

Delegates Perceptions on Synergies and the Implementation of MEAs

Views from the ESCAP Region

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Paper prepared for the Informal Regional Consultation on Interlinkages, Kuala Lumpur 2001

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Publications in the UNU discussion paper series represent interim reports on the concept and practice of environmental management, environmental information and related fields. They are circulated in a limited basis in their pre-publication form to stimulate discussion and critical comment.

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**Delegates Perceptions on Synergies and
the Implementation of MEA's
*Views from the ESCAP Region***

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**Background paper prepared for the
Informal Regional Consultation / Workshop on**

Inter-Linkages:

**Synergies and Coordination among Multilateral
Environmental Agreements**



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- Staff members from the United Nations University, the Global Environment Information Centre and the Institute of Advanced Studies who participated in drafting the questionnaire and undertaking the review

List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
UNU	United Nations University
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	Framework Convention on Climate Change
CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
ESCAP	Economic Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FPs	Convention Focal Points
HDI	Human Development Index
HDC	Human Development Country
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NC	National Committee
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
GEF	Global Environment Facility

“Makers of international policy and law are currently overwhelmed by the sheer diversity and number of international agreements and negotiations on their political agendas. Given the plethora of urgent international negotiations and multilateral activities related to law and policy the obvious need for policy coherence, treaty compatibility and capitalization on the synergistic potential of complementary aspects of related treaties is correspondingly greater.”

(Chambers, 2001. *Inter-linkages The Kyoto Protocol and the International Trade and Investment Regimes*. pg 3)

1

Introduction

During the past century, many international treaties have been created in an effort to address pressing environmental issues. Customarily, Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are intended to tackle problems associated with a single, specific, environmental problem or issue. Consequently, the act of creating treaties to combat a single issue has resulted in some agreements that reinforce the objectives of others, while the commitments of others undermine, overlap and contradict. (UNU report, 1999) Problems, including contradictions between treaties, could be mitigated if the natural links that exist between the components of the global environment were recognised and incorporated in the development of environmental management policies. (Watson, 1998) “Inter-linking involves a process whereby the key elements among and between various regimes are identified, analyzed, understood and then synthesized to bring about a result whereby much more can be gained for less.”(Paoletto, 1999) The possibility of reducing conflicts between the mandates of different MEAs through the adoption of integrative approaches during their creation and implementation has been increasingly recognised by UN agencies. Attempts to analyse the benefits of linkages between MEAs have recently been explored by agencies including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development (UNDP), the United Nations University (UNU) and various Convention Secretariats.

One of the first major efforts undertaken to specifically identify the potential benefits of synergies in relation to MEA development occurred in 1999, when UNU hosted the *International Conference on Inter-Linkages: Synergies and Co-ordination between MEAs*. The conference helped to foster an understanding and awareness among members of the international environmental community of the importance of recognising inter-linkages. In

response to the many assertions experts expressed at the conference the UNU initiated a three-year programme called the UNU *Inter-Linkages Initiative*. This initiative is designed to explore the key issues raised at the conference, with a particular emphasis on recommending practical measures to help co-ordinate MEA implementation at the international, regional and national levels. (UNU, 1999) At the conference, leading experts discussed the many difficulties encountered by national bodies responsible for MEA implementation. A key problem identified is that many nations possess limited human and financial resources to implement the MEAs for which they are responsible. The national bodies that have the mandate for environmental protection recognise the importance of eliminating contradictions and avoiding overlap within their management practices. Yet these national bodies frequently lack the capacity to take appropriate action and consequently call upon international and regional organisations for support. They ask these bodies to assist in identifying issues of overlap and commonality between MEAs and to aid them in developing synergies.

In an effort to gauge national capacities to address linkages and identify opportunities for synergistic development between MEAs, UNU conducted a survey of the baseline conditions in countries throughout the Asia Pacific Region. This report uses the findings of that survey to present a preliminary review of challenges encountered by nations during the MEA negotiation and implementation processes and to make recommendations aimed at increasing synergies in their application by national governments.

Questionnaire & Survey Limitations

UNU staff designed a questionnaire to address key issues related to the management of the Rio-Agreements; the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). The questionnaire was conducted by UNU researchers through consultations with delegates at the Economic Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) *Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific*, in Kitakyushu Japan, 4-5 September 2000. Advantage was taken of the opportunity to conduct the survey in person at the ESCAP meeting rather than, as initially planned, a formal survey to be administered via email to each Convention Focal Point¹ (FPs) and key policy makers in ESCAP nations. A number of factors prompted the decision to undertake the exercise at this event. First, the setting would allow for direct contact with Environment Ministers and relevant stakeholders responsible for developing environmental policies within each country. Second, it was anticipated that a high response rate could be secured through personal interviews. Third, this course of action

¹ Appointed by a national government body, a Focal Point is the key representative responsible for managing and coordinating the implementation of a given MEA and serves as the focal point for the Convention to liaise with the Secretariat.

would allow for on-the-spot clarification of problems in the survey if the need arose. Fourth, due to the nature of the exercise, the findings would be based on delegates' perceptions. Such information is considered highly relevant as the participants consisted of environment ministers and other high-level policy makers. Consequently, their perceptions and understanding of inter-linkages between MEAs are reflected in the policies and procedures developed to manage environmental decisions within their nation.

Permission to administer the questionnaire was granted only a few weeks prior to the conference. Due to the limited time, questions were loosely designed to focus on the status of national arrangements in regard to data management systems, institutional arrangements, capacity building and awareness exercises, and mechanisms to generate funding. Essentially, questions in each section of the document were created to gather information regarding gaps and opportunities for synergistic implementation of MEA programs, with specific emphasis placed on the implementation of the Rio-Instruments. The questionnaire was comprised of 13 questions and designed for completion in approximately 10-15 minutes.

Human Development Index

In total, 41 ESCAP members and associate member nations² attended the conference. Delegates from 36 countries completed the questionnaire. This number represents approximately 60 % of the total 52 ESCAP members and 9 associate member nations. Due to the diverse nature of the Asia Pacific region, particularly with regard to the issues that affect the synergetic implementation of the Rio-Instruments, the use of several indices to group country information was explored. In this discussion paper, The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) was selected as the chosen method of analysis, because of its comprehensive nature, particularly in terms of accounting for human conditions in nations.

“The HDI measures the average achievement in a country in three basic dimensions of human development: a long an healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. A composite index, the HDI thus contains three variables - life expectancy at birth, educational attainment (adult literacy and the combined gross primary, secondary and tertiary enrollment ratio) and Gross Domestic Product per capita. Income enters the HDI as a proxy for a decent standard of living and as a surrogate for all human choices not reflected in the other two dimensions.” (UNDP, HDI report 2000)

The HDI index is therefore, more relevant to the implementation of Rio-Instruments than more traditional economic indices, since it is indicative of a nation's ability to translate economic prosperity into an environment that will better the lives of its people.

