



Common impact themes are:

Agriculture: Agriculture is now the largest cause of environment damage. 90% of global deforestation is due to agriculture, whether for pastures or for fields. Moreover, agriculture is the largest buyer of chemicals, uses 70% of our fresh water, and leads to a dramatic loss of fertile soil and to overfertilized bodies of water due to erosion, salinization, and overuse.

Carbon: Due to large-scale burning of fossil fuels worldwide, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere continues to increase. This enhances the natural 'greenhouse effect' of the atmosphere, causing global warming and climate change. The idea of the Kyoto Protocol and the associated efforts on behalf of international climate protection were developed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In its final version completed in 2002, the Kyoto Protocol provides several “flexible mechanisms” for the states parties to reach their goals. Trading in emissions rights is one of the key instruments set out in the Kyoto Protocol.

Energy – Efficiency: Because of the worldwide increase in energy demand and the increasing scarcity of resources, energy efficiency is becoming more and more important. Industry has reacted to the rising demand and is increasingly investing in the manufacture of energy-efficient products which conserve energy and thus natural resources while ensuring a reduction of waste and pollution.

Energy – Renewable: The nuclear disaster in Japan makes painfully clear: a non-sustainable approach to the environment creates enormous and even irreparable damage. Nevertheless, about 80% of energy worldwide is generated from fossil fuels. A promising long-term growth market exists for alternative, i.e. renewable, energies, such as wind and solar power, small-scale hydropower, marine energy, and geothermal energy.

Fair Trade: Globalization and the increased turn toward a free market economy have led to a drastic deterioration of prices and exploitation especially of producers in the global south. Fair trade guarantees that producers from southern countries achieve fair prices through direct market access and the establishment of long-term trading relationships. With prices significantly above the world market level and through additional premiums for the transition to organic farming and social projects, small farming families are able to improve their life situation self-responsibly and for the long term.

Forestry: Scientific estimates show that the tropical forest of some countries will vanish within two to three decades if the rate of deforestation and damage remains the same. Therefore, a widespread public concern over the effect of current harvesting and silvicultural practices on these and other forests has led to calls for more sustainable forest management practices. As a result, labelling systems have been developed for timber and timber products derived from well-managed forests to give the consumer a guarantee of sustainability.

Green Building: Climate change and the associated increase in environmental disasters dramatically show that the increase in energy consumption leads to problems over the long term. Green building (which includes green real estate) is a comprehensive process of design and construction that employs techniques to minimize adverse environmental impacts and reduce the energy consumption of a building, while contributing to the health and productivity of its occupants.



Health: The issue of access to medicines for the developing world has become pressing in recent years. In 2001 a global public outcry forced some drug companies to drop their suit against the South African government for allowing cheaper versions of patented drugs. The principal reason for the lack of access to medicines is poverty, which denies people access to food, clean water, sanitation and basic healthcare. NGOs have argued that pricing, patents, public-private partnerships and research and development are the main ways to increase access to medicines in the developing world.

Microfinance: People with less than the equivalent of 1 US dollar at their disposal per day are considered extremely poor according to the World Bank's definition. They are not able to satisfy their basic survival needs. They do not have enough to eat, they have no access to clean drinking water, and they are unable to afford medical care. Without access to financial services, poor people are hardly able to free themselves from the poverty trap by their own means. Often, these people have only their labour to offer as well as many ideas, but they do not have enough money or entrepreneurial know-how to implement these ideas. Since these people generally cannot offer any collateral whatsoever, they are unable to obtain loans from traditional banks. Microfinance institutions are now trying to fill this gap. What is interesting about the microfinance approach is that development is to be achieved using tools of the market economy. The financial offerings of microfinance institutions are understood as help for people to help themselves, as means enabling microfinance clients to participate in the financial situation and to build up a better life.

Mobility: The worldwide process of urbanization is leading to rapidly growing cities with several million inhabitants and an infrastructure that often works poorly and is hardly possible to manage. Therefore basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society, such as transportation and communications systems, water and power lines, and public institutions are becoming increasingly important.

Waste/Recycling: Worldwide population growth and increased prosperity in certain regions of the world have led to a disastrous rise in waste production and a shortage of commodities available worldwide. By now, the burden posed by waste on the environment and on our national economies as a whole has reached critical levels. Ideas dedicated to the prevention, recycling, or disposal of waste are thus becoming increasingly important at both a political and an economic level.

Water: The natural resource of water is highly sought after, and annual demand is rising twice as quickly as the world population. While there is still sufficient drinking water worldwide and the problem is "merely" regional distribution, the situation will become significantly worse in future. The use of water in agriculture and industry as well as the production, processing, and purification of drinking water will become much more important.