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**ABSTRACT.** This article reviews the history of the Environment for Development (Efd) initiative, its activities in capacity building and policy-oriented research, and case studies at its centres in Chile, China, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania. Efd promotes research-based policies to manage natural resources as engines of development. Since 1991, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has provided funding for students from developing countries to earn a PhD at the Environmental Economics Unit (EEU) of the University of Gothenburg. Returning home, these economists face institutional and academic gaps that limit the adoption of research-based policies. In response, the first Efd centre was founded in 2004, and six more followed. Research focuses on agriculture, climate, fisheries, parks, wildlife, forestry, energy and policy design. This has yielded 200 peer-reviewed articles. Successful policy outcomes depend on relationships with policy makers, community involvement in livelihood strategies, strengthened institutional support, interdisciplinary approaches, and dissemination of research results.

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