

*One of the greatest global challenges of our time is to lift millions of people out of poverty without exceeding the boundaries of the ecosystems on which we all depend. In order to meet this challenge Swedish development cooperation takes a multidimensional view on poverty, where the environment (including climate change) constitute a fundamental part. This brief aims at describing how Sida views the main linkages between environment, including climate change, and the multidimensional approach to poverty*

## DEVELOPMENT WITHIN PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

The environment plays a central role in the lives of all people, and particularly for people living in poverty. These people are most affected by environmental degradation due to their vulnerability, high dependence on natural resources for sustaining their livelihood, and low capacity to cope with external shocks, such as floods and droughts. People living in poverty are often exposed to high risks. They are more often exposed to unsanitary living conditions, living on marginal land and other high-risk



### The environment and climate change perspective

Environment and climate change is one of the five perspectives that should permeate all Sida's operations. Sida needs to ensure that risks and negative impacts from its operations are avoided or reduced and managed, and that opportunities to contribute to a more sustainable development are identified and enhanced.

Source: Green Tool Box: Introduction to Environment and Climate Change Integration, 2016

locations, such as river banks, remote locations and slums.

Human and economic development over the last centuries has resulted in an increased prosperity at a rate the world has never seen before. Billions of people have moved out of poverty, and human health and well-being has improved at an unprecedented speed. But the development has come at a cost; environmental degradation and unsustainable use of natural resources are now so large that they risk altering the Earth's systems and several of the planetary boundaries have already been crossed. The increased spread of organic and chemical pollutants, the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services and climate change are some of the key global challenges.

Environmental resources are fundamental for human and social development. Therefore, the environment forms a key part of Sida's conceptual framework for multidimensional poverty analyses (MDPA). The MDPA identifies four dimensions of poverty: (1) resources, (2) opportunities and choice, (3) power and voice and (4) human security. These four dimensions are interlinked in complex ways, where

improvement in one or several dimensions could lead to both positive and negative consequences in other dimensions.

According to Sida's definition, a person living in poverty is someone who is resource-poor and poor in one or several of the other dimensions

#### THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY:

Being poor in terms of **resources** means not having access to or power over resources that can be used to sustain a decent living standard and improve one's life. Resources can be both material and nonmaterial – e.g. a decent income, capital, being educated or trained, professional skills, being healthy.

Being poor in terms of **opportunities and choice** concerns what possibility you have to develop and/ or use your resources so as to move out of poverty. Access to e.g. social services, to infrastructure, to capital, to land, or to natural resources affects the opportunities and choices.

Being poor through lack of **power and voice** relates to the ability of people to articulate their concerns, needs and rights in an informed way, and to take part in decision-making that relate to these concerns. Power is a relational concept that allows us to better understand socio-cultural hierarchies and relations of which gender is one, others include age, caste, class, religion, ethnicity and sexual identity. Reinforcing forms of discrimination based on such socio-cultural relations may increase an individual's poverty in this sense.

Being poor in terms of **human security** implies that violence and insecurity are constraints to different groups' and individuals' possibilities to exercise their human rights and to find paths out of poverty.

#### RESOURCES

##### Resources

Resources are a key feature of environmental linkages to multidimensional poverty. Being poor in terms of environmental resources means not having access to, or power over, natural resources and ecosystem services that are needed to sustain a decent living standard. Examples of

environmental resources necessary for human wellbeing include: land and fertile soil, forests, biodiversity, water and sanitation, energy sources, building material, and clean air. The resources need to be available, accessible, affordable, appropriate and of good quality. It is important to ensure that people have knowledge, rights, equipment and proper infrastructure to benefit from these resources in a sustainable way.

To have inadequate access to environmental resources of good quality creates a myriad of problems, particularly for people living in poverty. Degradation and overexploitation of environmental resources, e.g. deforestation, soil erosion, desertification and pollution is challenging peoples' ability to work and secure a livelihood in agriculture, fishing and other sectors that many of the world's poor are dependent on. This can lead to reduced household income, negative effects on health, and constitutes a severe obstacle to development.

