

TRAINING PROGRAMME BETWEEN GEORGIA AND THE NETHERLANDS ON WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ENFORCEMENT

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SUMMARY

In 2006, the Environmental Inspectorates of Georgia and the Netherlands took the initiative to develop and execute a training programme focusing on waste management and enforcement, with the aim to exchange theoretical and practical knowledge and experiences.

The training concentrated on three main issues: (1) environmental management and general principles; (2) waste management; and (3) enforcement of environmental regulations. These issues were highlighted in the development of the training, which took place around two “blocks.” Block A took place in Georgia and focused on the more theoretical aspects of the three topics; discussions on how to implement these issues in its daily practice also occurred. Block B took place in the Netherlands, during which theoretical issues were illustrated by site visits to (sanitary) landfills and incineration plants.

An essential focus of the whole training was the implementation of the “train the trainer” principle. It was the explicit intention to train Georgian inspectors on the main issues, so that they would be able to train other environmental inspectors within their inspectorate.

This article describes the background of the training programme, including establishment of the programme and experiences gained from both inspectorates. The implementation of the “train the trainer” principle is also discussed.

1 INTRODUCTION

Waste is a serious environmental issue in Georgia. The historical lack of policies focusing waste regulation coupled with steady economic growth contributes to the problem. Additionally, the physical infrastructure is not adequate to handle and dispose of waste in an environmental sound manner. Consequently, risks related to the impact on human health, safety, and the environment are increasing.

There are numerous examples demonstrating the mismanagement of hazardous waste in Georgia. For instance, separation of household waste does not take place. Waste burning mostly takes place at urban landfills, which greatly contributing to air pollution. Further, data on hazardous waste is very limited and controversial. There is no proper capacity in the country for treatment and disposal of (hazardous) waste, even though technical knowledge is locally available. Also, abandoned pesticide containers are not properly rinsed or disposed of, resulting in the potential leaching of chemicals into the soil and ground water.

The obstacles to improving waste management in Georgia are vast, including the seriousness of waste problems and the current political turmoil. However, the importance of such development can hardly be underestimated. Firstly, environmental protection and enforcement may well be a key factor in the development of Georgia, particularly concerning opportunities for ecological tourism. Secondly, the development of Georgia as a transit country (pipeline, shipping, road traffic) should carefully evaluate adverse effects of improper waste management; neglecting these issues will likely be counterproductive to the economic development of the country. As a result, cooperation between the Netherlands (a transit country of excellence) and Georgia on waste and enforcement issues will likely be fruitful.

There are a number of environmental laws and regulations in force in Georgia. However, adequate environmental policies are lacking in a number of areas. Among them, waste management is one of the most neglected areas. The recent implementation of the general waste management law was of great importance. This law sets out a number of important waste management aspects and principles, such as prevention, "the polluter pays principle," monitoring, waste classifications, and legal tasks and responsibilities of various administrations. It also sets an important "baseline" for enforcement. However, enforcement of environmental legislation has been in the juvenile stage for many years, but is slowly gaining importance.

2 ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

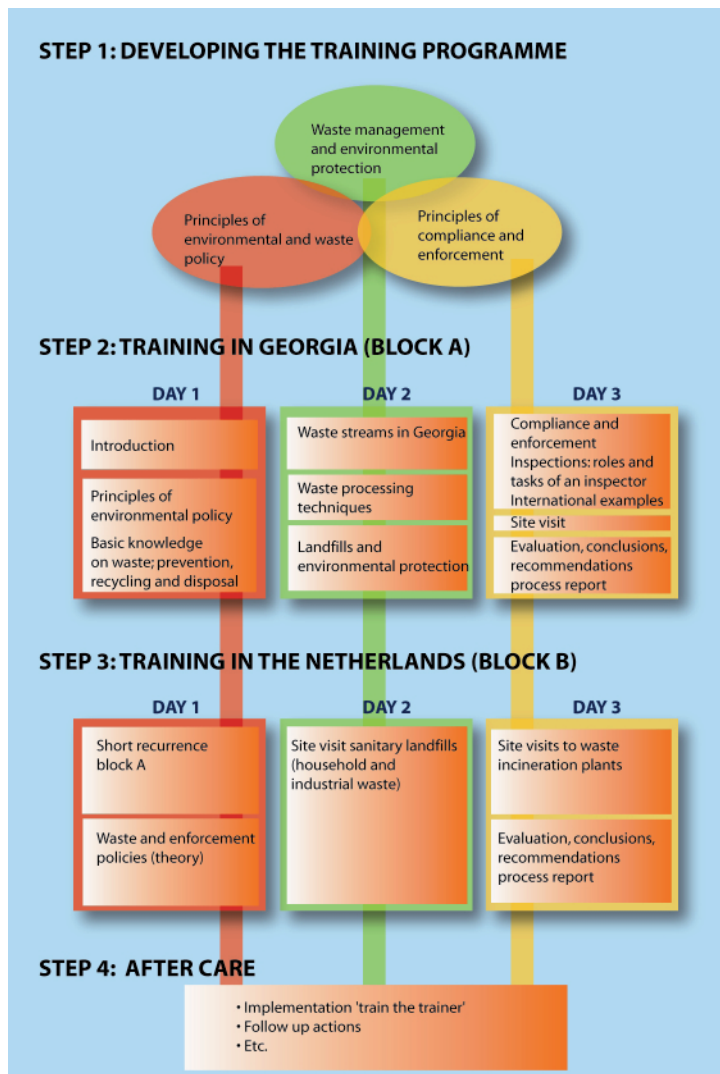
The Environmental Inspectorate of Georgia has appointed waste management and waste enforcement as a subject of high priority. Amongst other issues, the institutional design of the Inspectorate and the training of personnel is one of the areas of concern. Within the framework of the cooperation between the

