7 Environmental Concern in Bilateral Development Assistance

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The concept *environmental concern*¹ was first introduced to development assistance in Norway in 1979, when the Government decided to establish routine coordination meetings between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Ministry of the Environment (MoE), and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Two years later, a government directive on environmental concern was issued. Both the MoFA and MoE stressed the need for increased environmental activity with reference to environmental degradation and poverty in developing countries. Since then, environmental concerns have been repeatedly stated in major Norwegian political documents concerning development assistance. The Government has outlined goals and means of implementation, while NORAD has been responsible for putting it into practice.

There is no objective definition of the concept environmental concern, but it contains different aspects of the Norwegian Government’s intentions to include nature conservation, environmentally sound natural resource management, and environmental protection measures in development cooperation policy.²

This chapter seeks to evaluate the consistency between political goals or intentions and environmental concern in practice. Initially, we will outline how the Norwegian Government has understood environmental concern by taking an historical perspective. Then we will briefly describe how environmental concern in development assistance has been treated in the relevant chapters of Agenda 21. Thirdly, we will turn to a discussion of what the Norwegian Government has said in major documents about how to follow up the international call for environmental concern in development assistance. Finally, we will make an evaluation of the environmental practice in NORAD.

NORAD’s environmental development assistance is aimed at direct support of the environment and environmentally oriented projects. In addition, NORAD has been instructed by the Government to integrate environmental concern in all projects and programmes. This evaluation concentrates on environmental projects. The evaluation analysis is carried out according to a simple evaluation strategy: intention – implementation – reality (Baklien 1993: 270; Lafferty and Langhelle 1997: 52).

The Idea of Environmental Concern

A decisive step towards environmental concern in development assistance in Norway was taken when the MoFA, MoE, and NORAD decided to make a study on development assistance and environmental concern. A report was prepared by forester Arne Dalfelt (NORAD) and biologist Magnar Norderhaug (MoE) in 1980. It was entitled:
Development Aid and Ecology: a Statement on Environmental Concern in Norwegian Assistance. Their understanding of the link between environment and development was rooted in the international scientific view of a world facing an ecological crisis. One reason for this approach was that scientists claimed that nature in developing countries suffered because donors had introduced modern technology that had changed ecosystems to such an extent that the natural system could break down. In the Development Aid and Ecology Report, the concept of ecology was given prominence over the concept of environment. According to the two Norwegian scientists “the science of ecology will become the most important science for explaining why damage to resources and nature occurs and how it can be prevented” (NORAD/MoE 1980).

With ecology as the guiding star, Dalfelt and Norderhaug suggested that environmental concern should be shown by introducing environmental assessment, documenting the effects on ecosystems caused by development projects, the development of follow-up methods and long-term evaluation of projects, and the establishment of an expert department in NORAD.

The Development Aid and Ecology Report provided impetus to Government action regarding environmental concern. The Brundtland Government suggested that Norway should not participate in development assistance projects that could harm the recipient country’s environment. “In the future, Norway should not participate in projects which could cause comprehensive or long-lasting damage to the environment and natural resources of developing countries” (The New York Times 1981). This initiative gained international attention. In the United States, the idea of environmental concern was interpreted by the New York Times as a tightening of the rules (ibid.).

The idea of environmental concern was confirmed in 1984 by the Willoch Government. In White Paper 36 (1984-85), Some Major Questions in Norwegian Development Assistance, environmental concern was presented as the need for conservation of natural resources and environmental protection in developing countries (MoDA 1984). The Government was undoubtedly strongly influenced by what the North had learnt from the drought-affected areas in Africa. The ecological crisis was no longer a political or scientific notion that governed policy-making, it had been given a face by hungry and dying children in Ethiopia, Sudan, and other hard hit countries.

The White Paper presented by the Willoch Government was soon replaced by a supplementary White Paper, presented by the second Brundtland Government. White Paper 34 was strongly influenced by the ongoing work of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). Environmental concerns were now understood to be part of the process of achieving sustainable development in the developing countries, as recommended by the WECD (MoDA 1986: 72). According to the WECD, sustainable development rests on three pillars: environmental, social and economic. This understanding also guides the way in which environmental concern is used in this article. The Norwegian Government has made the environment a priority area in order to assist partner countries achieve sustainable development.

Agenda 21

The UNCED process entailed a new focus on the role of development assistance in the way that developing countries should participate in solving environmental
problems. They should now become active partners rather than be passive recipients. Again, the interrelation between environment and poverty was emphasized, as it had been by the WCED. The UNCED process focussed strongly on the necessity for an integrated approach to environmental and developmental problems, which meant that the guidelines in all the 40 chapters of Agenda 21 are relevant to development assistance policy (MoFA 1993). We will limit this analysis to four chapters of Agenda 21: Chapters 2, 3, 34, and 37. This is in accordance with the governmental approach to environment and development, which we find in major documents on North-South relations and development cooperation (ibid.). Environmental priorities for the 1990s were: to increase competence in national planning, institutional cooperation, assistance to environmentally sound natural resource management, and transfer of sound environmental technology (MoFA 1992b: 163-165; MoFA 1995: 31-34).

