

Proposal for an inter-agency Coordination Seminar

To Enhance Policy Coordination between Partners and Ministries in Environmental Information Management

Local participation and organizational support regarding accurate, efficient, and up to date environmental information are very precious in building and continuing the process of updating needed information.

A more scientifically coordinated effort is needed to implement the information regularly and supply the environment information center (Focal Point) with the available data.

Justification

In order to improve the Decision-Making process regarding environment matters, status, and using better management technique, there is a great need to have full and comprehensive information from all organizations dealing with environment issues (governmental, institutions, private, military, NGOs, and semi governmental).

- The better quality and volume of environment information the better action is taken by Decision-Makers toward managing and enforcing laws, regulations, and legislation for protecting the environment.
 - Concentrated efforts are very important, to identify , compile, harmonize, and complete the data needed for implementation of the environment center (focal point).
 - The relationship among organization related to environment (governmental, NGOs, private, and semi governmental), the activities, the needed data (type, quality, volume,...). should be determined

Objectives:

- Create an effective regulatory procedure for environment information feeding, updating, etc.
- Insure coordination of monitoring environment issues
- Promote awareness regarding accurate information
- Facilitate better and easy access to environment information system
- Avoid duplication of data

Enhancing Coordination among Partners in Environmental Information Management

Introduction

The subject of the environment is diverse in nature and involves various disciplines and sectors of the economy. Many organizations and ministries are involved in one or more of the environmental issues.

At present environmental information is collected, produced and managed by numerous agencies and institutions, and there is considerable duplication of effort due to the poor coordination between these agencies and institutions. The present situation of information in Jordan does not stand up to the required needs neither to the future challenges in terms of information content and information technology infrastructure and information services, nor to the quality of information which requires special attention. Statistical official data is not always up-to-date, and could be occasionally two or three years old. Such information cannot be used reliably. Besides, the data obtained from different sources of information could be inconsistent.

Availability of environmental information within the environment sector concerning water, water quality, solid waste, pollution, desertification,...etc, is not satisfying users' needs. The major environmental information challenges facing users are as follows:

- Absence of a coordinating body to manage access and dissemination of environmental information among all stakeholders in Jordan.
- Lack of Information Technology (IT), infrastructure, and qualified personnel within environment related institutions.
- Weakness and absence of some laws and regulations governing the environment information in Jordan.
- Information is duplicated haphazardly among numerous agencies and institutions.
- Communications means are mostly traditional and the use of IT for communication is limited.
- Most of the environmental information is not documented. It is stored in traditional files that add to the constraints in accessibility and weakness procedures.

Information on awareness of environmental health related issues are not available for public use. Human health is one of the aspects that must be considered when dealing with environment problems and adverse conditions. The effects on human health and safety (general public health exposure or contact with poisonous chemicals, injuries, physical as well as mental diseases in addition to nutritional problems. Educational efforts focusing on life style, nutrition, and behaviors are promising interventions.

The implications of information on decision making is so effective. Timely and comprehensive dissemination of information is required, since lack of timely and comprehensive environmental information negatively affects decision-making and gives misleading results. Moreover, awareness of importance of information by users from the perspective of the end-user of information whether for planning, day to day operation, or research conducting is very precious.

The adoption and implementation of the Jordan Environment Act in 1995 established the General Corporation for Environment Protection, to play most of the roles of other institutions involved in environment protection.

II- Critical Environmental Information Problems

Across the whole environmental sector, we have to point to critical problem spots (barriers) that face environmental information:

- Inaccessibility to certain information
- Administrative bureaucracy
- Language
- Accuracy of data
- Lack of qualified personnel
- Follow up issues
- Lack of Documentation
- Transpiration of the information
- Availability of funds for information management, collections and practices
- Updating of the needed information
- Lack of environmental experts
- Need to update the information management at the public sector level
- Duplication of information
- Hesitation in providing some of the information from some institutions
- Environmental Information Strategy Study

III - Environment Information Coordination Committee

One important feature for the environment sector in the country, is the Environment Information Coordination Committee, which has been formed from several organizations related to environment, within the National Information Center (NIC) since July 1997. The committee is plying a good role in information coordination between major environmental organization.

