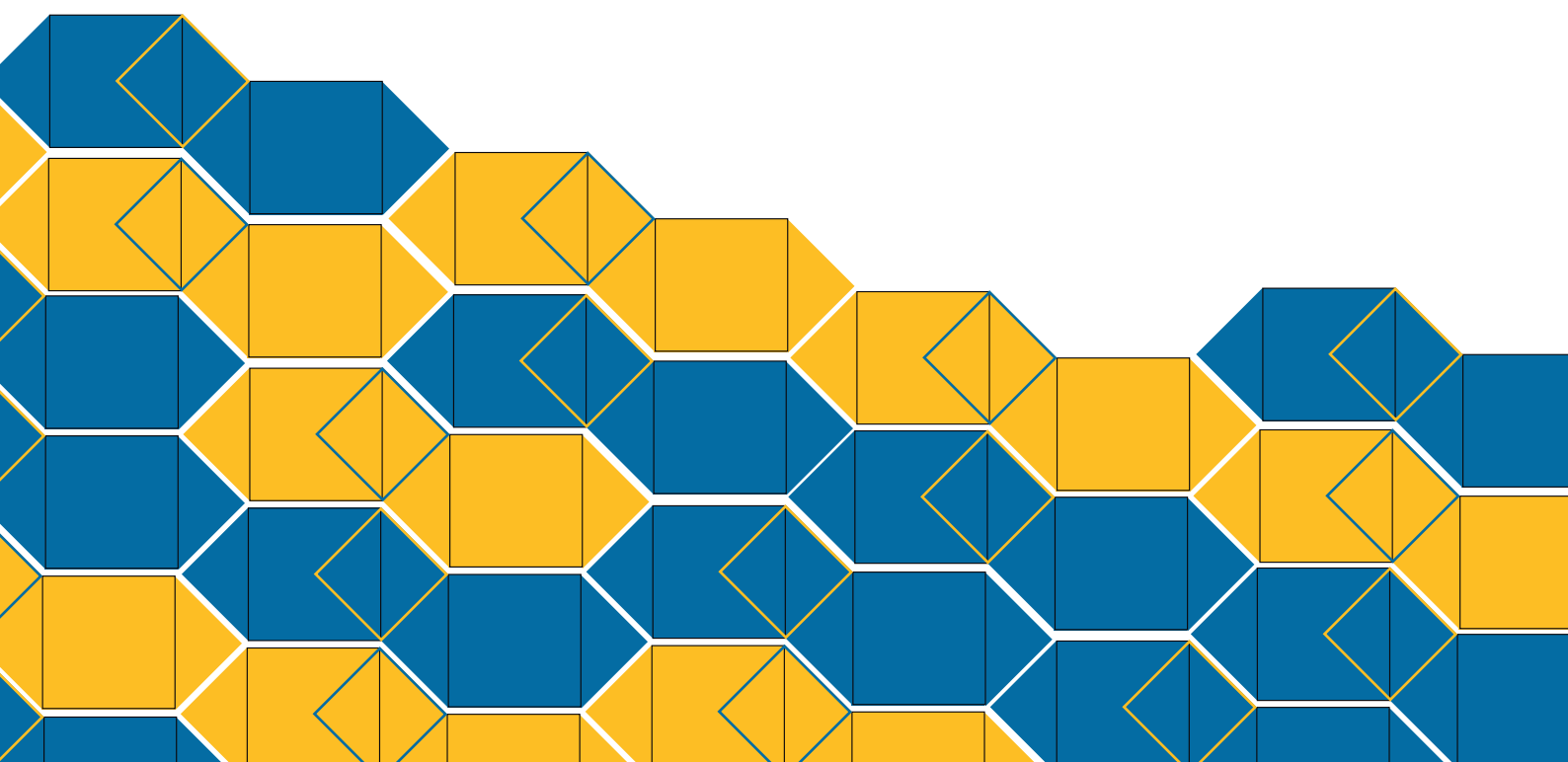


ESCAP-Embassy of Sweden Second Regional Workshop

EMPOWERING PEOPLE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

25-26 March 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

SUMMARY REPORT





Message from the Embassy of Sweden

The Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) together hosted the Second Regional Workshop “Empowering People for a Sustainable Future” on 25-26 March 2019 to provide an in-depth understanding on the role of empowerment and a human rights based approach on public participation to accelerate the implementation of environment related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This workshop brought together 162 participants (59% female) from international and local NGOs, governments, businesses, media, research organizations, and UN agencies. Based on the evaluation, overall participants were highly satisfied with the opportunity provided to share experiences and exchange knowledge with other participants. The workshop helped develop a shared understanding on benefits of public participation and empowerment as means to strengthen implementation of the SDGs, especially environment and climate -related goals and targets. The workshop had three main objectives.

First, to provide evidence on the impact and value of participation. **Second**, to develop a shared understanding on the gaps, priorities, and incentives for improving meaningful participation and empowering people in interventions for sustainable development. **Third**, to strengthen regional dialogue as a basis for a regional cooperation on public participation.

To achieve the workshop’s objectives preliminary positive results from case studies on the value of participation were presented, deep dive discussions on SDGs related to environment and climate change took place, and opportunities for regional dialogue were provided through the broad participation of regional actors from governments, academia, civil society, UN agencies and private sector. The workshop was participatory and provided panel discussions, talk shows and interactive break-out sessions to enable more dynamic and meaningful conversations between the participants and panelists.

This workshop is part of a regional platform for dialogue and action on sustainable development started by the Embassy of Sweden eight years ago. During these workshops the Embassy invites and engages partners and prominent speakers to highlight, provoke and discuss development challenges and solutions. Key lessons from previous workshops are: (1) There is a clear added value of multi-stakeholder approaches; (2) The transboundary character of climate change and environmental degradation require regional collaboration; (3) It is important to integrate gender equality and human rights-based approaches to address regional problems; (4) There is a need to break the silos between sectors and to develop cross-sector collaboration to address challenges and come up with sustainable solutions; (5) There is a need for inclusive participation and consultation.

The workshops have been appreciated by development cooperation partners and have contributed to cross-sectorial learning, partnerships and joint programmes. The last two years of collaboration with ESCAP has widened the regional platform and connected it to the regional dialogue on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

This year’s workshop focused on how participation can support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The workshop also highlighted the urgency in action in relation to environmental challenges as well as climate change.

Important points raised and discussed during the workshop included:

- The SDGs must be built on human rights standards and human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination and accountability.

- We need to urgently accelerate our collective action to save our planet and to be able to protect our children and future generations from the threats of environmental degradation and climate change.
- There is a clear added value of multi-stakeholder approaches, where actors from different disciplines work together and jointly discuss solutions to address existing challenges.
- The importance of diversity and pluralism e.g. engaging and listening to the voices of young people and children, people of all genders, minorities, indigenous peoples, persons with disability are key elements of sustainable development and critical for leaving no one behind.
- The right to access information is necessary for empowerment and engagement in sustainable development and contributes to greater accountability.
- Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of development and a precondition to secure sustainable results and not leave anyone behind.
- It is important to involve civil society, private sector, academic and research institutions, multi-lateral organizations and governments when discussing both challenges and solutions.
- Participation relates to process and shared power, but is also a right in itself.

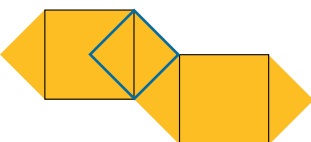
On behalf of the Section for Regional Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok, we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all the prominent speakers and participants for their excellent contribution and participation in the workshop.

Åsa Hedén

Counsellor

Head of Regional Development Cooperation in Asia - Regional Asia and Myanmar





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This report was prepared by Aline Roldan, ESCAP, and Jost Wagner, Conference Facilitator, The Change Initiative.



Opening and Welcoming Remarks

Speakers

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

H.E. Mr. Staffan Herrström, Swedish Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand, to Lao PDR and to Myanmar

Mr. David. R. Boyd, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment

The four main areas to overcome empowerment barriers


Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Based on our current trajectory, not a single sustainable development goal will be met by 2030. Empowerment, which means giving marginalized groups a voice to shape policies, services and decision-making, can help target solutions and accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The lack of access and control over natural resources, including access to land and ownership rights, disproportionately affects the poor and the vulnerable. The livelihoods of these groups depend on natural resources that are increasingly under pressure because of climate change and environmental degradation. It is central for empowerment of marginalized groups to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

Barriers to empowerment are significant. Action has to be taken in four main areas to overcome such barriers and empower marginalized groups:

- 1) Fundamental rights must be better integrated into tighter, more modern legal frameworks;
- 2) Prejudice and discrimination must be eradicated from our norms, decisions, and institutions;
- 3) Vulnerable groups must be given better access to resources from land to finances and public services;
- 4) Civil society needs to be given a greater role in shaping policies and services to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.



“Empowerment must be at the heart of our response to accelerate progress”

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Cross-sectoral learning at the crossroads of climate crisis

H.E. Mr. Staffan Herrström,
Swedish Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand, to Lao PDR and to Myanmar

We are at a crossroads, and urgent action is required. We have less than 12 years to change the global economic systems. Climate change will affect the most vulnerable groups and the scenarios suggest that chances of violent conflicts will increase. The future of our children is at stake and urgent action is needed to revert the situation: we need to act now and together. Empowering people for a sustainable future is critical.

The nature of SDGs requires new ways of working together. We live in a world with many compelling and complex issues that require transboundary approaches and regional collaboration. We live in silos. We need to provide arenas for dialogue, for co-creation and cross-sector learning that enables the formation of new partnerships. We need to be willing to learn from each other and develop mutual understanding to find sustainable solutions that can be quickly scaled up. We need to shift how we think and work together in order to create inclusive partnerships.

A human rights-based approach, which cuts across all the SDGs, is central in approaching the complex nature of global and local problems. Human rights and gender equality are rooted in the respect for the dignity of the person and internationally agreed universal values. Human rights principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination are crosscutting to all the SDGs. Furthermore, free open debates, freedom of expression, advocacy from civil society, different and critical voices are fundamental for democracy and good environmental decision-making.

“This is what participation looks like, should look like, needs to look like: Different voices being heard, different interests made visible, different opinions expressed. Without harassment, without lawsuits, without any climate of fear. [...] Participation is democracy in action. It is a goal in itself. But it is also a necessity for the kind of development of our societies that will keep us within the planetary boundaries.”

