

INTEGRATION

Some impacts of a policy on environment, health and human well-being cannot be quantified or valued in terms of money or numbers. In many developing countries basic environment and health data may be missing or incomplete, making quantitative assessment a difficult task from the outset. Social values and perceptions of risk and well-being also influence the manner in which many stakeholders assess the potential impacts of a policy.

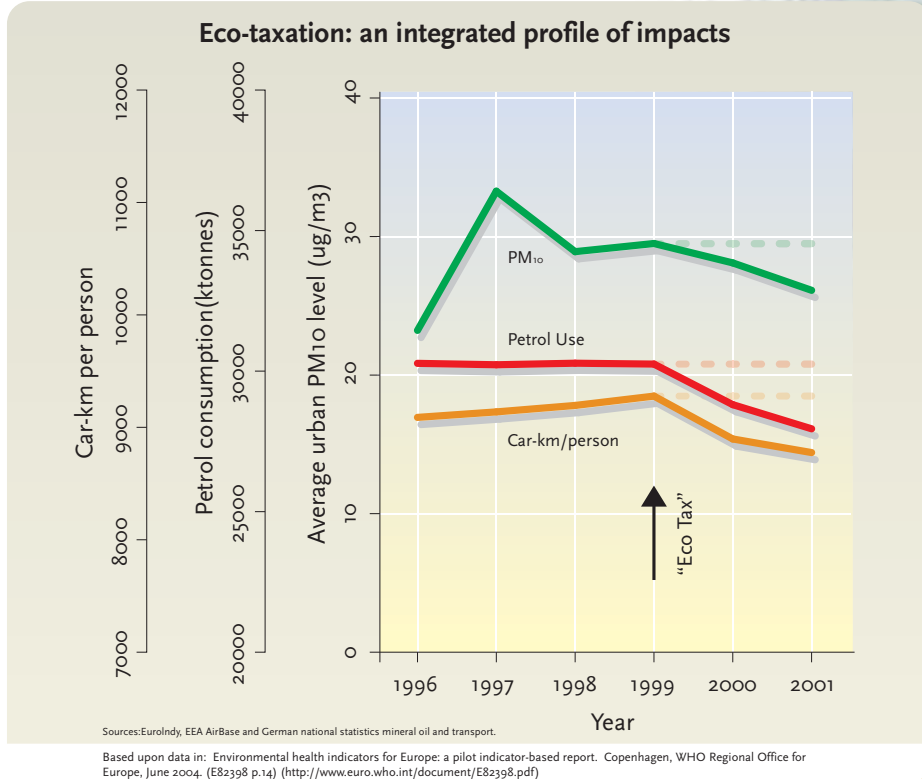
In the HELI process, UNEP and WHO highlight the importance of integrating disciplines and approaches on a number of levels:

- linked assessment of policies' impacts on health and ecosystems, and linkage of tools for impact assessment and economic analysis;
- reference to the social sciences as integral to an analysis of environment and health impacts, alongside the physical sciences and economic disciplines. This requires the use of impact assessment methods that are inclusive and reflective, not only of expert opinion but also of a broad, validating dialogue among politicians, the public and experts;
- integrated use of environment and health data for policy assessment, to optimize the present day use of existing evidence, alongside long-term improvements in monitoring, collection and reporting of indicators.

Finally, the integration of ecosystem approaches to environment and health in mainstream policy-making requires not only the linkage of health and environment in the assessment process, resourceful use of evidence, and judicious use of qualitative and quantitative tools – but also the appropriate enabling conditions. Such conditions are created when there are effective legal and civil society institutions and frameworks to support policy implementation. In many developing countries such supportive legal and social institutions may be weak, despite the deeply felt desire for change that exists at the grass roots and, indeed, among many policy-makers. Strengthening such institutions is a challenge that needs to be addressed jointly by country-level policy-makers, international institutions and civil society.

The importance of taking a **multidimensional approach** to the implementation of more effective environment and health policies is thus a theme running throughout the entire HELI initiative.

“The lack of quantification and valuation of EH hazards prevent any dialogue on the issue. It’s when you put a figure on the environmental health burden of disease that you can talk with decision-makers especially the Ministry of Finance. In addition, in the countries where we are working, EIAs are mainly used for donor-funded development projects with little attention to economic valuation. CEA and CBA are not used for health and environment-related projects. Both tools are complementary, and should be internalised in development work.”
Economist, consultant to the World Bank (2).



Integrated reporting of just a few key indicators can help decision-makers to evaluate the health and environment impacts of their policies - in this case, a differential "eco-tax" system for vehicle fuels introduced in 1999 by the German Government. Since the measure was put into effect, per capita car travel has declined nationally and previously static petrol use has fallen slightly. Though more difficult to interpret, the average urban concentration of small particulates (average urban PM10/m3 weighted by the city's population), also shows some signs of reduction.

"At a local level, people in communities do not think or act in 'sectoral' ways. Issues they face in health, agriculture, transport, environment, water, food are seamless and relate one to the other. It is antithetical to their way of living and working to constantly come up against the wall where they are told 'that is dealt with by the health sector' or 'you will have to wait until the agricultural extension office comes to the village'. What we offer to communities needs to reflect their own reality. Hence the need for holistic, integrated approaches and actions."

WHO officer, Healthy Environments for Children Alliance Secretariat, Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments, Geneva (2).

Case Studies of Integrated Policies

When New York City's water quality was threatened by increased bacterial and agricultural pollution, an economic valuation estimated that a managed ecosystem approach to the protection of the Catskill Mountain watershed could restore the natural filtration mechanisms protecting the city's water quality and health - at about one-sixth of the cost of a modern water filtration plant. The City of New York chose to adopt this approach, financed by new user fees for water and a package of economic incentives for Catskill landowners and communities to employ better land use management.

Those measures were effective because they were supported by **legal tools**, permitting the state to control land use in the watershed area, alongside **social action** that raised awareness about the importance of watershed protection.

In Thailand also, economic valuation studies have documented the long-term economic advantages to be gained from sustainable land use and sustainable agriculture. However, the absence of **legal tools** (e.g. systematic land use zoning, application of land taxes, land tenure rights) and the lack of **public awareness**, still impede the implementation of better land use policy for environment and health goals -- **even when the economic evidence is available** (25).



FAO/10723/P. Cigiti

Integration and disintegration: Terraces are an ancient and ecologically sound method of preventing soil erosion. Properly maintained and drained, terraces also benefit human health by facilitating cultivation and irrigation in hilly and dry regions (above). Contamination of both rural and urban watersheds by modern-day chemicals, sewage and solid waste leads to ecosystem degradation and health impacts (background).