

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) launches Local and Regional Policy-Makers Report

BONN, 9 September 2010 – Factoring the planet’s multi-trillion-dollar ecosystem services into policy-making can help save cities and regional authorities money while boosting the local economy, enhancing quality of life, securing livelihoods and generating employment.

This is the finding from a major international study, launched in a report on “TEEB for Local and Regional Policy-Makers”, being released in India, Brazil, Belgium, Japan and South Africa today. A number of local authorities from around the world are already seeing the value of an ecosystems approach to planning. Examples include:

- The replacement value of the South African municipality of Durban’s ecosystem goods and services supplied by Durban’s 2002 Open Space system was conservatively estimated at \$0.41 billion per annum. This figure does not include the tourism sector which is valued at an additional \$0.44 billion per annum. The Municipality is now investigating how to value municipal-owned spaces and include them on its asset register in order to make better provision for ongoing management (Source: Richard Boon1).
- Hiware Bazaar has become home to more than 50 millionaires (in rupees) and boasts one of the highest average rural incomes in India. In the 1970s, problems from low rainfall were exacerbated by increased run-off due to deforestation and vegetation loss leading to acute water shortages. Village elders and leaders realised that better management of water and forests was needed. With additional resources, and good coordination between government departments, the village members regenerated 70 ha of degraded forests, the number of active wells doubled, grass production went up and income from agriculture increased. In less than a decade, poverty reduced by 73% and there was an overall increase in the quality of life with people returning to the village (Adapted from ‘Sakhuja 2010’2).
- Local authorities in Canberra, Australia have enhanced urban quality of life by planting 400,000 trees. Besides making the city greener, the trees are expected to regulate the microclimate, reduce pollution and thereby improve urban air quality, reduce energy costs for air conditioning as well as store and sequester carbon. Combined, these benefits are expected to amount to the equivalent of \$20–67 million for the period 2008–2012 in terms of the value generated or savings incurred to the city (Source: Brack 20023).

The new report, entitled “TEEB for Local and Regional Policy-Makers”, prepared by The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiative hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), calls on local policy-makers to understand the value of their natural capital and the services it provides and apply a focus on nature’s benefits in local policy areas such as urban management, spatial planning and protected areas management.

The report aims to provide an inspiring starting point for thinking local policy in a new way. Highlighting practicality, the report calls for local authorities to take a stepwise approach to assessing options that factor nature’s benefits into local policy action. This approach includes:

assessing ecosystem services and expected changes in their availability and distribution; identifying which ecosystem services are most relevant to particular policy issues; assessing impacts of policy options on different groups in the community.

The report highlights cities' dependence on nature and illustrates how ecosystem services can provide cost-effective solutions to municipal services. It shows how, in rural development and natural resource management, ecosystems services with high market value are often promoted to the detriment of the regulating services that are equally important but less obvious. It investigates planning frameworks and environmental impact assessments that can proactively include a strong focus on ecosystem services and identify the economic potential of this shift in approach.

Enhancing local benefits from conservation, protected areas are studied and the report also offers guidance on incentives that reward good stewardship of local natural capital such as locally adapted payment schemes for ecosystem services, certification and labelling schemes.

Speaking on the eve of the report launch, Pavan Sukhdev, TEEB's Study Leader, said: "All economic activity and most of human well-being whether in an urban or non-urban setting is based on a healthy, functioning environment. Nature's multiple and complex values have direct economic impacts on human well-being and public spending at a local and well as national level.

"By focusing on the various benefits from nature we can see the direct and indirect ways that we depend on the natural environment and this insight can substantially support local policy and public management.

"We urge local authorities to read this report and recognize the benefits provided by nature and the economic dimension of their local natural capital."

The report comes in advance of the 10th Conference of Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD COP10) meeting in Nagoya, Japan, this October. Nagoya has also seen the benefit of linking public policy with conservation issues. In order to save the Fujimae Tidal Flat, a vital migratory bird stopover site, from being converted to a landfill site to meet the city's waste management needs, the City of Nagoya initiated a major waste reduction and recycling programme.

This programme started in 1998 and involved extensive community education about correct recycling. The efforts paid off and Nagoya met its target of a 20 per cent decrease in waste within two years and won national awards for environmental practice. In the last 10 years the volume of sorted waste has tripled, the volume of processed waste is down 30 per cent and the volume of landfill has been reduced by 60 per cent. Since 2002 the Fujimae Tidal Flat has been listed on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance (Environmental Affairs Bureau, City of Nagoya).

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, commented: "Sizing the problem of ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss in economic terms was the

main focus for TEEB's report to CBD COP-9. Now, as we head towards COP-10, I am pleased to see that TEEB's focus is on solutions that are both workable and economically successful.

“State and provincial governments, local authorities, city and county councils—the audience for today's new report-- can all make a huge contribution to overall efforts towards a transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient Green Economy. This is because some 70 per cent of humanity's ecological footprint is now linked with the way resources are consumed in cities. Some local governments are already rising to the challenge as the wide range of case studies and solutions spotlighted show-- from land-use planning which incorporates ecosystem service values, to new legislation and payments for ecosystem services. Many more now need to come onboard.”

The “TEEB for Local and Regional Policy-Makers” report also underlines three key issues beyond the appraisal of ecosystem services that need attention if natural capital will work for local development:

1. Ensure the fair distribution of rights to nature's benefits. Policy changes often affect service distribution or access – and this must be considered during decision making.
2. Maximize use of available scientific and experience based knowledge as this will help provide a common language to capture diverse views.
3. Engage stakeholders throughout the process to prioritize and develop feasible and effective local policy action.

TEEB has collaborated with the European Environment Agency's online Environmental Atlas to present a series of case studies from around the world that highlight efforts being made to incorporate ecosystems and biodiversity into local policy initiatives. The case studies can be accessed via a link on www.teebweb.org.

Over 140 experts from science, economics and policy from more than 40 countries across the globe have been involved in the research, analysis and writing of the “TEEB for Local and Regional Policy-Makers” report, which has been coordinated by Heidi Wittmer of the UFZ Helmholtz Research Centre and Haripriya Gundimeda of the Indian Institute of Technology.

TEEB is an independent study, led by Pavan Sukhdev, hosted by UNEP with financial support from the European Commission, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Mr. Sukhdev also spearheads UNEP's Green Economy Initiative.

The “TEEB for Local and Regional Policy-Makers” report is one of a series of five interconnected reports. These include the “Report on Ecological and Economic Foundations”, “TEEB for Policy-Makers” and “TEEB for Business”. A TEEB for citizens website goes live in the lead up to Nagoya and the final TEEB synthesis report will be released at the CBD COP10 meeting at Nagoya in October 2010.

Further information is at www.teebweb.org.

For further information, please contact:

Georgina Langdale, UNEP-TEEB, Tel: +49-228-815-0572, Mobile: +49-1707-617-138,
Email: georgina.langdale@unep-teeb.org

Nick Nuttall, Spokesperson/Head of Media UNEP, Tel: +254-733-632755, or when travelling
+41-79-596-5737, Email: nick.nuttall@unep.org

Notes:

1. Richard Boon [boonr@durban.gov.za], Manager: Biodiversity Planning, Environment Management Department, Development Planning and Management Unit, eThekweni Municipality
2. Sakhuja, N. 2008, 'Hiware Bazaar- A village with 54 millionaires', Down to Earth vol: 16 no: 20080131.
3. Brack, CL. 'Pollution mitigation and carbon sequestration by an urban forest' Environmental Pollution 116 (2002) S195–S200