In Chapter 2, *International Cooperation to Accelerate Sustainable Development in Developing Countries*, environment and development are identified as two sides of the same coin. A new global partnership should commit the North and South to engage in dialogue over how to make trade and the environment mutually supportive. It was emphasised that an open, multilateral trading system, supported by the adoption of sound environmental policies, would have a positive impact on the environment and contribute to sustainable development. Chapter 2 lists a wide range of activities that serve as propositions for how international cooperation could make trade and the environment mutually supportive. One core idea affecting North-South relations was to ensure that environmental regulations did not constitute a means of arbitrary trade discrimination.

Chapter 3, *Combating Poverty*, suggests how to enable the poor to achieve sustainable development. This chapter follows the conclusion from the WCED that poverty and the environment are inseparable (WCED 1987: 10). To tackle the problems of poverty, development, and environment, one should simultaneously focus on resources, production, and people. The donor countries should assist in promoting both environmentally sound resource management and economic growth.

In Chapter 34, *Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technology, Cooperation and Capacity-building*, the focus is on environmental protection. Transfer of environmentally sound technologies should aim to reduce pollution, increase recycling, and improve waste management. Chapter 34 is strongly linked to Chapter 37, *National Mechanisms and International Cooperation for Capacity-building in Developing Countries*. This Chapter deals with how to increase competence in developing countries. The donor should assist in making developing countries able to implement Agenda 21. This means, for instance, helping them identify environmental needs, by providing institutional support and increase capacity building. Core activities would be to evaluate the capacity and capability for the integrated management of environment and development, including technical, technological, and institutional capacities and capabilities, and facilities to assess the environmental impact on development projects.

**Norwegian Follow-up: The Government’s Intentions**

With the UNCED process as a backdrop, the first half of the 1990s saw a flurry of official documents concerning North-South relations. In Norway two fundamental white papers on these issues were launched in 1992: *On Major Trends in North-South
Relations and Norwegian Development Cooperation (MoFA 1992b) and On the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (MoE 1992). They provide information regarding the Government’s own expression of intent and will be discussed in relation to the external criteria laid down in Chapters 2, 3, 34, and 37 of Agenda 21.

With Chapter 2 as a starting point, the Government did not formulate any intentions regarding how to make trade and the environment mutually supportive in bilateral assistance. This issue became part of the Government’s work on the development of multilateral regulations within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and, later, the World Trade Organization (WTO). Norway, together with the other Nordic countries, was a member of a working group on environment and international trade within GATT.

The aim of reducing poverty, in Chapter 3 of Agenda 21, was in accordance with the overall goal of Norwegian development assistance policy. In both White Papers 51 (MoFA 1992b) and 13 (MoE 1993), the Government highlighted the necessity to use financial means to follow up the UNCED process and Agenda 21. The Government intended to continue giving financial support through the Special Grant for the Environment and Development, but stressed that environmental measures should also be funded from other financial resources. The grant was established in 1984 and proved to have positive effects on both the environment and poverty reduction, particularly in the drought-affected countries in the Sudan-Sahel-Ethiopia belt in Africa.

Transfer of sound environmental technology, Chapter 34 of Agenda 21, was understood by the Norwegian Government to be an important aspect of showing environmental concern in bilateral development assistance. The need for environmentally sound technologies was listed as a priority area. White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b), gave some indications regarding how to follow up of the UNCED process on this matter. The Government intended to increase support to research on environmentally sound production methods, to strengthen institutional cooperation within environment and technology, to increase support to new, renewable, sources of energy, and to introduce environmental assessments in all hydro electric power projects.

Chapter 37 of Agenda 21 was briefly discussed in White Paper 13 (MoE 1992). Capacity building was, on the other hand, presented as a governmental priority area in White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b). With reference to the weak environmental capacity in developing countries, the Government intended to support the building of environmental institutions, to continue the creation of national resource management strategies, support environmental law, and increase capacity within the field of environmental monitoring.

