

Sustainable Development Update

– Keeps you updated on the interactions between ecological issues and social and economic development

www.albaeco.com/sdu/

Issue 6, 2007

“ This short film will definitely make many people change the way they look at all the stuff in their lives forever... ”

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Ethiopian ecosystem services-based agriculture gives new hope

Many recent reports talk about an ecosystem-services based agriculture as the only long-term viable option. The “Tigray Project” of northern Ethiopia is a good example. It shows how composting, harvesting of water and soil and crop diversification can increase crop yields and bring many other benefits to poor communities.

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Dr. Tewelde Berhan Gebre Egziabher, “The godfather of the Tigray Project”

“Stop climate change apartheid now”



The latest Human Development Report warns about the inequalities in ability to cope with climate change.

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Growing cities, growing challenges



New book from IRIN and UN-Habitat.

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“Forests more important standing than cut”

The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) was launched at The Bali Climate Meeting. It is a financing mechanism to combat tropical deforestation and climate change.



A new financing mechanism to combat tropical deforestation was launched at the climate talks in Bali. Photo: World Bank.

Declining forests around the world are responsible for about 20 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and the main source of emissions for countries such as Brazil and Indonesia. Clearing forests not only emits CO₂ but it also removes future stores or sinks for CO₂. However, no international treaties have, so far, given any financial incentives to developing countries for reducing deforestation and degradation. The Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) has, however, allowed nations who cannot meet their emissions commitments to purchase “carbon credits” from developing nations for re-growing new trees, but has not provided any real incentives to avoid deforestation.

Now, a new multi-million dollar fund to compensate for the value of living forests has been launched by the World Bank. The new fund, called the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, was

presented at the UN climate conference in Bali and it is intended to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) of developing countries in tropical and subtropical regions.

Is this yet another try from the rich people in the North to stop people in the South from using their own natural resources in order to allow rich countries to carry on polluting? Critics say that addressing climate change is about leaving fossil fuels in the ground and not about creating carbon markets that will allow us to continue our climate-destructive lifestyle.

Forests provide a number of services

There are, however, also many other good reasons to protect forests in developing countries as they provide a number of other ecosystem services and non-timber products. Already two years ago the UN study Millennium Ecosystem Assessment concluded that forests are often worth more standing. This is because the overall benefit of sustainable forest management tend to exceed that of converting the ecosystem through farming, clear-cut logging, or other intensive uses.

Others warn that payment for carbon services could entail incentives for corrupt officials or local elites to appropriate this new forest value from local communities. Nonetheless, it feels promising that deforestation has now made it to the negotiation table at the international climate talks.

/Fredrik Moberg

More at:

<http://go.worldbank.org/44IMY3YL0>

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THE QUOTE:

“The next generation will ask us one of two questions. Either they will ask: ‘What were you thinking; why didn't you act?’ Or they will ask instead: ‘How did you find the moral courage to rise and successfully resolve a crisis that so many said was impossible to solve?’”

Quote from Al Gore's Nobel Prize speech:

<http://www.nobel.no>

December this year means Christmas time, Nobel Prizes and climate talks in Bali. But do these three things have anything in common? No, I'm not thinking of Al Gore's Santa Claus-like chuckle, ho-ho-ho. It is much more solemn than that. Two years ago the Australian Conservation Foundation came out with a report stating the obvious, that Christmas is damaging the environment. The report "The Hidden Cost of Christmas", for instance, calculated that gifts like DVD players and coffee makers generated 780,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, even before they were unwrapped and used. Moreover, the report also said that during 2004 year's Christmas, Australians spent US\$1.1 billion on clothes, which required more than half a million hectares of land to produce. Water corresponding to 42,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools was used in the production of Christmas drinks, most was used to grow barley for beer and grapes for wine. In the US someone has calculated that 25 percent of total spending occurs during Christmas and household garbage increases by 25 percent.

So, in essence Christmas comes with huge ecological footprints. We are paying for our Christmas presents with water, land, air and resources – hidden in the products we buy. But whereas Christmas season is normally an especially bad time of year for the environment, this year I see some promising signs. And it has to do with the other two things mentioned in the opening paragraph of this editorial.

