

Conclusions and recommendations

Environmental Profiles

It is clear that the majority of EC delegations recognise the need to produce environmental profiles: the number of profiles that have been produced, or are planned for the near future, shows a marked improvement.

We recommend that:

- A high quality Environmental Profile that follows EC guidelines should be in place for every country and region falling within the EC development cooperation programmes.
- Regional Environmental Profiles should not replace the need for an individual Country Environmental Profile.

Evidence of good practice:

From 60 responses, 44 country environmental profiles and 3 regional environmental profiles were completed or were in the pipeline at the time of the survey.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)

Only 24 per cent of the responses identified that an EIA had been carried out in the context of EC development funding since 1996. There was a wide range of views expressed about public accessibility to EIAs and whether it is the responsibility of the EC delegations to hold EIA information that may have been carried out under the national legislation of the recipient country.

We recommend that:

- The Commission should clarify procedures for carrying out EIAs and should make transparency and stakeholder participation a basic standard. Where national legislation is inadequate in this regard, the Commission should encourage improvements.

Evidence of good practice:

Environmental Impact Assessments of projects implemented with EC funds were made available on some delegations' websites and on request.

Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs)

Only four delegations in the survey had carried out a Strategic Environmental Assessment although a further four made reference to foreseen SEAs. Given the emphasis by the Commission and the European Consensus on SEAs as an important tool, the current lack of available SEAs is of concern.

We recommend that:

- SEAs should be used on a systematic basis as described in the European Consensus. They should be designed according to current good practice, following OECD guidelines.

Evidence of good practice:

Some responses referred to the identification of SEAs required at the country or regional level at the drafting stages of CSPs and RSPs.

Information access and dissemination

The vast majority of EC delegations agree that environment-related information is, or can be made, public. However there is little consistency regarding the active public dissemination of such documents and little clarity as to who is responsible for making the information available.

We recommend that:

- An unambiguous approach to the public availability of CEPs/ REPS, EIAs and SEAs should be agreed between the Commission, Member States, partner countries and other international agencies (UNDP, World Bank, etc). The EC is in an ideal position to promote this coordinated approach.
- A centralised database of all publicly available documents should be set up immediately, accessible via the internet, in order to allow civil society organisations to actively engage in consultation and dialogue.

- EC delegations should ensure that these documents are published on their national websites, as a matter of course, and the website is updated as soon as new documents become available.
- EC delegations should support a culture of openness and encourage participation through the active dissemination of information, including environmental information.

Evidence of good practice:

Publication of environmental profile on delegation website as soon as prepared; consultation with CSOs on the draft environmental profile; sharing of environmental information with civil society organisations during consultations on CSPs or at regular dialogue events.

Procedures

Out of 70 delegations and regional desks contacted, 10 failed to reply altogether and 28 did not reply until a reminder was sent two months after the first request for information. The timeliness of provision of information, including environmental information, is as important as its accessibility in order to facilitate civil society participation.

Only five delegations were aware of the existence of any evaluations of the integration of environmental issues into EC development cooperation even though the European Court of Auditors Special Report on the topic (Special Report 6/2006) was published in July 2006.

We recommend that:

- An environmental representative should be appointed in every delegation. This person should act as a focal point for the use of environmental tools, access to information and reporting back on environmental mainstreaming. The representative should also be a source of expertise in any political dialogue with government over environmental issues.
- Training in environmental integration should be compulsory for all delegation officials and headquarters staff working in the area of development cooperation.
- The Commission, through the Inter-Service Quality Support Group, should ensure that findings of evaluations are shared amongst delegations and recommendations acted upon.

Evidence of good practice:

The existence of dedicated environmental focal points in some delegations and provision of their contact details.

Environmental Integration across all EU Development Cooperation

The current survey focussed on accessibility to environmental information within EC delegations and did not cover the area of bilateral EU aid. However some examples were volunteered where donors have undertaken to coordinate development projects with environmental interests. A parallel study of the access to information and integration in other agencies, both bilateral and multilateral, would be useful.