² ESCAP is comprised of 52 Member states and 9 Associate Members

Countries that participated in the exercise were categorized according to their HDI number into high, medium, or low Human Development Countries (HDCs). The higher the number a country is assigned the greater the life expectancy, education, and income overall members of the population are likely to attain. The state of human well being in a high HDC is relatively good, (the average individual has a healthy quality of life) whereas people in medium HDCs live in a satisfactory state of well being, and in low HDC human welfare is considered low.

The information collected by the exercise was then collated, entered into a database, and analyzed according to the HDI index (see Appendix 1). Of the total delegates (countries) surveyed 16% represented high HDCs, 70% medium HDCs, and 10% represented low HDCs.

Goal of Preliminary Review

The findings produced by this preliminary review will contribute to the UNU's work on regional model framework development and will be used as input into the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and related meetings organized by the UNU. The information is also intended for use by decision-makers, Convention Secretariats and researchers, and will be freely shared with all relevant and interested organizations. At this stage the author has adopted a relatively straightforward analysis of the information generated. A more comprehensive analysis may be undertaken in the future that may include the conduct of follow-up questionnaires if comments from readers deem such action necessary.

Institutional Coordination

Due to the complex nature of environmental issues, the responsibility for negotiating and implementing a single MEA may fall under the auspices of more than one national agency. (Hisschemoller and Gupta, 1999) For example, to fulfill the objectives of the CBD, measures are needed to protect biodiversity, to regulate trade, deal with intellectual property rights, and so forth. As MEAs require different ministries, agencies, departments, conventions and FPs to interact, the capacity of implementing agencies to successfully execute MEA plans is dependent upon strong co-ordination of efforts between these bodies. To examine the operational connectivity between national organisations, and gain insight as to their overall effectiveness in determining the types of policies and mechanisms developed and used to co-ordinate implementation, delegates were asked to identify the agencies responsible for the negotiation and implementation of each Rio-Instrument.

A division among the types of institutional arrangements adopted by nations on the basis of HDI status was hereby identified. In the majority of high HDCs, negotiation, design, and co-ordination of convention implementation is the responsibility of one key institution. However, in approximately 50% of medium HDCs, the agency responsible for negotiating MEAs differs from the agency or agencies in charge of implementation. Delegates from nations that used this approach listed examples of the types of conflicts encountered, the majority of which involve communication failure among the various parties involved. Accounts notably identified grievances on the part of MEA implementation agencies with their government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). In most cases, MoFA was accused of not involving the FPs during international negotiations of environmental plans. As a result the plans negotiated disregard the concerns of MEA implementing bodies and the communities that they represent. Further, grievances conveyed of reluctance on the part of MoFA to readily share information with FPs. Delegates commented that although awareness of such conflicts is recognised by FPs, few efforts to combat these problems have been undertaken nationally.

Recommendations

The results suggest that conflicts tend to occur in nations that lack policies to foster cooperation between the different agencies responsible for negotiating policies, plans, and implementing a given MEA. The reason is rooted in the way in which national regulatory systems are designed. Government agencies are established to tackle a particular basket of issues, therefore, each agency has its own set of priorities, its own political agenda. However, to fulfill crosscutting MEA requirements different agencies need to enter into a new relationship, one that requires them to work closely together. Although, institutional structural arrangements may differ greatly among nations, according to the results, the nations in which fewer disputes seem to occur are those that have restructured their arrangements. They have developed a system that facilitates multi-stakeholder collaboration during the negotiation of policy at the international level and the drafting and implementation of policy at the national level.

It is suggested that those national agencies experiencing difficulty in coordinating MEA protocols conduct an evaluation to determine the effectiveness of existing institutional arrangements and then develop practical measures to improve the current situation. Various types of measures that serve to foster strong collaborative ties between groups involved in MEA processes, including; players that negotiate policy at the international level, those implementing and drafting policy at national levels, scientists, related government departments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups can be assumed.

The goal of restructuring any arrangement should venture beyond simply fostering information sharing. It should promote formal dialogue on a regular basis (for example, monthly meetings) between multi-stakeholders that will serve to forge joint decisions regarding policies to achieve MEAs. This can be achieved in a number of ways. For example, national governments can reconfigure arrangements to assign one central agency the responsibility of implementing all MEAs. This agency would exist as a watchdog agency, and oversee MEA implementation. It could serve to identify for example, if FPs from related MEAs have made efforts to collaborate and if not take measures to encourage them to foster ties. To account for views from all relevant sectors the lead agency could establish task forces to steer each MEA. Each comprised of multi-stakeholders including; relevant staff members from within the agency, non-government organizations, civil society groups, members of the private sector and academics, to provide guidance on how to steer pivotal MEA activities. In this type of institutional configuration the lead agency would be responsible for undertaking actions to implement task force recommendations.

Likewise, countries can set up a cross-sectoral National Committee (NC) that assembles participants from the various government departments and ministries, and FPs representing each MEA, to comprise a decision-making

body to steer all MEA implementation. (UNDP, 1995) Regardless of the arrangement assumed, a strong directive is required to foster needed communication to sufficiently join relevant actors in policy-making and planning processes to guide the implementation of the MEA.

What has been presented is a series of suggestions outlining centralized arrangements that may improve existing configurations. Guidelines that outline specific steps or procedures to be taken enhance existing arrangements as well as the most suitable bodies to undertake these measures are also needed and will be further explored within a series of case studies that UNU is conducting. The aim of the case studies is to examine institutional arrangements in-place to execute MEAs within selected Pacific Islands, and member countries from the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Each study will examine one pre-selected environmental issue and related MEAs within each country and develop recommendations to improve current systems. The case studies will be initiated during the summer of 2001 and the results will be made available upon completion.

3

Focal Point Communication

Frequent communication between the parties responsible for different MEAs is necessary for synergy development and can further help to avoid conflicts. With the aim of exploring the extent of communication between FPs, delegates' views were sought to identify the nature and reasons for their interaction.

The majority of the respondents, approximately 81%, were aware of interactions between different FPs, 19% of the delegates were unsure of FP communication. Individuals aware of FP interactions were asked to categorize the nature and motivation of the exchanges. Over 45% of the delegates suggested that interactions occur during personal meetings that are arranged on an ad-hoc basis. The holding of ad-hoc meetings implies a high level of communication between FPs. Four of the delegates mentioned that the ability of their FPs to hold ad-hoc meetings was greatly improved because their FPs offices are located within the same building. This facilitates regular contact.

