Decentralization Community

Environment

Water & Environmental Sanitation Network (WES-Net India)

The Decentralization Community
Solution Exchange for WES-Net India

Consolidated Reply

Query: State of Environment Report and District Planning, from EPCO and ERM India, Bhopal (Examples).

Compiled by Alok Srivastava and Preeti Soni, Resource Persons; additional research provided by Happy Pant, Research Officer and Ramya Gopalan, Research Associate
10 February 2006

Original Query: By Lokendra Thakkar, EPCO and Lalit Bhandari, ERM India, Bhopal
Posted: 25 January 2006

Environmental Planning and Coordination Organization (EPCO), Bhopal is a state-level advisory body to the Government of Madhya Pradesh on environmental issues. Currently EPCO is implementing a DFID[*] project for mainstreaming environmental concerns in district planning process for ensuring environmental sustainability and since State of Environment (SoE) is one such tool for mainstreaming .

I would be interested to know from members about any model that has been used in the preparation of the SoE or similar reports within the district planning process. I would specifically be interested in the following:

1. The criteria for selecting districts for preparing District level SoE reports.
2. The information needs for preparing SoE reports in the decentralized system of governance and the framework/structure of the SoE reports.

* Department of International Development of the Govt. of UK

Responses received with thanks from:

1. **V. Kurian Baby**, **Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF), Kerala**
2. **Bonani Dhar**, **Consultant, World Bank, New Delhi**
3. **Alok Srivastava**, **UNDP, New Delhi**
4. **B Ragupathy**, **Action for Integrated Rural and Tribal Development Social Service Society (AIRTDS), Tenali, Andhra Pradesh**
5. **Shrinivas Kowligi, Price Waterhouse Coopers, New Delhi, Response 1; Response 2**
6. **Vinod Vyasulu**, **Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore**
7. **Naveen G V**, **Centre for Sustainable Development, Bangalore**
8. **Balakrishnan Elangovan**, **Ramana Research Group, Chennai**
9. **Ajit Sharma**, **CECOEDECON, Jaipur**
10. **Lokendra Thakkar**, **EPCO, Bhopal**

Further contributions are welcome!

Summary of Responses

Members from both the WES Net and Decentralization Communities provided a range of models used in the preparation of State of Environment (SoE) reports in district planning process, and offered their own experiences in preparing environmental plans including selection criteria and plan information needs.

SoE Models mentioned included:
- Kerala, where a resource survey and mapping was integrated into a decentralised planning exercise.
- Tamil Nadu, which covered priority issues pertaining to the environment and provided a benchmark for future environmental reporting.
- Chandigarh, whose SoE was similar to that of Tamil Nadu, but added recommendations advocating a prevention-based environmental policy.
- Bangalore, which offered a model for an urban area, producing an "Environment Report Card"
- Kolkata, where the framework and context for the SoE study was according to Urban Local Bodies, subsequently integrated on a regional basis.
- Additional examples were offered in UNEP reports for other states and regions of India as well as other South Asian countries.

Members' felt that producing SoEs generally increased the awareness and understanding of environmental trends and conditions, thereby providing a foundation for improved decision-making at all levels and a better measurement of progress towards sustainability. Members also stressed that SoE reports should include a consensus based action plan emphasizing on significant community participation essential within the context of decentralized district planning processes.

Key information generally mentioned in formulating district environment profiles included assessments of current conditions of government lands, potential of forest reserves, pollution areas, and funding opportunities for prevention efforts. Other inputs referred to included

watershed mapping, integrating local level schemes and identifying programs and alternatives for community participation. Assessments and recommendations should correspond to the mandates of the organizations responsible for addressing them, to ensure they are taken up. Information needs should relate to the requirements of a decentralized system of governance. Costs, benefits and technical considerations should be incorporated into assessments so as to facilitate the prioritization of demands by elected councils.