In times of climate talks and Nobel Peace Prizes for climate research and awareness-raising many NGO's around the world now echo the Australian Conservation Foundation and urge us

to tread more lightly on the planet this Christmas. This can be achieved by eating, drinking and buying gifts in moderation, and by giving gifts with a low environmental cost, such as vouchers for services, tickets to concerts and memberships to museums.

And if you are still into buying things there is a growing number of eco-labelled and fair-traded products that you can buy with better conscience. Buying these products can even contribute to poverty alleviation by ensuring that producers in the developing world receive a fair price for their goods as well as support and education for sustainable farming practices.

In Sweden the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise has

"Have yourself a moderate-consuming, fair-traded and eco-labelled Christmas!"

recently published a number of whole-page ads that say the opposite: that we are inherently bad people if we decide to consume less during Christmas. Not a word about the environmental and societal drawbacks of overconsumerism. And they published the first of these ads the same day the Nobel Peace Prizes were handed out to highlight the connections between global environmental changes, lifestyles and peace. What did they think? Think again.

And have yourself a moderate-consuming, fair-traded and eco-labelled Christmas!

/Fredrik Moberg, Editor, Albaeco

Sustainability School:

"REDD – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries"

"REDD" is one of the latest contributions to the jungle of climate change acronyms. It stands for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and was also one of the main issues at the UN climate meeting in Bali.

Already two years ago, at the UN climate talks in Montreal, Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica proposed that reduced emissions from "avoided deforestation" should be included in an UN compensation scheme. It was proposed that developing countries should be provided financial incentives for reducing emissions from deforestation as it accounts for about 20 percent of global emissions of human-induced greenhouse gases.

Moreover, the major part of deforestation is occurring in developing countries, but so far, international treaties have not given any financial incentives to developing countries for reducing deforestation and degradation.

As a response, a new multi-million dollar fund, called the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, was launched by the World Bank at the recent UN climate conference in Bali. The new fund, is intended to compensate for the value of living forests in order to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation in tropical and subtropical developing countries (see also article on page 1). The agreement coming out of the meeting, the "Bali roadmap", also contains text affirming the urgent need to reduce emissions from deforestation and adopted a work programme for further methodological work.

Forests at your service

Any REDD-initiative will, besides contributing to emission reduction efforts, also entail many other potential benefits through maintaining the multiple functions and services of the forest ecosystems. Such ecosystem services are essential



for the livelihoods of many millions of people and include erosion control, stabilization of water supply, the conservation of biological diversity as well as many wood and non-wood forest products.

However, the REDD-idea also has its critics. Some say they doubt that the benefits from REDD will really trickle down to the local poor who need it most, and others fear it could entail incentives for local elites to appropriate land in order to benefit from REDD's credits. Yet others argue that REDD will simply provide another loophole for industrial countries to avoid their responsibility and continue their climate-destructive lifestyle.

/Fredrik Moberg

More at:

http://www.iucn.org/themes/climate/docs/bali_redd.pdf

Ecosystem services-based farming in Ethiopia increases crop yields and empowers women

The Tigray Project in northern Ethiopia sounds too good to be true. It is said to demonstrate how sustainable agriculture can lead to increased crop yields, raised water tables, improved soil fertility, increased incomes and empowering of women. The government has now adopted the project's approach for combating land degradation and poverty in the whole country. SDU went there to check out if the project is as good as rumour has it.

Tigray, with the state capital Mekelle town, is the Northernmost of Ethiopia's federal states. Here something unique is said to have taken place, a project called The Tigray Project – an experiment in sustainable development and ecological land management.

It all started when some people in the region started to ask the question whether industrial agriculture could continue feeding the world for the coming 10,000 years and more.



"Organic farming, I am sure, will feed the world"

This question emerged from a growing realisation that the green revolution might not have been so green after all. A large proportion of the world's agricultural landscapes has become steadily degraded through the pressure of intensive, pesticide- and chemical fertiliser based monocultures that produce agricultural commodities and industrial livestock for global markets.

