



DESA photo

DESA promotes sustainable development through a multi-dimensional and integrated approach to economic, social, environmental, population and gender related aspects of development.

### ROLE OF DESA IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In particular, DESA:

- Supports the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development to ensure effective follow-up of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) through multi-year work programmes and to monitor and report on implementation of the UNCED, especially Agenda 21, and subsequent agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels.
- Formulates, implements and executes multidisciplinary technical cooperation programmes and projects dealing with key aspects of sustainable development.
- Undertakes policy analysis and provides targeted advisory services in support of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the request of individual governments.

### THE DEPARTMENT IN ACTION – TECHNICAL COOPERATION HIGHLIGHTS

#### Energy-related capacity building

DESA's activities include:

- Projects on innovative approaches to commercialization, financing, as well as advice and demonstration of the feasibility of using new and renewable sources of energy in rural areas.
- Training in different aspects of energy development.
- Technical assistance on rationalizing energy end-use, promoting demand-side management and other efficiency measures as well as environmental protection in the production and use of energy.



Dr. Binodchandra Pathak of Jaijikh International Social Service Organization discusses sanitation methods with villagers.  
Photo: Rakesh Sahai

#### Passive Solar Housing for Somalia

As part of the post-conflict reconstruction effort in Somalia, DESA launched a project in January 2001 to transfer the techniques of brick and tile production and dome and vault roof construction to northern Somalia. This project will bring the cost of housing within the reach of returning refugees, internally displaced persons and the urban poor. By providing a passive solar energy alternative to the existing corrugated metal roofing that becomes excessively hot in the sun, living in the dwellings will be more comfortable. Very little wood is used in the housing construction, thus reducing stress on the region's meager vegetation.

#### Solar Energy for Health Centres in Marshall Islands

DESA is currently engaged with the Government of the Marshall Islands in a project to provide solar photovoltaic power units for designated health centres in the Marshall Islands. This is an example of using a suitable form of renewable energy instead of relying on diesel fuel.

#### Water Resources Management and Development

DESA provides technical support services to countries requiring assistance in the evaluation, exploration, development, management and efficient use of water resources. Currently the programme covers assistance to Niger, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Togo, Central African Republic, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Morocco, Yemen, Syrian Arab Republic, Pakistan, Haiti and the nine countries of the Niger River Basin. Some of these services include:

- Support to Governments to develop and implement their own policy, strategies and legislation towards Integrated Water Development and Management.
- Sustainable development and management of local services for water supply, sanitation or irrigation and water infrastructure maintenance, as well as water quality protection, sanitation master plans and liquid waste management.
- Economic and financial analysis of the water sector and water demand management to ensure better use of available water and existing installations, and to increase water-supply efficiency.
- Support to countries and their regional river basin organizations for the management of shared water resources.

#### Institutional capacity building

- DESA provides technical assistance to the Governments of Argentina, Nicaragua, Slovak Republic and Vietnam in the development of planning tools and methodologies for the design and implementation of National Cleaner Technology Strategies. Other projects are being evaluated for Tanzania, Uganda and Uruguay.
- In a related field, DESA is assisting developing countries, as well as countries with economies in transition, in capacity building and training for financial institutions in the areas of corporate sustainability strategies, improved investment analysis and evaluation tools.

• In the context of governance and electoral administration capacity building, DESA's technical cooperation projects include:

- helping to establish a participatory, African-oriented training programme for African civilian personnel on peacekeeping and humanitarian missions;
- assisting the Government of South Africa's local government transformation process by enhancing capacity for financial viability and management, integrated development planning, local economic development, and project management, and building a culture of collective civic responsibility;
- providing the Chinese Government with technical and substantive support for good governance policy development to support efficient use and conservation of the environment and natural resources, conflict prevention and sustainable human development.



Participants from Angola Central Bank learn new computer skills

## GENDER PERSPECTIVES RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 2001 and 2002, DESA implemented a pioneering initiative to clarify the gender perspectives of environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters. Among the activities was an "on-line" forum, created for sharing lessons learned and raising awareness of the differential impact of natural disasters on women and men.

Often the skills, capabilities, and resourcefulness of women are ignored in the organized institutional set-up of disaster response, since women are put under the category of 'helpless victims'.

It has been found that women farmers (particularly those who are not the head of the household) prefer seasonal climate forecast information to be made available through the extension officer or school, rather than the radio (preferred by male interviewees). The farmers state that in attempting to balance farming, child care and other domestic responsibilities, they are less able to schedule a fixed time to listen to the radio.