Suggested **Selection Criteria** for identifying Districts for SoE reporting were: the complexity of environmental issues, spatial scales, and institutional capacities. Ideally SoEs should be prepared for every district or local administration as an integral part of the local planning process so that they can incorporate local thinking and priorities and be aligned with the broader economic culture and social perspectives.

Contributions relating to these key issues from the members of both Communities are highlighted in the examples detailed below.

Examples

Kerala *(From V. Kurian Baby, Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF), Kerala)*

The Natural Resources Data Management System (NRDMS) under the Department of Science ad Technology, GoI, is an initiative promoting integrated resource survey and mapping for decentralized planning. At the Panchayat level an experimental model using resource mapping with people's participation was supported by DST and UNDP in Kerala during the early nineties, covering around 25 Gram Panchayats involving mainly local volunteers, trained by scientific institutions. During this coordinated endeavor with the Centre for Earth Sciences Studies, Kerala State Land Use Board, Government of Kerala, Local bodies, NGOs and the general public environmental appraisal maps were prepared by integrating the maps on land form, surface material, unit-wise slope, water availability and the existing land use pattern. Th experience enumerated how environmental gains are provided most effectively when natural resource management is done scientifically at the lowest appropriate levels and incorporating a participatory approach particularly within a three tier Panchayati Raj system. See NRDMS

Karnataka

From Alok Srivastava, UNDP, Delhi

The Department of Forests, Ecology & Environment, and Government of Karnataka has prepared State of the Environment Report and Action Plan with assistance from the World Bank. The main objectives of this report have been to identify and prioritize environmental issues, recommend cost effective policies, investments and institutional arrangements and finally institutional capacity building at the local level. This model provides for a holistic analysis of various environmental aspects grouped under a wide range of agendas. For further details see SoE - Karnataka

From Naveen G V, Centre for Sustainable Development, Bangalore

The Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD) has prepared a first-of-its kind 'Environment Report Card (ERC)' of Bangalore which presents the 'state of environment' of the city. The ERC study involved a questionnaire sample survey of 1200 households and 80 commercial

establishments across the city. The main environmental issues of Bangalore have been examined with reference to indicators such as air pollution, traffic congestion, lack of open spaces, drainage, waste collection, quantity & quality of water, sewerage, noise from industries, health impacts, etc. Additionally, monitoring of key environmental parameters like air, water quality and noise has also been carried out across the city. See Environment Report Card

Tamil Nadu

From *B Ragupathy, Action for Integrated Rural and Tribal Development Social Service Society (AIRTDS), Tenali, Andhra Pradesh*

In Tamilnadu, four district environment profiles have been organised and there is a separate directorate to execute environment plans. Usually, the exercise is given to a technical team through consultancy with terms of reference. Alternatively the department itself can take up with the involvement of consultants. It is suggested to have district itself to be a unit district SoE reports can be prepared. If prevailing conditions do not warrant it, divisional environment report may be prepared.

From *Balakrishnan Elangovan, Ramana Research Group, Chennai*

In Tamil Nadu, widespread awareness has been created relating to Environmental Management Plan for urban areas and the directorate has also drawn plans for preparation of the same for Tiruvannamalai district. Similarly the local level environmental action plan has also been prepared by Ramana Research Group, covering major districts through river basin studies, which indicate the status in a micro level.

From *Happy Pant, Research Officer*

The SoE report provides a general picture of the state of the bio- physical and socio-economic condition and an understanding of how human activities affect the environmental conditions and it's implications on economic well being. It brings all the data available (scattered in the archives of various Government departments and agencies) to one place from which the required data can be accessed and collected. The environmental challenges in the state and efforts to tackle them through institutional mechanism, increased public awareness and legislation are explained towards the end of the report.