We recommend that:

- Current commitments towards better coordination amongst EU donors should be enhanced by increasing cooperation and sharing information.
- An expert group of Member States, relevant Commission staff and civil society representatives should be set up to facilitate environmental mainstreaming across all EU development cooperation.

Evidence of good practice:

Participation in Environment Working Group led by the Government of partner country. Formation of Development Partners Group on the Environment.

Summary of findings

This study provides an overview of the public availability of environmental information from a number of EC delegations in Africa, the Caribbean, Pacific, Asian and Latin American countries, focussing on Country Environmental Profiles (CEPs), Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs).

Information was obtained over a six month period from 63 EC delegations or their related desk officers in Brussels, and from 7 regional desk officers (60 replies in total from 70 requests made):

On the positive side:

- There have been significant improvements in the delegations' approach to carrying out CEPs
- There is broad agreement on the public nature of the documents in question
- Positive attitudes to civil society involvement were recorded in some cases

But also:

- There is a lack of consistency in facilitating public access to documents
- There is no systematic approach to carrying out EIAs and SEAs
- There is no systematic approach to the publishing of the CEPs/EIAs/SEAs
- Guidelines requiring a response to correspondence within 15 working days have been disregarded
- There is limited knowledge of evaluations which have taken place, looking at the integration of environmental issues



BirdLife International is a global partnership of national conservation organisations that strives to conserve wild birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, by working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. The Brussels BirdLife Office works to ensure that the European Commission, Parliament and Member States support sustainable development and meet their biodiversity commitments. For further information: Avenue de la Toison d'Or 67, 1040 Brussels; <http://europe.birdlife.org>

FERN is a European NGO that campaigns for greater environmental and social justice. FERN's main focus is on the impact of the policies and practices of the European Union on forests and forest peoples. For further information: Avenue de l'Yser 4, 1040 Brussels; <http://www.fern.org>

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. The WWF European Policy Office contributes to the achievement of WWF's mission by helping shape European Union policies impacting on the European and global environment. For further information: Avenue de Tervuren 36, 1040 Brussels; <http://www.panda.org/eu>

Environmental tools in EC development cooperation

A review of transparency and the public availability of documentation

BirdLife International, FERN, WWF

This briefing is based on data collected between November 2006 and June 2007. The full report is available at <http://assets.panda.org/downloads/transparency.pdf> or at <http://www.fern.org>

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“One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making”

Agenda 21, Chapter 23



Protecting the environment is a fundamental pillar of sustainable development. But just as vital is the involvement of civil society and public access to information. Consultation, participation and accountability are identified as key principles of EU development policy. This study aims to examine how far this is happening in practice, in particular in terms of the requisite tools to facilitate environmental integration.

The Study

FERN, BirdLife and WWF carried out research during a six month period to analyse the public availability of the environmental tools (see box) currently used in EC cooperation and aid plans. The study follows up on the formal findings of the European Court of Auditors Special Report 2006,¹ which severely criticised practice in this area. The experience of some of our civil society colleagues in the south, also suggested difficulties in accessing environmental information from EC delegations.

Sixty-three EC delegations across Africa, the Caribbean, Pacific, Asia and Latin America were contacted and letters were also sent to seven regional desk offices in Brussels.

The following information was requested:

- The Country Environmental Profile (CEP) or Regional Environmental Profile (REP)
- Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) undertaken since 1996
- Any in-house or external evaluations of the integration of environmental issues within the framework of EC cooperation in the country in question
- When and how this information would be made publicly available

The EU’s commitment to integrating the environment into development

The 2005 European Consensus on Development² agreed between the European Commission, the EU Member States and the European Parliament in December 2005, explicitly acknowledges the link between environmental sustainability and poverty reduction. Indeed, Millennium Development Goal 7 (MDG 7) aims to reverse the current trends in the loss of environmental resources.