Implementation Measures

Although White Paper 13 (MoE 1992) is a direct statement of the Government’s intent for follow-up of Agenda 21, it is White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b) that serves as the core reference in our evaluation of environmental concern in development assistance. It was published a short time prior to the Rio Conference and contains a range of essential follow-up measures:
Preparation of a coherent strategy for the operationalisation of environmental concern in bilateral assistance

Statements regarding how activities should contribute to sustainable development in country strategy programmes

Environmental plans to be made for each partner country

Brief environmental profiles for each partner country

Training in use of environmental assessment in Norway and partner countries

Cooperation with external expertise, both Norwegian and international, in the field of the environment

The Government of Norway appointed an expert commission to further analyse how to implement the major political goals and intentions in development assistance. The major results were presented in White Paper 19 (MoFA 1995). Environmental concern was to be concentrated on four major issues: (1) sustainable production systems and management of natural resources, (2) the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, (3) reduced pollution of soil, air, and water, and (4) preservation of cultural heritage and management of the cultural values of the natural environment. The Government also proposed one implementation measure in bilateral assistance: the establishment of a new programme for extended environmental cooperation, particularly in Asia and South Africa. “Some of the countries acknowledge that they need environmental assistance, and they also have the capacity to use the environmental competence and technology that are offered by Norway” (ibid.: 33). The countries in question suffered from severe pollution problems and problems related to natural resource management.

Most of the implementation measures suggested in White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b) are related to the evaluation of the differences between intentions and reality when studying the practical work carried out by NORAD. In this section, we will briefly describe and evaluate the Government’s implementation measures, which served as guidelines for NORAD after 1997.

White Paper 51 (ibid.) recommended that the Government develop a strategy for further work regarding environmental concern in development assistance. This was met by the MoFA with the preparation of *A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation* in 1997. The overall idea was to integrate environmental concern in all development assistance activities. Implementation measures were largely repeated from earlier documents dealing with environmental concern (listed above).

In general, the strategy did not provide any indications regarding how to fulfil the Government’s intentions, nor how to operationalise implementation measures. Another problem was that the strategy suffered from a lack of historical wisdom. There were no discussions regarding the achievements of previous strategies, and recommendations were produced without analysis of earlier experience or weaknesses. An evaluation made by Statskraft Engineering in 1998 stated: “the environmental strategy is not well known…It drowns in the number of other strategies” (Skjønsberg 2000: 21).

As an instrument of implementation, the strategy carried little authority. Only one year after the publication of the strategy, change of government took place and the new Minister of Foreign Affairs approved of a memorandum *On Political Priorities in Environmental Assistance 1998-2001* (NORAD 1998a). The Government’s conclusion was that the memorandum should serve as the guideline for environmental assistance in the future.
Practical consequences had to be discussed in cooperation between the MoFA and NORAD (Skjønsberg 2000: 23; NORAD 1998a).

The memorandum, On Political Priorities, listed four political guidelines: (1) Support to the institutional capacity within the environmental field in the recipient country and the creation of integrated environmental management, (2) research and competence building, (3) integration of environmental concern in all development projects, (4) thematic focus on the nature of environmental problems as a starting point, the recipients’ priorities, and Norway’s particular competence.

Priorities that should guide the implementation of environmental concern and which are relevant to the follow-up of Agenda 21, were the focus on poverty alleviation and clean production. In order to combat poverty, the Bondevik Government announced the stepping up of assistance in the field of environment and natural resource management. Assistance should be directed towards the rural poor and food security. Clean production and pollution reduction were pivotal in the global efforts to take care of common goods such as water, soil, and air. The Government wanted to concentrate on environmentally friendly energy management, effective use of energy, and renewable energy sources, such as bio and solar energy (NORAD 1998a).

NORAD and Environmental Concern in Practice

When the notion of environmental concern was first launched in 1979/80, NORAD admitted its lack of ecological awareness and competence. Bilateral assistance of an environmental character was limited. During the 1980s, environmental concern gradually became part of development assistance practice in NORAD. Environmental concern was further developed as a consequence of the work carried out by the WCED and the UNCED process, prior to the Rio Conference (Ibsen forthcoming, ch. 2 and 3).

In the following section, we will describe and evaluate a number of major elements in the practical work performed by NORAD. This work will be evaluated with reference to the internal criteria from White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b), which were confirmed in A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation (MoFA 1997), White Paper 19 (MoFA 1995), and the memorandum from the MoFA, On Political Priorities in Environmental Assistance 1998-2001 (NORAD 1998a).

Strategies for Bilateral Development Assistance

Environmental concern was established as part of a NORAD strategy in 1990, and presented as NORAD in the 1990s (NORAD 1990). Two years later, NORAD launched another strategy: Strategies for Bilateral Assistance – Part II (NORAD 1992b). This second part of the strategy was a direct follow-up of White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b). It is appropriate to ask: Why did NORAD present its own strategy? According to recommendations in White Paper 51 (ibid.), the Government had been asked to make one. Obviously, NORAD operated in a political vacuum, since the MoFA had not put forward an environmental strategy or any guidelines since White Paper 34 and the very
general White Paper 13 (ECON 1995: 55). In addition, in the early 1990s, NORAD was heavily criticised for not showing concern for the environment, and it was an urgent matter to make some visible manifestation of a will to make environmental concern a priority (Ibsen forthcoming, ch. 3).