Madhya Pradesh *(from Alok Srivastava, UNDP, New Delhi)*

The Regional Plan of Khajuraho Region spread over the districts of Chhatarpur and Tikamgarh in Madhya Pradesh is an attempt to look at various environmental parameters at the regional level and then incorporate the critical factors thus identified into district level planning. This project undertaken by The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, MP and implemented by Development Alternatives, New Delhi looked at the environmental issues and parameters in the region in a comprehensive manner. An assessment of the land use, soil and land degradation, state of water bodies, irrigation facilities, forest and pasture lands, animal wealth of the region, status of sub-soil water, carrying capacity of the environment for establishment of industries, archaeological and cultural heritage etc was undertaken and a model using the results so derived in the making of development plan of the region was subsequently suggested.

Kolkata *(from Shrinivas Kowligi, PricewaterhouseCoopers, New Delhi)*

In Kolkata Metro Area PwC working with the State Govt and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) has put in place a framework and context for an SoE study to be taken up ULB wise, and later incorporate these on regional basis. This SoE study and Action Plan to be undertaken soon will serve as an input into the Draft Development Planning (DDP) process that has been triggered in the ULBs covering infrastructure, land use, environment, socio-economic development and other internal financial and human resource capacity building. Additionally rigorous participatory & bottom-up planning process is being engaged in by these ULBs.

Punjab *(from Happy Pant, Research Officer)*

The Punjab SOE report 2005 focuses on three issues of environment–air, water, biodiversity and their inter-linkages. It provides the people and decision makers a base to by raising their information levels about their current state of environment highlighting environmental issues that warrant immediate remedial measures highlighting environmental issues that warrant immediate remedial measures. See SoE - Punjab

International Examples

Australia *(from Happy Pant, Research Officer)*

State of the Environment (SoE) reporting occurs at both the national and state/ territory level in Australia. National SoE Reports provide information about environmental, heritage conditions, trends and pressures for the Australian continent, surrounding seas and Australia's external territories. The indicators have been grouped into environmental themes- atmosphere, biodiversity etc. Most States/ Territories of Australia (Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia) produce State SoE reports which contain information about issues affecting the state's environment and are designed for use by the community and policy makers to help inform decision-making across all spheres of government.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

Environment Report Card *(from Naveen G V, Centre for Sustainable Development, Bangalore)*
Centre for Sustainable Development, Bangalore, 2005
http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/environment/cr/res08020601.doc (Size: 36 KB)
> *Draws upon the expertise of people in various disciplines to design survey and analyze the various environmental issues as perceived by the citizens of Bangalore*

From *Alok Srivastava, UNDP, Delhi*

Fifth Citizens' Report on the state of India's Environment
http://csestore.cse.org.in/store1.asp?sec_id=1&subsec_id=1 (paid publication)
> *It is a comprehensive two-volume dossier on environmental issues, events, policies, practices and challenges in India, along with statistics on environment-related facts*

State of Environment Report - Karnataka
Department of Ecology and Environment, Government of Karnataka
Synthesis - http://parisara.kar.nic.in/PDF/Synthesis.pdf (Size: 1010 KB) available at,

Main Page - http://parisara.kar.nic.in/soer.htm
> This synthesis identifies environmental issues and recommends ways to strengthen the capacity of local institutions for setting environmental priorities

State of the Environment Report – New Zealand
Matamata Piako district, New Zealand, 1999, can be found at
http://www.mpdc.govt.nz/PoliciesPlans/SOE/profile1.htm
> Provides the SoE report for the Matamata Piako district in New Zealand

Additional documentation identified by Happy Pant, Research Officer

State of India's Environment: from 'First Citizen's Report' up-to 'Fourth Citizen's report', Centre for Science and Environment, CSE, New Delhi
http://csestore.cse.org.in/store1.asp?sec_id=1&subsec_id=1 (paid publications)
- **SOE 1** makes the reader realize the importance of environment in developing countries.
- **SOE 2** describes major environmental changes in India. It's a balance sheet of India's resources and focuses attention on the effect of ecological degradation on the poor
-**SOE 3** is a book on the changing ecology of Indo-Gangetic Plains, extending from eastern Uttar Pradesh to West Bengal. It kicked up a controversy on role of deforestation in floods
-**SOE 4** documents India's millennia-old wisdom in community-based water management systems.

