
SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND ENFORCEMENT

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GOALS

Identify the needs of users of information and develop systems responsive to their specific tasks, functions, roles, decisions, and problems. Issue recommendations for applying technology at the working level to lead to more protective, sustainable, measurable, and cost-efficient decisions.

1 INTRODUCTION

Questions presented by facilitator:

- What is a good way to improve between management and field operation units?
- What methods can be used to ensure the accuracy of information?
- Is information useful and (accessible) for managers, inspectors, etc. in order to enable them to apply it effectively in their work?
- Are countries using geographic information systems (GIS) to make linkages between data or to assist in environmental decision-making/priority setting?
- How are attorneys in Central America managing access to information from the Ministry of the Environment?
- How can INECE assist information sharing and distribution? Can INECE provide needs assessment?

2 DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Question 1: What is a good way to bridge the communication gap between management and field operation units? Cesar Luna suggested that we should begin by defining local information systems. Mr. Luna asked if there are countries

where companies are not required to turn over information on environmental performance? Ana Maria Magroe Silva noted that the European Union requires information and inspections. Portugal has been a member of the European Union since 1986. Self-monitoring is required of companies. Roy Watkinson noted that information/data extended beyond performance indicators to the actors in the equation (even those outside of the normally monitored sphere). Feedback is critical to the ground-workers (individuals either creating, responding to, preventing environmental problems).

Question 2: What methods can be used to ensure the accuracy of information? One commenter noted the value of the established quality assurance and quality control procedures. Other ideas included keeping a log for chain of custody.

Question 3: Is information useful and accessible for managers, inspectors, etc. in order to enable them to apply it effectively in their work? Greg Linsin gave the example that in relation to CFCs, comparing databases to see where differences and conflicts arise in relation to the same operators can reveal discrepancies, inconsistencies, and inaccuracy. Mr. Linsin questioned whether systems could be used to

verify the information coming in. Wolff discussed the use of numerically integrated profiling system (NIPS) that can be used for tasks including comparing imports/exports for what was entering in the border and for data mining. Programs (platforms) are available from the US government (Customs Services). Ms. Magro e Silva noted that the same inspector would never visit a given site twice to allow for different perspectives. Coordinators read reports to evaluate both the information and the different stories. Mr. Watkinson noted that regarding the European Union, use of standardizing reporting, available through Brussels (centralized), may be inefficient.

Question 4: Are countries using geographic information systems (GIS) to make linkages between data or to assist in environmental decision-making/priority setting? Dave Pascoe noted that the US is using GIS as an emergency response tool in the Great Lakes area (oil spills). GIS tools can be used to project where the spill will hit the shore and what species will be impacted. Resource managers can then use this information to prevent impact. For example, they can quickly locate and prioritize sensitive habitat areas for protection. In the long term, GIS can assist in determining if the environment is improving, based on work the government and industry has undertaken. Mr. Watkinson raised the issue of data transparency versus sensitivity by questioning how to maintain sensitive information on a need-to-know basis.

Ms. Miocic noted that in Croatia, systems exist for military but are not used for environmental purposes. The Ministry of the Environment is trying to encourage information sharing between the ministries so as to not duplicate cost and work. However, if the military collects the data through consultants, should Ministry of the Environment do it again?

Ken Markowitz argued that data

collection for environmental projects should be collected in a way that fulfills the intended purpose. Mr. Linsin noted the need to ensure that law enforcement officials do not direct the regulators specifically for criminal enforcement purposes.

Mr. Cruden noted that publicizing data informs people and also keeps companies in check (reputation). Tensions develop from concerns about security breaches (e.g. access to such information via terrorism). U.S. is drowning in data [although it, of course, should be noted that countries may be lacking data collection tools and infrastructure to maintain large databases] nevertheless, not every company is providing data. If every company does not, then the database may be incomplete or inaccurate. INECE should make recommendations about data-sharing efficiencies and about how data collection and database maintenance could be best managed. Wolff gave the example of a petroleum extractor in Niger Delta region. Corporations use monitoring systems effectively, because they recognize the benefits. However, it is not the same for governments (Again, this is big business, what about small/local businesses?). The majority of information is available - and examples include information layering for use by different users, RAMSAR (Wetland Convention) sites, using satellite imagery of sites to determine change over time (benefits of small cost). Lilliana Arrieta argued that this is not the reality for many user groups who could benefit from efficient data sharing. Developing countries have no data. The international environmental community requires that countries provide reports, but information is lacking. INECE could assess what countries could do to achieve this level.