Over 50% of the delegates indicated that their governments have established NC to guide the implementation of instruments and related environmental matters. National Committee meetings typically provide a useful formal venue for FP interaction. This study found that a marginal majority of NC meetings are held on an ad-hoc basis, 30%, whereas, approximately 22% are conducted on a monthly basis, and 11% are held on an annual basis. It seems unlikely that the majority committee meetings are truly held on an ad-hoc basis. Instead the findings suggest that committees are loosely structured or that the delegates questioned were unsure of NC meeting schedules and selected the category 'ad-hoc' as the most suitable response. Approximately, 11% of delegates were unaware of formal mechanisms established to foster interaction between FPs nationally. One delegate from a medium HDC indicated that in his country separate committees to steer UNFCCC and CBD related activities have been created. However, formal interactions between these committees do not take place.

Roughly, 30% of the delegates questioned from high HDCs indicated that convention FPs within their country frequently correspond through email. Moderate email use was reported in medium HDCs 12%. Whereas, all delegates from low HDCs implied that email is not used.

Recommendations

The establishment of National Committee's comprised of stakeholders representing various instruments, policy makers, relevant participants from line ministries, and institutions created to provide expertise and advice in steering MEA implementation and national sustainable development plans, should be encouraged. Committee meetings provide the opportunity for relevant parties to jointly address cross-linked issues, foster collaboration and discuss issues relating to multiple parties. Although, the effectiveness of NCs is largely dependant upon the authoritative powers possessed by the members involved, it is also important that membership in committees is not limited to government agencies. All relevant players including NGOs and representatives from civil society groups including indigenous peoples should be given ample opportunity to assume an active role in NCs and share their knowledge.

The findings suggest that although half of the countries accounted for in the survey have established NCs, only 22% of them meet on a regular monthly basis. This number was surprisingly low. In order to develop strong working relationship between the members responsible for conventions, frequent meetings are necessary and should therefore be required. When meetings are not held on a frequent basis, there is insufficient time to build-up the trust and understanding needed to foster joint programmes. It is suggested that NC meetings are more likely to be truly effective when conducted on a regular and frequent basis. This will help to ensure that the relationship between the different players will indeed be developed, that they will have ample time to work on the development of synergies and that the progress of the programmes established are frequently monitored.

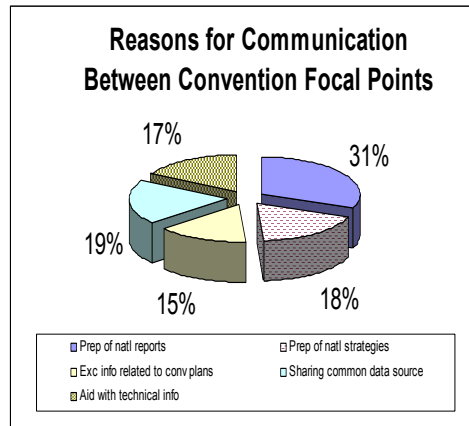
National Committees representing different issues for example, the NC on climate change and the NC steering biodiversity issues are very much encouraged to meet. Joint meetings are needed to identify if there are overlaps between programmes and, if so, whether synergies can be better taken advantage of.

The review determined that frequent personal meetings between FPs are conducted. This finding is encouraging since it is indicative of a high level of intimacy between FPs. These types of meetings provide a platform for the development of synergism between instruments. Focal Points are therefore, encouraged to conduct meetings with one another, and are reminded to ensure that other interested parties are afforded the opportunity for involvement if they represent relevant issues.

Motivation for FP Communication

As indicated in Figure 1, 31% of communication between FPs entails sharing of information relevant to the preparation of national reports.

Figure 1.



Interactions focusing on measures needed to prepare national reports was ranked as the leading catalyst for exchanges between FPs in medium and low HDCs and categorised as the second key reason in high HDCs levels. Several delegates suggested that national reports require information generated by other instruments and therefore, the use of data management tools is proving beneficial. However, communication concerning efforts to synchronise the sharing of information (including the use of common data-storage repositories) only takes place approximately 19% of the time. Furthermore, only 18% of communication is related to the preparation of national strategies.

Recommendations

The results suggest that the preparation of national reports often requires input generated by other instruments. The adoption of data management standards, and the promotion and use of standardised tools, including common data storage repositories, is therefore recommended. Such tools can improve information retrieval and analysis. Standard systems to process, store, and transmit data would decrease workloads, reduce the duplication of effort, lessen data handling costs, and improve compliance to convention requirements. The use of standards promotes transparency. It improves stakeholders' access to information and permits evolving issues and problems to be identified in a timely fashion. Given that high HDCs are the leading users of common data storage systems, it is suggested that successful systems employed by high HDCs be promoted as the building blocks for international standards development.

Correspondence between FPs is seldom related to the preparation of national sustainable development strategies, particularly in medium HDCs. It is during the planning stages of strategy development where synergism can be easily identified and implemented. Rather than attempting to infuse synergism into plans at a later stage, national governments are strongly encouraged to foster inter-linkages within strategy frameworks during the planning stages. Further, they are encouraged to make provisions within strategies that provide room for updating environmental policy.