On the other hand, the question of whether organic agriculture can produce as much food as industrial agriculture is also legitimate. Visionary environmentalist Dr. Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher, "the godfather of the Tigray Project", says it can:

– Organic farming, I am sure, will feed the world. I am also sure that unless organic farming re-expands, the human component of the world will eventually shrink.



Eight positive outcomes reported from the Tigray Project

1. Increased yields and productivity of crops
2. Decreased vulnerability to droughts/pests
3. Decreased dependence on fossil fuel input
4. Raised water tables
5. Improved soil fertility
6. Rehabilitation of degraded land
7. Increased incomes
8. Empowerment of women



Interestingly, the Tigray project has taken place in the place where a "biblical famine" occurred only a generation ago. This is one of the poorest regions of the country with depressing figures for child mortality, education, access to healthcare and life expectancy. In the midst of all this a group of people in 1995, lead by Dr. Tewolde, started to design the unique project in order to improve the productivity of the land and rehabilitate the environments of poor farmers in marginal areas. For his work to promote sustainable agriculture, Dr. Tewolde has been awarded many prestigious prizes, like the United Nations' Champion of the Earth Award and the Right Livelihood Award.

Promising for poor farmers

Today the project is run by the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), the Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BoANR), the Mekelle University, the local communities and the local administration. As Tewolde himself expresses it, the project's intention is to "bolster rather than shunt the natural cycles that improve the functioning of the ecosystem as a whole, including those parts of it that are not cultivated". This is because wild species in and around fields provide ecosystem services like pollination of crops, control of pests and cycling of water and nutrients.

When people ask him if this can really be done, he simply answers: "Previous farming communities have been doing it for thousands of years. With our increased knowledge, we should do better than they had done".



"Women are key to the success of the Tigray Project"

The poor farmers in the project have obtained very promising results by applying a number of sustainable farming techniques, including composting, crop diversification and rainwater harvesting. Among the positive outcomes seen are increased yields, raised water tables and empowerment of women (see box).

These management changes would not have been possible without reviving the local community organisation, says Sue Edwards, the current Director of the ISD in the capital city Addis Ababa:

– Removing small-holder farmers from the production system is not the way to go. If you are going to go organic small-holders are much more sophisticated than the large-scale systems.

Sue Edwards is a taxonomic botanist, teacher and science editor by profession, and one of the key stewards of the project today.



Mama Yuannisu with her fruit garden is one of the women who have benefited from the Project. Photo: J. Lundberg.

She often emphasises another key aspect to understand the success of the Tigray project: the role of women. The region has an unproportionally large number of women-headed families as a consequence of the many years of civil war. As women are traditionally not allowed to plough their own fields and have to wait for a male neighbour or relative to handle the plough oxen they often suffer from delayed sowing and shorter growing periods. The project has therefore worked to empower women and has in particular encouraged them to raise seedlings of long season crops (finger millet, sorghum, maize) to be planted out when the rains start, rather than sowing seeds in the field that require a longer growing season. This is also beneficial from another perspective: to meet the challenge of a steadily more unpredictable rainy season due to climate change.

Use of compost key aspect

The use of compost is, however, by many seen as the most crucial aspect behind the success of the project. The yields from compost have been shown to be comparable or higher than those from chemical fertilizers. The ISD staff have identified a number of other positive effects of using compost, including: increased biodiversity; reduced weed loads; decreased vulnerability to droughts; increased resistance to pest and lower costs for farmers than buying chemical fertilizers. Altogether, the Tigray Project clearly shows that organic farming can indeed give better yields than chemically based farming, even in a degraded mountainous environment.

/Fredrik Moberg, Jakob Lundberg

More at:

www.twinside.org.sg/title/end/ed04.htm
www.i-sis.org.uk/TTP.php

Human Development Report: "Stop the climate apartheid"

It is necessary to start cutting the emissions of greenhouse gases now if we are going to prevent catastrophic climate change consequences, like collapsing ecosystems and "climate refugees". This is the main message in the new Human Development Report from UNDP.