State of Environment Report – Chandigarh
Department of Environment, Chandigarh Administration, 2004
http://chandigarh.nic.in/whatsnew/soer.htm
> It provides a basis for measurement of progress towards sustainability highlighting environmental issues that warrant immediate remedial measures.

State of Environment Report - Punjab
Punjab State Council for Science & Technology, Chandigarh, 2005
http://www.punjabenvironment.com/SoE_Pb_Digi.htm
> Illustrates state of environment in the state within the categories of air, water and biodiversity

State of Environment (SoE) – India
UNEP Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific, 2001
http://www.rrcap.unep.org/reports/soe/indiasoe.cfm
> The report discusses the five priority issues- land degradation, biodiversity, air pollution, management of fresh water resources, and hazardous waste management

State of Environment Reporting on the Internet- A Cookbook, Grid Arendal & UNEP
http://www.grida.no/soe/cookbook/cdbook.pdf (1.29MB)
> Straight-forward guidelines on how to make your own State-of-the-Environment report.

Integrating Environmental Considerations into Economic Policy Making Processes
Virtual conference of UNESCAP, last updated 2003
http://www.unescap.org/drpad/vc/
> It examines country specific experiences & uses ideas/practices to enhance everyone's efforts to achieve sustainable development without destroying the environmental base

Additional documentation identified by Ramya Gopalan, Research Associate

State of Environment Report - Tamil Nadu
http://www.envis.tn.nic.in/Docu/SOE-1.pdf (Size: 167 KB)
> *Provides a general picture of the state of bio- physical and socio-economic condition, aims to provide a benchmark for future environmental reporting & serve as database*

State of Environment Report – Kerala
Kerala State Pollution Control Board
http://www.keralapcb.org/environnmetal_status.htm
> *This report is an attempt to outline the status of Kerala's environment and analyse the factors affecting the environment.*

State of Environment Report - Chandigarh
Punjab State Council for Science & Technology, Chandigarh, 2004
http://www.punjabenvironment.com/SoE_ChD_Digi.htm
> *The report provides information on air and noise pollution and land degradation in Chandigarh with recommendations to improve the SoE*

Department of Environment Fact Sheet, Government of Tamilnadu
http://www.environment.tn.nic.in/Plans.htm
> *This link provides an update of the various projects and programs undertaken by the Tamilnadu Government*

DANIDA WS PROJECT, Government of Tamil Nadu
http://www.viluppuram.tn.nic.in/danida.htm
> *Provides information on a DANIDA funded Water and Sanitation Project in Villupuram & Cuddalore Districts in Tamil Nadu, focusing on DANIDA Women in Development Policy*

State of the Environment - South Asia
UNEP Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific, 2001
http://www.rrcap.unep.org/reports/soe/sa_part1.pdf (Size: 548 KB)
> *A discussion of the existing biophysical profile, socio-economic and cultural patterns, political and governance structures and the economic base of the South Asian region*

Recommended Organizations

The Natural Resources Data Management System (NRDMS), Department of Science ad Technology, Government of India *(from V. Kurian Baby, Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF), Kerala)*
http://nrdms.gov.in/index.asp
> *A lead national initiative in promoting integrated resource survey and mapping for decentralized planning.*

Cities Environment Report on the Internet, (CEROI), Norway *(from Shrinivas Kowligi, PricewaterhouseCoopers, New Delhi)*
http://www.ceroi.net/
> *To access model for SoE / District Planning, CEROI provides a framework for preparation of SoE*

Ramana Research Group, Chennai *(from Balakrishnan Elangovan, Ramana Research Group, Chennai)*
http://www.rrgindia.org/enter.htm

Recommended for its local level environmental action plan that covers major districts through river basin studies

Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD), Bangalore
Public Utility Building, 21/F, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bangalore 560 008
Ph: (+91) 80 57603839 fax: (+91) 80 25323050
> *Recommended for additional information on the Environment Report Card (ERC) prepared on Bangalore city*