Many people around the world are dependent on forests for their livelihood. The loss of forests can deprive people of a home and a potential income in form of farming in forests and small-scale forestry. Large-scale deforestation also negatively affects the fight against climate change. Firstly, deforestation contributes to increased emissions of carbon in the atmosphere and removes parts of the Earth's lungs that turns carbon dioxide into oxygen. Secondly, it hinders adaptation as the water regulation is affected when trees no longer capture and binds water in the ground. This can result in increased local water runoff and soil erosion. Trees can also act as protective barriers towards wind, heat and flooding, which can help communities to protect themselves from hazardous weather events.

Increasing levels of pollution to air, water and soil is a global challenge. Pollution has become a high priority issue affecting both rich and poor due to its increasingly negative impact on human health. Pollution is responsible for between 9 and 12 million deaths annually. As a comparison, pollution is responsible for more

deaths than obesity, alcohol, road accidents or child malnutrition, wars or violence, and three times as fatal as AIDS, TBC and malaria combined<sup>1</sup>. Health hazards take the greatest toll on young children and elderly, with children under 5 and adults aged 50 to 75 years most impacted<sup>2</sup>.

Air pollution can be sorted into two different types of pollution: ambient air pollution and household air pollution. Ambient air pollution is due to emissions from industry, mining, petroleum-powered vehicles, etc. It is a global problem but populations in low- and middle-income countries are more affected. WHO has estimated that 97 % of cities in low- and middle-income countries with more than 100,000 inhabitants are polluted. The corresponding number for high-income countries are 49 %<sup>3</sup>. Exposure to urban air pollution is not affecting a city's population equally. People living in poverty who cannot afford to protect themselves from the impacts of pollution often suffer the most.<sup>4</sup>.

Exposure to household air pollution is due to the use of biofuels for cooking and heating. Women, children and the elderly are disproportionately affected as they are often responsible for cooking and spend more time indoors than men. The absence of proper ventilation and cleaner cooking alternatives are barriers to achieving cleaner air.

Lacking access to water is troublesome for all people but affects the lives of poor women and girls in particular. It is often the responsibility of women and girls to fetch water, whereby water scarcity can result in heavy and long working hours to collect it. Furthermore, lack of access to sanitation facilities is also especially problematic for girls and women. Inadequate access to sanitary facilities in schools risk creating far-reaching consequences in terms of missed education and job opportunities. Studies show that the absence of proper sanitation facilities in schools negatively affect school attendance

and is identified as a cause to why 1 out of 10 girls in Sub-Saharan Africa do not attend school when they are menstruating<sup>5</sup>. Unavailable or unsafe public toilets are associated with a risk of infections, if the women have to "hold it", to avoid being ridiculed or abused.

Widespread urban and rural poverty is complex but often a result of long-term neglect by weak institutions, where low investment rates in agriculture, infrastructure, housing and other municipal and social services keep people in poverty. Unlocking rural potential by increasing sustainable investments in rural areas can both support economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries. Securing land tenure can break poverty cycles in contexts where owning land is a platform for having a home, an employment and producing and processing food. People who have secure access to, and control over, environmental resources, tend to utilize the environmental resources in a more long-term sustainable way and can thus constitute agents of change.

Protecting and enhancing natural resources can be an efficient poverty alleviation strategy. Interventions that improve air quality, housing and waste management systems, or increase access to clean energy, and water and sanitation are examples of interventions that can both improve the situation for people living in poverty as well as it contributes to a cleaner and safer environment.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHOICE



Being poor in terms of opportunities and choice means that people lack the possibility to use available environmental resources and ecosystem services for their own benefit, to lift themselves out of poverty. Poverty in this dimension can take the form of limited access to markets, few opportunities

<sup>1</sup> Landrigan et al, 2018. "The Lancet Commission on pollution and health", *Lancet* 2018; 391: 462–512. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)32345-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)32345-0)

<sup>2</sup> WHO, 2016, Preventing the disease through healthy environment: a global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks, p. xvii

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/airpollution/data/cities/en/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/environment/brief/pollution>

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO, 2014, Puberty Education & Menstrual Hygiene Management, p.15

for livelihood diversification, inability to invest in improved agricultural technology, low access to education, or barriers to change into clean energy sources.

To lack opportunities and choice is often a consequence of deprivation in the dimensions of resources, power and voice, and/or human security that negatively affect what opportunities and choice people have and their possibility to escape poverty. A disabling context, such as inadequate access to energy, infrastructure or markets, sets the limits to how development could be realized.