Climate changes tend to be slow and the effects are often revealed much later. However, research shows that even a slow forcing can trigger abrupt and irreversible changes when thresholds are crossed. That is why it is so urgent to stop climate changes now. The greenhouse gas emissions have increased dramatically since the 1950s, and being global, "one country's emissions are another country's climate change problem". These are some of the conclusions put forward in the United Nations latest Human Development Report released November 27th.

The report has a harsh tone and requests the leaders of the world to act now if we are going to be able to prevent a dangerous global warming. The UNDP stresses that the world needs a new climate agreement to follow the Kyoto Protocol. All countries must cooperate to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. "Climate change mitigation is about transforming the way that we produce and use energy, and about living within the bounds of ecological sustainability", the report states.

Floating homes or people floating in water?

The report reiterates concern about that it is mainly poor people in developing countries that are affected by climate changes. Simultaneously, it is the developed countries that have contributed the lion's share of carbon dioxide emissions. They stand for almost half of the emissions, but only 15 percent of the world's population. Annually, 262 million people were affected by climate disasters during the last two years, more than 98 percent of them live in developing countries.

The investment needed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions is not insignificant. Still, the costs of inaction far outweigh the costs



of action. The latter would represent only two-thirds of the annual global military spending, according to a calculation in the report. Today we have both the financial resources and the technological capabilities to reduce the emissions and it is the developed countries that have to take a lead. "If we fail to prevent climate change it will be because we were unable to foster the political will to cooperate", the UNDP says.

An international cooperation to prevent and adapt to climate change would favour all countries. Right now there are huge differences in how countries adapt. "For one part of the world – the richer part – adaptation is a matter of elaborating climate defence infrastructures, and of building homes that 'float on' water. In the other part adaptation means people themselves learning to 'float in' flood water", says Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, and he calls this "adaptation apartheid". The developing countries need help from the rich countries to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

Dealing with climate changes requires knowledge from a wide variety of fields, like meteorology, ecology, psychology, economics and international relations. This makes the question very complex. Even more when the decisions we make today will effect future generations.

/Magdalena Jägerström

More at:

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/>

The world's growing cities a challenge for poor people

The book "Tomorrow's Crises Today: the humanitarian impact of urbanisation" was recently released. Using examples from ten cities in the developing world, the book shows how poor people in urban areas suffer most from the impacts of climate change and bad water supplies.



Cities make up around 2 percent of the Earth's surface, but consume around 60 percent of the water for human use. By next year, more than half of the world's population will be living in urban areas. And in the poorest countries, slums make up between 30-70 percent of urban populations. In Africa and South Asia the majority of the urban population lives in slum areas.

Is this a curse or a blessing? Well, it all boils down to water. One of the biggest challenges will be the water supply for the cities, according to the new book "Tomorrow's Crises Today" produced by the humanitarian news and analysis service IRIN in collaboration with UN-HABITAT. It explores the lives of the millions of poor people already living in metropolises as well as those millions drawn into them from the rural areas every day. The population growth is, however, expected to level out in mega cities; instead most of the growth will occur in cities with less than 500,000 inhabitants in developing countries. This will affect the

infrastructure but most of all the water supply – in particular when urban growth is unplanned. When this happens the poor are often forced to live on floodplains, cliff sides and close to industries and all too often they suffer from water-related problems. Every day 30,000 people around the world die of illnesses caused by poor water supply, waste disposal and rubbish.

Climate change yet another challenge

Moreover, climate change is projected to affect the people who are least equipped or able to cope with the changes the most – not the least through the close connection between climate and the water supply. For example, heat waves will increase the need of water at the same time as water conditions will be worsened. Moreover, whereas only 2 percent of the world's land area is low elevation coastal zones, these vulnerable areas house 13 percent of the global urban population.

To prevent human disasters in the future the book suggests that governments must take part in city planning even in slum areas, especially when it comes to water supply and sanitation. According to the book, the problems are technical and solutions are possible. Many experts say that it is necessary with micro-financing, community funding, women's savings groups and other innovative approaches together with good governance. Growing cities do not have to be a problem!

