

Environment & POVERTY Times

A periodic publication by UNEP/GRID-Arendal

EDITORIAL

The links between the environment and poverty are complex and often invite misunderstanding. Catchy titles such as "Poverty is pollution" and "Healthy environment, prosperous people" are misleading: they generalize the intricate interrelationships between poverty and resource mismanagement and fail to say that environmental degradation is an inevitable consequence of economic growth, that it is driven by predominantly commercial interests and is a major cause of poverty.

The Environment & Poverty Times aims to explain the complex links between poverty and the environment. It shows, through short texts, maps and other illustrations, some of the manifestations of poverty and environmental conditions. It explains how environmental degradation contributes to poverty and how poor people are trapped in such a cycle. And it provides references to key publications and initiatives on sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

This first issue of the Environment and Poverty Times may cover too many issues and seem "gloomy". This is because of the complexity of the issue,

and because the world *does* continue to sink deeper into environmental and poverty decline. While the overall trends are dismal, there are clear opportunities for achieving much greater progress at all levels of action and several "success stories" to point to.

We expect future periodic issues of the Environment and Poverty Times to focus on approaches being used to tackle environment and poverty issues and on initiatives that are successfully dealing with reducing poverty and improving the environment.

We hope that the Environment & Poverty Times will increase understanding of the links between poverty and the environment, stimulate debate and provide a basis for action. This issue is intended to provide impetus for negotiations during the WSSD (World Summit on Sustainable Development) and help set priorities for subsequent initiatives to reduce economic and environmental pressures.

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New momentum

The Norwegian Government hopes that the WSSD in Johannesburg will give new momentum to efforts to bring about sustainable development. The Summit is to chart a course for sustainable development in the next ten to twenty years. Norway is seeking to ensure that the Summit adopts an effective action plan for a global effort in which the fight against poverty is one of the main tasks.

We want the plan to translate into action after the Summit. The implementation of *Agenda 21* and the *Millennium Development Goals* must be central elements of the plan.

Creating a better world is not just a matter of fighting poverty or protecting the environment. Rather, environmental problems are themselves an important underlying cause of poverty. Millions of people live in areas that are in ecological crisis. Poverty and environmental problems are two sides of the same coin. This is why Norway has focused on areas where an integrated approach is used to deal with both problems.

We have given particular priority to health, especially improvements in environmental health, and to natural resource management, especially fresh water and energy issues. This is in accordance with the key areas where UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said that he would like to see results in Johannesburg. He suggested a simple acronym: WEHAB, meaning water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity.

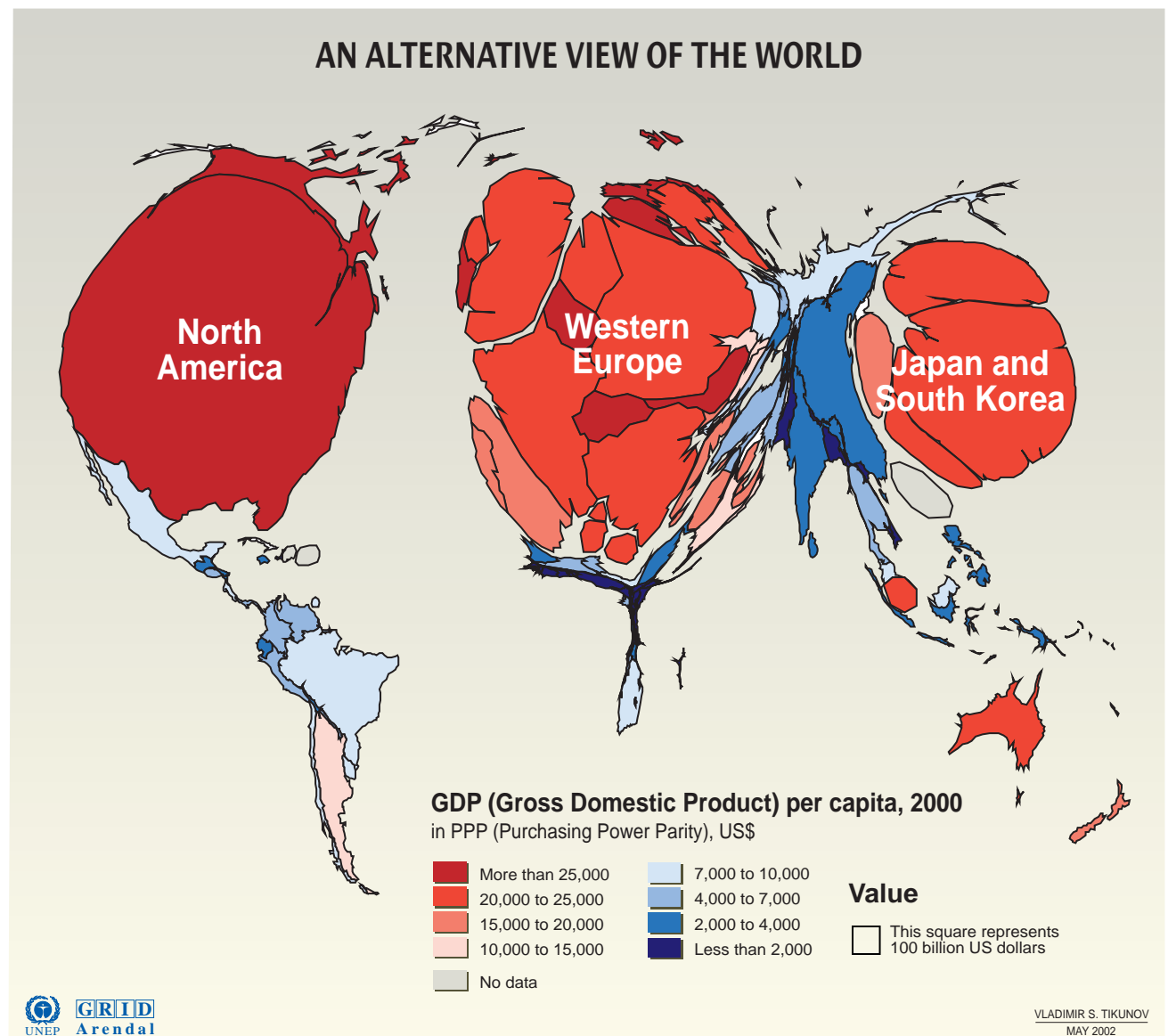
The role of the UN in efforts to bring about sustainable development must also be strengthened. If we can agree to give the UN a mandate to monitor and update the entire field of sustainability, we will be able to achieve a great deal.

