

Biodiversity in Austrian Development Co-operation

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1. Biodiversity as cross-cutting issue

Austrian Development Co-operation perceives biodiversity promotion and conservation in a cross-cutting perspective. Almost every measure in a development context is directly or indirectly affecting the natural resource base and hence biological diversity. Furthermore, the conservation of biological is closely related to questions of livelihood security, socio-cultural strength and political power of local societies in sensitive regions and ecosystems. And vice-versa, the sustainable management of biological diversity can be instrumental for better living conditions of populations in a local context.

As a consequence, Austrian Development Co-operation strategically focuses on interfaces and synergies between social development, poverty reduction and biodiversity.

2. Implementing biodiversity conservation

2.1. EIAs

Since 1996 all bilateral projects supported by the Austrian Development Co-operation are subject to environmental impact assessments, whereby not only the ecological dimension in its strict sense is considered. Given that sustainable ecological conditions are inseparably linked to social dynamics, the assessment procedures also review questions regarding gender equality, effects on local rules and regulations, social systems and cultural characteristics. Hence, biodiversity issues are raised on several occasions from various perspectives, whenever concrete influences on ecosystems and natural resources are discussed, and in relation to questions dealing with the social and cultural dimension of the programs and measures under assessment, e.g. in connection with effects on local or indigenous knowledge systems.

2.2. Bilateral programs

Austrian environment policies in development partnerships are primarily based on:

- the institutional support of the targeted population segments or local interest groups;
- the support of a careful and responsible, economically and socially sustainable natural resource use;
- the support of traditional know-how and knowledge systems, and adapted innovative technologies.

Participatory approaches, aspects of poverty alleviation as well as gender related questions form key categories within the guiding principles for all these spheres.

Concrete CBD-related activities are carried out mainly with regard to agro-ecosystems, forest ecosystems and highland/mountain ecosystems. Research and training as well as conservation and sustainable use are the predominant fields of co-operation.

2.3. Projects outside bilateral programs

Major support to CBD-goals was achieved through the Austrian National Initiative on Rainforests from 1993-1996. Within this initiative, more than 30 projects in the field of forest conservation, rehabilitation and sustainable management were funded. Although no comparable initiative is currently in operation, a small number of projects similar in terms of conceptual design and approach are continuously financed. Special attention is given to the consolidation of settlement boundaries and sustainable resource management in buffer-zone areas of natural reserves in Central America. Capacity development and institutional support to indigenous organisations and communities in the Amazon region of Brazil and Colombia form a second strategic focus.