The main objective of Strategies for Bilateral Assistance – Part II was well known from statements in major Government documents: “Environmental concern and sound natural resource management shall be integrated in all Norwegian development cooperation” (NORAD 1992b: 5). The strategies for bilateral assistance provided general guidelines for the integration of environmental concerns. The implementation measures were, however, of relevance to specific environment projects. These included: to ensure that environmental concern was taken into consideration in planned activities, to support environmental pilot projects, to support the development and transfer of environmentally friendly technology, to support the development of environmental institutions, and to support environment-related information activities. Furthermore, there was a strong emphasis on the introduction of environmental assessment.

In the absence of supervision from the MoFA, NORAD continued to discuss strategic work and prepared a number of draft documents to guide environmental activity. Such initiatives were not popular at the MoFA, and, in 1994, an agreement was made to rename NORAD’s strategies and call them “operational guidelines”. In future, the MoFA should be responsible for strategies (ECON 1995: 55). When the MoFA had completed A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation in 1997, NORAD presented an appendix, which aimed to operationalise the Government’s strategy. The guidelines did not contain any new elements compared with the governmental strategy. The appendix was replaced by a strategic document in 1999: NORAD Invests in the Future – NORAD Strategy towards 2005 (NORAD 1999b). This time, the controversy over terminology was obviously no longer an issue. Environmental concern was only mentioned in general terms, with the traditional focus being on environmental assessment, competence, and capacity building (NORAD 1999a: 21).

Of all the strategies mentioned, it is Strategies for Bilateral Assistance – Part II (NORAD 1992b) that gives the most concrete recommendations for how to develop environmental projects and environmentally oriented activities. A number of the implementation measures were put into practice during the 1990s.

**Environmental Assessment**

The first recommendation, to introduce a system for environmental assessment, can be found in the report on ecology and development produced in 1980. This recommendation was confirmed in White Paper 36 (MoDA 1984). NORAD was then instructed by the Government to introduce environmental assessment. The process of creating such a system started in NORAD in 1984. The first handbook was completed in 1988 and the last one in 1994. The system consists of a range of handbooks for assessing projects that may have environmental impact. The main objective is to recognize potential environmental consequences in an early phase of the project cycle.

The environmental assessment system consists of a three-step procedure: initial screening, rough analysis, and full environmental impact analyses. The screening follows a checklist of 13 different categories of projects, which might have severe environ-
mental impact. They are: agriculture, livestock keeping, forestry, fishery, aquaculture, hydropower construction, water supply/irrigation, transport, industry, mining, waste treatment, developing central areas, and use of chemical pesticides. If a project is not regarded as having environmental impact, NORAD approves of the project without further environmental assessment. A rough analysis, which is more detailed, follows if a project is regarded as having environmental impact. The rough analysis consists of 13 sector manuals, identical to the project categories. If the screening and rough analysis identify serious environmental impact, a full environmental impact analysis is carried out. This requires detailed investigation carried out by fieldwork, collection of new data, and, for instance, cost-benefit analysis. Hydropower has a separate system for environmental assessment. The process requires that environmental assessment should be applied routinely to all hydropower projects. The final decision as to whether a project should be implemented is left to the Government in the recipient country (ECON 1995: 61-63; Skjønsberg 2000: 44).

According to White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b: 166), the implementation of environmental concern was to be performed through training in the use of environmental assessment in Norway and the partner country. When the system was introduced, all NORAD officials attended a one-day course. When the NORAD Training Centre for Development Cooperation was established in 1992, it was given the responsibility for further training. The centre extended the training facilities by introducing economic and socio-cultural aspects into environmental assessment training, and the course was extended from one day to three. The course aimed at giving basic knowledge of environmental assessment methodology, concepts and definitions, and should enable NORAD officials to use the system in practice. In 1995, a two-day course was established in “Environmental Impact Assessment” as a substitute.

Two evaluations of the environmental assessment system have been carried out, the first one in 1995 (ECON 1995). The evaluation concluded that the three-day course was often cancelled. NORAD officials were generally overloaded with work and did not find time to participate. When introducing the two-day course, the target group was limited to managers and leaders in Oslo and local embassies. The evaluation carried out in 2000 revealed that NORAD staff found the environmental assessment system to be useful, the checklists in particular (Skjønsberg 2000: 44). The handbooks were well known, but were not used in practice. An evaluation of environmental concern in Tanzania from 1994-1998 revealed that only half of the 18 projects had been assessed (Valvatne 1998). There was a severe lack of evaluation systems and follow-up of results.

A study on environmental concern, using hydro-electrical projects as case studies, revealed a number of problems related to the use of environmental assessment. In the projects that have been studied, environmental assessment was used, but follow-up by executive officials occurred randomly and took place too late in the project cycle (Toppe 2001: 94-103).