PricewaterhouseCoopers, New Delhi
http://www.pwc.com/in/eng/main/home/index.html
> *Recommended for working with the State Government and Urban Local Bodies in Kolkata Metro Area to provide a framework and context for a SoE study*

From Happy Pant, Research Officer

SEAMCAP (Strengthening Environmental Assessment & Monitoring and Capabilities for Asia and the Pacific)
http://www.rrcap.unep.org/pub/pub-nsoe.cfm
> *This project of UNEP, Bangkok is undertaken to produce SoE reports at national, sub-regional, & regional levels providing guidance on action planning*

Centre for Environmental Studies (CES), Bhubaneswar
http://www.cesorissa.org/
> *CES, dedicated to ensuring clean environment in Orissa by running different awareness programmes has the EMCB-ENVIS node for preparation of the SOE report for Orissa.*

Recommended Contacts

Shrinivas Kowligi, PricewaterhouseCoopers, New Delhi
shrinivas.v.k@in.pwc.com
> *Recommended for his work within the Governance Reforms and Infrastructure Group of PwC*

B Ragupathy, Action for Integrated Rural and Tribal Development Social Service Society (AIRTDS), Tenali, Andhra Pradesh
airtds@airtds.org
> *Recommended for his involvement in organizing district environment plans*

Recommended Websites

From Happy Pant, Research Officer

SOE Gateway
http://www.grida.no/soe/
> *Provides links to the state-of-the-environment reports from countries and regions of the world.*

Environmental Information Centre (EIC)
http://www.eicinformation.org/internal.asp?id=13&type=normal

EIC's customized information and data helps in establishing environmental status of various areas in India; it also comes handy for preparation of state of environment reports.

From [Ramya Gopalan](), Research Associate

Indiastat.com
http://www.indiastat.com/india/ShowData.asp?secid=110&ptid=11&level=2 (subscription required)
> *Provides statistical data on environmental programs and projects across the country*

ENVIS - Environmental Management Capacity Building (EMCB) Institutional/ Government/ NGO Nodes section available at,
http://gbpihed.nic.in/envis/envislinks.htm#Jammu%20&%20Kashmir

> *This section of the ENVIS site provides some contact details and draft reports of the various State of Environment Reports categorized by State*

Responses in Full

[V. Kurian Baby](), Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF), Kerala

The Natural Resources Data Management System (NRDMS) under the Department of Science ad Technology, GoI is a lead national initiative in promoting integrated resource survey and mapping for decentralized planning. An experimental model in Panchayat level resource mapping with people's participation was supported by DST and UNDP in Kerala during the early nineties, covering around 25 Grama Panchayats (Kerala's GP is having an average population of 30000). Local volunteers, trained by scientific institutions played the lead role in preparing the spatial resource profile. It was a coordinated endeavor among the Centre for Earth Sciences Studies, Kerala State Land Use Board, Government of Kerala, Local bodies, NGOs and the general public. During the exercise, environmental appraisal maps were prepared by integrating the maps on land form, surface material, unit-wise slope, water availability and the existing land use pattern. A land use plan, including essential conservational requirements was also recommended. GoK has also brought out Pachayat Level Resource Mapping – An Approach Paper, which include, general guidelines, parameters to be investigated, structured format for survey and the detailed procedure for synthesizing the Environmental Appraisal. Subsequently, under the decentralized planning process in the State, Village/Block and District, Development Plans are being formulated. GoK has also given detailed instructions to each tier of the PRIs to prepare their annual plans on the basis of watersheds. Of course, environmental concerns did not receive adequate attention as it should have been under plan allocations, still the efforts can provide tremendous learning ground.