Question 5: How are attorneys in Central America managing access to information from the Ministry of the

Environment? Corruption impacts the transfer of information. Mistrust by attorney generals exists as to what the lawyers will use the information for. These processes are not carried out in accordance to the law. Ministry of Environment is under criminal proceeding, as well as Forestry, etc. Change in government has led to increased coordination. In relation to NGOs, the Attorney General is interested in improving their relationship. NGOs have an easier time filing complaints than individuals (not international organizations). Many NGOs currently have filed complaints. Furthermore, there is a move to use the NGOs as witness, experts, and information providers. Ms. Magro e Silva warned that this is an area to be very careful with. As the system develops, NGOs play an increasingly less important role. Careful with the projects you give to NGOs because some projects can sidetrack them. If you give them a project, then they will shut up. Martinez noted that it is one thing to have a database on the state of environment, and another thing to have a database on a particular topic. Recommendation: in areas of limited resources, get someone who's a mover to convince someone with the money to invest. Or look for where the information already exists and try to get access to that.

In the US, programs have started out at critical sites (high sensitivity, such as the Chesapeake Bay), then developed from there. The disconnect between data handlers and data managers has developed over time (since the information became housed). Croatia has an obligation to create an environmental agency, and having been given the choice between a large or small agency chose to develop a small-scale one. The agency is using experts to focus on specific problems (e.g. getting assistance from the EU) and will then build from there.

Question 6: How can INECE assist information sharing and distribution? Determine what is the minimum "type" of information necessary to begin with. Start with international requirements (minimum standards). Information clearinghouse:

- Compile/consolidate location of data sources.
- Facilitate location of data-information (bases) for specific needs.
- Organize information
- Encourage/sponsor needs assessment for information (step before providing bases; educates/informs)
- Information training on environmental issues for judges
- Other considerations that arise are in some countries, inspectors are lawyers, and in others they are engineers, which creates information/communication divides. Not a question of which bases there are, but what people want to use databases for. Needs assessment. Clearly defining what an inspection is, what an inspector does leads to defining the parameters of data collection.
- Judges are under-informed of the gravity/impact of the environmental harms, providing minimal punishment, which results in no deterrence.
- Data is not enough. People working in compliance and enforcement need to translate the data into the harm.
- Train public prosecutors in environmental issues (Netherlands). Environmental workers can help train those within the judicial (penalties/deterrence) system.
- Returns the need to improve judicial familiarity with environmental infractions.
- Needs assessment for INECE should take into consideration the difference between the development of data/information collection systems AND information sharing (internal and trans-boundary).

- Latin America: frameworks exist on the regional level that provide a basis for coordinating work (Andean Pact, Mercosur, Caricom, Central American group)

3 CONCLUSION

- Devise a questionnaire for the Web site. What do people/groups need? What are the critical issues?
- Share information on experiences. Give examples from other countries. Organize simply, in a way that countries can access info & advice from similarly situated countries (experiences).

INECE could organize a mission for developed countries to assist with start up. For example, INECE could lend support by sending a team of experts to NIS countries to help organize and develop programs (note - Armenia receives a significant amount of help/resources, but does not know how to use them most effectively). INECE must consider that obstacles might be in the government system of the countries; they will need to develop/plan so that the "delegation" is well received and that the support is effective. INECE should further consider how to maintain momentum. If projects are to be effective, they must be sustainable beyond good ideas and base funds. For example, coordinating with the regional organizations (infrastructure) could assist in maintenance.

Discussion ends focused on assisting developing countries. Has the discussion sufficiently addressed the global issues? What are the recommendations for INECE in terms of industrialized country needs? Those interested in participating in an informal working group with INECE to advance these ideas were Roy Watkinson, Cesar Luna, Evan Wolff.