**H.E. Mr. Staffan Herrström,
Swedish Ambassador to the Kingdom of
Thailand, to Lao PDR and to Myanmar**



Human rights, Participation, and Environmental Decision-making

Mr. David. R. Boyd,
Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment

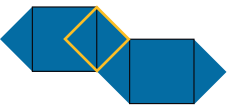
Public participation in environmental decision-making is absolutely critical. One example that illustrates the significance of human-rights and public participation to environmental decision-making is air pollution. Air pollution is a global environmental crisis that kills more than 7 million people every year, predominantly in the Asia-Pacific region. This is a combined effect of indoor and outdoor air pollution. It is important to replace dirty polluting fuels with cleaner sources of energy. Some places in the Asia-Pacific region have made substantive progress, but it is essential that people who are affected by air pollution are part of the solution, to make sure a solution is delivered and will work for them.

This case also illustrates the way vulnerable populations are being disproportionately harmed by environmental problems – In the context of indoor air pollution, women and children are those who are primarily exposed to high levels of air pollution. This is because the role of cooking and taking care of the household has been traditionally attributed to women and children stay often with their mothers. Therefore, since marginalized groups are the most affected by the global environmental crisis, a human rights-based public participation is central to environmental decision-making.

One of the most powerful catalysts to ensuring public participation in environmental decision-making is the recognition of the human-rights to live in a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Recognized by over 150 countries worldwide, this right includes substantive elements such as the right to clean air, clean water, sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food, a non-toxic environment to work, live, and play, a healthy ecosystem and biodiversity, and safe climate. The recognition of this right empowers people to engage in environmental decision-making.

The achievement of the right to live in a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment depends on effective protection of other human rights, such as freedom of association, freedom of expression, the right of access to environmental information, and the right to access justice and remedies when people's rights have been threatened or violated. Environmental human-rights defenders play a key role on environment protection and states are being called to protect them.





Session 1:

The role of participation for the 2030 Agenda – Moving from words to actions

Keynote speaker

Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, Professor Emeritus, Law Faculty, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok; former UN Special Rapporteur, UN Independent Expert and member of UN Commissions of Inquiry on human rights

Summary

In his keynote speech, Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn discussed how we can practically accelerate the achievement of the 17 SDGs and how public participation is a central, cross-cutting aspect in all SDGs. Regarding public participation, Mr. Muntarbhorn suggested a few avenues of consideration:

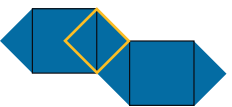
1. Inclusivity in action: We have the buy-in in of many countries to leave no one behind, at least in theory. However, who is “no one”? It should not be applied only to citizens and nationals. It means everybody including minorities, indigenous people, woman, youth, refugees, immigrants, etc.
2. Cross-cutting link: Participation must be the transversal cross-cutting link across all the SDGs, across People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership.
3. Informed participation: We want not only participation, but informed participation. Access to information is key to have meaningful participation or quality engagement.
4. Throughout the development cycle: Participation should be undertaken in different phases of the development of plans, policies, laws or projects - in the planning, implementation, and evaluation, not when the main decisions have already been made.
5. Democracy: Where is the word democracy in the SDGs? We should work to include it in the framework.
6. Effective: Participation must be effective, enable people to shape and influence policies, laws, and development plans. It should not be tokenistic.

When working to implement the 2030 Agenda, we should aim to increase the capacity of stakeholders to shape change and influence decision-making. Mr. Muntarbhorn suggested ten entry points to shape change and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: (1) Shaping policies and development plans; (2) Shaping laws and regulations; (3) Shaping projects and programmes; (4) Developing and sharing good practices; (4) Taking individual action; (5) Promoting education and capacity building; (6) Improving research, data collection, monitoring and evaluation; (7) Changing management and allocation of financial resources; (8) Improving accountability of organizations and governments; (9) Providing action against impunity and access to justice for the victims; and (10) Networking and mobilization to broaden the spaces for change.

“We want process and substance. We want participation as a process. But we also want the right to participate.”

**Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn,
Professor Emeritus, Law Faculty,
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok**





Talk show:

Is participation the key? Shaping the future through participation and empowerment

Panelists

H.E. Ms. Rosemarie Edillon, Undersecretary for Policy and Planning, National Economic and Development Authority, Republic of the Philippines

Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary for Sustainable Development, ESCAP

Ms. Dharini Priscilla, Programme Manager of Grassrooted Trust

Mr. Lars Svensson, Sustainability and Communication Director, IKEA Southeast Asia

Moderator

Jost Wagner, Managing Director, The Change Initiative

Summary

In this session the panelists discussed three main themes. First, how participation leads to better development outcomes and how to strengthen the link between stakeholder engagement and development. Although abundant documentation on participatory processes is available, it is still necessary to collect more evidence, developing methods to measure and compare the impact of participatory processes for sustainable development. Second, the panelists discussed the meaning of empowerment in the context of sustainable development. Finally, the panelists explored the role of private sector to achieve the SDGs.

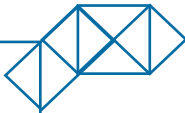
Strengthening the link between participation and development effectiveness

The panelists approached the link between participation and development effectiveness from the point of view of government, grassroots movements, and the UN system. Examples from the Philippines and Sri Lanka emphasized the political and technical need to engage marginalized actors to find better solutions. The premise is that policy makers need to involve those who are affected by the decision. Otherwise they will be given a solution that does not work. Moreover, although many cases demonstrate how participation improves development effectiveness, there is the need to improve evidence on the value of participation, and to increase the understanding of what quality engagement means. A central question underlying this discussion was expressed by Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP.

“We need to pose the question of “How is it possible to make a decision without involving those who are impacted by the decision?” It is going to lead to sub-standard decisions and outcomes. [...] People’s change in behavior requires their ownership and their involvement. How can we possibly promote SDGs on sustainable consumption if you don’t involve the consumers? How can we get better results for sustainable agriculture if you don’t involve the farmers? So involvement is clearly going to will bring about better development outcomes.”

Mr. Kaveh Zahedi,
Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP

According to H.E. Ms. Rosemarie Edillon participation improves the effectiveness of development and policy making. Participation informs government officials about nuances in design. Decision-makers hold



several assumptions about the issues they are trying to solve. However, these assumptions are different from the experiences of these groups and may not reflect their realities. For example, the policy of conditional cash transfer in the Philippines was changed when the new President took office. Over the years it has not been adjusted to inflation, so the new policy was changed from cash to in-kind distribution. People would receive bags of 10 kilograms (kg) of rice, distributed by schoolteachers. This shift in policy, however, found a few problems. First, rice would be delivered in bags of 50 kilograms (kg) to the schools, and the schools did not have a warehouse to unpack it. Second, in practice, the children would be the ones to carry the rice bags home, and the bags of rice would be too heavy for them. Third, the households would start to sell it below market price. Once the government identified these problems by consulting the stakeholders, they had to re-design the program and agreed to give people cash instead.

Participation, therefore, leads to a better use of projects and resources. When projects respond to people’s needs and expectations, it empowers people, fostering a sense of ownership and accomplishment. Furthermore, when people get identified with the project and see it as an instrument to achieve their needs, they can actively seek to adopt new behaviors and support project implementation.

Another example, from the perspective of grassroots level, comes from Sri Lanka. In 2017, a massive flood happened in Sri Lanka. The first action people did was to buy food and distribute them in the flooded areas. However, people in the affected areas did not want food as they did not have electricity or water to cook. People needed medicine and clothes instead. This one of multiple examples of how important is to hear people’s needs to make decisions.

“Sometimes we [government officials] take a lot of things for granted. But usually when it comes to the vulnerable groups, the marginalized sectors, they are actually confronted with other circumstances that we take for granted. Turns out that it hampers the effectiveness of even well-intentioned interventions. (...) We need to make interventions less interventionist. Any interventions shift people’s ways of life. But if people are engaged from the start and the projects are based on what people express they need. (...) This sense of ownership gives people the perception that they can monitor and demand accountability from us, government officials.”

**H.E. Ms. Rosemarie Edillon,
Undersecretary for Policy and Planning,
National Economic and
Development Authority,
Republic of the Philippines**

“In most often in these communities there is a lot of development. [...] But when you are part of that community, it feels like you are a bystander to your own development. Because the decisions are made by people who are outside of the community. [...] When these decisions are disconnected from the grassroots level, made on the top of the hierarchy, the final results are not good.”

**Ms. Dharini Priscilla,
Programme Manager of Grassrooted Trust**

The panelists suggested three main recommendations for strengthening the link between participation and development – fostering an evidence-based approach, understanding the meaning of quality engagement, and strengthening regional collaboration.

First, we need to provide evidence of the impact of public participation in development

effectiveness so policymakers can understand and appreciate the value of participation. Multiple sources from the Asia-Pacific region and beyond demonstrate the value of empowerment and participation for development effectiveness, increasing impact and reducing delivery cost. However, according to Mr.

Zahedi of ESCAP, it is not enough. We must go beyond anecdotes and find measurable evidence of how greater empowerment leads to greater development outcomes.

Second, we need to shift the focus away from quantity to quality of participatory processes. The quality of participation is important. It should not be about how many people we get into a conference room. It should be about the quality of engagement between the stakeholders. How can we measure and improve quality of engagement? This focus demands that we improve our methods to measure the quality of engagement and further develop our parameter of what improved quality in decision-making processes means.


Third, we need to enable opportunities for collaboration across stakeholder groups, and that involves the creation of a common language that can overcome silos. This is where the SDGs can bring advantage for regional cooperation. The beauty of the SDGs is that they can mobilize people and groups to think and act in an integrated manner, across sectors, and move away from silo-based approaches. The challenge, according to Mr. Zahedi, is not to compartmentalize, but integrate transverse sectors - "We have to be integrators".

Therefore, we need to move towards a human rights and evidence-based approach, provide decision makers / policymakers, government officials, urban planners with evidence of how participation improves development and guidelines of what quality engagement means in practice.

How sustainable development can empower communities


The panelists approached empowerment from two angles: empowerment as a shift in power relations and empowerment as the development of self-respect. On one side, discussing empowerment brings an elephant into the room: we are challenging the existing power balance that has led to the current state of inequality. On the other side, lack of empowerment breaks down the lack of respect for self and others. Empowerment, therefore, is about creating confidence within marginalized groups who are then able to shift the existing power balance that create social inequalities.