Ideally, SoE could be prepared for very district or lower level as a part of their planning process, if the State has meaningfully decentralized (not de-concentrated). However, if the districts are to be prioritized, we may follow a process of rapid environmental mapping at least on the parameters; viz., land, water, air, forests etc., an Expert Group constituted for the purpose rank the district on the basis of a composite environmental degradation index with provision for disclosure. Since we have a three tier PRI system, the Activity Mapping prepared by the State (if done) on the behest of GoI (ess entially to avoid overlapping of powers, functions and responsibilities) and the provisions of the State Panchayat Raj Act, related to environmental aspects shall also be considered, while preparing the district SoE. Though not explicitly addressed, natural resource management, if scientifically done by institutions at the lowest

appropriate level using participatory approaches in itself would provide rich environmental dividends.

Bonani Dhar, **Consultant, World Bank, New Delhi**

The need to mainstream various environmental concerns in a district planning process is highlighted by my experience on a DANIDA funded Water and Sanitation Project in Villupuram and Cuddalore Districts in Tamil Nadu, translating DANIDA Women in Development Policy in action. The Pilot Project made an attempt to initiate women self-help groups to maintain the handpumps, collect user fees from the beneficiary households. Water and Sanitation committees were formed with the Panchayat members. Women mechanics were trained to repair the handpumps, with 21% women mechanices in the two project districts. As a result, women demonstrated well managed handpumps, clean surroundings, waste water utilization in kitchen gardens and maintenance of tubewells, thereby ensuring equity in water distribution and efficient management of the resource.

This model could be replicated any where in India with self help groups being promoted by the State Governments in an intensive manner. Community managed, decentralized decision making and execution takes off the burden of the District Administration in a big way. This is one aspect that requires due consideration, i.e the role that participatory processes play in the management of natural resources, particularly that which caters to the form of decentralized governance in the preparation of SoE reports.

I would be interested to know from members of both communities if such participatory projects have been operational and included in the preparation of SoE reports in other parts of India.

Alok Srivastava, **UNDP, New Delhi**

Enviromental issues have assumed great importance at the local level. They have a huge impact on development and therefore these issues/concerns should be factored in when going for district planning. The need is to develop a framework for incorporating such factors and concerns in the District Plan. The step taken by EPCO and DFID is very much in the right direction.

I know of a regional plan (The Regional Planning of Khajuraho Region spread over the districts of Chhatarpur and Tikamgarh in Madhya Pradesh) where an attempt was made to look at various environmental parameters at the regional level and then incorporate the critical factors into district level planning. The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, MP undertook this project and Development Alternatives, New Delhi (an NGO working towards integrated development) implemented the project. A plan was developed which looked at, in a comprehensive manner, the environmental issues and parameters in the region. It suggested a model of using the results so derived in the making of development plan of the region. An assessment of made of the land use, soil and land degradation, state of water bodies, irrigation facilities, forest and pasture lands, animal wealth of the region, status of sub-soil water, carrying capacity of the environment for establishment of industries, archaeological and cultural heritage etc.

The results of the environment status so found were used to suggest a development plan for the region keeping in mind the sustainability of the environment and also how to use the available resources in a sustainable and useful manner.

Also, the master plan of a region is basically based on various issues related to the environment

and we can easily derive useful parameters that should be looked at, when preparing an environmental status report of the district. It would be useful to look at the Citizens' Report on the state of India's environment prepared by the Centre of Science and Environment, New Delhi (I think their fifth report is out now) and see which parameters will be important and critical from district perspective. Many states have also prepared SoE reports; chief among them being MP, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka (http://parisara.kar.nic.in/soer.htm).

I would also like to point out a website http://www.grida.no/soe/index.htm that gives links to state-of-the-environment reports from countries and regions of the world. These are documents having regional (many countries) perspective, yet some parameters may be found useful. Another report done for a district in New Zealand can be found at (http://www.mpdc.govt.nz/PoliciesPlans/SOE/profile1.htm).

Hope members find the information useful.

