



On the Way to a Sustainable Planet: The Marrakech Process Stories

When governments at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development called for the creation of a global economic framework that would help countries both stimulate growth and minimize the negative impacts of that growth on the environment and local communities, the first in a series of biennial International Expert Meetings was held a year later in Marrakech, Morocco, to determine a course of action.

That meeting set in motion what today is called the Marrakech Process, a series of global initiatives through which countries are working towards the development of a draft 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) by 2010. The challenge is to determine which key programmes to include in the Framework, and provide the means for their implementation: financial support, capacity building, and technical assistance.

The United Nations Department of Economic Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are the lead UN agencies in this global process, facilitating the active participation of national governments, development agencies, companies, and civil society, among other participants.

This work comes at a critical time, against the backdrop of widening economic and social imbalances among countries and regions, exacerbated, in large part, by the damaging effects of climate change and increased levels of man-made CO₂ emissions, particularly in expanding consumer economies. The call to action is as urgent as ever to preserve the world's natural resource base, and improve living conditions for the billions of people who depend on it to meet their most rudimentary needs. Changing our collective future will mean taking a "less is best" approach to our individual daily living today.

From the beginning, the Marrakech Process has been developing various instruments to help countries articulate that vision. Seven government-led Task Forces were created to carry out activities at national or regional levels to help accelerate a shift to more sustainable consumption and production patterns throughout the world. These voluntary teams of experts from government ministries, regional organizations, academic research institutes, technical agencies and UN bodies tackle pressing problems in innovative ways. They focus their work in seven specific areas: sustainable products, lifestyles, education, building and construction, tourism, public procurement and cooperation with Africa.

These stories showcase Task Force efforts, and highlight how these agile partnerships are helping to find solutions to common challenges in ways that can be tailored to meet specific national and regional priorities. Through these "no one size fits all" initiatives,

African governments are investigating a regional ecolabelling scheme to improve the competitiveness of their exports, particularly in booming markets for environmentally preferable products.

Young people in Abu Dhabi are re-thinking how they can buy everything from food to fashion, and integrate sustainable lifestyle messages into their faith. Indigenous Indian communities in the Brazilian town of Paraty are taking an active role in creating a sustainable tourism strategy, as part the town's involvement in a global Green Passport Campaign. Elsewhere, officials in Argentina are discovering how to integrate sustainable practices into their public procurement systems.

The Marrakech Process mosaic is made up of these and numerous other activities that are prompting consumers and producers in developed and developing countries to consider the environmental and social ripple effects of their economic decision-making.

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Marrakech Process Task Force on Cooperation with Africa *Cotton Made in Africa*

Africa is the world's second-largest cotton exporter, but domestic production has faltered amid weather, currency and other pressures, forcing an expected drop in exports in some countries for the first time in years.

However, some farmers are finding a way around such challenges. The Task Force on Cooperation with Africa has documented an innovative pilot project unfolding in four African nations – Burkina Faso, Benin, Zambia and Mozambique – in its report describing best practices for achieving sustainable consumption and production.

The *Cotton made in Africa* project offers a model of how farmers are using sustainable production techniques to improve their crops in the hope of penetrating global markets. The goal is to introduce ecological and social standards into cotton growing and, by doing so, generate demand among big retailers for a “*Cotton made in Africa*” brand.

Cotton in the sub-Saharan region thrives on natural rainfall, eliminating the need for artificial irrigation, which diverts precious water resources from other growing areas and causes major environmental damage. It is picked by hand and has long fibers, which makes it a naturally high-quality raw material.

The crop is a main source of income for some 20 million people in the region, and accounts for the lion's share of export revenue in several countries. In Benin alone, cotton cultivation employs 2.4 million people – 40 per cent of the population – and brings in 75 per cent of export earnings.*

To participate in the project, farmers must cultivate their fields using guidelines to meet social, ecological and economic criteria, which prohibit, for example, the use of child slave labour or internationally banned pesticides.

The project currently involves about 150,000 farmers who pick 100,000 tonnes of raw cotton a year. Their output is spun into yarn and eventually sent to international trading companies, which sell it on the free market to retailers and others.

Within that value chain, companies such as Geneva-based trading giant Dunavant SA play a pivotal role, explains Christian Lowe, an official with the Germany-based technical agency GTZ. Because they distribute and pre-finance agrochemicals such as pesticides and fertilizers, they can exert some control over how they are used.