The Consensus explicitly recognises the role that the environment and natural resources play as a source of livelihoods and environmental goods and services. (Para. 75)

The EU’s commitment to providing information and encouraging participation

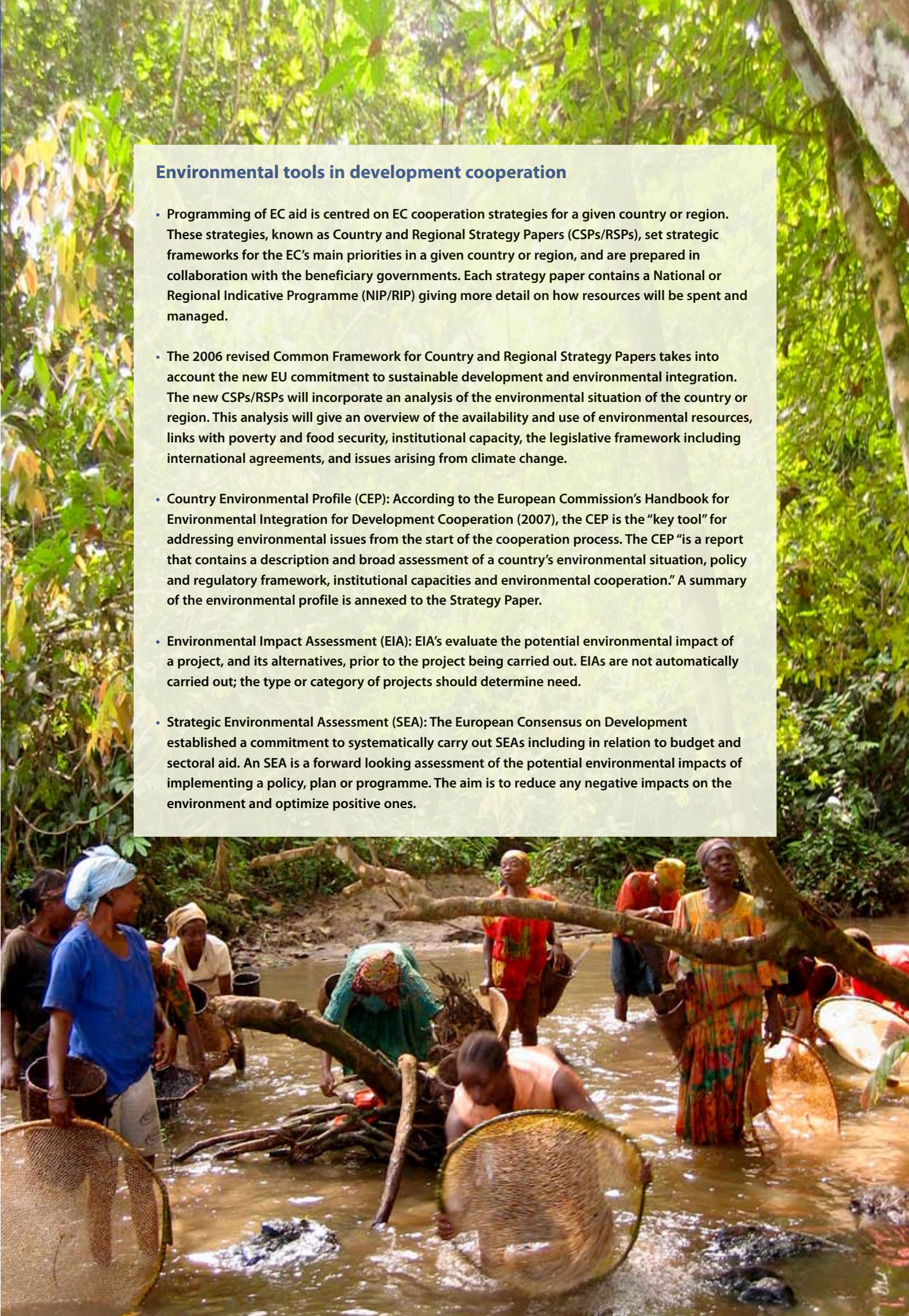
The 2005 EU Consensus on Development reiterates the Commission’s role to “put into effect the principle of participation of civil society.” The involvement of civil society actors is one of the principles of the Common Framework for Country Strategy Papers.³ This document states that civil society “should be involved in discussing policy, drawing up the cooperation strategy and implementing programmes. Other players, particularly local authorities and parliaments, should also be involved.”