/Magdalena Jägerström

More at:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=74973>

Climate change may cause global conflicts, new German report warns



Essential resources like water are affected by climate change. That this might trigger domestic conflicts is not a new insight, but UN officials at the Bali Conference warned that increasing pressure caused by climate change on essential resources might also have a destabilising effect globally. This is because local and national conflicts might have a spillover effect and destabilise neighbour countries through, for example, refugee flows. Another scenario is that countries most heavily affected by climate change will blame other countries who are not seen as doing enough to cut carbon emissions.

Moreover, societies in transition from authoritarian to democratic systems are especially vulnerable to crises and conflicts. Climate change will put many of these countries under additional pressure. This could be the case for many African and Asian countries, warns the report "Climate Change as a Security Risk" released by the German government's scientific advisory body on 10 December at the conference in Bali.

http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_jg2007_engl.pdf

Sweden's new commission for climate and development now appointed

The Swedish Government has decided to appoint an international commission for Measures against Climate Change. Its task is to increase the focus on the link between climate change and development in poor countries. Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation, Gunilla Carlsson, will lead the Commission and has now appointed its members:

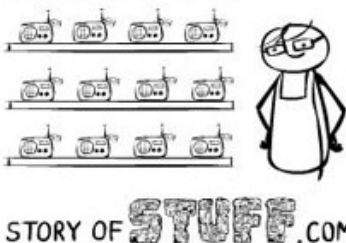
Wangari Maathai, Professor, Founder of the Green Belt Movement, Kenya
Sun Honglie, Professor, Head of the China Climate Change Expert Committee
Nanna Hvidt, Director of the Danish Institute for International Studies
Angela Cropper, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, Trinidad and Tobago
Jacques Aigrain, CEO Swiss Re, France - Switzerland
Mohamad El-Ashry, Senior Fellow UN Foundation, Egypt
Sunita Narain, Director of the Centre for Science and Environment, India
Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute, USA
Ian Johnson, Chairman of IDEACarbon, UK
Bernard Petit, Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Development, EU Commission, France
Margareta Wahlström, Assistant Secretary-General for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Sweden
Youba Sokona, Executive Secretary of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, Mali

– I am very pleased that we have succeeded in attracting such a wide group of knowledgeable and renowned people to the Commission, Gunilla Carlsson says.

A secretariat will be set up at the Stockholm Environment Institute. Johan Schaar, former Special Representative for the Tsunami Operation at the Red Cross, will head the secretariat. Anders Wijkman, Member of the European Parliament, will be chair of the Commission's expert group.

<http://news.mongabay.com/2007/0912-meat.html>

New animated online film questions the Western norms of consumption



Annie Leonard's "The Story of Stuff" is a brilliant little online film, timely distributed as the Christmas shopping mania is about to start in the North. The film takes viewers on a provocative tour from shopping to

the environmental and social impacts of the Western norms of consumption. The 20 minute film breaks a complicated globally connected story down to something that is easily grasped. It shows how all the stuff in the lives of the average citizen of the North affects communities at home and abroad.

Critics say it is sensationalist and that some of the facts are under debate. Others say its emotional language might spoil the message that now only works for the already converted. Notwithstanding, this short film will definitely make many people change the way they look at all the stuff in their lives forever.

<http://www.storyofstuff.com/>

163 million \$

...is how much developed countries have paid to the two funds set up by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to help developing countries adapt to global warming.

This is the result of a study from the UK-based development agency, Oxfam. Their new report "Financing Adaptation: Why the UN's Bali Climate Conference Must Mandate the Search for New Funds" also concludes that this is actually less than what Canadians spent on hair conditioner last year – or less than half of what the UK is investing in cooling the London Underground.

Oxfam estimates that the cost of adapting to climate change in developing countries is likely to be at least 50 billion US dollars each year, and far more if global greenhouse-gas emissions are not cut fast enough. The report was launched on 4 December at the meeting on global warming in Bali, Indonesia.

www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75684

SDU-numbers



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