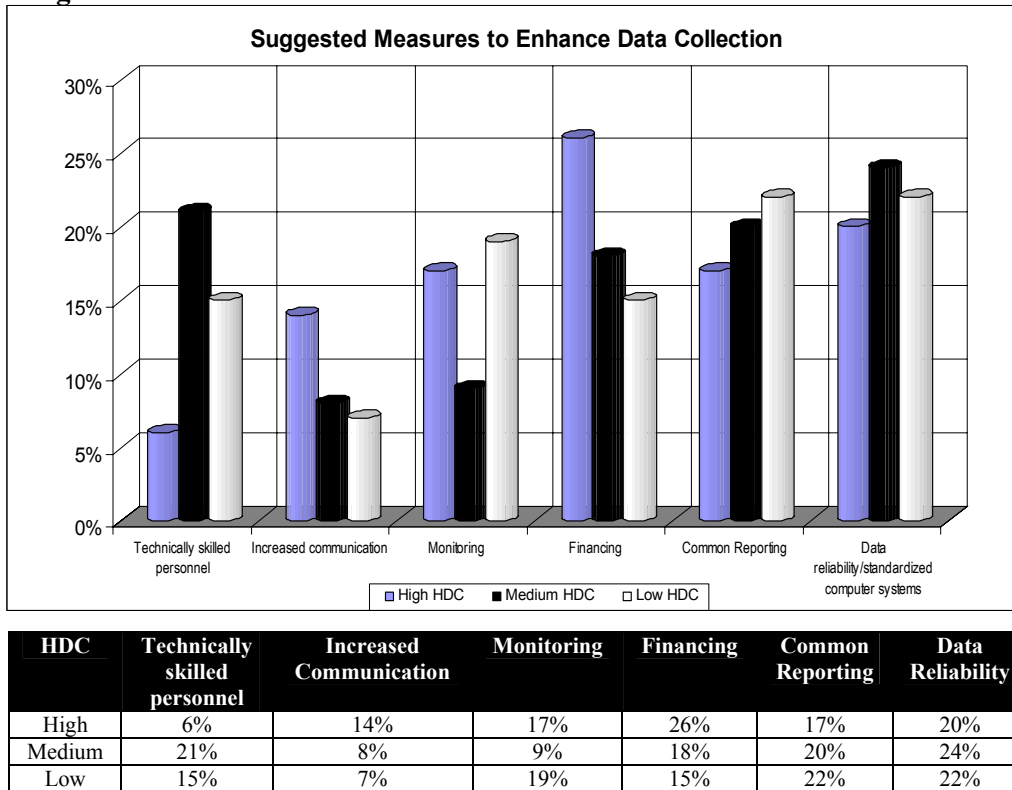
4

Information Sharing

Delegates were asked their views regarding the effectiveness of measures employed to share scientific data between various MEA implementing bodies. Approximately, 35% of the responses indicate that meetings are the leading medium used to disseminate scientific data. Delegates from medium HDCs suggested that the creation and distribution of publications is another leading channel for information dispersal. Only 7% of the delegates specified that information is posted on Internet web portals.

When then asked to prioritize the types of measures they seek to initiate to improve data collection capabilities within their country as indicated in Figure 2, delegates from medium and low HDCs selected efforts to standardise computer systems and strengthen technical capacity to be of greatest priority within their nation. Several delegates representing medium HDCs argued that their nation suffers from “brain-drain” and voiced the need for outside support to attract more technically skilled personnel. The desire to secure greater financial support to upgrade and improve data management systems was strongly promoted by delegates from high HDCs. The importance of enhancing monitoring systems to thereby create consistent and reliable data as well as the need to increase communication between relevant bodies was widely held as the least of delegates concerns. One delegate from a medium HDC offered the rational that “*there is sufficient verbal communication between relevant agencies, it is much less of a concern than determining ways to sort, store and present data in a manageable manner*”.

Figure 2.



Recommendations

The results indicate that information regarding MEAs is shared among different stakeholders during meetings. Although, meetings provide participants with the opportunity to share and explain findings, the information exchanged is limited those attending the event. Inevitably, the data will not reach all interested parties. Considering that the findings generated for a given MEA might be useful to other conventions it is important to promote measures to provide better access to information.

The publication and circulation of reports was identified as the second leading means to distribute data. Although informative, this measure possesses serious limitations. Not all nations can afford to subscribe to these publications information is therefore limited to those who can afford it. International agencies can aid by financing the cost of producing reports. For example, Thailand and Malaysia’s initial national communications under FCCC were financed through the Global Environment Facility (GEF). (Boyer, 2001)

Particularly discouraging, yet not unexpected, are the findings that indicate very little Internet use in low HDCs. Low HDCs tend to lack the capacity, infrastructure, and hardware necessary to gain access to the Internet. Furthermore, they tend to lack human resources and staff to maintain such systems. However, the Internet is considered a very effective means to share up-to-date information as it allows for worldwide access at a very low cost of

connection. Information supplied by international bodies, academic institutions, and NGOs regarding project findings, reports, clearing house mechanisms can be particularly helpful to scientists residing in low HDCs. Due to lack of funds some of them are unable to attend events, or even acquire the information through other channels (subscriptions to publications or training session). It is therefore recommended, that regional and international bodies conduct research and promote programmes to aid low HDC connect to the Internet. Once connected to the web it is equally important that that Internet sites have provisions for easy interaction with site owners (e.g. Convention Secretariats). Provisions that allow multi-stakeholders to raise queries with site owners and increase understanding of the issues.

Delegates from high HDCs predominantly expressed the need for greater financial support to upgrade and improve their data management systems. Suggesting that MEA implementation bodies in high HDCs recognise the benefits of using and maintaining data management systems. Although, it is generally accepted that improvements to data management systems are needed to enhance the quality of the information generated, many nations seem to lack the capital to undertake such efforts. It is therefore recommended that regional and international bodies help through the provision of practical support including the act of sending field-experts to nations in need to aid them in setting up data systems. Or by providing guidelines and examples of “best practice” that outline practical steps needed for the development of policies and protocol to establish and manage information systems.

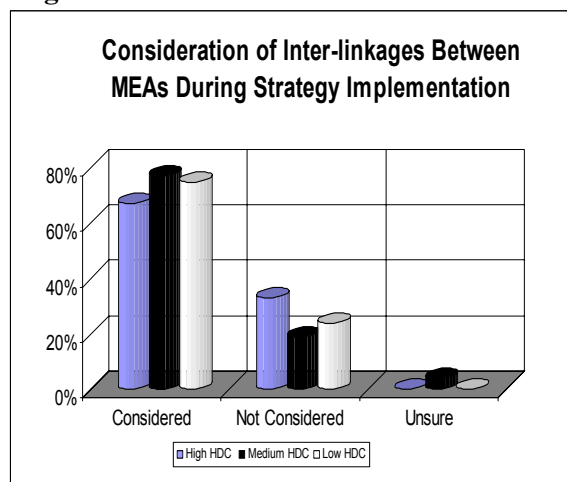
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Inter-Linkages

The development of synergies between MEAs has the potential to reduce the number of conflicts and duplicated efforts. UNU researchers created questions to collect data regarding efforts to understand and identify synergies as well as to measure of the effectiveness of such endeavors.

Delegates were asked whether efforts to identify inter-linkages between instruments and create synergies within related strategies are undertaken within their country. As shown in Figure 3, the majority of delegates questioned were aware of such efforts. Respondents described the various types of steps taken, including, “We have established a national committee from the various departments representing each convention that often meets to co-ordinate efforts” to “We are in the process of passing an ‘Environment Bill’ that will require the formal review of inter-linkages between MEAs”. At this stage of analysis no discernible trends linking a country’s HDI status and national efforts to foster synergism between MEAs have been detected. The majority of the delegates who were unaware if measures to identify inter-linkages within their country were undertaken suggested that those responsible for implementing convention plans are unable to do so due to limited human and financial resources.

Figure 3.