Through their extension services, these companies train “lead” farmers to use the products in a sustainable manner, ensuring, for example, that pesticides are used only

where damage thresholds have been exceeded. Techniques, such as balanced fertilization, and mulching to prevent water evaporation in soil, are also passed on. The farmers then train other farmers in their villages and regions to multiply the effect.

The hope is that such transparency will turn the heads of the world's high flying buyers. German retailing giant Otto Group is involved in the project and using its clout to convince other big retailers of the project's value, and boost demand in European markets. While the cotton produced does not yet qualify as organic cotton, the moves may one day help more African countries to tap the organic buying frenzy.

The Organic Exchange, which tracks organic cotton use, estimates that global retail sales for organic cotton products will reach \$3.5 billion in 2008, up from \$1.1 billion last year, as retailers make significant new commitments to sustainable textile and apparel production. By 2010, sales are expected to hit \$6.8 billion, up from 2005 sales of \$583 million.

* Cooperation with Africa: *Best Practice in African Countries* report

For more information, please visit the Marrakech Process website:

<http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/index.shtml>



Marrakech Process Task Force on Cooperation with Africa Towards A Regional Ecolabelling Scheme

With environmental requirements increasingly used to define commercial relationships, meeting strict standards is becoming an imperative for producers in Africa.

Plans are underway to create an African ecolabelling scheme that would integrate environmental and health-related standards into the design and production of African products. Once in place, companies around the region would be able to apply for certification that their products had met the continent's best environmental standards, helping them to penetrate large – and increasingly savvy – consumer markets, both in Africa and elsewhere.

Spearheading those efforts is the Task Force for Cooperation with Africa, a seven-member team of Governments, United Nations agencies and organizations working to develop a policy framework to cover pillar sectors such as forestry, agriculture, tourism and textiles. The plans stand to impact everything from the leather shoes we wear, to the scarves we drape to the juice we drink to get a start on our day.

“The main goal of the African Ecolabelling Scheme is to increase the access – and competitiveness – of environmentally friendly African products in regional and international markets,” says Ulf Jaeckel, a German Government official who is chair of the Task Force. “The ecolabel project is an innovative part of the team’s broader involvement in fostering sustainable consumption and production in Africa.”

Generally speaking, an ecolabel is a voluntary trademark awarded by a third party to products deemed less harmful to the environment than other products within the same category. As a market-based tool, it stimulates the supply and demand for products with a reduced environmental impact.

If applied to the African forestry sector, for example, which supplies upscale buyers in Western Europe with high-quality flooring and furniture, an ecolabel would certify that wood had been harvested in a sustainable manner, without the use of destructive clear-cutting practices. It would also show that forests had been managed using strict social criteria that respected indigenous communities.

Educating the consumer in this way both meets demand for such information, and protects precious resources and lifestyles, a huge consideration for sub-Saharan Africa, where more than 59 per cent of the population depends on woodlands for survival.

Applied to several sectors, a regional ecolabel would inform consumers about greener choices. For producers, it could offer marketing advantages of enhanced reputation and

branding, and distinguish exports in booming international markets for environmentally preferable products.

Implementing the scheme in Africa in coming years would depend, in part, on adapting existing infrastructure and institutions, explains Josephine Bauer, who works in the United Nations Environmental Programme's Regional Office for Africa in Nairobi, Kenya. Among the challenges: a need for technical expertise and increased financial muscle.

Despite such constraints, the plans have been endorsed by the African Union. "That gives us opportunity to proceed," explains Mr. Cleo Migiro, a leading member of the African Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production, which is involved in the Task Force. "At the political level, this is an accepted way of moving." The scheme has also received support from the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, an association of African environmental ministers who discuss plans to promote environmental protection.

Other Task Force members include Germany's Federal Environmental Agency; Belgium's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation; UNIDO; UNEP and the Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

For more information, please visit:

African Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production website:
<http://www.arscp.org/>

Marrakech Process website
<http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/index.shtml>

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Marrakech Process Task Force on Sustainable Tourism *Green Passport Campaign*

Attention, travelers: Are you thinking about the size of that carbon footprint trailing your suitcase?

Don't fear.

You can now make your travel habits more sustainable with the help of a little green passport, the centerpiece of a global campaign recently launched by the United Nations Environment Programme, the French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning, and the Brazilian Ministries of Environment and Tourism.

The *Green Passport Campaign*, unveiled at the Berlin Tourism Fair in March, is introducing tourists to ways they can make each part of their trip a sustainable activity: one that conserves natural resources, and respects the economic and cultural development of host countries.