B Ragupathy, Action for Integrated Rural and Tribal Development Social Service Society (AIRTDS), Tenali, Andhra Pradesh

In Tamilnadu, we have been organising district environment profiles and there is a separate directorate to execute environment plans. I have myself organised for four districts environment profiles. The most significant factors to identify in these profiles are
- Government lands and their current conditions whether revenue or PWD or natham - land in residential area in panchayats
- Forest reserves and their potential
- Pollution areas and possible resources that can be raised to prevent
- Possibilities of organising or rejuvenating eco clubs at schools
- Mapping of watersheds and possible plantations around it
- Pollution monitoring
- Alternatives for the community to preserve their environment
- developing indicators to local environment monitoring
- Human resource available to manage and the estimated budget to achieve the minimum environment protection
- Possible local level schemes and programs to which these environment activities can be integrated - kitchen garden, social forestry, panchayat and municipal programs for park and playgrounds.

Usually, the exercise is given to A TECHNICAL team through consultancy with terms of reference. Alternatively the department itself can take up with the involvement of consultants. It is suggested to have district itself to be a unit and you can prepare for each district SoE reports. If the present conditions do not warrant it, you can have divisional environment report and the forest divisions can be a unit here.

Shrinivas Kowligi, PricewaterhouseCoopers, New Delhi

Response 1:

I work with the Governance Reforms and Infrastructure Group of PwC. I can share with you our views on the same.

1. Model for SoE / District Planning: CEROI provides a framework for preparation of SoE. There are many models available for City planning which can be suitably adapted for a District Level Planning Process. From our experience, the SoE should go forward into development of a consensus based action plan; else the SoE remains only a report.

2. Criteria for selecting districts: Can be combination of criteria (complexity of enviro issues - urban / rural interface, industrial - agro interface, high variations in topography / agro-climatic conditions, etc. - say a total of 80% weight & give some weightage of proactiveness of agencies / institutions in dist to work together to resolve issues, say 20% wt)

3. Information needs for preparing SoE reports in the decentralized system of governance: Point 1 will answer this query to a large extent. Critical issue in context of decentralised governance especially in Indian context - is the structure of institutional mandates and therefore key input is the Institutional role / mandate mapping. The SoE assessment and action plan arriving therefrom should dovetail its assessment and recommendations to the prevailing institutional structure, else actions if recommended at broad level fall through the cracks for implementation and they do not map on to mandates of any agency clearly / uniquely.

Vinod Vyasulu, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore

There is much value in these technical exercises on environmental planning and district planning. Yet, how does one ensure that these reflect what the people of the area want--how does this technical information inform local thinking? The 73rd and 74th amendments provide for three tiers of local self governments in rural areas, for municipalities and for districts, a District Planning Committee, which is an elected body with constitutional status. For metropolises, there is the provision for a Metropolitan Planning Committee. Few states have even constituted these bodies.

Our discussions must show how all these inputs to these bodies--by which I understand the elected body, not the civil servants of the state governments who are to service them, or NGOs which, however good their work, do not have either the reach or the legitimacy of the elected councils. Can we think of ways in which all this technical input gets processed in various ways so that the elected councils engage with the information and prioritize various demands in a democratic manner? After all, the national five year plans gets acceptance because of the national development council approving them--similarly, at a local level, the DPC and the MPC must do their bit. There is a lot of skepticism about local governments--even resistance to the use of this term. The belief that the local governments are uneducated and not above board is unjustified.

If anyone in this network has experience of going beyond the platitudes of working with these bodies I will be grateful to learn of the work done

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Shrinivas Kowligi, PricewaterhouseCoopers, New Delhi

Response 2:

We at PwC have worked with the State Govt and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in Kolkata Metro Area to put in place a framework and context for a SoE study to be taken up ULB wise, and later

sew it up on regional basis (as most ULBs are geographically contiguous with their environment issues interlinked / spilling into one another (literally).

This SoE study and Action Plan to be undertaken soon, is to serve as an input into the Draft Development Planning (DDP) process that has been triggered in the ULBs. The DDPs are 5 year municipal plans covering infrastructure, land use, enviro, socio-economic dev (limited to ULB mandate as per laws) and their own internal financial and human resource cap bldg. Many ULBs are going thru a process of self-discovery as they are currently treading along a rigorous participatory & bottom-up planning process.