**Competence Building**

When environmental concern was introduced to development assistance in the early 1980s, NORAD set out to increase internal competence through administrative and organisational measures. The first practical step taken was the setting up of a short
course to increase general knowledge regarding environmental problems and how development projects could have severe environmental effects. A more theoretical course was then given on problems related to different ecosystems and to sectors where Norway traditionally held high competence, such as forestry, agriculture, water, and energy.

In 1989, a decisive organisational change took place when NORAD was established as an agency outside the Ministry of Development Assistance (MoDA). In order to increase environmental awareness and competence, environmental advisors were recruited to the Advisory Group to the Director General on Women, Environmental Affairs, Democracy and Human Rights (KVIM) (NORAD 1989: 40-41). The Group reported directly to the Director General. The main objective of the Group was to stimulate an overall internal policy debate on environmental issues and natural resource management in developing countries. KVIM was an obvious innovative agent in NORAD, but its practical functioning suffered from organisational contradictions. KVIM did not have decision-making authority. The Advisory Group acquired the double role of being both advisor and watchdog, and the members of the Group were only asked upon request by the Director General. After five years, the advisory group was dissolved, and environmental expertise was concentrated in NORAD’s Technical Department (Ibsen forthcoming).

An evaluation of the Technical Department in 1995 revealed that no satisfactory organisational solution had been found for environmental issues. In order to increase NORAD’s environmental capacity, the Director General decided to establish an environmental unit for a period of three years. Capacity-building at home was necessary in order to increase the environmental capacity in the partner country.

Members of the unit were recruited from amongst the environmental expertise that already existed in NORAD, among experts working within the Norwegian environmental management sector, and from amongst other external consultants. They constituted an interdisciplinary group, with natural and social science background. By the time of the establishment of an environmental unit, environmental experts constituted 25 per cent of the technical staff (Skjønsberg 2000: 40).

The unit was established based on a project model. From an organisational point of view, this was regarded by the NORAD administration as having many advantages, by being limited in duration and without interrupting the ordinary lines in the organisation. However, when choosing this model, the experts were neither given responsibility nor any authority to control or follow-up the environmental work performed by NORAD officials at home or abroad. Another problem was the timeframe. Three years was not much compared to the environmental unit of the Swedish Agency for Development Assistance, which was given ten years to come up with institutional changes in favour of the environment.

The environmental unit was closed down in 1998. By that time, NORAD had made some adjustments in the direction of environmental assistance. The project had generated environmental projects and increased environmental awareness within NORAD (NORAD 1988). Ten environmental advisors had been recruited to the Technical Department, and there was apparently an increasing demand for their competence. On the other hand, the advisors were only used on request and had no responsibility vis-à-vis implementation procedures. The organising of environmental advisors on the fringe had been a tradition in NORAD since the establishment of KVIM in 1989 (Ibsen forthcoming ch. 3).
Institutional Capacity in the Partner Countries

According to White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b), environmental concern could not be shown in practice without increasing the institutional capacity of the partner country. As a means of implementation, White Paper 51 (ibid.: 166) recommended that environmental plans should be made for each country. They should contain a description of the environmental status and contain a policy in accordance with priorities set by the partner country’s own government.

In 1992, NORAD drew up guidelines for how to prepare Environmental Action Plans (EAP). According to NORAD, the EAP should “be prepared and formulated as detailed, concrete plans for the implementation of NORAD’s environmental strategy” (NORAD 1992a). EAP should be prepared for each partner country and region by NORAD’s’ Resident Representation and in collaboration with local authorities. Assistance from NORAD in Oslo could be provided on request (ibid.).

During the 1990s, the NORAD’s Resident Representations in some partner countries made attempts to develop EAP and environmental profiles in accordance with the political signals given in White Paper 51. The plans were generally broad and lacked focus on the state of the environment in the respective countries. One exception was Sri Lanka, and this plan, published in 1989, has been characterized as a pioneering work. The Sri Lanka plan has been the only plan that contains real policy guidance for how NORAD officials should show environmental concern (ECON 1995: 56).

Strengthening institutional capacity has also been directed towards the development of national conservation strategies in Asian and African countries, and NORAD has funded the establishment of environmental databases in Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (MoFA 1992a).

Environmental Programs

One important part of NORAD’s support for environmental projects has been the creation of specific environmental programmes. Such programmes directly relate to the Government’s intentions stated in White Paper 19 (MoFA 1995). Environmental programs were developed during the 1990s in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Uganda, Mozambique, South Africa, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Pakistan, China, Indonesia, and Nicaragua (NORAD 1999b: 27-28). The programs cover a wide range of practical measures, such as the development of geographical information systems, development of expertise on pollution and industrial emissions, the handling of dangerous chemicals, investigation into the effects of acid rain, and training centres in sustainable agriculture.