The organizers are using all means to get the word out, including through an easy-to-use website, available in English, French and Portuguese, that lets a user flip through a virtual passport containing tips on what to pack, how to fly and get around in ways that reduce environmental harm.

The website is loaded with reminders to choose responsible service providers that have a history of fair wages, limit energy use on the road and in hotels, and buy locally prepared food and souvenirs, instead of imports. There are even sections for posting individual travel tips, taking a climate quiz, and downloading a green banner to display on a personal blog or trendy MySpace profile.

"This is a friendly way to learn about your impacts when you travel – and how to change them," explains Thibault Devanlay, a French government adviser and leader of the Task Force on Sustainable Tourism, which initiated the project in 2006 to promote sustainable development under the Marrakech Process.

To launch many of its efforts, the team chose the historic town of Paraty, Brazil, famed for its diverse cultural traditions and 18th century architectural treasures. Beyond distributing communications materials, organizers facilitated workshops with the entire community to localize the campaign's global message to be aware of – and minimize – the travel footprint.

What started as a discussion to attract tourists quickly evolved into social debate on how to preserve the area's indigenous cultural heritage. "They know what they want, and what they don't want, from tourism," says Mr. Devanlay.

Brazil had expressed an early interest in hosting the project, and now hopes to replicate it in other parts of the country. Campaign organizers plan to start similar projects around the world, including in the Mediterranean region next year.

International tourist arrivals reached almost 900 million in 2007, and are estimated to hit 1.6 billion by 2020, according to the World Tourism Organization. Tourism is among the largest categories of international trade, with volume equaling or exceeding that for oil, food and car exports, depending on the year.

For more information, please visit:

Green Passport Campaign:
www.unep.fr/greenpassport

Marrakech Process:
<http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/index.shtml>

Task Force on Sustainable Tourism:
<http://www.veilleinfotourisme.fr/taskforce>

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Marrakech Process on Sustainable Tourism *Green Passport Campaign in Action: Paraty, Brazil*

The historic town of Paraty, nestled in a quiet bay along on Brazil's scenic Atlantic coastline, and storied for its 17th century role in shipping gold from the mines of Minas Gerais to the shores of Portugal, is taking new strides to integrate its unique cultural assets into a sustainable tourism strategy.

With its cobblestone streets, colonial architecture and lush green hills, the port town was recently chosen as the pilot location for carrying out the UN's *Green Passport Campaign*, launched in March 2008 to educate travelers about preserving the environment and respecting cultural heritage while on holiday.

But what started as basic awareness-raising for tourists has catalyzed a larger push within the Paraty community to protect its cultural patrimony, and transform itself into a truly sustainable town. The pursuit has mobilized everyone from the area's famed *pousada* hotels and family restaurants, to larger cultural associations and government bodies.

With information materials and financing from the French government, Paraty residents have organized workshops to "Brazilianize" the campaign's global message to be aware of – and minimize – the travel footprint. Community members are voicing their opinions and tailoring that reminder to their specific industries and needs.

"The workshops were very productive," says Thibault Devanlay, a French government official and chair of the Marrakech Process Task Force on Sustainable Tourism, a team of governments and UN agencies that helped to initiate the *Green Passport Campaign*. "They were a testament to participatory decision-making."

During the workshops, the area's three native Indian populations, who are directly affected by swelling tourist flows, established parameters for visits to their villages. They set rules for how and when tourists could arrive, deciding, for example, against overnight stays and tours lasting less than one hour. They also took the lead in determining entrance fees and channels for redistributing funds into the community.

"They know exactly what sustainable tourism is, how to teach it and how to preserve their culture," explains Mr. Devanlay. "We started one idea, and it has grown into a very big movement for Paraty."

The Rio de Janeiro state government and three federal offices have also stepped in to tackle Paraty's often un-discussed – but huge – sanitation problem, which has long

stymied efforts to fully tap human, cultural and economic potential. Authorities at all levels are now looking at financing waste disposal projects, recycling programmes and general sanitation strategies to spruce things up.

The hope is that Brazil's ministries of tourism and environment will soon announce which projects will go forward and how the work will break down.

Brazil took an early lead in organizing the *Green Passport Campaign*, and hopes to replicate Paraty's pilot project elsewhere in the country. "This project has been led by an emerging country, which is why I found it so interesting," says Mr. Devanlay. Similar projects are in the works for the Mediterranean region next year.

