
Bilateral aid agencies: aid upside down

There is a variety of bilateral aid agencies. The work of some of them may actually contribute to improve the quality of life of the population of Southern countries and there are people working in those organization who devote their efforts to that goal. However, it is equally important to stress that there is also an important number of such agencies -specifically in the forestry-related sector- whose work results in negative impacts to local peoples and their environments.

A number of bilateral agencies have played an important role in the promotion of the present model in the field of plantations and the industrialization of the resulting wood. Such is the case of FINNIDA (Finland), SIDA (Sweden), CIDA (Canada), USAID, ODA (UK). The Japanese JICA is to be underscored for its role in carrying out research, planning and plantation trials in several countries. Others -like GTZ (Germany)- support specific projects where tree monocultures are one of the components, even if they are at the same time involved in projects having a positive social and environmental approach.

This kind of international aid has been also strongly criticized because a significant proportion of their resources are provided on the basis that they are used by the receiving countries to buy goods or services from the donor country. This is aid upside down, since people of Southern countries are actually subsidising the industry and the services sector of the North. It is therefore important to make Northern citizens know how their money is being used.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Southern NGOs can try to find out if aid agencies are active in the promotion of plantation development in their country
- Northern NGOs can provide information on their country's aid agencies and on their activity in different Southern countries
- South-North links can be established to exchange information and to carry out concerted actions on a particular agency
- Northern NGOs can denounce the impacts of these consultancies in their home countries
- Northern NGOs can monitor the activities of the donor agencies of their respective countries, so that funds are not devoted to the implementation of large-scale plantations
- Northern NGOs can disseminate information to the public whenever taxpayer money is being channeled to support plantations
- Northern NGOs can also find out if these agencies have a forest policy and analyse if such policy includes the promotion of large-scale plantations. According to the results of such research, the agency could be challenged, either because of having a bad policy or because it is not complying with its own policy.

