



USAID
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Asia: Improving Air Quality Through Public Participation

Activity: Improving Air Quality in Asian Cities through Public Participation
Program Area: Urban Energy; Energy Sector Governance
Implementer: Advanced Engineering Associates International
Geographic focus: Asia
Duration: September 1998 – December 2004



Compressed Natural Gas cylinder in a car.

Project Background

The objective of this project is to strengthen the rule of law in Asian energy and environment sectors by enhancing public participation in governance institutions. This process is being achieved by USAID in cooperation with Advanced Engineering Associates Inc. (AEAI), and Resources for the Future (RFF) team in partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council. The team is working on the development of procedures for public participation (e.g. information access, public comment

procedures, public campaigns, litigation, NGO and government-led efforts, legal structures and cultures), analyzing specific experiences in using such procedures, and utilizing this analysis to build capacity and enhancing skills for public participation in different Asian contexts.


This focus on practice and implementation complements USAID's conceptual work in developing a framework for democratic governance and indicators for public participation in the energy sector.

Development Objectives

Specifically, the work focuses on citizen efforts to improve air quality in Asia, but it has broader applicability for public participation in the areas of policy implementation and rule of law as they relate to the energy and environment sectors.

Project Approach

The project identified and catalogued efforts toward environmental public participation from throughout Asia and initiated a process to consider how to transfer lessons from those efforts between these countries and practitioners.



It is conceived as the initial step in a larger effort to build capacity and share experience, and thereby assist NGOs, public participation experts and other stakeholders to open up productive avenues for public participation in environmental and energy decision-making.

of each workshop consisted of open discussion initiated by a designated discussant.

Project Results

A final workshop examined findings of a separate AID-funded effort to understand the Indian Supreme Court's order that required commercial vehicles in Delhi to use compressed natural gas (CNG) in place of diesel, as the Delhi experience has been referenced as a model by a number of neighboring countries. This initiated a region-wide conversation on how environmental advocates in Asian countries might learn from one another, including issues of replicability, and connecting lessons from the various presentations.

A final report will present two sets of recommendations, one to organizers of future BAQ meetings and the other to USAID for further actions that can provide a forum for Asian environmental public participation practitioners and for others who want to better understand the techniques and skills that can public participation in environmental and energy policy areas in each of their countries.

Project Impact

As the final report has not yet been released the full impact of this assessment is not known. However, if the dialog and interaction on this topic at the final workshop that examined findings of a separate AID-funded effort to understand the Indian Supreme Court's order is any example, this assessment and report will provide a solid basis for dialog between countries and donor agencies on how



Indoor cookstove.

Project Activities

In brief, the effort started by canvassing Asia for examples of environmental public participation. 80 examples from 17 countries were narrowed down to six case examples grouped into three categories. The categories were: NGO campaigns to influence government decision makers; government-driven efforts to improve public participation; and public interest litigation. Each of these was the focus of a separate workshop at the annual Better Air Quality 2003 (BAQ 2003) meetings of the Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities, held in December 2003 in Manila. Each case example was presented in a paper and a short oral presentation. The balance



public participation can be a catalyst and moral compass for environmental policy development in Asia.

Lessons Learned

From this assessment it is clear that applicability for public participation in the areas of policy implementation and rule of

law as they relate to the energy and environment sectors exists and that it is this participation that acts as a prime mover and guiding compass for governmental lawmakers, policy makers and those that are tasked with the enforcement of these laws and regulations.

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