One extensive environmental programme that might serve as an illustrative example is the environmental programme in South Africa, established in February 1997. After three years, the programme was extended to 2004 (Ibsen forthcoming ch. 4).6

The programme was the result of an agreement between Norway and South Africa on bilateral development cooperation. The content of the programme was determined by South Africa’s own priorities. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) in South Africa addressed the promotion of conservation, development of natural resources, the protection of the environment, the promotion of responsible
tourism, and the promotion of accessible environmental and tourist information for sound planning and decision making (Ibsen forthcoming ch. 4).

With the South African priorities as references, the Norwegian Government announced seven relevant issues: climate change and energy, environmental coordination and management, cultural heritage and tourism, environmental rights and justice, biodiversity and water, pollution, and waste. Several Norwegian institutions are currently engaged in collaboration projects with South African authorities, amongst them some of the expert centres that will be discussed below.

It may be too early to evaluate the results of the environmental programme in South Africa, since several of the projects are still running. Results from one project exist and give some indications concerning how poverty reduction might be linked to environmentally oriented bilateral assistance (ibid.).

Following a visit made by the MoFA, the MoE, and NORAD in 1996, environmental assistance was immediately granted to three projects, amongst them the Working for Water Programme, to combat alien floral invasion and poverty. Invading species are a severe problem to water deprived South Africa, since they drink much more water than the indigenous species. South African authorities started to fight the invading species during the apartheid period, and the fight has been continued with great intensity since 1995. In brief, the South African Government has developed the Working for Water Programme to clear invading species and give the clearing assignment to the poorest people. The Working for Water Programme exists in most of South Africa, but is most strongly concentrated in the Western Cape, which is home to one of the world’s six floral kingdoms.

The Norwegian Government gave support to a local community, Elim, in the Western Cape for three years. Elim is a small and poor village located in an area extremely rich in rare and endemic species. Norway’s funding was aimed primarily at giving support to wages, running expenses, and cash flow, while smaller amounts were spent on herbicides, protective clothing, transport, and equipment.

A summary of the results from the Elim project shows that ecological restoration and social improvement have genuinely been achieved. Invading alien species have been removed from large areas, which has led to improvements in water supplies. Better supply of water is important for the future of small farm development and was also a priority for the alien plant-clearing project in Elim. Environmental awareness has clearly been strengthened. The social aspects were related to income for the poorest people and capacity building. Work training gave the people participating an official certificate to use when looking for future employment. A social gain resulting from the project was the increase in community spirit amongst the Elim community (NORAD 1999a).

Assistance to the Working for Water Programme in Elim might serve as an example of best practice and gives indications concerning various factors that facilitate an environmental project (Grimstad 2000). Firstly, the project was in accordance with South Africa’s priorities. Secondly, the Working for Water Programme was an efficiently organised national programme with strong supervision and management. The Board of the Programme had been appointed by representatives from a range of ministries and gained wide support from the Government. Efficient management facilitated institutional cooperation between Norwegian and South African ministries and agencies. One might say that institutional cooperation made South Africa more of an active partner than a passive recipient. Thirdly, the Working for Water Programme was aimed at both ecological restoration and social improvement. Thus, Norway’s assistance to Elim was
in accordance with NORAD’s overall goal of poverty reduction and the UNCED process that took an integrated approach to environmental and developmental problems.

Environmentally Sound Technology

In White Papers 51 (MoFA 1992b) and 13 (MoE 1992), the transfer of environmentally friendly technologies was prioritised by the Government. Of relevance to our evaluation of how NORAD should show environmental concern in practice are the signals given to NORAD by the MoFA. The Bondevik Government sent signals related to environmental assistance and environmentally sound technology to NÖRAD: “There will be more emphasis on the development and use of environmentally friendly energy” (MoFA 1998: 2). These signals were reinforced in the following years in the memorandum On Political Priorities in Environmental Assistance 1998-2001 (NORAD 1998a). The MoFA advised NORAD to concentrate on cleaner production strategies and to support new renewable energy sources such as solar and bio energy. This advice was followed up in the National Budgets of 1999 and 2000: “More priority shall be given to alternative energy,” and “Priority should be given to more holistic water management and environmentally friendly energy management. The work for cleaner production should be continued” (MoFA 1999: 3; 2000: 7).

The Stoltenberg Government continued this work and made energy a priority in development assistance policy. “We must place a stronger focus on energy, environment, and development” (MoFA 2001b). According to the Government, Norway should contribute to a dialogue on new renewable energy sources with partner countries. One way of doing this would be for NORAD to incorporate new renewable energy into existing environmental programmes with countries such as China and South Africa. In the National Budget for 2001, the Government advised NORAD to implement the specific recommendations given for environmental cooperation or programmes with China and South Africa, which included new renewable energy (MoFA 2001a).

