

Public environmental management

Good public environmental management is fundamental to poor people's livelihoods and health. It decreases poverty and the risk of environmentally related conflicts, pollution and natural disasters. Good governance, decentralization and public access to information are important elements for improved management.

Environmental management concerns management of common resources and services such as land, water, air, biodiversity, energy, municipal services and urban transport. In this context, it refers mainly to the manner in which authorities interact with other institutions, the private sector, civil society and the public in terms of urban environmental administration, policy, legislation and information.

Key issues

Social aspects

Poor people often depend directly on a wide range of natural resources for their livelihoods and they are therefore the most affected when the environment is degraded or not accessible due to weak environmental management. Exposure to water and air pollution, toxic chemicals and environmental hazards such as floods, droughts and landslides are severe problems that poor people often cannot take action against. In urban areas the concentration of people and activities generates a large demand for water, energy and other natural resources and give rise to vast amounts of waste and pollution within a limited area.

Institutional aspects

Authorities dealing with environmental management in developing countries are often weak, with outdated, top-down



Indian survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy attend a protest march in New Delhi. Civil society has a central role in environmental management by raising awareness, expressing people's needs and demands and monitoring service delivery and observance of laws.

management and decision-making practices. Legislation is frequently inconsistent or unenforceable and resources are scarce. Environmental policies are seldom effective or efficient enough to stimulate improvements. Environmental management instruments, for example, Environmental Impact Assessments, permitting, environmental taxes and fees can be efficient tools for improving environmental performance and increasing the tax base, when used properly.

Corruption also contributes negatively to weak environmental management, for example, through an uncontrolled handling of permissions for extraction of natural resources or for a low rate of enforcement of pollution levels.

Environmental management cannot be treated separately from other development concerns. Improving environmental management in ways that benefit the poor requires policy and institutional changes that cut across sectors and that often lie

outside the control of environmental institutions. Changes in governance, economic policies, social policies and international relations are examples of such areas.

Integration of environmental considerations into other policy areas is essential to success, for example in energy, transport and industry. Strategic Environmental Assessment is an important tool for this.

The primary role of the government is to provide appropriate policies as well as regulatory and legal frameworks, including measures to enhance accountability and minimise risks for corruption. National environmental reforms need to be linked to policy implementation, planning and investment processes at the local level.

Decentralization of environmental management is not a guarantee of improved and more accountable decision-making but under the right conditions, local control of resources can mean that benefits from sustainable management will accrue locally. An important factor

when supporting decentralization is to ensure that the central government provides enough resources, both in terms of finances and capacity development for local governments to be able to fulfil their responsibilities. It is fundamentally important that the operations at both local and central government levels also become transparent.

Public participation

Civil society has a central role in environmental management by raising awareness, expressing people's needs and demands and monitoring service delivery and observance of laws. Strengthening civil society's role in environmental management requires improved governance in terms of public access to good quality environmental information and statistics, participatory decision-making processes and methods of judicial appeal. The mass media are especially important for awareness creation, public debate and information dissemination.

Strategic areas for support

- Capacity development of environmental administrations and other sector authorities at national, regional and local level, aiming at policy development, enactment and implementation of legislation and international agreements and sound management of ecosystems
- Support for developing and implementing integrated sectoral responsibilities within national environmental management, for example ministries of energy, transport and industry
- Development of strategic environmental assessments, environmental impact assessments, monitoring and reporting structures for environmen-

tal administrations and authorities

- Strategic planning for environmental infrastructure and technology, aiming at reforms and improved service in the municipal service sector
- Development and implementation of national and local plans and strategies for environmentally sustainable development
- Improved environmental information management for increased public awareness and enhanced private sector cooperation
- Empowerment of civil society to monitor and influence environmental management policy and planning processes.

To be aware of

Assistance in environmental management should be long-term and adapted to the capacity of the cooperation partner to enable real capacity development.

It is essential to involve and strengthen cooperation between all levels of administration at national, regional and local level, based on the different authorities' mandates, in order for the efforts to be sustainable and cover the whole chain of policymaking, implementation and use of services or natural resources.

Support should be focused on processes as well as results but avoid short-term interventions, for example, in drafting legislation where the public has not participated in the process.

Examples of Sida support

- Twinning between the Ukrainian and Russian Ministries of Environment and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.
- Development and implementation of Local Environmental Action Plans in the western Balkans.

Swedish resources

Swedish public agencies have extensive experience of working with environmental management and are increasingly active in development cooperation. Institutions presently active in development cooperation include: Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Statistics Sweden, the Swedish Chemicals Inspectorate, county board administrations and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. Sweden also has a broad range of private enterprises in the field of public environmental management.

Sida references

Available at www.sida.se

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Urban Issue Paper on Industrial Environment

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Urban Issue Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation

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Tannerfeldt, G and Ljung, P (2006) *More Urban – Less Poor, An introduction to urban development and management*, London, Earthscan

REMINDERS

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| <input type="checkbox"/> What is the knowledge and awareness level regarding the importance of public environmental management for poverty reduction in the country? | <input type="checkbox"/> What are the mandates and institutional arrangements between different authorities and administrations at national, regional and local level? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do civil society organizations engage in environmental management discussions? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What is the status of the country's environmental legislation and are the existing laws enforced? If not, what are the reasons? | <input type="checkbox"/> What are the constraints for the responsible authorities on drafting and implementing environmental legislation? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is environmental information accessible to the public? |