	High HDC	Medium HDC	Low HDC
Considered	67%	77%	0%
Not Considered	33%	19%	4%
Unsure	0%	4%	0%

Delegates were asked whether projects to fulfil the requirements of more than one instrument are undertaken within their country. The majority responded that dual-purpose projects designed to execute the goals of more than one convention are mounted within their country. Approximately, 66% of high HDCs undertake such efforts, followed by 54% of medium HDCs. One respondent from a low HDC appeared to be aware of one collaborative project within his nation. A few delegates reported that they perceived a reluctance to harmonize programs for fear that this would result in the overall provision of less financial support. Arguing that more funding can be obtained for multiple independent programmes than for one large endeavour. It must be noted that, when answering this question, some of the respondents listed examples of projects that serve to jointly implement conventions other than Rio-Instruments.

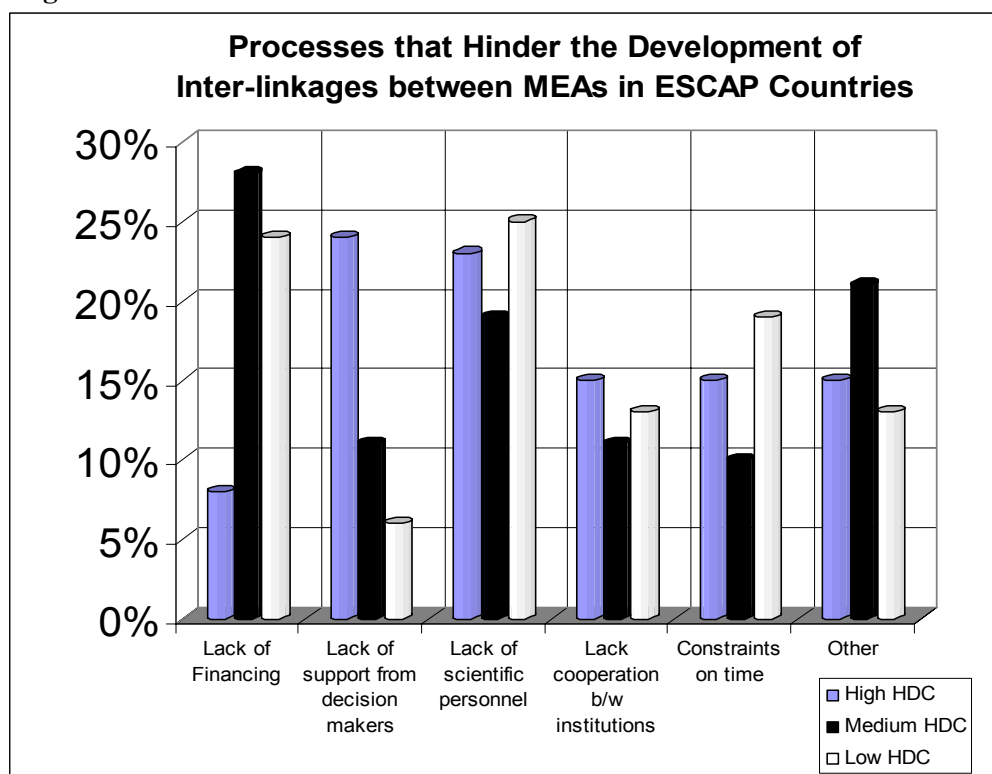
Recommendations

Interestingly, the majority of the delegates questioned asserted their engagement in programmes that serve to fulfil requirements for different conventions. Indicating that the benefits of linking related MEA efforts are generally recognised among nations. Findings, however, also suggest that the advantages of synergism may not be fully realised by governments in low HDCs. Although further work in this area is required to validate these concerns, low HDCs should still be encouraged and supported in undertaking efforts to reduce work duplication. UNU recommends that international institutions aid by creating tools, including, models of best practice and case studies to provide examples and instructions to guide the design of harmonised programmes.

Processes that Hinder the Development of Synergies

When asked to identify issues that hinder the development of inter-linkages, delegates from medium and low HDCs suggested that limited financial resources are the greatest obstacles for synergistic developments. Delegates from high HDCs considered the predominant barrier to synergistic developments as being the lack of support and apathetic attitudes of decision makers to engage in such efforts. The following statement from a delegate representing a medium HDCs illustrates the situation *“First, our Government is struggling to fund all environmentally related programmes. Second, because there is a huge lack of support on the part of diplomats, environmental projects are provided with very little government funding”*. Additional, comments emphasizing the lack of sufficient scientific personnel possessing the knowledge and ability to develop synergistic programmes were voiced by many of the delegates questioned. In addition, various requests for assistance in mobilising technical and financial resources were made, as indicated in Figure 4.

Figure 4.



HDC	Lack of financing	Lack of support from decision makers	Lack of scientific personnel	Lack of cooperation b/w institutions	Constraints on time	Other
High	8%	24%	23%	15%	15%	15%
Medium	28%	11%	19%	11%	10%	21%
Low	24%	6%	25%	13%	19%	13%

Recommendations

Educational efforts are key towards increasing support for MEAs. The findings suggest that the lack of support from national decision makers for convention plans is delaying ratification and in-turn the development of synergies between MEAs. If decision makers and members of the general public understand the vast ramifications of even small-scale actions that degrade the natural environment they may be more eager to support measures to prohibit such behaviour. The promotion of programs that explain the links between environmental issues and the ramification of single actions may help politicians and members of the general public further comprehend the importance of environmental protection.

It is recommended that governments, NGOs and regional institutions intensify efforts to educate government officials as well as members of the public to increase understanding surrounding the importance protecting the environment and supporting convention ratification.

Additionally, as suggested in Chapter 2 of this paper, national agencies should encourage multi-stakeholder involvement during processes to coordinate MEA implementation. This is because NGOs, private sector members, and civil society

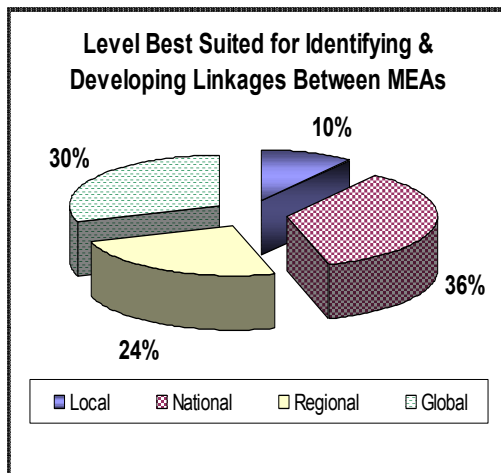
groups are able to utilize their networks to build capacity and increase public awareness in areas where government agencies are poorly equipped. (Boyer, 2001)

In addition, the findings suggest that the lack of adequate human capacity at the local level is a serious factor limiting the progress of convention implementation. Synergy development can only be undertaken when there are sufficient human resources available to undertake such efforts. Local institutions need to improve their ability to develop, implement, and support the required regulatory systems. UNU case study exercises will examine these issues and develop recommendations to foster increased capacity at local and district levels.