For more information, please visit:

Green Passport Campaign:
www.unep.fr/greenpassport

Marrakech Process:
<http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/index.shtml>

Task Force on Sustainable Tourism:
<http://www.veilleinfotourisme.fr/taskforce>

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Marrakech Process Task Force on Sustainable Public Procurement *Governments Assess the Situation*

Imagine your government at work: building schools, fixing roads, planning housing. To meet the needs of growing cities and towns, governments today invite companies from around the world to compete in bidding for often lucrative contracts. They are the largest consumers in any given economy, spending an average 45 to 65 per cent of their budgets on public purchasing. Those purchases account for some 13-17 per cent of GDP. *

Imagine using that hefty buying power to influence a range of long-term social, economic and environmental goals. That is sustainable public procurement in a nutshell, a process in which governments consider three main factors when buying products or services they need: environmental impact throughout a lifecycle; impact on social issues – such as poverty, labour conditions or human rights – and economic competitiveness.

This approach is commonly called the triple bottom line approach to financial reporting, which expands traditional accounting methods to capture “people, profit and planet” considerations. By using it, governments can help create markets for goods and services that support sustainable development, and raise the bar for other market actors to respect environmental and social standards.

The Task Force on Sustainable Public Procurement has developed an online status assessment tool, which can be used by procurement officials to help them understand and improve their countries’ purchasing systems.

The assessment gauges whether national laws are in place to regulate procurement, and if so, whether they are applied. Do procurement systems measure the effects of purchasing on the environment, society and economy? Do governments provide skill training in areas such as influencing, negotiating and contract law to procurers, finance managers and lawyers?

With the results in hand, officials can identify the strengths and weaknesses of their government’s procurement approach. Anyone who wants to follow the government’s example can use the assessment, including companies, says Alexander Kopp, an official with Switzerland’s Federal Office for the Environment, the lead Task Force agency.

The online tool is the part of a package of steps that governments can take in developing a sustainable approach to public procurement. Other steps include a legal review, market readiness analysis, development of a sustainable public procurement plan, and finally, a “train the trainers” workshop.

The Task Force is moving quickly to promote the holistic approach among governments. Its goal is for 14 countries in all regions to have tested it and fed results into the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production by 2010.

So far, Costa Rica, the Brazilian State of Sao Paulo, Colombia, Tunisia and Ghana have expressed interest in the project. Developed countries, including New Zealand and Norway, are also hinting at interest after their officials took part in a training workshop in Buenos Aires, Argentina that attracted 60 people, many of whom were from other Latin American countries.

“What we really would like is for China and India to participate”, Mr. Kopp says, adding that a green light on a sustainable approach to public procurement from those large consumer economies would pave the way for others to follow their lead.

Led by Switzerland, Task Force members include the United Kingdom, China, Brazil, Argentina and Norway.

* International Institute for Sustainable Development

For more information, please visit:

Task Force for Sustainable Public Procurement:

<http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/tfsuspubproc.shtml>

To download this article: <http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/>



YouthXChange: Partnering with Task Force Efforts in Sustainable Lifestyles and Education for Sustainable Consumption

In 2000, when a joint UNEP-UNESCO study asked middle class young people in 24 countries about their consuming habits, many said they were aware that their use and disposal of everything from gum to Game Boys created environmental and social ripple effects, but they were less sure of how their shopping choices might also do the same. Furthermore, they seemed to prefer taking individual, everyday steps to modify their behaviour, rather than organized action.

Their responses set the stage for the creation of YouthXChange, a global programme launched by UNEP and UNESCO to provide educators with an easy-to-use tool kit for introducing 15-25 year olds to opportunities offered by sustainable lifestyles. The main message: many people lack access to the natural resources they need in their everyday lives. We can change that by adopting a “one-planet-for-all” lifestyle.

Middle class young people this age – in developed and developing countries – are spenders and trend-setters with the power to shape ideas. To reach them, the team created a guide book in 18 languages which educators can use alongside a youthxchange.net website to introduce “green living” concepts.

The tool kit offers ideas for calculating carbon footprints in math classes or examining the environmental impacts of shoe dye in science courses. Information is presented in ways that allow young people to compare the stories behind their favourite products and decide how they want to purchase.