The work of empowerment requires to move from a place of empathy, not sympathy, relating to each other from a humane perspective and without preconceived notions. Abandoning pre-conceived notions in the context of localizing the SDGs means to customize the latter according to the groups one is working with. For example, what does quality education mean in a specific context for different stakeholder groups? It is important to understand where the stakeholders are coming from in order to undertake development processes that empower local communities. Sustainable development has to be centered around local cultures and interests as the starting point.



"We need to have a human-rights based approach, but also an evidence or results-based approach. We need to build that evidence on how empowerment and stakeholder involvement leads to better development outcomes."

Mr. Kaveh Zahedi,
Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP



"Since we are kids, we have been thought....to respect people more powerful than you....But never we learn how to respect ourselves. (...) It is important for these communities to understand that being treated with respect is not a privilege, it is a human right."

Ms. Dharini Priscilla
Programme Manager of Grassrooted Trust

How the private sector can support sustainable development and the work of empowerment

Mr. Lars Svensson, Sustainability and Communication Director of IKEA Southeast Asia shared his experience on how businesses can be a catalyzing force for sustainable development. As a starting point, IKEA seeks to provide decent work conditions for their workers in accordance to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). From an environmental perspective, IKEA makes sustainability part of their business model. In Southeast Asia they have created a customer recycling center where IKEA repurchases furniture that clients do not have any use for anymore. What would be waste becomes money. They believe that engaging society to make change has to be done by leading by example. “The purpose is to showcase that it is possible, can be profitable, and can be part of your business model as well”, said Mr. Svensson. However, businesses should also care about strategies outside of the usual customer relationship. In case of IKEA, their workers cannot afford to buy their furniture. IKEA tries to benefit them through other means. By working with non-profit organizations and schools in Thailand, IKEA has benefited approximately 300,000 people through projects focused on education, women, and youth development. IKEA is an example of a company sees sustainable development as an important part of their business model.

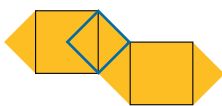
“The integration of sustainability in the function of society. [...] Sustainability has to be a part of doing business and relating in society. This is going to drive the change and help us move forward.”

**Mr. Lars Svensson,
Sustainability and Communication
Director of IKEA Southeast Asia**

“The challenge is that we are not set up to deal with things in an integrated manner as countries, with the ministries, as the UN with our agencies. [...] The real challenge is with the engagement, to find groups and people who can begin to think in an integrated manner, across sectors.”

**Mr. Kaveh Zahedi,
Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP**





Session 2: Inspiring change through participation

Speakers

Ms. Katinka Weinberger, Chief, Environment and Development Policy Section, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP

Ms. Åsa Hedén, Counsellor, Head of Development Cooperation- Regional Asia and the Pacific, Embassy of Thailand in Sweden

Summary

This session provided an overview of the collection of initiatives gathered via a call for case studies launched by ESCAP and the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok in 2018 and the analytical framework developed to deepen the understanding on the value of participation and empowerment to deliver on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. There are many examples of participatory processes that have succeeded and many other examples of those that have failed. It is still unclear why different engagement processes lead to different outcomes. This is where more data and case studies are needed. The call for case studies had the purpose of (1) Collecting examples that demonstrate the value of participation and empowerment for the achievement of the environmental dimensions of SDGs, and (2) Getting insights to inform thinking on interlinkages of empowerment and participation with improved environmental outcomes. The conceptual scope of the call for case studies considers that (1) Power is at the center of poverty and environmental degradation; (2) Decisions around resource exploitation are often exclusive and taken in isolation of other concerns; (3) There is evidence of the potential of people living in poverty to mobilize for environmental improvement and poverty reduction; (4) Participation is not an end in itself.



The call identified 112 initiatives active in 58 countries in the region, with particularly high response rate from South and Southeast Asia. The top five countries that submitted case studies were India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, and Nepal.

Most initiatives (35%) take place at the national level and have been active for 1-3 years. Among these initiatives, 61% contain engagement elements that are both formal and informal, and 92% consider the engagement element to be very important to achieve their development objectives.

According to the analysis of the case studies, 45% of initiatives resulted in enhanced social impact, reporting impacts on SDGs 5 and 16, and 93% of cases affirmed that engaging marginalized groups led to improved environmental impact. The engaged stakeholders are from different constituencies but majority of them focused on women, farmers and fisher communities, indigenous people, and children and youth. Responses concerning other stakeholder groups such as LGBTIQ and Refugees were much lower.

The most successful strategies involved the engagement of vulnerable groups in ecosystem management, having possible multiplier effects on the environment, and promoted behavioral changes with positive environmental impacts. Some of the direct benefits of engagement reported included raising awareness and access to knowledge, economic empowerment, greater improvement of women's life conditions, inclusion of indigenous knowledge, improved health, the establishment of regular consultations, economic benefits or savings, and the involvement of communities in monitoring and evaluation.

The call for case studies was an initial step towards achieving broader goals. ESCAP is looking forward to having a better understanding of how different social, cultural, and economic aspects influence the outcomes of participation and empowerment by collecting more quantifiable evidence and developing a larger database on cases about participation and sustainable development.

Stories from the field:

Participation and empowerment through the lens of SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 13 (Climate Action)

Speakers

Ms. Cham Perez, Research Coordinator, Center for Women's Resources

Mr. Lorenzo Urbinati, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Mr. Bo Bo Min, Myanmar Climate Change Alliance

Summary

Stories from the field: Presentations of “on the ground” stories where participation and empowerment have led to improved environmental outcomes. This was an opportunity to hear and learn from cases that have worked and share experiences that can inspire further action or generate peer learning in other areas.



How rural communities in the Philippines empower themselves

Ms. Cham Perez, Research Coordinator, Center for Women's Resources

In the Philippines there is a very popular folk song: "Planting rice is no joke." It refers not only to the vigorous activity, but also to the long struggle of peasant women and men for their right to access to land. Ms. Cham Perez shared the story of farming communities in the Philippines, who are engaged in Bunkaram or collective land cultivation. Bunkaram is a way the farming communities have guaranteed access to land, advance gender equality and save land which has been deteriorated by sugar cane plantation. Their struggle faces resistance from landlords, who have used tractors to destroy their crops and harass and threaten men and women engaged in Bunkaram. The big challenge, however, are the root causes that perpetuate the situation of the farmers. The economic and political system keep many farmers landless through the monopolistic practices of landowners, corporations and market-oriented policies that disregard the needs of the people. Since 1998, nothing significant has happened to change the situation of the farmers. The farmers and women have to assert to the rights to access land.

Many communities in the Philippines have started practicing Bukaram which has substantially contributed in improving their living conditions. For example, in 2007, Nana Elita - a farmer, mother, woman – was forced out of her land by real estate developers. For 10 years she lived in poverty, with "spider nets in her rice boxes." By practicing Bukaram, she reclaimed her land. From having no food, she started to have food security in the following months.

Bunkaram contributes to women's empowerment in the Philippines. Women are key players in agriculture and Bukaram, in fact, does not succeed if women do not participate. However, some of the women are hesitant to take up the role of leaders in their collectives. Moreover, women tend to be strongly connected to their traditions which have strong roots in patriarchy. This influences women's participation for example when women choose to take care of household activities so that men can attend meetings outside. To change this pattern, Bukaram tries to create a community day care system where child care and house duties are a shared responsibility between the community members, including the men.

The empowerment element of Bukaram in the Philippines includes several strategies. It involves a collective effort of the communities to educate themselves. They believe that "nobody empowers anyone": people empower themselves and the power relies on people. To support their own empowerment process, the rural communities engaged in Bukaram seek to deconstruct disempowering behaviors and narratives, such as patriarchal views that undermine the role of women in the community. Furthermore, they engage on forging solidarities with other sectors, such as youth and the media.


Empowerment of communities and improved environmental regulations in Mongolia

Mr. Lorenzo Urbinati, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

In 2016, mining accounted for 21% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 85% of exports, and 70% of foreign investment. This is a result of the "Gold program" launched by the national government of Mongolia in 1993 to open strategic mining sites for foreign companies. Mongolia has significant coal, gold, silver, coltan, and uranium reserves. These precious minerals co-exist with one of the most unique nomadic cultures in the world. The herding communities were affected by such mining activities since they have to move away from their land and are the most exposed to environmental and social issues caused by activities of mining corporations. Their right to self-determination, to live in a safe and healthy

environment, to choose and keep living their nomadic life, and to access clean water were being affected. The mining corporations required access to land and water, at the same time they are polluting water sources and pasture land. Environmental protection is one of the main pillars of the country, reflected in Article 17 of the Mongolian Constitution. However, according to Mr. Urbinati, there is not enough regulation neither enforcement of existing regulations for environmental protection.


In this context, the Center for Human Rights and Development (CHRD) focused on public interest litigation. In the early 1990s, there were almost no lawyers with the expertise on environmental issues and mining that could represent communities in Mongolia. At the same time, communities were not aware about the regulations in place that could support their demands. Founded in 1989, CHRD started to study public interest litigation by analyzing examples of other Asian countries, with focus on what other civil society organizations and human rights defenders have utilized to advance the demands of local communities. They translated training materials and developed trainings for Mongolian lawyers, judges, and other stakeholders. At that time, NGOs were not allowed to make claims on behalf of communities and the communities were facing huge pressure from mining corporations and governments and would give up and not file complaints. A community-based development program trained the communities on how to handle the pressure from state and non-state actors, to undertake environmental impact assessments, and to engage with both mining corporations and government agencies.



“NGOs, communities need to be able to speak out without fearing from criminalization or reprisals.”

**Mr. Lorenzo Urbinati,
Asian Forum for Human Rights
and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

The empowerment of these communities helped to achieve some concrete results. Once the communities became more aware and comfortable with the regulations and engaging with governments and mining companies, the pressure from NGO-led advocacy increased and triggered the review of the environmental law. NGOs and communities, now allowed to work together, joined forces and became able to challenge injustice, creating a platform to press for change, demanding more accountability, supporting the enforcement of regulations, and seeking remedies for environmental degradation. Furthermore, through the pressure of civil society, the regulations on environmental impact assessment have improved in 2014, including specific guidelines for public participation to ensure a bottom-up approach for development. Substantial progress had been made, but implementation still faces many challenges. There is a need to ensure that affected groups are empowered as they are often not involved in a timely and meaningful manner. Additionally, mining companies have to consider communities as rights holders.



