



**National Assembly  
of Lao PDR**



**Inter-Parliamentary  
Union**



**United Nations  
Development Programme**

***ASIA-PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT***

26-28 NOVEMBER 2007, VIENTIANE, LAO PDR

**DIAGNOSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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<b>Problems identified</b>	<b>Possible solutions</b>
<p>General public and decision makers are not very aware of environmental issues.</p>	<p>Education on the environment is crucial for people to feel responsible for conserving natural resources. Awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes are needed to ensure that everybody is familiar with sustainable development issues, make sure that people respect relevant laws and comply with environment policies and understand the importance and usefulness of natural resource conservation.</p> <p>Within parliaments, environment committees composed of experts should be set up. International organizations and bodies such as IPU, UNDP, UNEP can assist by developing awareness-raising activities targeting decision makers and staff of key institutions.</p> <p>Sensitized MPs should push for a common vision of sustainable development within the parliament to ensure that laws are passed with an environment-friendly vision. To better understand the environmental problems and promote the dissemination of information, MPs should enhance their dialogue with the general public by involving the public in formulating laws and policies, in particular through consultations, and by organizing public debates, hearings and field trips.</p> <p>MPs should encourage awareness-raising campaigns on natural resource conservation to develop a genuine "environment culture" and subsequently articulate it internationally. These campaigns could benefit from the assistance of the media and of the new information and communication technologies (NICTs).</p> <p>Environmental education programmes should be included in school curricula.</p> <p>Gender should be taken into account in formulating policies and laws related to environment. Women should be more involved in finding and implementing solutions for achieving sustainable development.</p>

<b>Problems identified</b>	<b>Possible solutions</b>
<p>Financial resources are a very important factor in sustainable development. While developing countries need to achieve economic growth, the policies/methods they use are energy-intensive and highly polluting. At the same time, policies and laws need to be put in place to conserve the environment, involving heavy investments that countries can ill-afford.</p>	<p>Setting up financing mechanisms is necessary to effectively implement environmental laws and policies. In addition to international assistance, national ownership of the sustainable development projects is essential for the sustainability of the projects. Parliaments should assist governments to develop sources of financing such as national/local environment funds, financed by tourism or partnership between the public and private sectors. Parliamentarians also have a role to play in coordination of national and international financial resources to avoid both duplications and gaps and to ensure effective delivery of programmes.</p> <p>Parliaments should seek to reduce the risks related to overpricing of sustainable/renewable energies by passing laws to ensure that rates are affordable to all citizens and that change is appealing (by incentives and benefit-sharing mechanisms, for instance).</p> <p>Sustainable development is linked to poverty reduction and good governance. MPs should internalize this in the law-making process. The issue of conservation of natural resources can be enshrined in domestic laws and programmes, such as those on ecotourism developed to assist rural areas to combat increased rural-urban migration, which leads to poverty. Guidelines for polluting companies should be developed and enforced and fighting corruption should be placed on the legislative agenda.</p> <p>Parliamentarians should make sure that evaluation of the value of land, including economic value, takes into account environment and resources: conservation of lands devoted to food and biodiversity as a whole are major issues. The immediate cost value may lead to extreme poverty, hunger and foster climate change in the longer term. To ensure transparency, the cost of development can be also be budgeted by taking into account carbon footprint screening to measure the impact human activities have on the environment.</p>

Problems identified	Possible solutions
<p>Inadequate regional/global cooperation to fully implement sustainable development. The world is like one big family and environmental issues should not be confined to the country level since the environment transcends borders. Big countries seem sometimes less inclined to protect resources than smaller countries.</p>	<p>At the national level, MPs should ensure that their government ratifies conventions and international instruments on the environment and that their provisions are incorporated into national law. Once this is done, MPS should ensure that existing and new legislation are reviewed for compliance with the conventions and that adequate funding is allocated in the national budget for the various sectors relevant to the achievement of sustainable development.</p> <p>At the regional level, Asia-Pacific regional inter-parliamentary cooperation should be strengthened by expanding existing or developing new parliamentary exchanges and cooperation platforms or a network of parliamentarians for the environment to facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices. Such collaboration would make the parliaments of the region more familiar with the policies and technologies in use in neighbouring countries and may help in creating regional guiding principles to address the issue.</p> <p>At the global level, inter-country cooperation is essential to make all countries aware of the impact of development on the environment and to find fair and equitable solutions for everyone, not only the LDCs, but developed countries as well. MPs also have the opportunity to address the sustainable development issue at the global level, through greater involvement in the reporting activities on the implementation of the conventions to which their country is party.</p> <p>Support from IPU, UNDP and partner organizations is crucial at the national, regional and global levels. Other seminars, such as the one organized in Vientiane, are welcome and should be encouraged.</p>

<b>Problems identified</b>	<b>Possible solutions</b>
<p>Inadequate capacity at the sub-national and community levels to combat poverty and protect the environment.</p>	<p>The environment is mostly a local issue. MPs should strengthen dialogue with local authorities by organizing working meetings and on-site visits to ensure that the authorities and elected bodies at the sub-national levels are made aware of sustainable development and its impact, poverty linkages and importance of conserving biodiversity as a whole.</p> <p>Parliamentarians should promote equity in the use of natural resources so as to ensure their access to land and other resources.</p> <p>Parliamentarians should participate in enhancing the socio-economic well-being of local communities by promoting and participating in income-generating activities and local project implementation and by mobilizing financial resources for local projects on poverty alleviation.</p> <p>Parliamentarians should ensure that the issues of poverty-environment linkages and other environmental issues are mainstreamed in the national plans and that relevant/prioritized issues at the local and sub regional levels are provided with adequate budget resources. They should regularly monitor the use of those resources.</p> <p>More gender capacity-building should be undertaken at the community level to foster women's action in combating poverty and implementing sustainable development activities.</p>

Problems identified	Possible solutions
<p>The use of second-hand (ill-adapted) technologies and the lack of scientific, technical, and technological know-how lead to mismanagement of natural resources and environmental degradation.</p>	<p>Parliamentarians should encourage at the national, sub-regional and regional levels the search for innovative energy sources and the development of research programmes and foster the mobilization of necessary funds.</p> <p>Parliamentarians should encourage the transfer of technologies and research into adaptation of these technologies for natural resource management and other innovations necessary for sustainable development.</p> <p>MPs, in performing their legislative and oversight functions, should address the major issues such as the use of nuclear, solar, wind and geo-thermal energies. Short-, medium- and long-term plans at all levels should be developed and should take into account the use and development of new technologies.</p>
<p>Need for follow up</p>	<p>To make the best possible use of the outcomes of the Vientiane Parliamentary Seminar, follow-up action needs to be taken.</p> <p>IPU and its partners are requested to organize further conferences on the topic of sustainable development and conservation of natural resources.</p> <p>Sustainable development should become, - as have gender and human rights - a cross-cutting issue in all IPU technical assistance programmes.</p> <p>The recommendations from this table could be turned into a clear action plan that can serve as a basis for the work of parliamentarians in interested countries. The establishment of a mechanism for the implementation and assessment of the Seminar's recommendations can also be foreseen. IPU and its partners could assist in this matter by providing experts' advice and/or a broader technical cooperation activity.</p>