

Enabling the poor to achieve sustainable livelihoods

Basis for action. Poverty is a complex multidimensional problem with origins in both the national and international domains. No uniform solution can be found for global application. Rather, country-specific programmes to tackle poverty and international efforts supporting national efforts, as well as the parallel process of creating a supportive international environment, are crucial for a solution to this problem. The eradication of poverty and hunger, greater equity in income distribution and human resource development remain major challenges everywhere. The struggle against poverty is the shared responsibility of all countries.

While managing resources sustainably, an environmental policy that focuses mainly on the conservation and protection of resources must take due account of those who depend on the resources for their livelihoods. Otherwise it could have an adverse impact both on poverty and on chances for long-term success in resource and environmental conservation. Equally, a development policy that focuses mainly on increasing the production of goods without addressing the sustainability of the resources on which production is based will sooner or later run into declining productivity, which could also have an adverse impact on

poverty. A specific anti-poverty strategy is therefore one of the basic conditions for ensuring sustainable development. An effective strategy for tackling the problems of poverty, development and environment simultaneously should begin by focusing on resources, production and people and should cover demographic issues, enhanced health care and education, the rights of women, the role of youth and of indigenous people and local communities and a democratic participation process in association with improved governance.

Integral to such action is, together with international support, the promotion of economic growth in developing countries that is both sustained and sustainable and direct action in eradicating poverty by strengthening employment and income-generating programmes.

Objectives The long-term objective of enabling all people to achieve sustainable livelihoods should provide an integrating factor that allows policies to address issues of development, sustainable resource management and poverty eradication simultaneously. The objectives of this programme area are:

- a To provide all persons urgently with the opportunity to earn a sustainable livelihood;
- b To implement policies and strategies that promote adequate levels of funding and focus on integrated

human development policies, including income generation, increased local control of resources, local institution-strengthening and capacity-building and greater involvement of non-governmental organizations and local levels of government as delivery mechanisms;

c To develop for all poverty-stricken areas integrated strategies and programmes of sound and sustainable management of the environment, resource mobilization, poverty eradication and alleviation, employment and income generation;

d To create a focus in national development plans and budgets on investment in human capital, with special policies and programmes directed at rural areas, the urban poor, women and children.

Activities Activities that will contribute to the integrated promotion of sustainable livelihoods and environmental protection cover a variety of sectoral interventions involving a range of actors, from local to global, and are essential at every level, especially the community and local levels. Enabling actions will be necessary at the national and international levels, taking full account of regional and subregional conditions to support a locally driven and country-specific approach. In general design, the programmes should:

a Focus on the empowerment of local and community groups through the principle of delegating authority, accountability and resources to the most appropriate level to ensure that the programme will be geographically and ecologically specific;

b Contain immediate measures to enable those groups to alleviate poverty and to develop sustainability;

c Contain a long-term strategy aimed at establishing the best possible conditions for sustainable local, regional and national development that would eliminate poverty and reduce the inequalities between various population groups. It should assist the most disadvantaged groups – in particular, women, children and youth within those groups – and refugees. The groups will include poor smallholders, pastoralists, artisans, fishing communities, landless people, indigenous communities, migrants and the urban informal sector.

The focus here is on specific cross-cutting measures – in particular, in the areas of basic education, primary/maternal health care, and the advancement of women.

A Empowering communities

Sustainable development must be achieved at every level of society. Peoples' organizations, women's groups and non-governmental organizations are important sources of innovation and action at the local level and have a strong interest and proven ability to promote sustainable livelihoods.

Governments, in cooperation with appropriate international and non-governmental organizations, should support a community-driven approach to sustainability, which would include, *inter alia*:

a Empowering women through full participation in decision-making;

b Respecting the cultural integrity and the rights of indigenous people and their communities;

c Promoting or establishing grass-roots mechanisms to allow for the sharing of experience and knowledge between communities;

d Giving communities a large measure of participation in the sustainable management and protection of the local natural resources in order to enhance their productive capacity;

e Establishing a network of community-based learning centres for capacity-building and sustainable development.

B Management-related activities

Governments, with the assistance of and in cooperation with appropriate international, non-governmental and local community organizations, should establish measures that will directly or indirectly:

a Generate remunerative employment and productive occupational opportunities compatible with country-specific factor endowments, on a scale sufficient to take care of prospective increases in the labour force and to cover backlogs;

b With international support, where necessary, develop adequate infrastructure, marketing systems, technology systems, credit systems and the like and the human resources needed to support the above actions and to achieve a widening of options for resource-poor people. High priority should be given to basic education and professional training;

c Provide substantial increases in economically efficient resource productivity and measures to ensure that the local population benefits in adequate measure from resource use;

d Empower community organizations and people to enable them to achieve sustainable livelihoods;

Mount Oku, Cameroon. Local villagers have formed a fire patrol to combat forest fires. Empowering communities allows them to participate in the management and protection of their local



Cameroon. Women and children working with plants in a local tree nursery project. Local organisations and women's groups have a strong local interest and a proven ability to promote sustainable livelihoods.

- e Set up an effective primary health care and maternal health care system accessible to all;
- f Consider strengthening/developing legal frameworks for land management, access to land resources and land ownership – in particular, for women – and for the protection of tenants;
- g Rehabilitate degraded resources, to the extent practicable, and introduce policy measures to promote sustainable use of resources for basic human needs;
- h Establish new community-based mechanisms and strengthen existing mechanisms to enable communities to gain sustained access to resources needed by the poor to overcome their poverty;
- i Implement mechanisms for popular participation – particularly by poor people, especially women – in local community groups, to promote sustainable development;
- j Implement, as a matter of urgency, in accordance with country-specific conditions and legal systems, measures to ensure that women and men have the same right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and have access to the information, education and means, as appropriate, to enable them to exercise this right in keeping with their freedom, dignity and personally held values, taking into account ethical and cultural considerations. Governments should take active steps to implement programmes to establish and strengthen preventive and curative health facilities, which include women-centred, women-managed, safe and effective reproductive health care and affordable, accessible services, as appropriate, for the responsible planning of family size, in keeping with freedom, dignity and personally held values, taking into account ethical and cultural considerations. Programmes should focus on providing comprehensive health care, including pre-natal care, education and information on health and responsible parenthood and should provide the opportunity for all women to breast-feed fully, at least during the first four months post-partum. Programmes should fully support women's productive and reproductive roles and well-being, with special attention to the need for providing equal and improved health care for all children and the need to reduce the risk of maternal and child mortality and sickness;
- k Adopt integrated policies aiming at sustainability in



- the management of urban centres;
- l Undertake activities aimed at the promotion of food security and, where appropriate, food self-sufficiency within the context of sustainable agriculture;
- m Support research on and integration of traditional methods of production that have been shown to be environmentally sustainable;
- n Actively seek to recognize and integrate informal-sector activities into the economy by removing regulations and hindrances that discriminate against activities in those sectors;
- o Consider making available lines of credit and other facilities for the informal sector and improved access to land for the landless poor so that they can acquire the means of production and reliable access to natural resources. In many instances special considerations for women are required. Strict feasibility appraisals are needed for borrowers to avoid debt crises;
- p Provide the poor with access to fresh water and sanitation;
- q Provide the poor with access to primary education.

Financing and cost evaluation \$30 billion including about \$15 billion from the international community on grant or concessional terms.