## SUPPORT FOR SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)

SIDSnet, hosted by DESA since mid-2000, is a web-based network that offers a variety of Internet tools. It is a medium for communications for SIDS stakeholders to follow up on the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action, promote the sharing of SIDS experiences and the development of the global SIDS agenda, and also as a means for building partnerships among SIDS, using information and communications technologies. SIDS experiences and best practices on various issues are captured on the website ([www.sidsnet.org/](http://www.sidsnet.org/)). A sample of success stories includes: advisory services for the development of national maritime legislation; a Coastal Zone Management Programme; renewable energy project for rangers in the Marine Park Authority; and creation of the Micronesian Entrepreneur Development Centre.

## POLICY ANALYSIS AND ADVISORY SERVICES

### Research Network for Development Policy Analysis

DESA and the University of Pretoria, South Africa are working together to enhance capacity for research and policy analysis in fifteen African countries: Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Senegal, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Since October 2000, the project has achieved the following:

- Improved econometric and policy analysis capacity, and information technology skills for 18 participants (majority from Central Banks and Ministries of Finance) from the participating African countries.
- Creation of a Regional Network of econometric modelers of international standards.
- Development of guidelines for improving statistical data collection.

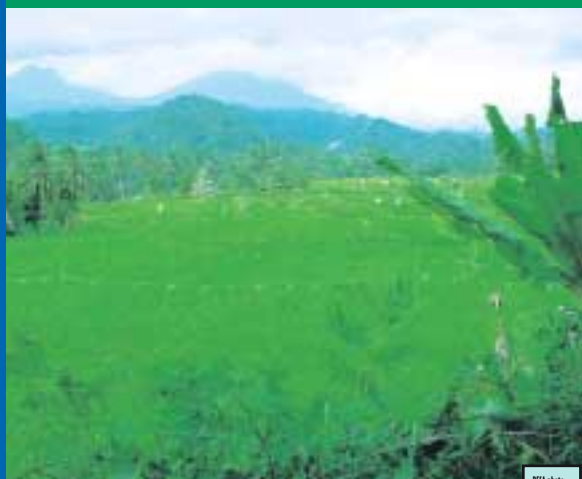
Upon completion in November 2002, the project will have created a platform for the establishment of long-term partnerships and collaboration between institutions, countries and multi-lateral organizations.

### System of integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA)

DESA is one of the principal players in the development of a system to measure sustainable development. The SEEA aims to systematically measure the interaction between the economy and the environment, and provide policy-makers with indicators and descriptive statistics to monitor these interactions, as well as a database for strategic planning and policy analysis to identify more sustainable paths of development. The system has recently been revised and will be jointly published later in 2002.

## POPULATION, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Concerns about the adverse consequences of environmental change have brought renewed attention to the complex interrelationships between population, environment and development. In response, DESA has issued the first-ever wall chart on population, environment and development — a companion piece to *World Population Monitoring 2001* — the special theme of which is population, environment and development. The wall chart features new demographic data and presents the most up-to-date key environmental and development indicators from the United Nations and outside sources.



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## STRATEGIES AND INFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### National Sustainable Development Strategies

At the heart of operationalizing sustainable development is the challenge of evaluating and managing the complex interrelationships between economic, social and environmental objectives. Agenda 21 promotes National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs) as mechanisms for translating a country's goals and aspirations for sustainable development into concrete policies and actions.

- With technical assistance from DESA, Sudan, for example, has initiated a process to develop a national sustainable development strategy – the draft is expected by the end of 2002.

### National Reports on Implementing Agenda 21

Since 1993, Governments have been preparing national reports for submission to the Commission on Sustainable Development on activities they undertake to implement Agenda 21. DESA analyzes, processes and publishes this national information in various forms which can be accessed on the DESA website at [www.un.org/esa](http://www.un.org/esa), or through the following products:

- National Implementation of Agenda 21: A Summary, as well as the full report on the website;
- CD-ROM with 140 Country Profiles on the national status of the implementation of Agenda 21;
- Country Experiences with National Reporting to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

### Information for Decision-making

DESA assists countries to improve information for decision-making in the context of sustainable development. As an example, DESA supported a regional consultative meeting in 2001 on indicators of sustainable development, organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, attended by Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Honduras, Costa Rica and Argentina. One of the outcomes was an agreement to create a regional network to promote the development and implementation of sustainability indicators in support of national decision-making.

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