

**PRESS NOTE
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The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) Local and Regional Policy Makers report launched at national workshop in New Delhi

New Delhi, 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 by TEEB for Local and Regional Policy Makers, being released in India, Brazil, Belgium, Japan and South Africa on September 9.

Various representatives from national governments, state bodies, municipalities, corporations, NGOs, biodiversity boards, environmental organisations, forest departments, academics etc from across India participated in the New Delhi launch. The event provided the platform for the launch of this significant report, and a workshop for local authorities from across the region to explore findings of the report within an Indian context. The event was organized by the TEEB Study, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Green India States Trust (GIST) and ICLEI South Asia.

Hon’ble Minister for environment, Shri Jairam Ramesh, addressed the event and emphasised the importance of an ecosystem approach for Indian regional and local authorities.

“In case of climate change India talks from the position of defense but in case of biodiversity we talk from the position of strength. India had enacted the national biodiversity act in 2002 and we are having good compliance of bio-safety and other measures in the act”.

“India is due to host the next CBD in 2012 and approximately 192 countries are expected to participate in that mega event for which we are well prepared”.

“TEEB is an important study and India needs to have a TEEB study of its own”.

A number of local authorities from around the world are already seeing the value of an ecosystems approach to planning. Examples from across India include:

- 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 2010'¹).

- The Biorights Program in East Kolkatta is an innovative financial mechanism that provides microcredits to local communities in return for active involvement in conservation and restoration of wetlands. The micro-credits are converted into definitive payments upon successful delivery of conservation services at the end of a contracting period. The global and local stakeholders pay local communities to provide ecosystem services (Adapted from 'Dey 2008'²).
- In the 1970s, agricultural land degradation led villagers in Sukhomajri to practice indiscriminate free-grazing, land-clearing and tree-felling – perpetuating a cycle of land degradation and poverty. These actions affected the water supply for communities downstream. In response, the Centre for Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute, supported by the Ford Foundation, constructed soil conservation structures to reduce lake siltation and capture rainwater. As these structures could benefit only landowners, an important element of the plan was to have better water sharing arrangements which could benefit all the villagers.

In return for protecting vegetation, a water-users association constructed rainwater collection dams which improved village water supply and allocated tradable water rights to every household. Over time, the tradable water right system was replaced by a user fee and in return the villagers received the revenue from sale of forest products. In addition, families with no land or marginal land have been given land rights, and those who wish to can sell water entitlement. An affiliated reforestation project is further expected to benefit the community through timber extraction from communal property. This PES scheme has, in the past 40 years, generated high economic returns for the once-poor community. It has improved agricultural productivity and increased household income. Siltation in Sukhna Lake has fallen by 95%, which saves the city downstream (Chandigarh) about US\$ 200,000 annually in dredging and related costs. (Adapted from 'Agarwal and Narain 1999'³).

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, 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 is 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 labeling 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.

"Many local authorities in India are recognizing the benefits of factoring the economic dimension of biodiversity into public planning. It is our hope that this TEEB report will help further this action at a local level."

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 ten 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: Maximise 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, Bombay.

TEEB is an independent study, led by Pavan Sukhdev, hosted by United Nations Environment Programme with financial support from the European Commission; Germany, UK, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Pavan also spearheads the Green Economy Initiative of the UN Environment Programme.

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.

The TEEB reports are available at www.teebweb.org.

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Notes to Editors:

Sources:

- 1: Sakhuja, N. 2008, 'Hiware Bazaar- A village with 54 millionaires', Down to Earth vol: 16 no: 20080131.
- 2: Dey, D. 2008, 'Sustainable development and waste water in peri urban wetlands, a case study on East Kolkata Wetland'
- 3: Agarwal, A. and S. Narain. 1999. Making Water Management Everybody's Business: Water Harvesting and Rural Development in India. No. 87 London, International Institute for Environment and Development. Gatekeeper Series International.