“As these case studies demonstrate, a vibrant civil society and empowered community can indeed push to regulations that can protect the environment and there is no adverse impact in the land, in the natural resources, as well as in the communities that live around them.”

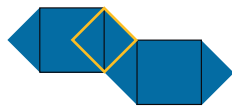
**Mr. Lorenzo Urbinati,
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Empowering regional governments and local communities for climate action in Myanmar

Mr. Bo Bo Min, Myanmar Climate Change Alliance

Myanmar is exposed to a variety of climate change related hazards and disaster. Under this pretext, Myanmar needs to undertake climate change adaptation measures for sustainable development which also addresses poverty alleviation. In 2013, the Myanmar Climate Change Alliance was launched with the support of the Global Climate Change Alliance, the Environment Conservation Department of the Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental conservation, UN-HABITAT, UNEP, and with funding from the European Union. The program had three major expected results: (1) Increase the awareness of government, civil society, and the private sector on the implications of climate change; (2) Develop further the capacity of government and provide support needed to integrate climate change considerations in policy, strategy, planning and operations; (3) Draw lessons on climate change from subnational and local activities.

Myanmar has developed their climate change strategy and master plan through a subnational consultative process. For two years, the Myanmar Climate Change Alliance in partnership with international development agencies and civil society organizations organized five regional consultation workshops and reached out to over 3000 people, both at the national and subnational levels. The subnational consultation workshops identified major climate change issues and substantial capacity gaps and needs. Through the consultations, the national government was able to understand the impact of climate change in local communities and their perspectives of how to find solutions to mitigate it at the local level. Since Myanmar has different ecosystems, the assessment was conducted in different geographic areas, such as coastal zones, central dry zones, and mountainous areas. Additionally, the consultation included vulnerability assessments and gender analyses. Based on these assessments, subnational and local authorities developed adaptation plans. The initiative presented several results. The climate change strategy and master plan, endorsed in the beginning of 2019, is an important instrument to inform policy making. Furthermore, development and women empowerment projects have started with the objective of reducing the dependence of impoverished communities on climate change sensitive livelihood options.



Session 3:

Deep dive discussions

This was an opportunity to discuss, in groups, the importance of participation for the 2030 Agenda, how it can help in achieving the tenant of “leaving no one behind”; the different dimensions of participation including human rights-based approaches to implementation of the SDGs and crosscutting elements of participation. This session was held in 4 parallel sessions with two rounds of discussions to provide participants with the opportunity to participate in two groups.

Why is participation key for the 2030 Agenda?

Speakers

Mr. Nyein Tun, Community Engagement Specialist, Earthrights International, Myanmar office
Ms. Anna-Karin Jatfors, Deputy Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UN Women

Moderator

Stefanos Fotiou, Director, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP

Why is participation important for the implementation of the SDGs (particularly for environment related SDGs)?

Ms. Anna-Karin Jatfors explored the importance of public participation with the focus on environment conservation and gender equality. For SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households in developing countries. Globally, it is reported that women spend 73 billion hours fetching water for household use – 73 billion hours of invisible and unpaid work. Even if women have a central role in water collection, their voice is limited in decision-making around water governance. For SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), women spend many hours every day collecting fuel for household consumption. However, they still underrepresented in energy sector employment and are not key decision makers in the field. For SDG 15 (Life on Land), women own just 20% of the land but constitute 43% of all farmers. For SDG 13 (Climate Action), data indicates that 80% of disasters in Asia-Pacific region are climate change related and 1.3 billion people are affected by them. However, women are more likely to die in disasters and their livelihoods tend to be more directly impacted. On the other side, while women are the



most affected by disasters and have low influence in decision-making on the governance of natural resources, they are usually the first responders and the front lines on environmental conservation. Understanding the gender dimensions is central when planning better responses. Women need to be fully engaged in planning processes.

How to ensure a balanced and meaningful participation from stakeholders in the context of the 2030 Agenda?

Ms. Jatfors recommended a few measures to ensure a more balanced participation that foster gender equality: we need to increase the understanding of different needs and priorities of women and men to improve planning and development processes, increase sex and age disaggregated data, undertake

vulnerability assessments, and increase the participation of women in monitoring and evaluation activities.

Meaningful participation involves ensuring access to information, building the capacity to engage and influence decision-making, and creating durable accountability mechanisms. Access to information is a basic step to enable public participation. A legal system to protect the right to access information is central. Empowering stakeholders requires further development of their capacity to participate. For example, stakeholders have to learn how to negotiate their interests and how to communicate with different audiences. Ms. Jatfors went further – We should consider moving beyond developing the capacity to participate. We should aim to develop leadership skills. Women and other vulnerable groups should not only be included, they should be leaders, shaping governance and market. Empowerment and stakeholder engagement, however, should aim to go beyond isolated initiatives and aim to institutionalize public participation practices. A meaningful and impactful form of public participation is when stakeholders have influence on the decision-making processes around budget expenditure and have instruments to track public finances. Implementation and institutionalization of participatory budgeting in the Asia-Pacific region could contribute to building transparency and accountability in local governments. According to Daw Than Ei, Community Engagement Specialist at Earthrights International, we need to create and strengthen systems for accountability, implement systems that empower people – share power, are diverse, self-regulated, mutually beneficial, cooperative, and sustainable.

Governments and the UN system can have significant contributions to strengthen accountability. According to the participants in the fishbowl discussion, governments must allow themselves to be monitored, have the responsibility and ownership to be compliant. Furthermore, governments can foster opportunities for participation by investing in social protection and basic public health care. Women, for example, might require access to childcare to participate, and low-income communities might need some sort of compensation for the time not spent on their livelihoods. In addition to the role of governments, the participants discussed that the role of the UN is to facilitate spaces where a diversity of voices can be heard and to help build trust among different sectors. Furthermore, UN agencies can support meaningful participation through research and advocacy, providing good practices, evidences of the value of participation, and guidelines to foster quality engagement.

The participants suggested two recommendations for next steps to foster meaningful public participation in the Asia-Pacific region. First, there was a concern about the limited capacity of events to reach out the right audiences and spend the circle of people who believe on the value and impact of public participation. Based on this concern, the audience suggested to mainstream participation in infrastructure and transportation sectors. Infrastructure projects have a high impact in local and regional development, a substantive amount of investment, and often fail to undertake any participatory processes that could mitigate their impact. The second recommendation was to increase financing to scale up existing initiatives. There are already multiple good pilots and stories of good practices. It is necessary to create the conditions to ensure the long-term sustainability of pilot experiences.

“In this region we see harassment of CSO, killing of human rights defenders, what does this mean for this effective empowerment of vulnerable groups?”

Workshop participant

“The government must be open and create a mechanism of engagement that allows people to engage”

Fany Wedahuditama, Workshop participant



Participation and its importance for “leaving no one behind”

Speakers

Mr. Miles P. Young, Director, Regional Rights Resource Team at the Pacific Community (SPC)
Mr. Gam Shimray, Secretary General, General of Asia Indigenous Peoples’ Pact (AIPP)

Moderator

Ms. Therese Bjork, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

How can participation ensure those who are at risk of being left behind are included in development processes?

Bottom-up approaches are key for development processes. We can’t make blanket programmes, we have to tailor approaches according to different communities. An example of good practice is to let the communities define what it means to be left behind according to their experiences. It is necessary to be culturally sensitive and people-centered. The Regional Rights Resource Team at the Pacific Community (SPC) is governed by its member states, including the 22 Pacific Island countries. They face two main questions “How do we work with other communities in the Pacific, CSOs, private sector?” and “How do we work with our scientists in fisheries and agriculture to make them put people from the Pacific at the center of their worlds?”. In response to these questions, they have adopted a people-centered approach that explores the relationship between people and their environment, looking from a rights-based approach, gender mainstreaming, education, and climate change perspective. They try to understand what human rights means in the context of the Pacific communities. This involves cultural mapping, “What has been the story telling the Pacific over the years?”. This work had already had multiplier effects throughout the region. Therefore, development processes should be rooted in the local culture, for example by understanding people’s perspectives, valuing the local history and myths, adapting processes to the local languages and symbols, and developing an agenda according to local events and seasonal calendars.

How can participation help in upholding the rights of vulnerable groups?

According to Gam Shimray, from the Asia Indigenous Peoples’ Pact (AIPP), participation is not about “pushing” somebody, it is about being in sync. Participation is about putting ourselves in alignment. In a community, people are all somewhat aligned. Participation has different faces, it can be short or long term. AIPP cares about institutionalization of participation. For their members, participation can help to uphold the rights of vulnerable groups by:

1. Providing equal opportunity to participate;
2. Respecting diversity and building consensus: Respecting different perspectives, removing barriers for participation, building trust and consensus. “If we are not there to overcome our differences, we are not able to come together”;
3. Being able to influence and to be represented: Taking part in something should mean being able to influence, whether policy dialogue or something else. Representation in the process is key.

Additionally, the participants discussed that stakeholders coordinating a participatory process should:

1. Provide easily accessible information allowing anyone to step in a project;
2. Establish a clear mechanism for engagement and response;
3. Guarantee clear communication among stakeholders to build trust;
4. Address and minimize barriers to participation;
5. Emphasize the inclusion of everyone in a community, such as men, women, young, and elderly;
6. Speaking the language that people speak best. For example, to engage the private sector to care about gender violence, talk about the impact of people missing work and how it impacts the bottom lines. With Ministries of Finance, one should highlight the economic benefits of inclusion.

Strategies and dimensions of participation

Speakers

Ms. Victoria Demello, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Ms. Hitomi Rankine, Environmental Affairs Officer, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP

Moderator

Mr. Dhruvad Choudhury, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)



What are different dimensions of participation?

Participation is not new to those who work in the development sector. However, we need to unpack what “participation” and “inclusion” mean. In the discussion, building ownership was a central topic. Participation is not the validation of a pre-cooked document, it is engagement in the actual process of decision-making. For that we need to understand how to make spaces of decision-making more inclusive. Participation is not about sympathy, it is about building empathy and understanding and developing the negotiation skills to manage conflicts.

This session introduced the spectrum of public participation (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower) and the four dimensions of quality engagement (purposeful, proactive, inclusive, and transformative engagement) tools developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and ESCAP. Each dimension of quality engagement has six indicators. Meaningful participation and engagement vary depending on the issue. However, the dimensions of quality engagement help to plan and assess participatory processes. A few aspects of quality engagement include:

- 1) Inclusive engagement: Guaranteeing safe space for engagement and being sensitive to cultural context.
- 2) Purposeful Engagement: Developing an engagement plan or strategy that defines the purpose of the engagement process, building a common understanding among stakeholders on why they are engaging and defining specific approaches according to the target audiences. Co-designing projects and engagement plans with stakeholders helps to foster transparency, build ownership and the capacity to participate.