At the Summit, new initiatives and partnerships will be launched to help implement the action plans. We will

actively support new initiatives in priority areas - initiatives that can make a difference to the poor people of the world and to the environment.

The Summit must find ways to improve people's living conditions and also protect the environment. We can make Johannesburg a turning point, provided that we achieve clear commitments to change and start new initiatives that will ensure that these changes take place. We must hold on to the hope of a decent life for future generations.

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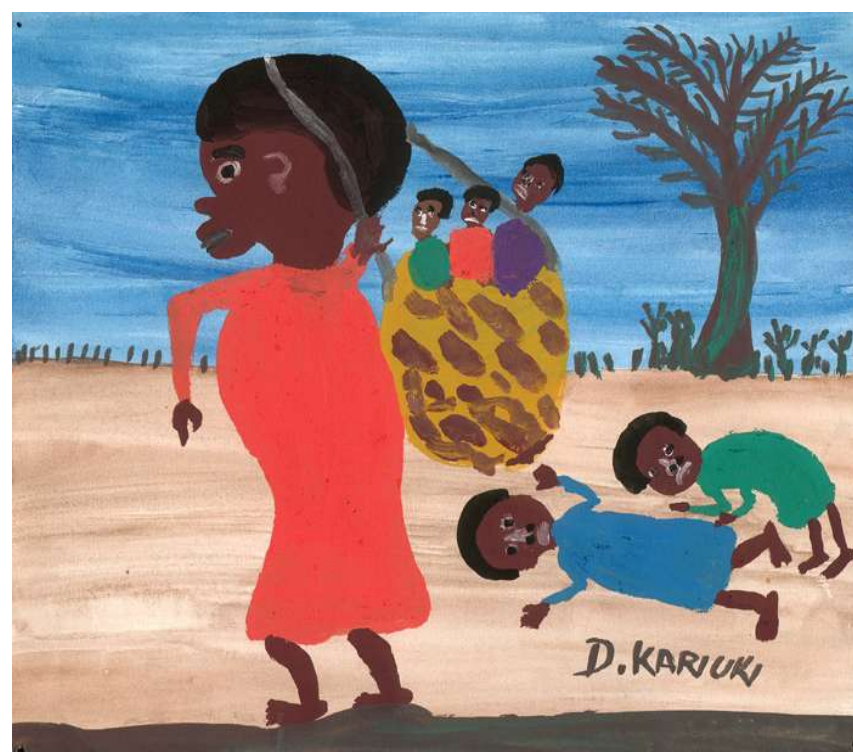
The key links

The environment is particularly important to poor people. They rely on it for subsistence and employment and suffer disproportionately from disease and premature death if it is degraded. They are more vulnerable to natural disasters and are often driven from good land to marginal areas.

The links between the environment and poverty are complex. They are affected by a variety of factors: global to local institutional arrangements, policies, markets, gender relations, property rights, access to technology and

information (1). The wealthy are only 20 percent of the world's population but they consume 70 to 80 percent of its resources: most institutional arrangements accommodate the wealthy at the expense of the poor (2). For example, Subsidies that favor upper and middle income consumers are particularly damaging to poor people since they overexploit important natural resources and degrade land that the poor depend on. This degradation can in turn cause malnourishment (low agricultural yields), displacement (ecological and economic migration) and inadequate education (children may leave school to help support their families).

(continued on page 6)



DANIEL KARIUKI - "Taking people the way they are" (1992)

HIGHLIGHTS

PAGE 2 and 3

Expressions of poverty

- Quotes by the poor
- Photos by children of Nairobi slums
- Human development indicators

PAGE 4 and 5

Assessing the environment

- Stockholm to Johannesburg
- Global environmental indicators

PAGE 6 and 7

How environment means Poverty

- The key links
- Eco-refugees

PAGE 8 and 9

Degraded environment, fewer choices

- "Water is life and we have none"
- Thinking green
- The disappearing Aral Sea

PAGE 10 and 11

Pollution means bad health

- "When the water is brown, we call it tea"
- Hazardous wastes in Albania
- When the indoor air is bad

PAGE 12 and 13

Natural disasters, insecurity

- "At the whim of nature"
- Niger: hunger warning
- Hurricane Mitch

PAGE 14 and 15

Restricted land, disempowerment

- "Poverty is because of land"
- India's villages need proper power
- Women's rights

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- The use of poverty maps
- Poverty in Johannesburg
- Daniel Kariuki