Identification of Inter-linkages

UNU researchers asked delegates their opinion regarding the level most suited for identifying and implementing inter-linkages between MEAs. A marginal majority of respondents suggested that the identification of linkages between MEAs is the role of national governments, as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5.



Approximately 50% of the delegates from high HDCs favor undertaking such activities at the national level and 33% at the regional level. Whereas, responses from delegates representing medium HDCs were roughly evenly split, 34% were in favor of developing inter-linkage programs at the global level and 32% at the national. Approximately, 43% of delegates from low HDCs suggested that the national level is most suited to developing inter-linkages plans followed by the local level 29%. Few delegates from high

HDCs argued that the local level has the least available capacity. They suggested that staff possess limited understanding of overarching environmental agreements, understanding that is needed to identify linkages; yet argued that since the local level is most sensitive to environmental policies, the next logical level for identification is the national level. The general sentiment of delegates from medium HDCs was that global and regional efforts to identify linkages are needed particularly since key environmental issues including, air pollution, biodiversity and water pollution are trans-boundary in nature. Delegates from low HDCs disagreed, supporting instead the creation of synergistic programs at the national level to be accomplished in close cooperation with local level constituents. The rationale for this being that it is at the local level that the implementation of strategies is carried out.

Recommendations

In response to the findings, the promotion of a multi-layer approach for identifying inter-linkages is suggested. Global institutions are encouraged to aid in the identification inter-linkages between instruments and to foster support for related programmes. Regional organisations can help by detecting cross-linking regional issues and by developing and promoting related synergistic programmes, and at the national level, synergistic efforts should be encouraged at the onset of policy and strategy development.

It is important that efforts to increase the chances of successful MEA implementation should include visible support from leaders and the public.

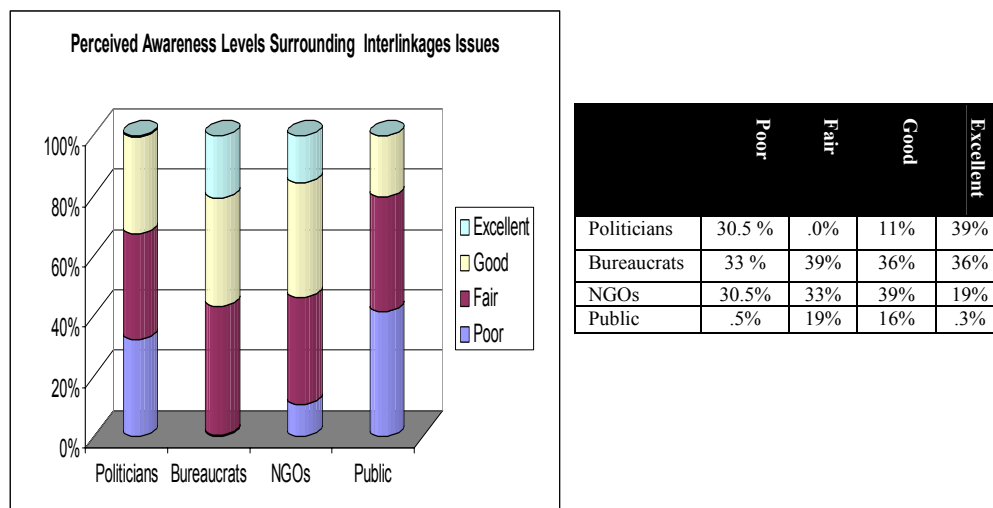
(Meadowcroft, 1999)

6

Capacity Building & Awareness

Delegates' views surrounding perceived levels of awareness possessed by politicians, bureaucrats, NGOs, and members of the general public regarding the concept of inter-linkages were sought. As indicated in Figure 6, public awareness regarding the connectedness of environmental issues is generally considered poor or fair, regardless of HDI country status. Awareness levels among politicians are reasonably dispersed between poor, fair, and good according to delegates. A large proportion of the delegates questioned also indicated that politicians possess limited understanding of the links between environmental issues. A marginal majority of bureaucrats were perceived as possessing a fair level of awareness. It must be noted that, although this question was designed to gauge awareness levels related to the interconnectedness of environmental issues, some of the delegates responded to the question as though it involved general environmental awareness.

Figure 6.



Existing Efforts to Build Capacity

Respondents were asked to describe capacity building activities available to personnel responsible for implementing conventions strategies with their country. Among the replies, only two delegates reported that relevant personnel have access to training activities on a regular basis. A delegate from a low HDC stated that *“We are fortunate to have monthly training sessions for provincial government officials on environmental law, education etc. by international organizations and NGOs. (For example, UNEP, JICA, ESCAP and Nature Conservation International)”*. In all other instances, delegates maintained that there are insufficient training opportunities available to staff. A few delegates from high HDCs cited on the job experience as the leading form of training for staff members. The majority of respondents from medium HDCs indicated that attendance at sub-regional and regional workshop, meetings, and conferences constitutes as training for responsible staff members. One delegate from a high HDC stated that *“education focusing on how to harmonize different efforts by different ministries and countries”* is required.

In general, delegates expressed the need for more educational support from outside sources (consultants, academia and convention Secretariats). Requests were made for the establishment of training sessions designed to introduce procedures to cultivate synergistic programs, cleaner technology practices, and resource assessment measures for personnel responsible for implementing convention plans at national and local levels. In addition, delegates requested that written information related to MEAs be presented in layman terms, suggesting that this would decrease the amount of time and effort spent on deciphering the meaning of such materials.

An increase in environmental awareness efforts to strengthen political and public support for convention programs was advocated by approximately 80% of the delegates. Respondents made various comments stressing the need to strengthen public education and environmental awareness campaigns and increase efforts to teach media representatives the significance of environmental protection, with the hope that such efforts will result in increased media coverage on environmental protection.

Recommendations

Findings suggest that rudimentary environmental training is not readily available to the majority personnel working on MEA programs. Instead, related personnel learn of new issues by attending workshops and conferences. Unfortunately, the review did not identify whether information collected at events is circulated among personnel when participants return. Nevertheless, even if conference reports are shared among all staff, members that miss events lose the opportunity to learn the views expressed during discussions. The provision of greater and more varied support for personnel responsible for negotiating and implementing MEAs is obviously needed within all nations.