What are the mechanisms needed to foster stakeholder acceptance, support and involvement?

An engagement process needs to generate both trust and authority to gain legitimacy. Some of the strategies to ensure accountability and build trust include:

- Access to Information: Sharing appropriate information is key to allowing stakeholders to effectively engage. It requires, for example, boundary agents facilitating communication between different groups and providing information in accessible formats.
- Common Language: Developing a common language among stakeholders is key to facilitating cross-sectoral learning and public participation.
- Valuing local and indigenous knowledge: Technical people can be focused on the technical issues, but bringing people together means that they can learn from each other and add value to the decision-making process.

Building the capacity of civil society to participate involves providing them with (1) More space so they can have a bigger voice; (2) Support from stronger organizations and a platform for engagement; (3) Help to know their target audience and convey their messages and recommendations in a more powerful way; (4) Support to identify win-win situations and incentives to gain commitment from stakeholders; and (5) Support to articulate their interests as a business case, speaking the same language as financial institutions when needed.

Sensitize the private sector to increase their engagement: Private sector engagement tends to be very limited. However, business and human rights are more entangled than ever. To change this scenario, engagement needs to make sense for their return on investment. Demonstrating how partnering with CSOs can provide new income streams is far more convincing to the private sector than relying on goodwill and empathy.

How can the quality of participation be assessed and how to ensure that those involved are accountable throughout the process of participation and beyond?

The common pitfalls of engagement and participation are:

- Badly designed processes;
- Badly implemented (intentional or unintentional);
- No result or outcome of the process achieved;
- No lessons learned – can see the same people repeating the same mistakes;
- Sometimes participation efforts bring the wrong stakeholders to the table. For example, when stakeholders who do not have the power to influence the implementation of a decision are engaged, such as junior staff, or when people who are biased towards a certain cause or have homogenous interests are invited to participate. As a result, quality of participation tends to be limited as it excludes diversity of interests and might become ineffective;
- Lack of common language. For example, when experts do not share a common language and experiences with stakeholders, making projects not relevant neither replicable to the new context.

By observing the four dimensions of quality engagement when planning and implementing engagement processes, stakeholders can minimize these and other pitfalls of participation.

Interconnected nature of participation and the SDGs

Speakers

Ms. Lisa Guppy, Asia and the Pacific Coordinator for Disasters and Conflicts, UN Environment
Mr. Jason Squire, Director of Regional Asia Office, The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

Moderator

Ms. Anisha Rajapakse, Expert

Do different SDGs call for different types of participation?

The SDGs are an attempt to catalyze systemic approaches, revealing interconnections across issues and creating opportunities for engagement among different stakeholders. Therefore, SDGs require participation. However, participation varies according to the context and issues involved. The kind of stakeholder engagement required in the context of water resources management or housing, in the Philippines or India, will vary. Engagement processes should be sensitive to the local context.

What are the biggest challenges for ensuring participation when dealing with the intersection between different SDGs?

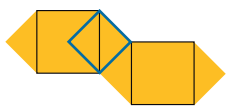
There are several, multifaceted challenges for ensuring participation when dealing with the intersection between different SDGs. The lack of tools and methodologies for a systemic analysis of complex issues is a major setback when dealing with intersectionality, as it prevents us from reaching a shared set of policies. Moreover, when dealing with participatory efforts, it is important to account for the expected diversity of opinions from the participants. The lack of tools to manage processes that involve diversity of opinions, competing interests, stakeholders with different cultural, social, and economic background undermines successful stakeholder engagement. As the achievement of the SDGs requires civil society organizations and other stakeholders to be engaged and learn about several issues concerning their local context, it is mandatory to redefine the measurement of the participatory effort. Currently it is a rather vague measurement, lacking any link between participation targets and human rights. Therefore, it becomes even more complex to make SDGs targets relevant to civil society organizations. Reports and indicators are made by scholars, and the result is often disconnected from the communities and the local context. Operationalizing these indicators or methods is, therefore, difficult not only for local governments but also for international institutions such as the UN.

How can a “whole of society approach” avoid trade-offs in between goals?

The “whole of society approach” is based on the idea that multi-stakeholder engagement can overcome a sectoral or fragmented approach to issues. Applied to the SDGs, it argues that the improvement of a specific goal necessitates engaging non-goal related sectors and actors through policies and initiatives at all levels of governance. A potential risk of this approach could be “trade-offs” between goals – and even though they should be avoided, given the fact that all the SDGs represent an equally urgent call to action, without any kind of prioritization, it is sometimes inevitable. However, can we consider increased integration a trade-off? By embracing a whole-of-society approach, we could not only prevent but also mitigate any kind of quid pro quo. Complementing the whole-of-society approach with a rights-based one would offer more protection in the achievement of the SDGs and in the face of eventual trade-offs. In order to implement the SDGs in practice, however, there is need for a major understanding of the local context. Policies and programmes have to be tailored to each individual and specific situation and be provided with a “tool box” from which to choose the best option based on the context. Sometimes there is the need to translate the SDGs to the local message, in order to make their message more attractive to governments. However, the knowledge and understanding of the local context is essential for an effective and successful implementation of policies. An example of its importance is the slum relocation program in India. The relocation created new problems, as there was a disconnect between the government’s

decision-making and the local communities, and therefore the project backfired. Understanding of local contexts and needs, integration of all affected stakeholders and staying true to reality are some of the elements needed to avoid trade-offs. Guaranteeing the right to participate for local communities is necessary to avoid “one-size fits all” projects.





Session 4:

Empowering people for a sustainable future

Keynote speaker

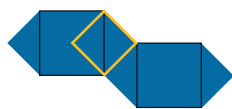
Mr. Antonio A. Oposa Jr., President of The Law of Nature Foundation and 2008 International Environmental Law Award Recipient

Summary

While the other sessions of the workshop focused on evidence, concepts, and facts, Mr. Antonio A. Oposa brought a particular angle –to empowerment by focusing on the experience. Empowerment is about inspiring action and moving from a willing and open heart.

Is it about nature? Or is it about life? The land and soil are the skin and the flesh of the Earth. Sea and the rivers are the blood and bloodstreams of the Earth. Our planet is suffering from multiple organ failures. We have to transform “climate change” into “climate of change”. The climate crisis brings both dangers and opportunities for positive change. Time for talk is over, we need to take personal and collective action. But where does change begin? There is no hearth stronger than a volunteer. “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a will to take the journey”. With a willing heart, nothing is impossible. All change begins within. We will turn it into an opportunity to awaken to our role as beings who are part of the earth. Science tries to change the mind. But change also needs a change of heart - a change of how people value, experience, and perceive life. But how to change people’s hearts? Appreciation. Hope. Inspiration. The greatest human hunger is the hunger for appreciation. We are going to shift from enforcement to shining success stories, bringing the spotlight of recognition on good deeds. Empowerment is also about inspiring hope. Hope is the currency of the human heart. Empowerment is about inspiring action because awareness is not enough. Awareness without action is like a bow without an arrow, useless. Engagement, enlightenment, or empowerment are about inspiration. Inspiration is the most powerful leader because you put the heart on fire. What do we want? Action and change are needed, now! Nowadays, sitting is the new smoking. Inspiring collective action calls to recognize our individual capacities as both limited and powerful. Change starts with the person you see in front of the mirror. At the same, we are only water drops. But if each one of us are only one drop of water, together we are a raging river. There is no limit to what we can achieve when we do not care who gets the credit. Anything that is worth doing cannot be done in one lifetime.





Session 5:

Knowledge into Action – The Ten-year Challenge to Save the Planet

What would you do if you had 10 years before all agricultural land became unusable, water was so polluted it became undrinkable, climate change risks became unmanageable and all biodiversity was phased out of the planet? Participants in this session had the opportunity to identify practical examples of how to create change and the incentives needed to accelerate delivery of the SDGs in an inclusive manner with a view to galvanize action. This session was held in four parallel sessions with participants choosing one preferred group for discussion.



SDG 2: Zero Hunger

Speaker

Mr. Clemens Grünbühel, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

Moderator

Mr. Lawrence Surendra, Sustainability Platform

Key recommendations

According to the recommendations from this group, it is important to ensure the inclusion of different stakeholders through public participation including, among others, academia and private sector (such as the pesticide industry). Moreover, the role of civil society organizations should not be undermined, especially in countries such as Myanmar and Cambodia, to guarantee vertical and horizontal accountability. Furthermore, farmers are crucial in this process and need to have space in the discussion,

as well as be informed of appropriate farming techniques. It is important to create an enabling environment and social safety nets for small farmers and the landless, especially during the rainy season e.g. by providing food vouchers and establishing a welfare system.

Overview of trends on implementation of SDG 2 in the region

Despite significant progress being made in the reduction of hunger and malnutrition, the improvements are not uniform across the region and groups, affecting livelihood and food security of the most vulnerable ones. As a general trend, the prevalence of undernourishment has been halved, from 23% in 1991 to 2% in 2015 due to increasing agricultural production. However, the rate of reducing undernourishment has slowed down in the past five years (2010-2015) and has not been able to keep pace with the growing population in South and South-West Asia – nearly 300 million people were still affected by hunger in 2016, reflecting the urgency of the issue. On the other hand, almost half of all overweight children under the age of 5 live in Asia, an emblematic sign of the challenges towards hunger reduction in the region.

Overview of challenges for ensuring participation when implementing SDG 2 and its relation to other goals, including on gender (SDG 5), inequality (SDG 10), and peace and justice (SDG 16)

The participants indicated a series of multifaceted challenges to the achievement of SDG 2, such as climate change, increasing urbanization, competing use of land and resources for food and agriculture, and the ageing population of working farmers. Moreover, the tendency is towards mechanization, with the tacit understanding that it equals development. However, the participants highlighted how there exists a negative correlation in this instance i.e. with a decrease in the number of people substituted by machines, there is a corresponding increase in fuel consumption.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Speaker

Ms. Jyotiraj Patra, Oxfam

Moderator

Mr. Vishwa Ranjan Sinha, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Key recommendations

The key recommendations emerging from this focus group highlighted firstly the need to work together with the private sector in order to develop business cases that are not only profitable but meet the SDGs as well. Secondly, in order to achieve the goal, it is recommended to include the local level stakeholders, by informing and engaging them in monitoring processes of any activities undertaken. Moreover, there is a need for further cooperation on making evidence-based knowledge and data accessible to all.

