

***Environment-Democracy Governance Exchange***  
***The EDGE Roundtable Series***

Session 1: November 21, 2000 Tuesday group

Milkshakes or Ice Cream Floats:  
Getting the Scoop on Why the Environment Sector is  
Increasingly Addressing DG-Related Issues

*Presenters:*

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**1. Introduction**

**WHAT IS EDGE?**

The Environment-Democracy/Governance Exchange is a new discussion series. It is part of an ENV-DG linkages initiative organized by the Biodiversity Support Program and includes the July 2000 workshop, "Greening Democracy and Governing the Environment: Managing for Cross-sectoral Results" and an upcoming workshop in May 2001. The EDGE series aims to encourage dialogue and collaboration among ENV and DG colleagues and expand expertise on operationalizing these linkages (e.g., understanding how DG issues shape ENV program choices, identifying new opportunities to build DG and address ENV issues and scaling up from local successes).

**2. Presentations**

Pat Fn'Piere (USAID/G/DG)

Pat Fn'Piere conceptualized approaches to cross-sectoral work as milkshakes and ice cream floats.

Milkshake approaches blend sectors to create synergies. The blending is seen as necessary to produce something more than the sum of the parts and as intrinsic rather than optional (e.g., collaboration across projects and joint initiatives on indigenous people, corruption, HIV/AIDS, etc.).

Ice cream float approaches add a second sector to the work of a first sector to add value (or flavor!) but is still by considered program staff as an option rather than a necessity (e.g., DG technical assistance, to ENV programs, sharing of civil society partners among ENV and DG programs, etc.).

Nancy Diamond (Independent Consultant)

Nancy Diamond provided a brief overview of ENV programming trends at USAID over the last ten years. In general, there has been a shift to partnerships and multi-stakeholder approaches, leveling the playing field for decision-making (through information, access, skills and transparency) and increasing attention to natural resource-based enterprise and secure tenure for local producer groups. With decentralization and other factors, more ENV work is shifting to local government, as well as judiciaries and legislatures. Assistance to civil society organizations now includes more work on organizational development, political skills and constituency building. Harry Blair added that ENV has been more focused on governance and less focused on service delivery compared to PHN and HCD sectors.

ENV programming at USAID is subject to external and internal forces. Both the modern “birds, bunnies and toxics” movement and older social justice movements influence program design and partners. Ideas about participation and social capital from development and economic theory are reflected in USAID ENV programs. The Internet and political reforms have led to new opportunities and openings. Steady or declining funding levels and the infusion of staff with different disciplinary perspectives (e.g. agriculture, planning, social science) have led to greater interest in leveraging funds, new types of institutional collaboration and heightened attention to DG concerns. Harry Blair suggested that the activism and advocacy orientation of the ENV sector has made ENV work less cost-intensive than the technical work of other sectors.

Janis Alcorn (BSP)

Janis Alcorn focused on the three reasons why governance work has become part of the Environment and Natural Resources (E&NR) sector.

Natural resources and the environment are valuable and vulnerable. Because they are valuable, natural resources are embedded in patronage politics. If DG concerns are not addressed, these resources become vulnerable. Property arrangements include state-owned, private community property (common property), and/or private individual property. Decisions about who has power to benefit from, destroy and dispose of property are political decisions. Inevitably, there are winners and losers.

A broad-based constituency for E&NR mobilizes coalitions for civil society action, because E&NR conditions are highly visible indicators of social inequity, human rights abuses, and the need for major governance reform.

Results and failures in the E&NR sectors are visible to the public and cannot be hidden. The conditions of forests or fisheries, for example, are measurable indicators of governance success or failure.

Harry Blair USAID/G/DG

Harry Blair discussed substantive and process aspects related to why civil society seems to work better with environmental issues and organizations than with other sectors:

In contrast to other sectors, the technical aspects of env are fairly well understood and the apparent solutions are simpler.

- ◆ individuals are impacted by env problems in obvious ways and multiple constituencies are motivated by diverse appeals.