Households that constantly live with small margins and few opportunities are vulnerable to internal and external shocks, such as droughts, floods, failed harvests, price drops on the global market, and political instability. People living in poverty might be forced to apply negative coping mechanisms when their livelihood is weakened (such as selling land or other assets, stop sending their children to school, consume less nutritious food or stop buying medicine), which negatively affect the health, wellbeing and future livelihood opportunities of the concerned households.


To lack opportunity and choice can hinder people to plan for their future. People who do not know whether they will have the right or opportunity to use local natural resources in the future might feel forced to maximize the use of them today instead of sustainably manage them over time. This could for example lead to an overexploitation of fish stocks, agricultural land and forest resources. People who lack opportunities and choice have a harder time to strengthen their community and/or household resilience since their possibility to invest in sustainable solutions are limited.

A strive to create a better life is universal and people living in poverty should not only be seen as victims of environmental degradation but also as agents of change. The change agents can maintain and conserve the environment once given the opportunity to do so. Having opportunities and choice, for instance access to

a diversity of livelihood opportunities instead of depending on one only, is essential for strengthening resilience and to increase people's freedom to shape their own lives and make them more able to bounce back after shocks.

Provision of opportunities and choice can be limited by unfair and corrupt governance but it can also be restricted by lack of knowledge and information in several levels of society. Inadequate information about how environmental degradation and climate change affect communities' health and wellbeing can explain a widespread use of illegal pesticides, burning of electronic waste and batteries to recover precious metals, the use of mercury in artisanal mining etc. A lack of information and knowledge of rights, in combination with poor governance and corruption, is likely to exacerbate the problem. Developing knowledge about environmental issues, such as resilience of ecosystems, the status of fish stocks and integrated pest management, can help people make better decisions and cooperate even when opportunities are few.

## POWER AND VOICE



Being poor in terms of power and voice means that people lack the ability to articulate their concerns, needs and rights in an informed and meaningful way, and to take part in decision-making affecting these concerns. Power and voice will ensure that people's knowledge and concerns are listened to and understood.

Human rights principles and governance – how decisions are made and power exercised – have a strong effect on environmental actions and outcomes.

Weak governance is correlated with negative environmental outcomes and is closely associated with social ills such as corruption, social exclusion, and lack of trust in authorities. Good governance, on the other hand, combined with pro-poor legal frameworks and processes, may be powerful instruments contributing to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

All people should have the possibility to participate meaningfully in public consultations that affect their environment and livelihood opportunities without being discriminated against<sup>6</sup>. The reality of who has the right to use their power and voice can differ substantially depending on the context and their economic situation, and it can also vary depending on a person's gender, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or whether one is married or not, etc. The power and voice dimension encompasses also decision-making in the domestic sphere, where e.g. women's access to land and other productive resources or decisions over harvest and may be restricted by cultural norms or practices.

Poverty in this dimension is linked to a lack of power over natural resource use or inadequate voice regarding decisions related to the environment. Decisions on natural resource use, for instance logging licenses or mining concessions, can result in reduced access rights to, or quality of, natural resources for the communities affected. Therefore, affected communities and/or their representatives, need to be allowed to participate in, or criticize, these decisions. In these discussions it is important that groups who often are excluded from power – women, girls, Indigenous people and minority groups etc. – are ensured fair representation.

Achieving a sustainable management of the environment is a complex task and many perspectives needs to be taken into consideration. One component that needs to be safeguarded in a development context is to secure the power and voice of people who lack representation. As an example, indigenous people and traditional farming and fishing communities hold context-specific and valuable knowledge of the land that they have lived off for generations. This knowledge risks being ignored and not taken into policy and development processes if their power and voice is not addressed.

Power and voice is often related to access to information, ability to participate and hold duty

bearers accountable. The public needs to be invited to participate, but also able to participate in a meaningful way. Therefore, participatory approaches should sometimes be accompanied with capacity development activities. People speaking their minds must be protected. To strengthen power and voice could be to secure representation in local, national and international forums where decisions on climate change, natural resource use, biodiversity, the allocation of water resources and other types of issues that have a large impact on people's life and well-being, are discussed. Efforts must be made to disclose information and make it publicly available. Another strategy could be to increase access to technologies to ensure access to information, early warning systems, environmental monitoring data, impact assessments and reporting in order to contribute to an increased awareness of upcoming natural hazards and environmental risks, such as deforestation, environmental impacts of a proposed project, storm warnings and rising air pollution levels.