During the Stoltenberg Government, the Minister of Development, Anne Kristin Sydnes, appointed a working group with representatives from the MoFA and NORAD, with a mandate to make a plan for how to increase assistance to energy activities and how to give new renewable energy sources higher priority. The work was part of an effort to raise Norway’s profile at the forthcoming Johannesburg Summit.

So, what is the status two months before the Johannesburg Summit? The level of direct investment in renewable energy is still low, but there has been a shift in the level of awareness. The principles of NORAD’s policy in the energy sector, which were outlined in 1994, stated that commercial energy should be generated from traditional sources, but that new renewable energy sources could be a potential basis for energy production if conditions were appropriate. The main constraints were lack of competence and capacity in Norway (NORAD 1994).

The principles from 1994 are no longer valid, and there is a greater awareness in NORAD regarding the need to pave the way for new renewable energy sources. The working group appointed by Sydnes claimed that new renewable energy sources would have a positive effect on development, since poor people on the periphery would get
access to energy. Production of energy locally would thus, hopefully, have positive economic consequences.

At project level, we find some evidence that NORAD has increased assistance to new renewable energy sources since 1999 (NORAD 2002). One illustrative case, which employs new renewable energy sources as a means to promote positive rural development, is found in the cooperation between NORAD and South Africa.

Dialogue on this issue began in 1999 between SolEnergy AS and NORAD. SolEnergy saw a potential market for solar energy amongst poor rural households and small enterprises in rural areas far from the electricity grid in South Africa and other countries in the southern part of Africa. From NORAD’s point of view, solar energy had proven to be a reliable energy source that took account of environmental as well as socio-economic concerns. Solar energy might provide enough electricity for light, refrigerator, and television. In addition, new renewable energy sources were a priority area in South Africa. The South African Government has developed a national strategy for electricity in which solar energy plays an important role. Solar energy will primarily be used in remote areas (MoE 2002).

The Norwegian energy company, Renewable Energy Corporation, of which SolEnergy is part, has received funding from Norwegian authorities in cooperation with the South African Government. NORAD is one partner in this cooperation. So far, SolEnergy has been granted a licence from the South African authorities to produce 50,000 solar cell panels for rural households (ibid.).

### Environmental Assistance Centres

In White Paper 51 (MoFA 1992b), and subsequently in White Paper 19 (MoFA 1995), the Government suggested that NORAD should initiate closer cooperation with external expertise. A reference group, with representatives from the MoFA/NORAD and the MoE, was appointed in 1998. NORAD already had some cooperation with external institutions and consultancies, but it happened in an _ad hoc_ manner, and NORAD needed more specific expert assistance.

The signal given to NORAD from the MoFA and the MoE was to pay more attention to environmental concern. This was crucial for two reasons. Firstly, and according to the UNCED process, one important part of development assistance would be to assist partner countries in implementing global environmental agreements and conventions. Secondly, more specific environmental expert assistance should contribute to full implementation of _A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation_ from 1997 (NORAD 1998a).

By 1999, NORAD had signed agreements with four environmental assistance centres, while two more were signed in 2000. External competence is provided from the centres covering fishery, agriculture, pollution, cultural heritage, and natural resource management (NORAD 2001). The centres cover a wide range of environmental assistance measures relating to priority areas of support that were outlined in _A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation_ (MoFA 1997). The first priority area is development of sustainable production systems, while the second is conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Two environmental assistance centres, the Centre for International Environment and Development Studies (NORAGRIC), at the
Agricultural University of Norway, and the Directorate for Nature Management, have high competence in both priority areas. The centres provide environmental assistance in terms of environmentally oriented projects or environmental programs in the areas of, for instance: integrated mountain, coastal zone, and wetland management, the management of wildlife, dryland management, food security, land tenure, forestry management, and environmental law. In addition, they assist in the implementation of global environmental conventions and agreements. The Institute of Marine Research and the Directorate of Fisheries aim to offer assistance in the same priority areas, but in relation to fisheries (MoFA 1997).

The third priority area is reduced pollution of soil, air, and water. This area lies under the Norwegian Pollution Control Authority. Environmental assistance can be given in terms of pollution control regulation, waste minimisation and recycling, and hazardous substances.

Since 1997, cultural heritage has been defined as part of Norwegian environmental assistance. The Directorate for Cultural Heritage provides environmental assistance in areas such as implementation and follow-up of commitments under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, management of cultural heritage, support of sustainable production and consumption systems, sustainable use and development of historical cities, and sustainable tourism.

**Conclusion**

When referring to the follow-up of the UNCED process in general, Norway has been described as “reluctantly carrying the torch” (Langhelle 2000). This is valid when reviewing both the Government’s sustainable development performance in general and when analysing environmental integration within the development cooperation sector (Skjønsberg 2000; Ibsen forthcoming). Our evaluation of environmental concern in bilateral assistance indicates that Norway has been less reluctant to introduce environmental projects.

