

# BioSoc: the Biodiversity and Society Bulletin

Research highlights on biodiversity and society, poverty and conservation

ISSUE 11: JANUARY 2007

---

## BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: NORWAY SETS A NEW STANDARD

The Norwegian government is seeking to establish Norway as a leader in integrating environmental issues into development cooperation. Following up on a recent government white paper *Fighting Poverty Together*, and taking into account the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has produced the *Norwegian Action Plan for Environment in Development Cooperation*. An earlier issue of *BioSoc* noted the real constraints faced by donor agencies in terms of their ability to push an agenda on partner countries. The *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, to which European donors are committed, emphasises the importance of developing countries setting their own priorities rather than being driven by their donors. Norway fully supports this principle but also recognises that, as parties to a range of multilateral environmental agreements, donor countries have an obligation to support developing countries to meet their commitments under those agreements. This is the entry point for the Action Plan.

The Action Plan covers the key environmental issues that one might expect – energy, water, climate change, hazardous waste – but with a big difference. Whereas climate change has emerged as the overriding preoccupation of many environmental strategies, Norway has prioritised biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. In line with the MA findings, Norway justifies this prioritisation on the basis that “biological diversity is vital for the future of life on earth”. This does not mean, however, that the Norwegian government is suddenly going to start handing out money for traditional conservation projects. The Action Plan recognises that biodiversity is as much about fisheries, forests and agriculture as it is about wildlife. Further, given that this Action Plan is a response to a white paper on poverty reduction, it highlights the need to “help secure access and rights to resources for local communities, including indigenous peoples”. The main vehicle for delivering Norway’s commitments will be through capacity development in partner countries, both directly - working with the relevant public authorities within those countries - and indirectly - working with international institutions, NGOs and the private sector.

Like the majority of official development agencies, the overall purpose of Norway’s development cooperation is to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Unlike many development agencies, however, Norway sees MDG 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability as central to this success. Those within and outside of development agencies who are pushing for better and stronger integration of environmental issues, including biodiversity, within poverty reduction programmes will want to track the progress of Norway’s strategy. Its success - or failure - could mark a turning point in the re-greening of aid.

## SOURCE

Government of Norway (2006) Norwegian Action Plan for Environment in Development Cooperation. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo

Please direct queries or comments to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [post@mfa.no](mailto:post@mfa.no)

A copy of the Action Plan can be downloaded from <http://odin.dep.no/ud/english/doc/plans/032201-220054/dok-bn.html>

## **BIOSOC**

BioSoc is a new monthly email bulletin from the Poverty and Conservation Learning Group (PCLG), hosted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). BioSoc highlights key new research on biodiversity and society, poverty and conservation and is available in English, Spanish and French.

All issues are available online at: [www.povertyandconservation.info](http://www.povertyandconservation.info)

Please let us know about other networks that might be interested in subscribing by emailing us at: [BioSoc@iied.org](mailto:BioSoc@iied.org)

## **POVERTY AND CONSERVATION LEARNING GROUP (PCLG)**

The PCLG aims to share key information, highlight new research highlight and promote learning on poverty-conservation linkages. For more information visit: [www.povertyandconservation.info](http://www.povertyandconservation.info)

## **TO UNSUBSCRIBE TO BIOSOC**

Please email [BioSoc@iied.org](mailto:BioSoc@iied.org) with the subject heading UNSUBSCRIBE.