- ◆ blair suggests that the env advocates realized early on that the main obstacles to be surmounted related to politics and state policy.
- ◆ fortunately, many perceive environmental issues as less partisan than other issues (in other words, a motherhood/apple pie sector). These issues and groups are often tolerated by authoritarian regimes and they are able to advance dg concerns in addition to their env work, with help from a well-organized global activist community. Env issues have appeal for both the conservative right (national heritage and patrimony arguments) and the radical left (challenging the status quo, battling big predators, etc.).
- ◆ amongst urban elites and do-gooders, blair believes that env issues have a certain glamour and romantic appeal, but poor resource-dependent communities are motivated by livelihood, cultural and other factors.

### **3. Discussion**

#### What ENV And DG Sectors Offer Each Other

Janis Alcorn, cited the work of Derick Brinkerhoff and the Implementing Policy Change Project, to discuss why DG might expect E&NR sector work to contribute to DG systemic change. Brinkerhoff noted that E&NR cross-sectoral work with DG creates social capital, builds concrete positive experience with democracy among a broad spectrum of society, and provides models for democratic governance in other sectors.

Pat Fn'Piere discussed what ENV and DG offer to each other:

ENV serves as a training ground for direct citizen participation in governance issues. However, Fn'Piere cautioned that this objective was not achieved by empowering environmental NGOs as intermediaries between communities and government, and instead required capacity-building of the communities themselves. ENV sector activities also lead to constituency building and this outcome can contribute to other DG objectives.

The DG sector offers assistance to the ENV sector including the know-how to help with strengthening institutions, the platform to structure more cross-cutting partnerships, and the opportunity to scale-up. DG, by working against corruption at all levels and by helping indigenous people to secure their basic rights can help to further ENV objectives.

#### Institutional and Structural Issues

Both USAID and the State Department have created an artificial structural separation between sectors. Working in sectoral boxes can make our work less effective. ENV and DG work can be at cross-purposes (e.g., tolerance of forest destruction and human rights abuses in Indonesia and Cambodia to maintain diplomatic relations; U.S. disagreements with the Global Climate Change Convention and Aarhus Agreement). USAID and the State Department can foster work "outside the boxes" by:

- ◆ creating performance incentives for staff related to ENV-DG linkages,
- ◆ providing linkages training for new and current technical staff and Ambassadors,
- ◆ working with governments to raise their consciousness about the role that NGOs can play in raising ENV standards (OES is promoting this goal at the State Department), finding ways for State and USAID to coordinate on ENV-DG linkages and work with other organizations such as the Wilson Center,

- ◆ capturing more linkages lessons learned (e.g., Slovakia passed a national Freedom of Information Act after gaining experience with an environmental Freedom of Information Act, AFR/SD case studies and AFR Bureau's work with ELI).

### Factors Influencing the ENV Sector

Historically, management of natural resources was one of the first areas of governance (e.g., Mesopotamia) and one of the first reasons for government. Political revolutions, including in the United States, have been fought over natural resources. Politics is about the allocation of scarce resources by society and therefore, decisions about natural resources are political decisions.

Under traditional systems, natural resources were managed by communities as free goods and services through the commons. Population expansion and privatization of tenure resulted in different arrangements for management and governance. To balance private concerns with public goals, there is a need for mechanisms to incorporate civil society into environmental governance.

In the ENV sector, the State is represented in two ways. There is the traditional State, which is portrayed as a benevolent manager of the commons versus a modern, decentralizing state.

Increasingly, the ENV sector is recognizing the DG-related prerequisites for ENV results (e.g., creating space for civil society through better rule of law, access to information and reasonable and fair NGO registration procedures).

In comparison to health, education and economy, environment is a less regulated sector because the most recent wave of environmentalism has coincided with political liberalization.

- ◆ In recent times, the State is often unable to offer health or education services so access to natural resources is one of the few assets that it can offer to citizens.

### Unique Aspects of ENV

ENV work is not necessarily cheap less cost-intensive or less technical. Policy work can be cheaper less cost-intensive than expensive investments in industrial technologies and infrastructure. The ENV sector at USAID and elsewhere is still populated by many more natural/biological scientists than social scientists.

ENV is a relatively easy way to mobilize people. Individuals seem to perceive that they have more opportunity to impact ENV decisions than other sectors. Many people will act to defend their perceived individual or community entitlements to natural resources or fight power differentials. People also mobilize because they see environment as a broad-based indivisible public good.