Georgian Inspectorate and her sister organisation in the Netherlands (the VROM-Inspectorate), a training programme on waste management and enforcement was organized which fulfilled the needs of the Georgian Inspectorate and were developed in line with the mentioned areas of priority.

3 DESIGN OF THE TRAINING

The training programme was mainly executed in four phases. The general design of the training is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: General set up of the training programme



During the first phase, specification of training needs and development of a training manual took place. Inspectors who would join the training were selected. Important criteria for this selection – also with the “train the trainer” principle in mind – included general basic knowledge about environmental principles, strong knowledge about the (internal) organization of the Inspectorate, insight into “target” groups of regulation and enforcement, and profound skills in enforcement of environmental regulations.

In the second phase, a four day training session occurred in Georgia (block A) focusing primarily on theoretical aspects of environmental principles in general, waste management issues, and international enforcement principles.

Within the third phase, the Georgian inspectors-trainees came to the Netherlands and visited with their trainers/hosts a number of selected (sanitary and closed) industrial and municipal landfills and incinerators. During this phase theories of environmental protection and approaches to control and enforcement were illustrated in practice. Open discussions with the management of the facilities were also included.

During the final phase all experiences and findings were laid down in a process report with general findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The report was finally submitted to both Inspector Generals of the Environmental Inspectorates.

4 EXPERIENCES FROM BOTH INSPECTORATES

Apart from their interest in general policy approaches to waste management and enforcement, the Georgian trainees were particularly interested in the practical aspects of enforcement operations. Issues such as the communication with industry/enterprises, the preparation and actual execution of enforcement activities, the reporting thereof and the follow-up turned out to be of special importance. Also the (horizontal and vertical) coordination with other authorities received considerable interest. Although a one-to-one transformation from the Dutch to the Georgian situation is not realistic, the trainees nevertheless indicated that they absorbed basic ideas for future developments in their country. At the same time, it was realized that the general framework for enforcement in Georgia needs further strengthening.

Photo 1: Inspectors and trainers



The Georgian trainees emphasized the importance of having international contacts with countries that already have a well developed legal system and infrastructure in relation to waste management and control/inspection. Although it is realized that additional steps must be taken, the trainees clearly expect benefits from the training programme. One of the challenges for the trainees will be to “translate” what they learned from their Georgian colleagues in very practical, operational, and hands-on terms. The materials (brochures, manuals, checklists, etc) should probably be tailored towards specific issues or objects of inspection, like transboundary shipments of waste, land filling, polluting industrial sectors, etc.

The Dutch trainers were impressed by the eagerness of the Georgian trainees to learn more about waste regulation, waste management, and enforcement, along with the trainee’s motivation to extrapolate from this to useful policies for and approach to enforcement in the Georgian context. Also, the trainers experienced that an intensive process of preparation and interaction with their foreign colleagues was very useful and contributed to the success of the training. An open attitude from both sides is one of the key factors.

5 CRITICAL FACTORS OF SUCCESS

A number of issues can be identified as critical factors of success for the training programme and it’s follow-up.

First, the selection of inspectors for the training programme is essential. Basic knowledge on environmental, waste, and enforcement issues is an advantage. Moreover, inspectors must be capable of implementing gained knowledge in practice and possess the ability to advise and train other inspectors.

Second, input of local knowledge during the development and execution of the course was essential, not only from the point of view of collecting background information, but also for language, linguistic, and logistic matters. To facilitate this, a local consultant was involved in the project and translators were available during the whole course.

Furthermore, quality of regulations is clearly a critical factor for effective enforcement. Limited human and financial resources and “competition” from economic objectives makes it rather difficult to enforce environmental regulations adequately. Nevertheless, with the new act on waste management a further important step has been taken.

For the short term, it is essential that the trainees succeed in training their colleagues. This further dissemination of knowledge requires a very practical approach, tailored towards the specific operational requirements and needs of inspectors in the day-to-day reality of inspection and enforcement in Georgia. It is recommended that international assistance and cooperation programs also invest in these suggested practical steps as they forward.

6 CONCLUSION

The entire training focused on implementing the “train the trainer” principle, allowing the knowledge gained from this training to be utilized to train additional Georgian environmental inspectors within the Inspectorate. The initiative of the Environmental Inspectorates of Georgia and the Netherlands to develop and execute a training programme focusing on waste management and enforcement will likely result in positive impacts improving the environment and economy of Georgia.

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