Will be glad to chip in with our specific experience against any specific queries.

Naveen G V, Centre for Sustainable Development, Bangalore

The Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD) has prepared a first-of-its kind 'Environment Report Card of Bangalore' which was released by Sri. M. V. Rajasekharan, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Planning, Government of India on 3rd December 2005.

This Environment Report Card (ERC) presents the 'state of environment' of Bangalore, a city caught in the dilemmas of economic development and environmental sustainablility, mainly from the perspective of its citizens.

The ERC study involved a questionnaire sample survey of 1200 households and 80 commercial establishments across the city. The main environmental issues of Bangalore have been examined with reference to indicators such as air pollution, traffic congestion, lack of open spaces, drainage, wate collection, quantity & quality of water, sewerage, noise from industries, health impacts, etc.

In addition, monitoring of key environmental parametes like air, water quality and noise was carried out across the city.

Please see an abstract of the ERC. Any anybody wanting to purchase a copy (Rs. 40/- + postage) may write / email to us at the address indicated below.

Balakrishnan Elangovan, Ramana Research Group, Chennai

In Tamil Nadu, widespread awareness has been created relating to Environmental Management Plan for urban areas and the directorate has also drawn plan for preparation of the same for Tiruvannamalai, one of the great pilgrim centres in South India. Similarly the local level environmental action plan has also been prepared covering major districts through river basin studies, which indicate the status in a micro level. This has been prepared by Ramana Research Group, Chennai, which may be useful for members in the future.

Ajit Sharma, CECOEDECON, Jaipur

The Query posed by Mr Thakkar EPCO and Mr. Bhandari, ERM is a very straightforward question for formulation of the SoE report. Indeed working for developing the State of Environment report

at district level is a welcome initiative and would definitely facilitate for the adequate planning process at the district level in particular and India at large. At this moment however, I would not be able to satisfy and contribute directly to the query.

But certainly, I would like to draw their attention towards the perspective of environment and identification of stakeholders, which would be crucial for the formulation of the reports.   In the strict sense there are interest groups and each group has a specific claim over the environment resources. There was no bone of contention between various stakeholders for use of raw materials during the days of its abundant. But the continuous degradation without considering for sustained availability; has led to contentions between them. Each stakeholder under contention is lobbing very actively to defend and promote own interests for inclusion in policy matters.

Environment can be termed as a Life support system (LSS) and helps in sustenance of life and provides livelihood opportunity directly or indirectly to majority of the population especially poor people who are more dependent on the environment particularly for their livelihood. So, while selecting the district for SoE one should largely focus on the issues of livelihood sustainability to the poor people.

[Lokendra Thakkar](#), Environmental Planning and Coordination Organisation (EPCO), Bhopal

We would like to bring to your attention that presently the State of Madhya Pradesh has World Bank funded poverty alleviation projects- the District Poverty Initiative Program (DPIP) running in 14 districts. Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihood Project (MP-RLP) funded by Department for International Development (DPIP) is also being implemented in the State. Apart from this MP has been the pioneering State to prepare human development index at the state level and is planning to prepare the district level human development reports.

Madhya Pradesh comprises 11 agro climatic zones which give rise to the rich biodiversity of the state. Representation of these agro climatic zones to the extent possible has been one of the criteria for selecting the districts. Apart from this some of the districts, which are predominantly tribal, have also been selected for preparing State of Environment Reports. The selected districts also represent high forest cover (Sheopur-57%) as well as low forest cover (Dhar-8%).

We have immensely benefited by the deliberations held on this forum and thank members for their contributions.
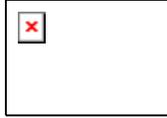

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for WES-Net at se-decn_se-wes@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-decn][se-wes] Query: State of Environment Report and District Planning, from EPCO and ERM India, Bhopal (Examples). Additional Response."

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