At the international level, Convention Secretariats can aid by simplifying the written language used within the reports provided to signatories. They can further help by stepping-up activities to produce introductory guides to MEA targeting scientists, bureaucrat, and politicians in other fields, thereby promoting greater understanding of their MEA. For example, UNEP's Information Unit on Climate Change produced a guide to "Understanding Climate Change a Beginner's Guide to the UN Framework Convention International" that presents a detailed introduction to the issue of climate change in an easy to read manner. Regional agencies and NGOs are encouraged to conduct research into innovative new training approaches, provide training materials and training when possible. For example, new areas for exploration might include the establishment of mobile MEA training teams created to bring training to the most needed areas. Teams could conduct seminars during side events at regional conferences and visit regional organizations, training representatives from NC on the links between environmental issues and measures to harmonize convention programmes. Another possible and less expensive option would be to develop Internet web-based teaching modules. Internet Clearing House mechanisms that numerous Convention Secretariats have already established are also helpful tools that can aid nations by providing their experts with substantial amounts of useful information, (particularly if searches on the database may be performed in multiple languages), and help them to forge international contacts.

National governments are suggested to encourage academic institutions to provide assistance in technical matters including updating staff on current data collection and monitoring measures. Furthermore, governments are encouraged to sponsor pragmatic educational campaigns to explain the aims of MEAs to members of the media. Greater media coverage of environmental issues will help to educate and engage civil society, thereby strengthening their support for environmental protection. Public support for environmental programs can help to further sway positive political support for MEAs.

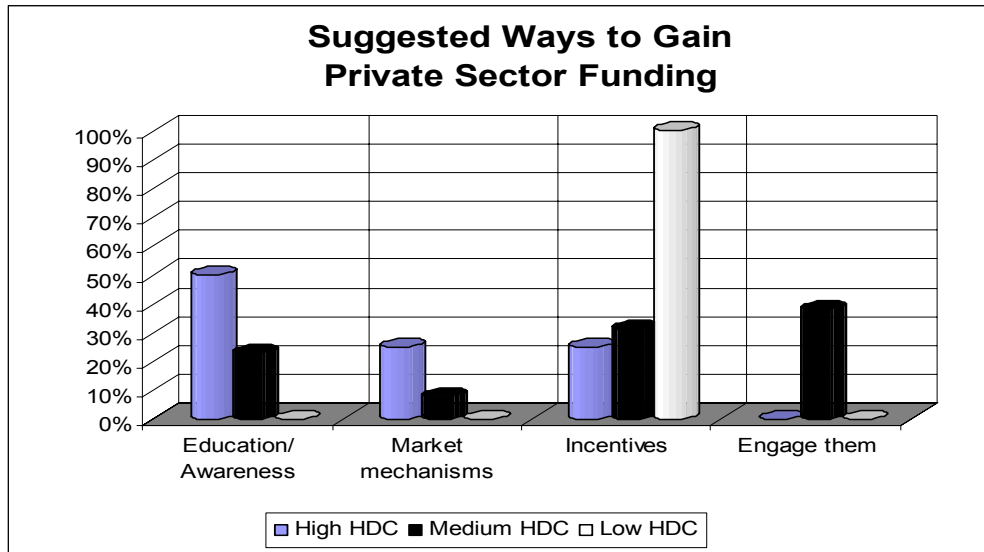
7

Generating Funds

Efforts on the part of convention FPs to engage relevant economic and financial planning authorities in identifying the ways in which MEA commitments fit into national development frameworks are key to supporting inter-linkages. The identification of major funding sources to support convention programs as well as situations in which funds from one source are allocated to implement other agreements were sought. The majority of responses suggest that countries party to CCD predominantly use government funds. Countries party to CBD and FCCC receive the majority of their funds from the GEF, followed by government funding and support from NGOs. Delegates suggested that only a small portion of funding comes from private sector and multilateral sources. A large percentage of delegates, 44%, acknowledged the use of one funding source to implement programmes for the different Rio-Instruments. The majority of these responses came from delegates representing high HDCs. The bulk of respondents from low HDCs were unaware of funding for joint projects.

When asked to suggest the types of actions needed to acquire more private sector funding, respondents generally supported the promotion of government incentives. Delegates from low HDCs suggested that tax incentives and the creation of legislation enforcing environmental accounting, are likely the best options as seen in Figure 7. Whereas, delegates from medium HDCs were more in favor of engaging private sector members in convention implementation through the endorsement of public good concepts. Approximately 50% of delegates from high HDCs were in support of using educational and awareness campaigns to target private donors. The following statement, made by a delegate from a medium HDC, summarizes the general sentiments of the respondents. *“Engaging the private sector requires appealing to the consciousness of businesses while explaining the virtues they would be bestowed if they did help (e.g. good public image). Therefore, education and awareness measures regarding key convention issues are needed to gain such support.”* Some delegates questioned suggest that within their country, private sector achievements in environmental innovation greatly surpass government efforts. The reason given was that private sector members constantly upgrade their products to adhere to strict international environmental standards (e.g. eco-labelling).

Figure 7.



HDC	Education Awareness	Market Mechanisms	Incentives	Engagement
High	50%	25%	25%	0%
Medium	23%	8%	31%	38%
Low	0%	0%	100%	0%

Recommendations

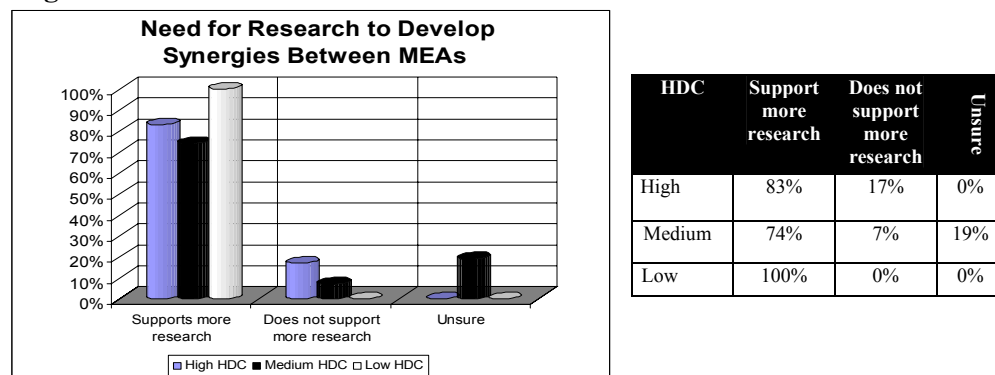
Opportunities to increase funding from donor institutions can be spearheaded through appealing to the social conscience of private sector businesspersons. MEA agencies should engage businesses as partners in mutually beneficial programmes, where their public image will gain from their contributions. Governments are therefore encouraged to engage private sector members in dialogue that focuses on funding programmes to achieve convention mandates. The programmes promoted for support should serve to mutually fulfil different convention plans, thereby promoting support for multiple environmental issues. This arrangement has the potential to encourage donor support for more than one cause. In return for backing environmental projects, donors’ “public image” will be enhanced, in the eyes of socially conscious consumers.