The Aarhus Convention⁴ – signed up to by all EU Member States and the European Community in 1998, and the subsequent adoption of regulation (EC) No 1367/2006 provides for public participation and public access to environmental information. It applies to all EC institutions and bodies⁵ as of 28 June 2007.

The Development Cooperation Instrument (EC Regulation 1905/2006) states “Appropriate environmental screening shall be undertaken at project level including environmental impact assessment (EIA) for environmentally sensitive projects, in particular for major new infrastructure. Where relevant, strategic environmental assessments (SEA) shall be used in the implementation of sectoral programmes. *The involvement of interested stakeholders in environmental assessments and public access to results shall be ensured*”⁶ (our emphasis).

Environmental tools in development cooperation

- Programming of EC aid is centred on EC cooperation strategies for a given country or region. These strategies, known as Country and Regional Strategy Papers (CSPs/RSPs), set strategic frameworks for the EC’s main priorities in a given country or region, and are prepared in collaboration with the beneficiary governments. Each strategy paper contains a National or Regional Indicative Programme (NIP/RIP) giving more detail on how resources will be spent and managed.
- The 2006 revised Common Framework for Country and Regional Strategy Papers takes into account the new EU commitment to sustainable development and environmental integration. The new CSPs/RSPs will incorporate an analysis of the environmental situation of the country or region. This analysis will give an overview of the availability and use of environmental resources, links with poverty and food security, institutional capacity, the legislative framework including international agreements, and issues arising from climate change.
- Country Environmental Profile (CEP): According to the European Commission’s Handbook for Environmental Integration for Development Cooperation (2007), the CEP is the “key tool” for addressing environmental issues from the start of the cooperation process. The CEP “is a report that contains a description and broad assessment of a country’s environmental situation, policy and regulatory framework, institutional capacities and environmental cooperation.” A summary of the environmental profile is annexed to the Strategy Paper.
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): EIA’s evaluate the potential environmental impact of a project, and its alternatives, prior to the project being carried out. EIAs are not automatically carried out; the type or category of projects should determine need.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): The European Consensus on Development established a commitment to systematically carry out SEAs including in relation to budget and sectoral aid. An SEA is a forward looking assessment of the potential environmental impacts of implementing a policy, plan or programme. The aim is to reduce any negative impacts on the environment and optimize positive ones.



1 Special Report 6/2006, July 2006. http://eca.europa.eu/audit_reports/special_reports/docs/2006/rs06_06en.pdf
2 Official Journal C 46/01 of 24 February 2006. http://ec.europa.eu/development/body/publications/docs/consensus_en_total.pdf
3 http://ec.europa.eu/development/How/qsq/docs/Links_various/Framework_CSP_2006.pdf
4 <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/and> Official Journal L 264 of 25 September 2006
5 Article 2.1 (c) of Regulation 1367/2006 defines ‘Community institution or body’ as: “any public institution, body, office or agency established by, or on the basis of, the Treaty [...]” This means that the regulation covers not only the institutions listed in Article 7 of the EC Treaty (the Commission, the Council, etc...) but also other bodies, such as the European Investment Bank (art. 9) or subordinate agencies, such as the European Environment Agency.
6 DCI, Article 22.4