For example, take the story on Veja, a trendy France-based sneaker maker that sources all its materials from an association of small Brazilian producers. Cotton for the canvas is grown according to agro-ecological principles. Latex for the soles is harvested by *seringueiros* and bought at a premium. Sewing and shoe assembly is done by producers in the south at wages that surpass the national average. Proceeds feed back to communities in the form of an in-house education programme.

“YouthXChange is about giving young people options – not imposing choices or telling them they need to turn off the water”, says Morgan Strecker, a UNEP consultant in charge of the programme. Ms. Strecker and others also introduce YouthXChange through youth group networks and activities associations, organizing workshops with local partners for young environmental leaders.

In a recent Abu Dhabi workshop, young people raised questions about how to find organic food in West Asia, a desert region that relies on imported goods. To reduce a

travel footprint in cities where public transport is unavailable and hot temperatures prevent people from riding a bike, they brainstormed about carpooling, working from home and creating community offices.

They also generated ideas for integrating sustainable lifestyle messages into their faith, a major vehicle for communicating social values, and lobbying government to provide public transport options. "There's no point in promoting sustainable transport if there's no opportunity to choose it," Ms. Strecker explains.

Issues vary from region to region – and young people are active. In North Africa, they are concerned about the proliferation of fast food restaurants that offer cheaper, less-healthy food than local markets. In Dubai and Thailand, they are working to change the idea that "more means cool" and, in South America, are finding ways to recycle plastic utensils after large community meals.

YouthXChange was first introduced to UNESCO-affiliated schools involved in UNEP's Tunza programme, an environmental awareness raising effort. The project later caught the attention of the Norwegian government, which incorporated it into the national public school curricula in 2005. Today, YouthXChange uses support materials developed by the Task Force for Sustainable Lifestyles and the Task Force for Education for Sustainable Consumption.

Roughly 800,000 guides have been distributed to date, and plans are underway to publish in Polish and German by 2009. A challenge remains in integrating the programme in some of the world's largest consumer nations, including the United States. However, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art has expressed interest in adapting part of the guide for its fashion exhibit.

For more information, please visit:

YouthXChange
www.youthxchange.net

Marrakech Process
<http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/index.shtml>

Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles
<http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/tfsuslifestyles.shtml>

Task Force on Education for Sustainable Consumption
http://www.minambiente.it/index.php?id_sezione=1935

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Marrakech Process Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles ***Designing Sustainable Lifestyles***

How do you design “environmental sustainability” into a house, or a subway system or a government building? What does energy efficiency really look like when its happening in a refrigerator motor?

These are some of the questions that kept industrial design students in China, India and Brazil awake for a year. They were taking part in the *Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles* project, which enlisted three top design schools to envision scenarios for sustainable living in these countries, and come up with interactive technologies to make them happen.

Participating in the year-long project were the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in Guangzhou, China; the National Institute of Design, in Ahmedabad, India and the Technology and Social Development Laboratory at Rio de Janeiro Federal University in Brazil. The schools presented their ideas in workshops held in each of the cities. The discussions sparked a torrent of brainstorming among local designers, architects and public policy makers about how to design for a greener future.

The students' involvement in the project typifies how industrial design schools are supplying decision-makers in wide-ranging fields with a steady stream of innovative thinkers able to meet the needs of environmentally conscious consumers.

To respond to changes in the ways people are buying food, for instance, designers are coming up with energy-efficient refrigerators with wider doors and more space, to accommodate the special needs of urban food purchase groups that place large orders from rural vendors. They are developing interactive software that allows those same groups to order their food with the push of a single button.

To promote sustainable transport systems, designers are creating technologies that help carpoolers coordinate plans, map out a route to a common destination and log pick-up and drop-off times into a database – all from a cell phone. Details down to the shape of magnetic keys used to open a communal car are considered to ensure personal safety and sustainability.

“A designer, working with a company, can make it easier for people to use these kinds of collective, urban services that promote sustainable living,” says Ezio Manzini, Director of the Design and Innovation for Sustainability research unit at the renowned Politecnico di Milano University, which was involved with the project.

Governments, however, can take on the lead by developing national legislative frameworks that allow for greener living, doing things like designating high-occupancy car lanes on highways, or carpool parking lots on office campuses.

The *Creative Communities* project generated a few related spin-off initiatives, including an online lecture for Brazilian universities, hosted by Mr. Manzini. Discussion is underway to continue the project in Africa.

For more information, please visit:

Marrakech Process website

<http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/taskforces.shtml>

Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles

http://www.sustainable-everyday.net/ccsl/?page_id=4

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