The organization are:

1. Ministry of Water and Irrigation
2. Department of Statistics
3. General Corporation For Environment Protection (GCEP)
4. Royal Scientific Society-Environmental Research Center (ERC)
5. Ministry of Health /Environmental Health Directorate
6. Jordan Valley Authority
7. Municipality of Greater Amman
8. Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN).
9. Industrial Estate Establishment
10. Friends of Environment Society
11. Jordan Institute for Standards and Metrologies
12. National Information Center

The committee major activities and tasks:

Activities

- Evaluate the environmental information situation
- Identify different sources of information
- Identify major collections of environment-related information, subjects, area experts, and other resources
- Facilitate access to and retrieval from these resources
- Encourage organizations to collaborate in creating and using ENE
- Equip the focal point
- Develop connectivity to form the network
- Implement and test the system
- Evaluate and amend as required
- Training
- Follow-up

Committee Mission

- Assessment of different kind of information within the involved environmental organization
- Using a systematic classification of environmental data
- Use a suitable instrument for information exchange between involved organization and avoid repetition
- Decide upon each organization role in forming an integrated environmental information system
- Choose one of the involved organization to have the environmental focal point
- Establish a sub network and adjust the relationship between the focal point and the involved organizations
- Continues updating and effluent of information to the focal point
- Continues cooperation with National Information Center to update the needed environmental information within the National Information System (NIS)

III- Environmental Information Elements

- Value of information
- Role of Government
- Information Technology Infrastructure
- Cultural Aspects & Human Factor
- International & Regional Cooperation

Information Value

For an information to be valuable, it should be possible to be put to beneficial use. An information is useless, if it is not reliable or detailed enough for a specific application, or if it is too old, or if it arrives too late at the scene when decisions have been already made. On the other hand, availability of information is not sufficient without the

proper awareness concerning its value to the user, and without the adequate skills or tools for transforming it into a useful production item or a transaction for instance. The right information is required at the right time, and to be used by the right person.

Role of Government

to prevent Therefore, the role of government should be modified and specified between all users, duplication and support the ease of dissemination of information improving the efficiency of ‘through drafting the proper set of rules and regulations standards to satisfy all users’ information production and maintaining good quality assistance to other stakeholders as well needs. Government should provide the needed available personnel to obtain a better information as qualified personnel and train the .management

Information Technology Infrastructure

it is important to ‘In order to meet the information needs of the environment sector easily processed, consider the appropriate infrastructure, to make information .of users accessible and disseminated to satisfy the information needs

A policy is required to process environmental information at minimum cost while saving waiting time for the user and preparation effort of producers of information. This will help in gathering, processing and disseminating quality information in terms of accessibility, timeliness and reliability.

Cultural Aspects and Human Factors

Cultural aspects play a major role in information technology. The development in information technologies and the increase in the use of networks for information exchange is very obvious. Due to that, cultural and personal attitude needs to be changed to cooperate with these technological changes positively, to adapt them to local and regional needs, to increase their productive role in the improvement and development of information resources, and hence, to be used effectively on social development.

International and Regional Cooperation

The importance of the international and regional cooperation with respect to information emerged from two basic elements:

- Globalization of the environment information.

- Increasing mutual benefits of information availability.
- Maintain close contacts with regional and international sources of information, as well as linkages with regional and national networks.
- Undertake joint projects and workshops to exchange experience with other more advanced countries in the field of information and information technologies.

IV- Policy Coordination

Going a few steps to the past period, and well working within the environmental coordination committee, we propose more coordination of key environmental information generating organizations using the following procedures:

- Establishing the environmental information center (Focal Point) within the General Corporation for Environmental Protection (GECEP)
- Equip the center with well staff environmental specialists and information technology specialists
- Continue cooperation of information feeding, updating, analysing, etc. from the other organization to environmental center (Focal Point)
- Drafting the proper set of rules and regulations, improving the efficiency of information production and maintaining good quality standards to satisfy all users' needs.
- Ensure that national standards are compatible with International Standards.
- Carry out a proper need assessment prior to the implementation of any information program, whether at the organization or even at national level.
- Suppliers of information should assess regularly the needs of users. Needs keep evolving. Suppliers of information should be responsible to changes in user demand. Needs assessment should not be considered as a one-time event.
- Awareness should be enhanced on the individual, collective, and research levels
- Information to be made available to address quality issues. One of the essential pre-requisites for producing quality
 - Adopting a selective stance when dealing with international information, and seeking and creating solutions appropriate to the local conditions.

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