## HUMAN SECURITY



Being poor in terms of human security, describes how violence and insecurity constrains a person's or community's ability to move out of poverty. An

increasing share of the world's poor is found in conflict-affected areas. By 2030, it is estimated that over 80 percent of the world's poor will live in fragile or conflict-ridden contexts<sup>7</sup>. Political violence can be used to control a society's population on national or local level, but violence can also be used within households.

A person's security can differ substantially depending on gender, sexuality, class, religious affiliation, ethnic identity and geographical location. When assessing human security, it is important to be specific about whose security is threatened and why. Applying a gender perspective allows one to look at how conflict and insecurity affects women and men, and girls and boys differently. Lacking access to

<sup>6</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, *Good practices*, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Environment/SREnvironment/Pages/GoodPractices.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> OECD, 2018, *States of fragility 2018*, OECD Publishing, Paris, p.7

water and sanitation is an illustrative example of a public health issue that is closely associated with poverty that disproportionately affect women and girls. Practising open defecation or sharing sanitation facilities with other households can compromise their personal safety and expose them to sexual harassment and abuse. Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world and undermines the health, dignity and security of the victims.<sup>8</sup>

When exploring human security in connection to environment it is advisable to assess if and in what way environment and natural resources are linked to ongoing or recent conflict (for instance as a cause or irritant, or for financing the conflict). Conflicts have both direct and indirect effects on the environment, for instance through massive displacement of people, reluctance to invest because land tenure is insecure, and more indirectly, the undermining of capacity to manage the environment and natural resources. In addition, evidence suggests that natural disasters exacerbate pre-existing conflicts or conflict risks<sup>9</sup>.

A development paradox that is closely linked to natural resources is the resource curse. The resource curse refers to how countries that are rich in natural resources, like fossil fuels, rubber and valuable minerals, but have weak institutions and governance, could risk less economic growth and more instability than more resource poor countries. A growing competition over natural resources, is a cause for concern, and risk creating insecurity for people that already have limited resources, few opportunities and a restricted power and voice.

The last decade has shown a trend of shrinking democratic space for civil society actors. The situation for environmental rights defenders has worsened and the number of people killed has increased in recent years. In 2017, 197 environmental rights defenders were killed for

standing up against governments and companies to defend land, and indigenous and environmental rights<sup>10</sup>. This number has fourfold over the last 15 years. Situations like these are often linked to the growing pressure on land, forests or minerals and the conflicting interests between individuals, local and national elites, regulators and investors. To lack power and voice but still try to speak up and shape public opinion can be a serious threat to an individual's security. Indigenous people are overrepresented among defenders killed and women defenders often face gender-specific threats including sexual violence, smear-campaigns and threats against their children.

Living in poverty is closely associated with a number of personal and societal risks. Lacking access to water and sanitation is an example of a risk for all people, but especially affects the security of women and girls who are disproportionately targets of violence and sexual abuse. In order to improve human security there is a need to explore how the management of natural resources can work as a catalyst for promoting cooperation and sustainable development, but also how it might spur conflict and consolidate unjust power relations. In order to secure stability and strengthening resilience one have to explore how people living in poverty can adapt to a changing climate.

## DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Environmental analysis is one of the underlying pillars of a comprehensive multidimensional poverty analysis (MDPA). The multidimensional poverty framework is based on the understanding that poverty is dynamic and not a static condition. People who live in poverty are not inherently destined to stay in poverty, and people who are higher up on the socio-economic ladder today can - depending on

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-based-violence>

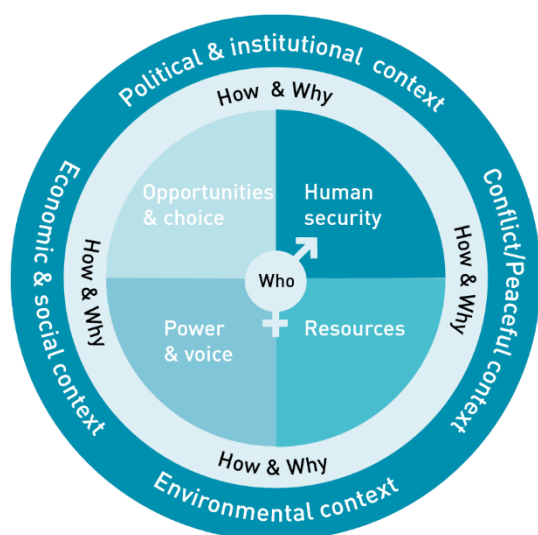
<sup>9</sup> Harris Katie, et al, 2013. When disasters and conflicts collide.

