

## **Environmental Policy for Ethiopia's Sustainable Social and Economic Development: A Working Paper**

Asayehgn Desta, Ph. D. Sarlo Distinguished Professor of Sustainable Economic Development,  
Dominican University of California

In a number of developing countries, balancing poverty and socioeconomic needs with environmental concerns creates very pressing problems. To meet this challenge and to realize the spirit of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992, a number of countries have formulated strategic environmental sustainability policies to: a) include environmental concerns in their mission statements; b) develop long-term objectives; c) generate alternative strategies to pursue those objectives; d) implement strategies to devise policies, motivate employees, and allocate resources so that the formulated strategies can be executed; e) monitor the execution of strategies and make adjustments according to feedback; and f) assess whether the strategies actually fulfill the countries' mission statements.

Realizing that natural resources are the foundation of an economy, Ethiopia has attempted to develop a policy to protect its ecosystems. To counteract the short term results of economic and technical policies of the past and to meet the needs of present and future generations "the first comprehensive statements of Environmental Policy for the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia were approved by the Council of Ministers in April 1997" (UNEP EIA Training Resource Manual, 2006).

By proclamation No. 9/1995 the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has created an environmental policy, as well as legal and regulatory reforms to manage its environmental and natural resources. The overall aim of the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) is to "... improve and enhance the health and quality of life of all Ethiopians and to promote sustainable social and economic development through the sound management and use of natural, human-made and cultural resources and the environment as a whole so as to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (EPA, 2010). Some of the specific duties of the Ethiopian Protection Authority include:

- To prepare environmental protection policy and laws, and upon approval, follow up their implementation.
- To prepare directives and systems necessary for evaluating the impact of social and economic development projects on the environment; monitor and follow up their implementation.

Stated differently, the mandate of the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority is to manage, protect, conserve, and sustain the environment and the natural resources of the country. Through sustainable management of the environment and natural resources, it is expected that the economic and social conditions of Ethiopia will be greatly improved and all Ethiopians will lead productive lives in a healthy environment. More specifically, keeping in mind the organization's overall aim and principles of action such as compliance and regulatory

requirements, the policy objectives of the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority seek to communicate the following environmental priorities:

- Ensure that essential ecological processes and life support systems are sustained
- Preserve biological diversity
- See that renewable natural resources are used in such a way that their generative and productive capabilities are maintained
- Ensure that the exploitation of non-renewable resources is managed wisely to extend the benefits far into the future
- Identify under-utilized natural resources by finding new technologies for their development
- Incorporate the full economic, social, and environmental costs of natural resources development into the planning, implementation, and accounting process by a comprehensive evaluation of the environment and the services it provides
- Improve the environment of human settlements to satisfy the physical, social, economic, and cultural needs of their inhabitants on a sustainable basis
- Ensure the empowerment and participation of the people and their own organizations in all levels of environmental management activities
- Raise public awareness with educational programs to promote understanding of the essential linkages between environment and development
- Undertake sectional and cross-sectional economic evaluations that create strategic alliances with the local, regional, national economy (Fed. Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1997)

While it is recognized that environmental resources contribute significantly to sustainable economic development, the conceptual framework of Ethiopia's comprehensive environmental policy is too general. It is not systematically formulated to meet the strategic management process stated above. In its strategic objectives, the Ethiopian Environmental Policy does not include strategies for rigorous implementation, monitoring, or evaluation. In addition, the implementation of its functions is hindered by the lack of institutional frameworks. The capacity to initiate and sustain change and mobilize adequate resources linking activities effectively among sectors is hardly visible.

Based on the goals of the Ethiopian Environmental Policy, it is worth mentioning that its *vision* statement should have highlighted what Ethiopia aspires to achieve in the future. Through the establishment of sound management of renewable and non-renewable resources, Ethiopia should have envisioned development that ensures a secure and sustainable environment. Similarly, the *mission* of the environmental policy should have been designed to raise the awareness and empowerment of the Ethiopian people to use environmentally sound technology and the best practices in order to achieve sustainable development. This would include using good management, conservation, and monitoring in order to protect the natural resources of the country (EPA, 2006).

Unlike the Environmental Protection Policy which lacks specific vision and mission statements, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), begun by the Environmental Protection Authority includes Procedural Guidelines as a prerequisite for the approval of new development activities and projects in any sector. To be well-designed, the EIA has very specific vision and mission statements. Its vision is to "...see a clean and healthy environment by eliminating or, when possible minimizing pollutants at their sources. Its *mission* statement is to enforce the Pollution Control Proclamation and related laws, in order to eliminate or ...minimize pollutants that generated from industries, agricultural activities, service rendering organizations and urban areas and enhance the health and wellbeing of the citizens" (Ethiopia Environmental Protection Authority, 2006). To realize the mission statements, the EIA included the following objectives and goals:

- Promote development that is sustainable and optimize resource use and management opportunities
- Protect the productivity and capacity of natural systems and ecological processes which maintain their functions
- Ensure environmental concerns are explicitly addressed and incorporated into the decision-making process
- Develop, implement and measure programs that promote management systems for the environment
- Prevent or minimize or offset the adverse impacts of municipal waste and other potential pollutants
- Prevent the adverse effects of developmental proposals that may generate hazardous substances or waste. (See for example, The Ethiopia Environmental Protection Authority, 2006)

