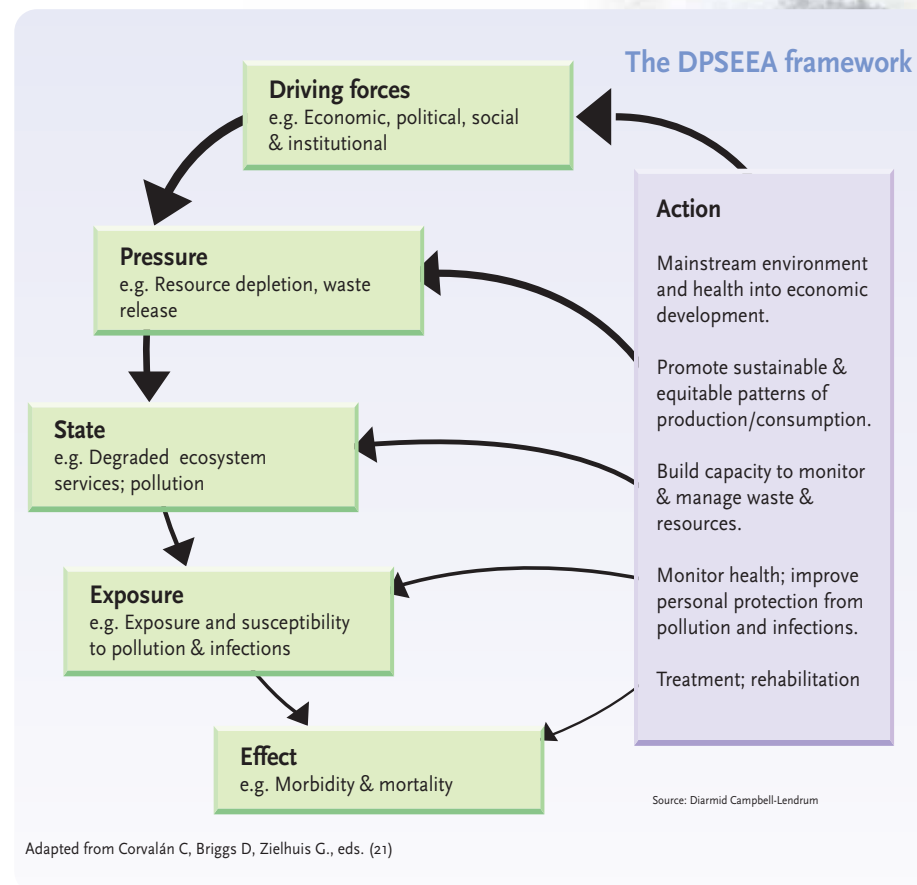


PASSION, POLICY & SCIENCE IN ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Scientists are trained in dispassionate enquiry, an essential tool of the trade. At the same time, in the policy process, there is a need to frame compelling objective evidence on environment and health issues in terms valued by the public – and decision-makers. Appreciating the complexities of the policy process and how scientific evidence is used, and might be used better, in that process has been a theme of HELI. The passion of politics must be harnessed to the scientific passion for knowledge about the root environmental causes of disease.

HELI's approach was designed around four key issues identified in the Needs Assessment Workshop (April 2003) involving both developed and developing country policy-makers, and refined further in the global review of decision-making.

- **More effective impact assessment procedures are needed in developing countries.** This can facilitate political and scientific exchange within a systematic and transparent framework. Impact assessment is a forum where science and policy interact – producing a synergy between scientific evidence and policy agendas.
- **Analysis of environment and health costs and benefits is important to improved utility of assessment frameworks.** Both economic and socioeconomic valuation put issues into monetary terms relevant to many policy-makers. Non-monetary measures, including death and disease burden and the rate/degree of environmental degradation, also are powerful indicators.
- **Interactive exchange between scientists, policy-makers and stakeholders is critical to improving access to knowledge about health and environment problems and solutions.** Such exchanges can range from technical workshops to intersectoral government meetings and ministerial-level encounters. Participatory research allows policy-makers and stakeholders to "see" and "touch" the evidence for themselves.
- **Building decision-maker and stakeholder awareness about environment and health problems, tools and policy options requires sustained and comprehensive communication strategies.** Such strategies should describe potential "solutions" alongside the "problems," and relate to successful experiences elsewhere. Potential economic and poverty reduction gains should be communicated together with the health and environment gains. Policy-relevant briefing and training materials should be refined and adapted to local needs and issues.



The DPSEEA framework illustrates how socioeconomic driving forces can generate environmental pressures, leading to altered ecosystem states, personal exposure to risks, and eventual health impacts. Actions can be taken at each step in the causal chain, to help manage the driving forces, and reduce negative effects.

"We have done a lot of situation analysis, identification of the issues. However, that remains only information -- unless it can be turned into policies in the respective ministries. Data has to be translated into something that will move people; some people are moved by money, some by politics. These are passion parameters. You have got to make people feel the issue."

WHO Official, SEARO Region, New Delhi (2).

A Global / Local Approach

The identified needs have been addressed via the following concrete activities.

- **Country-led pilot projects** - undertaken by partner governments and supported by WHO/UNEP, using their combined scientific/technical know-how. The projects assess existing or proposed policy in a particular sector in the light of environment and health impacts. National-level health and environment actors manage the assessment in coordination with other government sectors (i.e. agriculture, finance & economics). The process results in policy recommendations that can achieve real reductions in death and disease.
- **Regional workshops and national events** - sharing lessons from the pilot projects, building capacity, and engaging decision-makers and the public in policy development/implementation processes.
- **Guidance** - on integrating linked environment and health impacts into assessment of policies of critical socioeconomic importance. The guidance also covers tools for the economic valuation of environment and health costs and benefits -- in a context relevant to developing countries. A menu of useful strategies is provided, rather than one prescription or formula. This may be adapted to each country's needs and resources.
- **Development of a web portal and publications** - enhancing knowledge of environment and health risks and potential solutions, and tailored to the needs of policy- and decision-makers. Emphasis is placed upon good practice experiences, feasibility and cost-effectiveness, along with links and references to more technical information.

Responding to WSSD

"...The goals of sustainable development can only be achieved in the absence of a high prevalence of debilitating diseases, while obtaining health gains for the whole population requires poverty eradication. There is an urgent need to address the causes of ill health, including environmental causes, and their impact on development..."

*Plan of Implementation of the
World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002.*



Nigel Bruce/ITDG/Nepal

Reliance on solid fuels by many of the world's poor is a factor in deforestation and in indoor air pollution -- with consequent impacts on respiratory health.