Furthermore, it is suggested that agencies responsible for MEA implementation encourage private sector companies to undertake environmentally sound procedures and create ‘green products’. The United Nations Global Compact equates “good environmental performance with good business”, and states that environmentally sound products can prove to be cost-effective to companies. (Global Compact Internet Web site: www.unglobalcompact.org) Businesses that assume a ‘precautionary approach’, by undertaking activities to manage uncertainty and ensure transparency in all product development, can help to guarantee that their actions will not cause irreversible environmental damage that they will be responsible for in the future.

8

Researching Inter-Linkages

Delegates' perceptions were sought regarding the need for further research into the development of measures to co-ordinate and create synergies between MEAs. As indicated by Figure 8, the need for more research into methodologies for developing synergies and co-ordinating such efforts was strongly supported by 77% of the delegates. Respondents generally indicated that, although the need for establishing synergies is widely recognised, there is little knowledge surrounding the types of measures needed to undertake such endeavours. Support is required in this area. Furthermore, many respondents argued that they devote much time and effort to deciphering reporting requirements and they lack the time and resources to identify inter-linkages. Delegates suggested that organisations, including the UNU, continue to work in this area and provide practical tools to aid them in establishing synergistic efforts. The suggestions received particularly highlight the need for workshops detailing measures to link the implementation of instrument strategies. Two delegates surveyed did not support the need for further research on inter-linkages and instead suggested that action be taken based on already existing research.

Figure 8.*Recommendations*

In addition to the many recommendations suggested by the delegates, this review identifies the lack of information available to address inter-linkages among environmental issues. It is therefore suggested that relevant information be collected collated and posted on the Internet, a task that could be voluntarily undertaken by an international agency.

9

Conclusion

This preliminary review has identified widespread recognition on the part of ESCAP members of the benefits of developing synergisms between MEAs, in order to avoid duplication of work and mitigate inter-agency conflicts. Although the importance inter-linkage is widely recognised, initiatives to identify and created synergies are not readily taken, particularly during sustainable strategy development. In response to the findings, the promotion of a multi-pronged approach for identifying inter-linkages is suggested. Global institutions are encouraged to aid in the identification of inter-linkages between instruments and foster support for related programmes. Regional organisations can contribute by detecting cross-linking regional issues and through the development and promotion of related synergistic programmes. National governments are encouraged to focus efforts on fostering synergy at the onset of policy and strategy development.

The review uncovered that there is a reasonably high amount of communication between FPs occurring in most nations. However, FPs are most inclined to correspond with each other regarding information that is useful for the preparation of national reports. Since communication between FPs seldom occurs during the planning stages of sustainable strategy development, national governments are strongly encouraged to invite all stakeholders, including NGOs and civil society groups to take part in such efforts and foster inter-linkages within strategic frameworks.

Results suggest that nations need to review existing institutional structures to determine what is functioning well and areas needing improvement. When nations then go about restructuring, they should strive to develop new mechanisms that serve to foster strong collaborative ties between multi-stakeholder groups involved in MEA processes. The goal of any approach should go beyond fostering information sharing, it should promote formal dialogue between relevant groups that will result in joint decision-making regarding the policies taken to achieve MEAs.

Few formal efforts to improve data management structures and foster synergism between MEAs appear to be undertaken at the national level. It is recommended

that efforts to establish formalized data management systems to increase transparency between differing MEA implementation bodies be taken at the national level. Since the majority of high HDCs have had proven success in the design and use of data management systems it is suggested that they share their methods of best practice among nations.

In general, organizations responsible for implementing convention plans possess limited human and financial resources. Recommendations therefore include, encouraging governments to gain private sector donations by emphasizing the benefits that businesses can acquire (e.g. good public image) if they support environmental protection efforts. Furthermore, national level governments are encouraged to develop pragmatic environmental educational campaigns targeting members of the public and media thereby inspiring these groups to encourage political support for MEAs. It is recommended that NGOs and regional institutions intensify capacity building efforts geared towards government officials as well as members of the public to increase understanding the importance protecting the environment and supporting convention ratification.

Concerning training for staff members responsible for MEA implementation, recommendations call for voluntary support from international agencies to provide nations with examples of synergistic programs to aid in capacity building and awareness exercises. International agencies are also encouraged to conduct research into new measures to train government officials and FPs on convention requirements.

The findings within this report have been developed as a contribution to the UNU's efforts to create a regional model framework. In the future, a more comprehensive follow-up analysis of the data will be made that will group data according to an ecosystems approach.

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Appendix 1

List of Countries that Responded to the Questionnaire & HDC Status

Country	Human Development Value (HDI)	Human Development Country Status
Australia	.929	High
Azerbaijan	.722	Medium
Bangladesh	.461	Low
Bhutan	.483	Low
Brunei Darussalam	.848	High
Cambodia	.512	Medium
China	.706	Medium
Cook Islands	N/A	Medium GDP per capita \$5600.00
Fiji	.769	Medium
Indonesia	.670	Medium
India	.563	Medium
Japan	.924	High
Kazakhstan	.754	Medium
Kiribati	N/A	Medium GDP per capita \$860.00
Korea	.854	High
Kyrgyzstan	.706	Medium
Lao	.484	Low
Macao	N/A	High - GDP per capita \$17,5000
Malaysia	.722	Medium
Maldives	.725	Medium
Mongolia	.628	Medium
Myanmar	.585	Medium
Nepal	.474	Low
Papua New Guinea	.542	Medium
Philippines	.744	Medium
Russia	.771	Medium - Russian Federation
Samoa	.711	Medium
Singapore	.881	High
Sri Lanka	.733	Medium
Thailand	.745	Medium
Tonga	N/A	Medium – GDP per capita \$2,200.00
Turkey	.732	Medium
Tuvalu	N/A	Medium - GDP per capita- \$800.00
Uzbekistan	.686	Medium
Vanuatu	.623	Medium
Viet Nam	.671	Medium

Note: Countries have been categorized according to their High Development Index in High Human development Countries (score of 800. or above) Medium Human Development Countries (score between 799 – 500) and Low Human Development Countries (score of 499-or below). HID values have not been established for 5 of the nations that underwent the exercise. Therefore, this circumstance called for the substitution of the most recent available GDP per capita for those countries and then this amount was for the as indicated in Table 1 and categorized accordingly.