As practiced by other developing countries (See Kofi and Desta, 1998), the Environmental Impact Assessment generally includes: a) an assessment of strategic environmental policies and strategies (refers to a proactive approach for integrating environmental considerations with higher levels of decision-making in the development of policies and plans); b) regional, sectional development for an EIA (the concept of regional planning that integrates environmental concerns with plans for developing a specific geographic region); c) project-level EIA effects (refers to development activity and the impact that it exerts on the receiving environment). In other words, the EIA determines: 1) social impacts on health, demography, work, recreation, consumption, culture, and values; 2) economic impacts on markets, technologies, resource management, industrial structure, regional development, business practices, and trade; and 3) environmental impacts on ecosystems, habitats, resources, air, water, soil.

EIA in Ethiopia is voluntary and is not legally binding. It is only applicable to large projects, and ascertains environmental impacts of development activities and how to mitigate negative impacts early in the project planning cycle. The developers of these large projects are required to take an "Initial Environmental Examination (IEE)" in order to determine whether or not a given project requires full Environmental Impact Assessment. As narrated by Tekelemichael, however, the EPA was created to assist developers in addressing environmental issues related to the development of their projects and in meeting environmental impact

assessment requirements (2006). It is further alleged by the Ethiopian Government that the environmental impact assessment process included the participation of local populations in project planning and design. Thus, properly-conducted EIA lessens conflicts by promoting community participation and informing decision makers, thus helping to lay a suitable foundation for environmentally sound projects.

In general, the environmental impact assessment process ensures:

- *Screening*: responsible agencies carry out an appropriate assessment of all significant environmental consequences
- *Timing*: assessments are available early enough for use in the preparation of the strategic decisions
- *Environmental scoping*: the developer provides his judgment of whether or not an initiative should proceed, or if his objectives could be achieved in a more environmentally friendly way (i.e., through alternative initiatives or approaches)
- *Other factors*: sufficient information is available concerning other factors, including socio-economic conditions, either parallel to or integrated into the assessment
- *Study phase*: the output of the study is reviewed by the Competent Agency;
- *Review*: the quality of the process and information is safeguarded by efficient review mechanisms
- *Participation*: sufficient information for all legitimate stakeholders (including the public) is available early enough to be used efficiently in the decision-making process.
- *Documentation*: results are identifiable, understandable, and available to all parties affected by the decision;
- *Decision-making and accountability*: it is clear to all stakeholders and all parties how the consequences of the decision were taken into account;
- *Post-decision*: sufficient information on the actual impacts of implementing certain strategies is available to judge whether the decision should be amended, Dalal-Clayton, B. and Bass, S. (2002); and Tekelemichael, Y. (2006).

In simple terms, the distinguishing characteristics of a systematic, analytical, and practical Environmental Impact Assessment process need to be:

- *Purposive*- should inform decision-makers and result in appropriate levels of environmental protection and community well-being;
- *Rigorous*- should employ methodologies and techniques appropriate to address the problem being investigated
- *Practical*- should result in providing information that is acceptable and useful to investors faced with problems and needing solutions
- *Relevant*- should provide sufficient, reliable and usable information for development planning and decision making
- *Efficient*- should achieve the objectives of EIA within the limits of available, information, time, resources and methodology

- *Adaptive*- should be adjusted to the realities, issues and circumstances of the proposals under review without compromising the integrity of the process
- *Participants*- should provide appropriate opportunities to inform and involve the interested and affected populations, and their input and concerns should be addressed explicitly in the documentation and the decision-making
- *Integrated*- should address the interrelationships of social, economic, and environmental aspects
- *Credible*- should be carried out with professionalism, rigor, fairness, objectivity impartiality, and balance, and be subject to independent checks and verification
- *Transparent*- should have clear, easily understood requirements for EIA content; ensure public access to information; identify the factors that are to be taken into account in decision-making and acknowledge limitations and difficulties ( See for example, Nalini Bhat, Technical EIA Guidance Manual, 2009)

Based on the above analysis, the long-term strategic objectives of Ethiopia's Environmental Impact Assessment are congruent with the mission statement but they do not seem to be very realistic. They are hardly measurable and there is no time frame for achieving the stated objectives. Assuming that the Ethiopian Government is on the right track, it does not appear to have worked out the enforcement capacity, or trained human resources, or established the technical and scientific base for setting standards to measure compliance. Finally, workable appeal and grievance procedures have hardly materialized.

Therefore, given that the EIA should be introduced early in the project cycle and must be an integral part of the projects' pre-feasibility and feasibility stages, 1) do multinationals operating in Ethiopia ever submit in advance the design and engineering, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of their projects to concerned authorities, and 2) do the Ethiopian authorities regulate or enforce compliance to the established environmental standards and guidelines in order to assess the environmental footprints of the multinational corporations operating in the country? **To be continued.**

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