
Strategic Environmental Assessment Of A Large Rural Development Programme In Ethiopia

By Bernt Rydgren and Yohannes Afework

Strategic Environmental Assessment Of A Large Rural Development Programme In Ethiopia

Study background:

- The study object was a large (app. \$US 13 million per year), rural development programme with a clearly stated poverty-alleviation focus;
- The programme had run for over 5 years without focussed strategic socio-environmental assessment or evaluation;
- The study was conducted as a combination of actual SEA work and training in SEA and EIA application;
- Time was very short and other resources also extremely limited.

In order to adapt to existing limitations, the study was focussed on:

- Review of existing policies, and the way in which the programme was strategically based on such;
- The attention to sustainability issues in the implementation of the development activities;
- Identifying the key components of the programme in regards to sustainable poverty alleviation;
- The definition of meaningful scenarios/alternatives;
- The drafting of recommendations for changes to the programme in order to better accommodate strategic socio-environmental priorities.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Of A Large Rural Development Programme In Ethiopia

Three scenarios identified:

- Programme as it was;
- Idealised “socio-environmentally perfect” programme and;
- 0 alternative (no programme at all), given 0 impact

Findings for the programme as it is:

- Strongest positive potentials in key areas were found in land tenure, environmental awareness creation and participatory planning (public and popular)
- Energy received negative score due to a near total lack of attention and activities
- Gender issues received massive attention, but failed to reach potential impact due to less than ideal interpretation of the results from the participation exercises

Strategic Environmental Assessment Of A Large Rural Development Programme In Ethiopia

The “idealised” programme:

- Strongest positive potentials were found in land tenure, participatory planning and environmental assessment capacity
- The reason not all cases resulted in maximum positive impact/potential is the we have reviewed, and internalised, the programme-external (lack of) institutional capacity for change
- The most notable difference to the existing programme was that with an “ideal” approach, no “politics”, donor or otherwise, enter into programme formulation and prioritisation

Strategic Environmental Assessment Of A Large Rural Development Programme In Ethiopia

Principal problems and conclusions:

- In donor activities, the lack of ability and/or willingness to address certain needs and/or areas does not agree with priorities identified in a SEA. Donors who wish to achieve complete local “ownership” of a programme such as this one, need to be absolutely open about what areas the resulting programme will focus on
- Strategic environmental priorities are often assumed to be inherently addressed in all rural development programmes, especially those with a stated poverty alleviation aim

Principal problems and conclusions (continued):

- It is quite difficult, in really large projects or programmes, to address all issues at the same level of detail and/or complexity
- Participation is always a problem – how to properly internalise the views of 16 million people in what is left of 10 weeks, once one has done everything else?