Overview of trends on implementation of SDG 6 in the region, and its relation to other goals, including on gender (SDG 5), inequality (SDG 10), and peace and justice (SDG 16)

Ample evidence demonstrates that currently there are an estimated 260 million people relying on unimproved water sources in the Asia-Pacific region, and over 1.1 billion people lacking access to a basic sanitation facility. Moreover, due to climate change, the region has been put under additional pressure due to increasing water stress and shocks. With the loss of natural wetlands and the decline of 36% of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan glaciers, which scientists predict will happen by 2100, progress in achieving SDG 6 has been slow. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that few in the region adopt a basin-wide approach, resulting in limited water cooperation. Regarding its relationship to other goals, access to clean water is critical for achieving gender equality and enhancing women's rights and empowerment (SDG 5). As women often bear the brunt of the household's domestic work such as food preparation, house maintenance, and collecting water for the family. The task is often arduous, time-consuming and

dangerous, and prevent women from engaging in income-generating or educational activities. It does not then come as a surprise that the level of gender-based discrimination is high in the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, the achievement of SDG 6 plays an important role also in relation to SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and Strong Institutions). Water scarcity is often exacerbated by security concerns and the participants highlighted links to targets on peace and security. This appears to be in line with situation in the region where 94% of people live in countries with closed, repressed, or obstructed civil space.

Overview of challenges for ensuring participation when implementing SDG 6

There are several challenges in ensuring participation when implementing SDG 6. First, the limited integration and interaction between social and environmental SDGs at operational and practice levels. Second, the major data gaps, that prevent a coherent understanding of the crisis' magnitude. Third, the techno-centric approaches that have been embraced in implementing SDG 6 limit more people-centric and human-rights based approaches. Fourth, there



is the matter of shrinking civic spaces: the focus until now has been more on interactions between governments, civil society organizations, and private companies, rather than on the people. Lastly, the limited regional cooperation on water issues remain a great barrier in ensuring participation in Asia-Pacific for the achievement of SDG 6.

Exciting or inspirational participatory initiatives relating to SDG 6

The participants highlighted how participatory initiatives relating to SDG 6 can improve development outcomes. People-centric SDG 6 implementation, especially using a gender-based approach, could ensure that the achievement of clean water and sanitation becomes a driver for gender equality throughout the Asia-Pacific region, a key step towards a level playing field. Furthermore, partnerships promoting communities' participation in decision-making are a necessary condition for development, closing the persisting gaps between countries and subregions, urban and rural, and between groups within countries. Of course, it was highlighted how in order to have progress there needs to be political will and leadership to promote and invest in inclusive development frameworks in the region. An interesting example put forward is the Mekong River Commission. Due to its actions, the Mekong region is registering significant progress and has developed a 5-year plan between governments, private sector and CSOs. For this to be possible, however, the focus has to be on shifting the discussion from national security to regional security and the emphasis on benefit sharing through transboundary approaches.

SDG 13: Climate Action

Speaker

Mr. Stefanos Fotiou, ESCAP

Moderator

Ms. Evelyne Batamuliza, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Key recommendations

The key recommendations emerging from this focus group highlighted the need to ensure no one is left behind and quality inclusive participation in the implementation of the SDG. To do so, it is necessary to provide space for voicing concerns, build capacities and devolve decision-making to the appropriate level (regional, national, subnational and local) and hold each level accountable for any decision-making. Furthermore, the participation needs to look at both supply and demand, to be sustained over time, and collective action should be

taken with a sense of urgency reflecting the critical threat of climate challenge. Lastly, it was recommended that in order to progress further towards achieving SDG 13, regional cooperation and accountability for meaningful participation and dialogue should be strengthened.



Overview of trends on implementation of SDG 13 in the region

The region as a whole is not experiencing significant progress on the implementation of SDG 13. South-East Asia has made no progress including due to an increase in the greenhouse gas emissions per capita. The environmental impacts related to SDG 13 are affecting the population hard throughout the



region, from East and North-East Asia to the Pacific, where climate change represents the single greatest threat to the lives and livelihoods, security, social development and wellbeing of the subregion. However, there are positive trends – Singapore recently adopted carbon tax, China is working towards a carbon tax as well while its five-year plan reflects climate change, and Indonesia reduced fossil fuel subsidies. What emerged was the necessity of bringing in the people who are most affected by climate change into decision-making processes, as currently decision makers tend not to be directly affected themselves by the impacts of climate change. A question that was asked is whether we are engaging the right people in decisions. Those most vulnerable to the changes cause by climate change are the coastal communities and poor people reliant on subsistence on herding and migration. All these effects point towards a general vulnerability in our systems and societies and historical injustices which are exposing people to the impacts of climate change. It, therefore, becomes necessary to incorporate the externalities of climate change in the planning of investment decisions.

Overview of challenges for ensuring participation when implementing SDG

Several recommendations emerged from the breakout groups regarding the challenges for ensuring participation when implementing SDG 13. The group highlighted the necessity of having no preconceived solutions, more open access to information which would need to be tailored to the stakeholders involved, the implementation of National Action Plans based on participatory need assessment, and the importance of providing local multifaceted solutions. The participants also raised the issue of increasing the accountability for all stakeholders and strengthening regional accountability by creating measures for both the public and private sector. They pointed towards “co-creation” as a possible approach – a dimension of participation going beyond the mere “consultation”. It underlies the “think global, act local” motto, allowing for a bottom-up approach while at the same time identifying vulnerable groups and the right stakeholders necessary for an inclusive space. Furthermore, in order to improve the quality of the participation, it needs to be a sustained one, rather than an ad-hoc participation. The powerholders should be sensitized in order to enable people to participate and, lastly, everyone should be held accountable. Accountability is the key for achieving and ensuring participation when implementing SDG 13.

Questions and recommendations from the plenary

Can SDG 13 be achieved in the next 10 years? In order to have some measure of progress, the participants insisted on the need to hold people and governments accountable. The decision-making process should be devolved at the appropriate level – national, subnational, and local – and each level held accountable. Moreover, there is the need for a reform of the global tax system and multinational corporations taxed for their emissions and transgressions. Participation can be achieved only if it is institutionalized. Governments and international institutions must spread awareness regarding the urgency of the matter at hand, seek to increase institutionalized spaces of participation, and provide capacity building to enable the whole society to engage effectively, over time, and take action.

SDG 15: Life on land

Speaker

Ms. Warangkana Rattanasat, The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC)

Moderator

Mr. Francesco Checchi, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Key recommendations

The key recommendations to emerge from this focus group revolved around a call for institutional change – empowerment of government actors at all levels to pressure companies to comply with forest protection standards, more decentralized and collaborative forest management through increased inclusion of indigenous groups, and enforcement of transparency in forestry contracts to achieve greater corporate accountability. Moreover, the participants advocated for major public awareness to be achieved by guaranteeing freedom of the press.

Overview of trends on implementation of SDG 15 in the region

“Forest governance exists, but implementation, compliance and enforcement often fail”. As a result, the region has registered 10% of the world’s forest loss between 2000 and 2015. However, participants recognized that lot of progress has been made in the region at the policy level with relatively large Protected Areas, dedicated conservation policies, and National Biodiversity Action Plans (NBSAPs). Protected areas are growing more common across the region but remain critically insufficient in countries like Afghanistan and the Maldives. Wetlands and other unprotected forests are still subject to encroachment and illegal logging partly due by regional economic and political processes.

Overview of challenges for ensuring participation when implementing SDG 15

There are specific issues related to the implementation of SDG 15 in the region e.g. encroachment of natural forests, extraction of natural resources for commercial use, expansion of agricultural land, removal of firewood and illegal logging in border areas. Regarding the challenges facing inclusive participation in the implementation of the goal, they intersect both with SDGs 5 (Gender Equality) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities). First, forest management in the region remains overwhelmingly in men's hands despite the fact that women are those bearing the brunt of the damage done to forests – the forest landscape is yet to level the gender playing field. The issue has also been addressed by the Centre for People and Forest (RECOFTC), which stressed the importance of addressing gender inequalities in protecting forests. The Centre has designed training courses for communities to work on forest management and has been facilitating a multi-stakeholder platform. Even though policymakers should ensure that SDG 15 consistently supports the people that are the most impacted by land degradation, indigenous groups – which tend to be highly affected by deforestation and biodiversity loss, lack institutional recognition and do not have the means to defend themselves legally. Local communities need the legal recognition of their right to live and use the land for their livelihoods. Lastly, it is important to highlight that the wealth gap has widened by deforestation.

Exciting or inspirational participatory initiatives relating to SDG 15

The participants agreed on recognizing increasing collaboration of forest dwellers with civil society organizations to ensure that forest communities gain legal recognition of land ownership. There is a need for community-based forestry – forest and landscape restoration initiatives that support local livelihoods and multi-stakeholder platforms that enable coordinated responses and participatory initiatives.

Session 6 and Closing

In the final session, participants and moderators from the break out groups shared their key messages and recommendations in the plenary (summarized in the sections above). Some key cross-cutting themes throughout the workshop included the need for an evidence-based approach to public participation – to strengthen the value of stakeholder engagement by providing data on how it improves development effectiveness. It is also crucial to have a human-rights based approach. Public participation requires the right to participate and to access information. Participation as a human right is a means to achieve the right to a safe, clean, and healthy environment. Therefore, human-rights and evidence-based public participation in environment decision-making is central to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.



The presentations of workshop sessions can be found at the ESCAP's event webpage at <https://www.unescap.org/events/escap-embassy-sweden-second-regional-workshop-empowering-people-sustainable-future>.



Annex A: Workshop Programme

ESCAP-Embassy of Sweden Second Regional Workshop EMPOWERING PEOPLE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE 25-26 March 2019, Bangkok, Thailand

A regional workshop, jointly organized by ESCAP and the Embassy of Sweden, will highlight the importance of participation and empowerment in achieving more sustainable and inclusive societies.

The workshop on March 25-26, 2019 in the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok will be held as a pre-event to the 6th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) which will highlight regional and subregional perspectives on the theme of the high-level political forum in 2019, "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality". The 2019 Regional Workshop will bring together civil society organizations, governments, private sector, academia and other interested stakeholders to discuss the impacts and value of empowerment, including public participation on strengthening implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Asia and the Pacific.