Environmental concern in development cooperation was brought onto the political arena by the Social Democrats in 1979, when Gro Harlem Brundtland was Minister of the Environment. There was, however, consensus among the major political parties that environmental concern should be elaborated as part of development cooperation policy. During the 1980s, the Government’s intention to show environmental concern was confirmed in two white papers (MoDA 1984; MoDA 1986). From 1987, the Norwegian Government regarded environmental concern as being crucial to achieving sustainable development in the developing countries. Environmental concern included the protection of soil, action against deforestation and desertification, environmentally sound natural resource management, and management of genetic resources (MoDA 1986).

The UNCED process that followed from the WCED reaffirmed the importance of showing environmental concern in development cooperation, to which Norwegian development cooperation had attempted to contribute solutions for some years. The Government’s intentions and means of implementation were further elaborated in several white papers during the 1990s. They were directly related to the Earth Summit in Rio and Agenda 21. With Chapters 3, 34, and 37 in Agenda 21 as points of reference,
we have found that the Norwegian Government formulated a policy for development cooperation that was directed towards poverty reduction, competence and capacity-building, and institutional cooperation. Main guidelines for how to demonstrate environmental concern were presented in *A Strategy for the Environment in Development Cooperation* (MoFA 1997) and a memorandum *On Political Priorities in Environmental Assistance 1998-2001* (NORAD 1998a). Governmental intentions and means of implementation serve as guidelines for NORAD. To what extend has NORAD managed to follow up such directives and suggested means of implementation in practical work?

At the strategic level, there have obviously been a number of difficulties. The strategy produced by the MoFA in 1997 had little authority in NORAD. Apparently, it drowned in the number of other strategies and guidelines that were produced during the 1990s. Another reason might have been the struggle between NORAD and the MoFA over their specific roles in formulating environmental strategies.

At a more concrete level, we have found that NORAD has introduced different means to support environmentally oriented projects. Of relevance to us are the elaboration of a system for environmental assessment, the recruitment of environmental experts, the preparation of EAP, specific environmental programs, support for environmentally friendly technologies, and the agreements with six environmental assistance centres. All the initiatives reflect good intentions with regard to showing environmental concern.

In practice, the means show negative and positive signs. Specific studies of environmental assessment have revealed that the system is well known, but that assessment often starts too late in the project cycle. The introduction of environmental experts to the NORAD organisation has increased environmental awareness and the total environmental portfolio, but the advisors have little authority since they are only asked on request. One result is that the environment is still not part of the “spinal cord” of NORAD. The governmental signal to NORAD to support new renewable sources of energy has induced little progress. Traditionally, NORAD has supported Norwegian competence within the energy sector, which has been, and still is, hydropower. Regarding new renewable energy sources, there has, until recently, been a lack of competence in Norway. Another barrier has been the substantial expense related to the production of, for instance, solar and bio energy. In 2002, there are some indications of change, which are reflected in the increased focus on the export of solar energy to countries in southern Africa.

NORAD has established two concrete environmentally oriented initiatives that may serve as examples of best practice: environmental programs and the establishment of environmental assistance centres. They both aim at giving support to solving environmental problems related to natural resource management, biodiversity, pollution, and cultural heritage, which are the four core areas listed by the Norwegian Government as being the most important. By doing this, NORAD has taken a technocratic approach, favouring planning and management, which does not call for reform within the existing political system. Characteristic of both initiatives is a focus on solving environmental problems without challenging the quest for fundamental reshaping of decision-making. Changes in decision-making are, however, crucial to achieve the overall goal of Norwegian environmental assistance policy, which is the integration of the environment into all projects and programs.
Notes

1 The term “environmental concern” refers to the Norwegian “miljohensyn”.
2 Environmental concern was the concept used in an evaluation carried out by the Fridtjof Nansen Institute and ECON Centre for Economic Analysis (ECON 1995). The concept relates to measures aimed at environmental improvements within the field of nature conservation and environmental protection.
3 The expert commission presented an Official Norwegian Report (NOU) on the Norwegian South policy (Government of Norway 1995), which served as a basis for White Paper 19 (MoFA 1995).
4 Biodiversity and cultural heritage were also mentioned.
5 There was a shift of government in 1997 from Labour to a coalition of the Christian Democrats, the Centre Party and the Liberals.
6 The programme was established after a fact-finding mission with representatives from the MoFA, the MoE, and NORAD. The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage was appointed as lead agency to assist in the implementation.
7 There was a shift of government from Bondevik to Stoltenberg (Social Democrat) in March 2000.
8 The following paragraphs are based on an interview with Geir Hermansen, since the report from the working group on energy is not official (Hermansen 2002).

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