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[https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/feb/02/almost-four-environmental-defenders-a-week-killed-in-2017?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/feb/02/almost-four-environmental-defenders-a-week-killed-in-2017?CMP=share_btn_tw)

changing circumstances - fall into poverty in the future.

The previous sections introduced the main links between environment, climate change and poverty to answer the question of **who** is poor and **how** that poverty is experienced. This section takes a wider perspective of **why** this situation of poverty has evolved by exploring the development context.



### Economic and social context

Analysing the prevailing economic and social context in a country helps us understand access to and distribution of economic and natural resources, the structure of the economy, demographic development, gender gaps and ethnic divides. The economic and social context will explain whether this is a country with high or low GDP per capita and the share of population that live in poverty. It asks questions such as to what extent the country is dependent on natural resource extractions for sustained and continued growth and for providing job opportunities, whether the natural resource use is sustainable or not, and how this is affecting the poor. Aspects related to economic incentive structures (taxes, fees, subsidies, payment for ecosystem services), allocation of financial flows, and accounting methods and reporting, play a key role for determining whether or not the economy is socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. Is there a green growth strategy in

place, do traditional gender roles prevail, or if it is a country where the poor part of the population are rural subsistence farmers, urban dwellers, or both? It also explores where economic development has the best potential to take off, what sector (e.g. agriculture, extractive industries, or other) that show most progress, if it is a prevailing or full-blown industrial economy that comes with its own benefits and challenges or other.

### Political and institutional context

The political and institutional context includes understanding formal and informal institutions, the rule of law, and human rights. Are the environmental laws and international commitments implemented? It lets us know if policy- and decisions makers, public officials and other elites are held accountable for what they do and what they don't do, actions and if they strive to fulfil their obligations to national and international agreements on environment and climate change. It also tells us how the environment is governed, if the natural resource sector is corrupt and whether people with a certain gender, ethnicity, religion or other social roles and identities can participate in society on equal terms.

### Peace and conflict context

The conflict context explores social trust, conflict resolution mechanisms, violence and tensions. This context will help us understand existing conflicts or rising tensions over natural resources and whether they could be aggregated by pollution, overexploitation, and climate change. It also asks questions about violence or external shocks coming from climate change and other types of environmental degradation, and to what extent these events could force people to migrate within or outside of a country.

### Environmental context

The environmental context describes the current state of the country's environment, the causes and driving forces for over extraction of natural resources or environmental degradation, and the impacts on people living in poverty. The environmental context describes trends concerning biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution, the use or misuse of shared water resources, climate change and

how these different environmental factors link up and reinforce each other. Many of Sida's partner countries and primary beneficiaries are in countries and regions that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identifies as running disproportionately high risk from a global warming of 1.5 degrees or more. This includes especially small-island developing states, least developed countries and dryland regions.<sup>11</sup> In 2017 drought and desertification pushed many more people into extreme hunger, especially in the Middle East and the Sahel<sup>12</sup> and climate change will continue to increase the intensity of extreme weather events in the future.

### TOOLS FOR INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS INTO THE MDPA

Analysing development from an environmental including climate change perspective is an integral part of the MDPA with the aim to identify constraints for people living in poverty

and interventions needed to improve their situation. When an MDPA identifies environment including climate change, as an important perspective for understanding who is poor and why, there may be a need to learn more about these challenges and sectoral opportunities for change in order to optimize Sida's contributions.

Sida's [Green Tool Box](#) includes thematic briefs, overviews and in-depth guides as well as concrete guidance and tool for how to integrated environment, including climate change, into Sida's contributions.

A reliable source for environmental country level data is [The Little Green Data Book](#) published annually by the World Bank. The dataset compiles recent key environmental data for most countries in the world.

You can also contact Sida's environmental help desk for further assistance at: <https://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.gu.se/>

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<sup>11</sup> IPCC, 2018, Global warming of 1.5 degrees, Summary for Policy makers, p.12

<sup>12</sup> OECD, 2018, States of fragility 2018, OECD Publishing, Paris, p.59