The 2030 Agenda links progress on the sustainable development goals to empowerment and participation. ESCAP has highlighted participation and engagement as being fundamental to the transformations envisaged to sustainable and resilient societies. It emphasized the linkages between better engagement, more effective social learning and capacity to change. Similarly, the 2018 Embassy of Sweden annual regional workshop, underlined the importance of participation for resilience-building, particularly for vulnerable communities and in the context of decision-making relating to natural resources. However, countries in Asia and the Pacific, often lack enabling frameworks for public participation, guidelines for effective partnerships and technical capacity.

The purpose of the workshop is to increase the knowledge of all stakeholders on the situation regarding empowerment and public participation and their impacts on development outcomes and to foster regional dialogue and cooperation around these critical issues. The workshop will discuss the importance of participation for the environmental dimension of the SDGs in the context of other goals related to gender (SDG 5), inequality (SDG 10), peace and justice (SDG 16), different dimensions of participation and its relation to frameworks such as human rights-based approaches to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The workshop will have two objectives:

1. To develop a shared understanding on the impacts and value of empowerment, including through public participation, for strengthening implementation of the SDGs with an emphasis on the environment related goals and;
2. To discuss and identify incentives on how participation will improve interventions for sustainable development.

The Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation encourages mutual interaction between human rights, democracy, gender equality, environment and climate change and increased regional collaboration for poverty reduction and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.

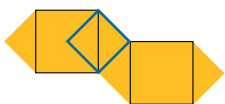
We welcome all participants in this year's workshop to be actively engaged to find paths to jointly deliver effectively on their goals, the 2030 Agenda and to foster participatory approaches to ensure more inclusive and equal societies.

Programme

Monday 25 March	
Conference Room 2 - UNCC, Bangkok	
Time	Session
09:00 – 09:40	<p>Opening and welcome remarks Ms Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Mr Staffan Herrström, Swedish Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand, to Lao People’s Democratic Republic and to Myanmar Mr David. R. Boyd, Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (video message)</p>
09:40 – 10:00	<p>Introduction to the objectives of the Workshop Ms Katinka Weinberger, Chief, Environment and Development Section, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP Ms Åsa Hedén, Counsellor, Head of Development Cooperation- Regional Asia and the Pacific, Embassy of Thailand in Sweden</p>
10:00 -11:00	<p>Session 1: The role of participation for the 2030 Agenda: moving from words to actions Keynote speaker Mr Vitit Muntarbhorn, Professor Emeritus, Law Faculty, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok; former UN Special Rapporteur, UN Independent Expert and member of UN Commissions of Inquiry on human rights</p> <p>Talk show: Is participation the key? Shaping the future through participation and empowerment Panellists H.E. Ms Rosemarie Edillon, Undersecretary for Policy and Planning, National Economic and Development Authority, Republic of the Philippines Mr Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary for Sustainable Development, ESCAP Ms Dharini Priscilla, Programme Manager, Grassrooted Trust Mr Lars Svensson, Sustainability and Communication Director, IKEA Southeast Asia</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Jost Wagner, Managing Director, The Change Initiative</p>
11.00 -11.30	Coffee Break
11:30 -12:20	<p>Session 2: Inspiring change through participation</p> <p>Segment 1: ESCAP and the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand launched a call for case studies, this presentation will provide an overview of the collection of cases and of the analytical framework that will be developed to deepen the understanding on the value of participation and empowerment to deliver on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.</p> <p>Speakers Ms Katinka Weinberger, Chief, Environment and Development Section, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP Ms Åsa Hedén, Counsellor, Head of Development Cooperation- Regional Asia and the Pacific, Embassy of Thailand in Sweden</p> <p>Segment 2: Stories from the field: participation and empowerment through the lens of SDG 5 gender equality, SDG 15 life on land and SDG 13 climate action.</p> <p>Speakers Ms Cham Perez, Research Coordinator, Center for Women’s Resources Mr Lorenzo Urbinati, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) Mr Bo Bo Min, Myanmar Climate Change Alliance</p>
12:30-12:45	<p>Greening the UN Ms Aneta Nikolova, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP</p>
12:45 -14:00	<p>Group Photo Lunch</p>

14:00 -15:00	<p>Session 3: Deep dive discussions</p> <p>This will be an opportunity to discuss, in groups, the importance of participation for the 2030 Agenda, how it can help in achieving the tenant of “leaving no one behind”; the different dimensions of participation including human rights-based approaches to implementation of the SDGs and crosscutting elements of participation.</p> <p>Format: This session will be held in 4 parallel sessions with two rounds of discussions to provide participants with the opportunity to participate in two groups.</p>			
	<p>Group 1 (MR C+D) Why is participation key for the 2030 Agenda? Speakers: Nyein Tun, ERI Anna-Karin Jatfors, UN Women Moderator: Stefanos Fotiou, ESCAP</p>	<p>Group 2 (CR 2) Participation and its importance for “leaving no one behind” Speakers: Miles P. Young, RRRT Gam Shimray, AIPP Moderator: Therese Bjork, OHCHR</p>	<p>Group 3 (Public Foyer) Strategies and dimensions of participation Speakers: Victoria Demello, UNDP Arun Jacob, ESCAP Moderator: Dhruvad Choudhury, ICIMOD</p>	<p>Group 4 (MR G) Interconnected nature of participation and of SDGs Speakers: Lisa Guppy, UN Environment Helena Olsson & Victor Bernard, RWI Moderator: Anisha Rajapakse, Independent Expert</p>
15:00 -15:30	Coffee break			
15:30- 16:30	<p>Session 3: Deep dive discussions</p> <p>Format: Second round of parallel sessions with participants choosing a different group.</p>			
	<p>Group 1 (MR C+D) Why is participation key for the 2030 Agenda? Speakers: Nyein Tun, ERI Anna-Karin Jatfors, UN Women Moderator: Stefanos Fotiou, ESCAP</p>	<p>Group 2 (CR 2) Participation and its importance for “leaving no one behind” Speakers: Miles P. Young, RRRT Gam Shimray, AIPP Moderator: Therese Bjork, OHCHR</p>	<p>Group 3 (Public Foyer) Strategies and dimensions of participation Speakers: Victoria Demello, UNDP Hitomi Rankine, ESCAP Moderator: Dhruvad Choudhury, ICIMOD</p>	<p>Group 4 (MR G) Interconnected nature of participation and of SDGs Speakers: Lisa Guppy, UN Environment Helena Olsson & Victor Bernard, RWI Moderator: Anisha Rajapakse, Independent Expert</p>
16:30 -17:00	<p>Reflections of the day (Conference Room 2)</p> <p>In plenary</p>			
From 17:00	<p>Dinner</p> <p>Art experience by Jobel</p>			
<p>Tuesday 26 March</p> <p>Conference Room 2 - UNCC, Bangkok</p>				
9:00 - 9:30	<p>Check-in</p> <p>Participatory exercise – “perspectives about the future”</p> <p>Video speech of Greta Thunberg at COP24</p>			
9:30 - 10:00	<p>Session 4: Empowering people for a sustainable future</p> <p>Keynote speaker</p> <p>Mr Antonio A. Oposa Jr., President of The Law of Nature Foundation, Recipient of the 2008 International Environmental Law Award and the 2009 Ramon Magsaysay Award</p>			
10:00 -10:30	Coffee break			
10:30 -12:00	<p>Session 5: Knowledge into action – the ten-year challenge to save the planet</p> <p>What would you do if you had 10 years before all agricultural land became unusable, water was so polluted it became undrinkable, climate change risks became unmanageable and all biodiversity was phased out of the planet? Participants will have the opportunity to come up with actionable recommendations to address these challenging scenarios with a view to galvanize action, identify practical examples of how to create change and the incentives needed to accelerate delivery of the SDGs in an inclusive manner.</p> <p>Format: This session will be held in 4 parallel sessions with participants choosing one preferred group for discussion. Participants will have the opportunity to come up with actionable recommendations needed to accelerate delivery of the environmental dimension of the SDGs in the context of other goals related to gender (SDG 5), inequality (SDG 10), peace and justice (SDG 16)</p>			

	Group 1 (MR F) SDG 2 zero hunger Speaker: Clemens Grünbühel, SEI Moderator: Lawrence Surendra, Sustainability Platform	Group 2 (MR C+D) SDG 6 clean water and sanitation Speaker: Jyotiraj Patra, Oxfam Moderator: Raphael Glemet, IUCN	Group 3 (Public Foyer) SDG 13 climate action Speaker: Stefanos Fotiou, ESCAP Moderator: Evelyne Batamuliza, UNDP	Group 4 (MR G) SDG 15 life on land Speaker: Warangkana Rattanasat, RECOFTC Moderator: Francesco Checchi, UNODC
12:00 -12:45	Session 6: Recommendations from breakout groups			
12:45-13:00	Closing ESCAP and the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand			
13:00-14:30	Lunch			



Annex B: Evaluation Results

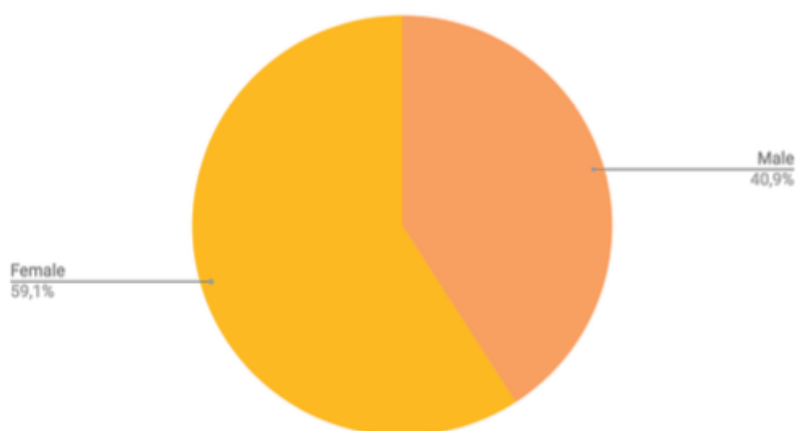
Profile of Participants:

