major constraints in implementation, such as a lack of financing, weakness of human and institutional capacity, poor indicators and monitoring mechanisms. Secondly, we should ask if we need a new set of measures or indicators to assess the contribution of IWRM to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The role IWRMs can play in sustainable development should not be underestimated. There needs to be a focus on the role that partnerships can play in delivering sustainable water and sanitation services and the considerations that have to be made to ensure they are effective. Examples of best practice should be used by policy makers wherever possible.

There is a need to demonstrate the relevance of IWRM in a changing world where climate change has become the dominant issue. The Global Water Partnership should broaden its outlook beyond the water sector to encompass food and energy security, climate change adaptation and economic growth for poverty reduction. The new GWP Strategy 2009-2013 currently under development has these issues at its core, providing the "fast forward" basis for re-energising.

The challenge to conventional practices

The case for IWRM is strong – many would say uncontestable. The problem for most countries is the long history of unisectoral development. A cooperative relationship between people or groups who agree to share responsibility for achieving some specific goal is needed. Successful partnerships are absolutely crucial. Consider the adage "people support what they help to create."

Failed partnerships

The following are characteristics of failed attempts at partnership, or warnings that something is going wrong:

- A history of conflict among key interests.
- One partner manipulates or dominates.
- Lack of clear purpose.
- Unrealistic goals.
- Differences of philosophy and ways of working.
- Lack of communication.
- Unequal and unacceptable balance of power and control.
- Key interests missing from the partnership.
- Hidden agendas.
- Financial and time commitments outweigh the potential benefits.

Successful partnerships

The following factors for success emerge from surveys of partnerships, and workshops of practitioners involved in creating and running partnerships:

- Agreement that a partnership is necessary.
- Respect and trust between different interests.
- The leadership of a respected individual or individuals.
- Commitment of key interests developed through a clear and open process.
- The development of a shared vision of what might be achieved.
- Time to build the partnership.
- Shared mandates or agendas.
- The development of compatible ways of working, and flexibility.
- Good communication, perhaps aided by a facilitator.
- Collaborative decision-making, with a commitment to achieving consensus.
- Effective organisational management.

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