

Survey of the Norwegian follow-up of environmental factors in development aid projects

NORAD's follow-up and documentation of how environmental factors are integrated into development aid projects has some serious deficiencies. This pertains in particular to the execution and completion phases of projects. It can also be queried whether the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' reporting to the Storting on environmentally targeted development aid provides satisfactory information about how the funds are being used and what results have been achieved.

These are the main findings of the Office of the Auditor General's investigation into environmentally targeted development aid (Document no. 3:4 (2002-2003)), which was submitted to the Storting on 8 November. The Office of the Auditor General's main objective was to investigate how environmental factors have been integrated into development aid projects funded by NORAD. The auditors also studied the scope and thematic and geographical focus of environmentally targeted development aid projects.

The term "environmentally targeted development aid" covers both development aid projects whose primary aim is to improve the environment and activities that aim to integrate environmental factors into all types of development aid projects in order to avoid damage to the environment as a result of the project.

The Office of the Auditor General reviewed 11 selected development aid projects in Tanzania and Sri Lanka in the sectors energy development, construction of roads and building homes. All the sectors require caution in terms of showing due consideration to the environment. The audit revealed that environmental factors were touched upon in the documentation in the preparatory phase, especially in Tanzania, but otherwise, in most of the projects there was little trace of environmental considerations in the documentation in the execution and completion phases. The Office of the Auditor General pointed out that NORAD is still responsible for the monitoring and documentation of the projects, despite the fact that according to the principle of recipient responsibility for development aid, the collaborating country is responsible for the project as a whole.

In its response to the audit, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs points out that the findings and assessments made in this audit are useful. The Ministry has stated that it will raise with NORAD the issue of how the routines can be improved in order to ensure that the guidelines are observed and that this is documented systematically. The Office of the Auditor General regards it as positive that NORAD is going to reassess developing an environmental manual and that they are also considering introducing the use of checklists in the preparatory phase of the projects as another possible measure.