162

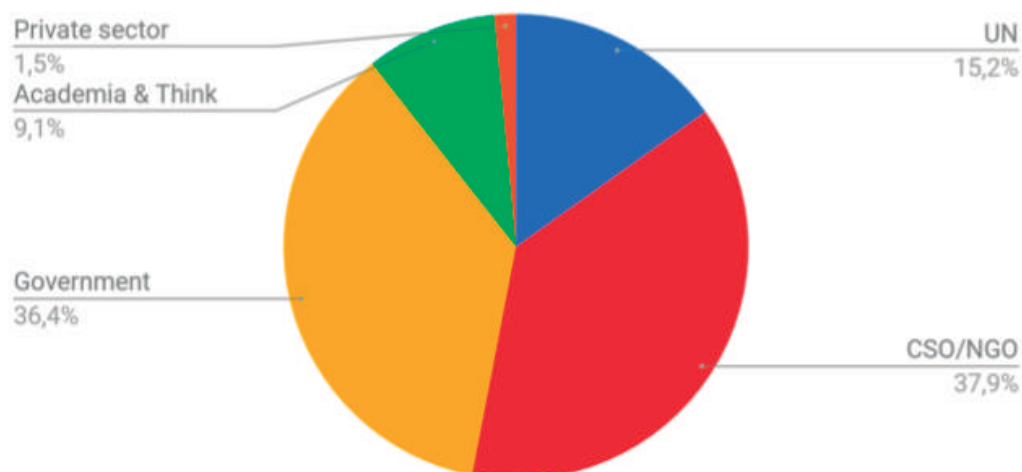
registered participants to the workshop

66

respondents to the survey

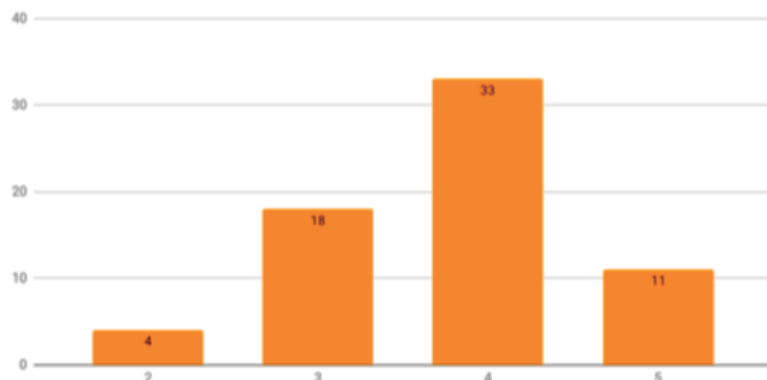


... from a variety of backgrounds



Measuring Impact:

The workshop helped develop a shared understanding on the benefits of public participation and empowerment as a means to strengthen implementation of the SDGs, especially environment-related goals and targets

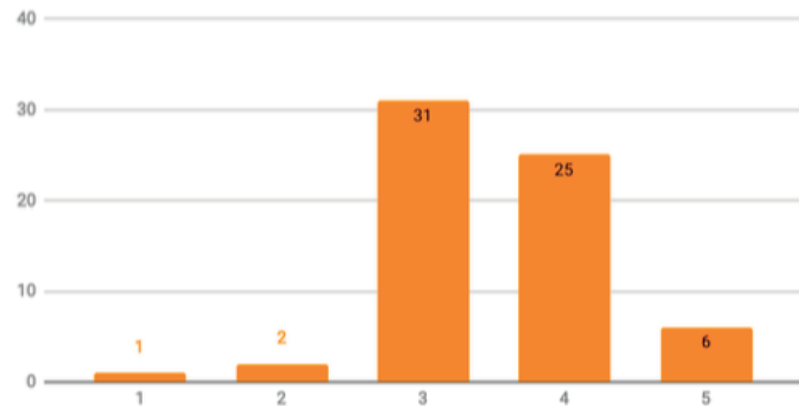


Two thirds of participants found the workshop helpful in understanding the benefits of public participation

But the participants were **split** on the value of the workshop to identify incentives for participation

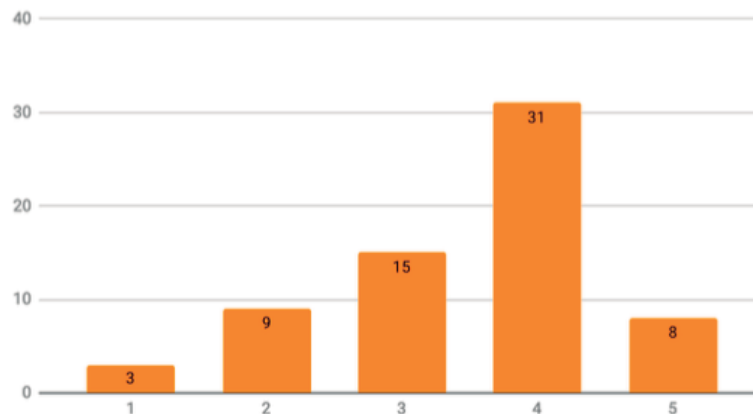
Measuring Impact:

The workshop helped identify incentives on how participation will improve interventions for sustainable development.



Measuring Impact:

The workshop will have an impact on how I conduct my work

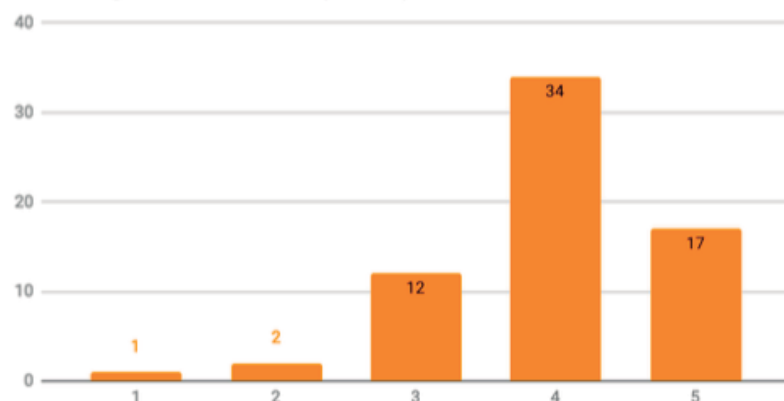


A large majority of participants shared that the **workshop** would impact how they conduct their work

Participants were **overall satisfied** with the space given for them to **share and exchange** with each other

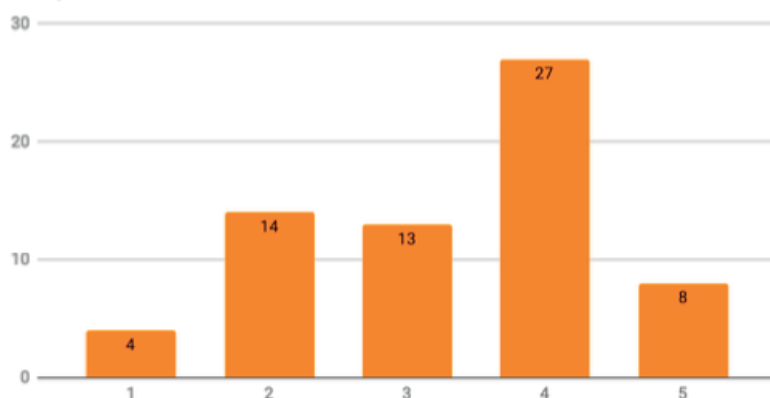
Measuring Impact:

The workshop allowed me to share experiences and exchange knowledge with the other participants



Measuring Impact:

The time available for discussion during the workshop was adequate

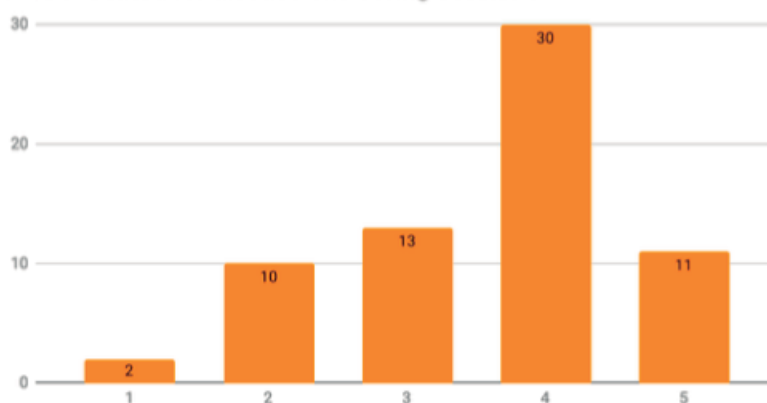


But they found that more time could have been allocated for discussion

Though they found the balance between presentation and discussion was satisfactory

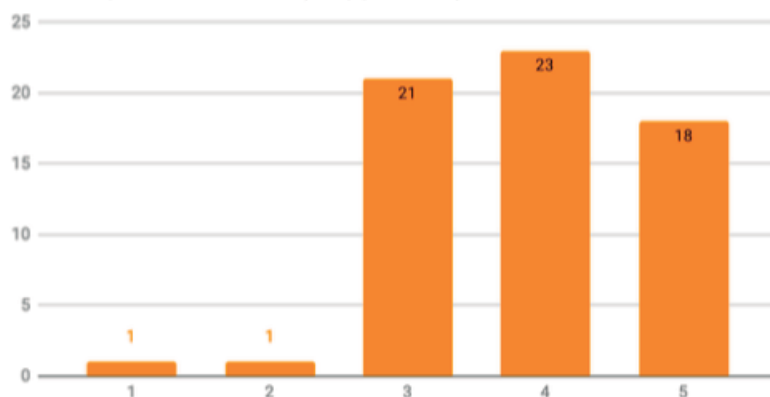
Measuring Impact:

There was a good balance between time for presentations and time allocated for discussions during sessions



Measuring Impact:

Communication from ESCAP to support participants to the workshop was effective (if applicable)



They were overwhelmingly satisfied communication from ESCAP

Are there aspects of participation you wished had been discussed further?

Best practices
Reality check
Incentives for Participation
Barriers to participation
Experience sharing
Focus on solutions
Private sector

Do you have suggestions to improve the workshop?

More Dialogue
Make it 2 days
More time for ideating
More engaging and relevant
Less A/C
Vegetarian food
Proper meals
Capacity building
More concrete
More networking
Non-UN/professional facilitators
Focus on anti-corruption

Moving forward...

48%

of participants would find **networking opportunities** most helpful to integrate participation in their environmental practice

What kind of resources would best help you integrate a participatory dimension to your environmental practice?

Online resources
21,5%

Training
30,8%

Networking opportun...
47,7%

