

I. Introduction

1. The workshop was opened by the Director General of the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), Carlos Enrique Gonzalez, who welcomed all participants to the Mexico City campus of the Institute.
2. The text of the Director General's address is attached as [Annex 1](#). Welcoming statements were also made by the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Mexico, Mr. Bruno Guandalini and by the Director of UNDP's Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP) from New York, Mr. Chuck Lankester.
3. Invitations to the workshop were sent in February 1996 to the National Coordinators of 20 SDNPs. Invitations were also mailed to Resident Representatives of 13 countries which were in the final stages of initiating national SDNPs, urging them to work with their respective Interim Steering Committees to designate National Coordinators in time for the workshop. Only one country from each group did not succeed in participating. National Coordinators and Coordinators designate from 31 countries accordingly attended the workshop. A select member of observers from organizations that are partners with SDNP were also invited. A list of participants, with a summary of their individual backgrounds, is provided in [Annex 2](#).
4. The workshop was financed by SDNP Headquarters in New York. A subcontract for conference services, including interpretation, was negotiated with the Mexico City campus of ITESM for a total of US \$18,000. All services provided were judged exemplary by participants.
5. A draft agenda had been distributed in advance to participants. An amended version was introduced at the opening of the workshop. Further adjustments were introduced during the course of the workshop. A copy of the final agenda is attached as [Annex 3](#).
6. With the exception of the draft agenda, little other substantive documentation was distributed in advance of the workshop. Participants were, however, encouraged to review either hard copy of the report of the Third Global Workshop, or to access this on the Web page maintained by SDNP Headquarters (<http://www3.undp.org>). Some participants commented that it would have been helpful to have had more documentation in advance, but the impact on the conduct of the workshop was negligible. It will be noted from the agenda that most Discussion Leaders were drawn from the group of National Coordinators with operational experience. This clearly was of great benefit to Coordinators designate and contributed to what became a truly participatory workshop.
7. The report of this Fourth Global Workshop will be available in a limited number of hard copies, primarily intended for distribution to donors and potential donors, and to countries considering the establishment of a national SDNP. The great majority of persons needing to access the report will do so through SDNP's Web page. Sections of the report can be accessed and downloaded individually.

II. Summary of SDNP Country Reports

8. Operational SDNP sites have diverse economic, social and environmental backgrounds. The rapid development of the Internet in the various regions of the world has caused an impact on several SDNP sites. SDNP sites in countries with full Internet connectivity are now

facing increased competition for connectivity by commercial Internet Service Providers (ISPs) (including national PTTs). Several national SDNPs are starting to feel the pressure and need to concentrate on providing information services (value-added services) related to sustainable development and to cater to national developmental partners. Since the great majority of commercial ISPs are not interested in providing content or specialized training for end users, SDNPs are finding market niches that contribute to meeting their recurrent costs. For additional information see the full text of the presentation included in [Annex 4](#).

III. SDNP Past, Present and Future: Lessons Learned, Trends and Next Steps

9. SDNP has been active for three and a half years and the Discussion Leader provided an account of experience, lessons acquired and some ideas for future development. He noted that UNDP had found itself well positioned to lead UN efforts in introducing the benefits of the communications revolution to developing countries with the objective of helping them focus their resources on achieving Sustainable Human Development (SHD). To this day UNDP's longer term corporate objectives toward the SDNP remain uncertain. Much had been accomplished, as manifested by the attendance of thirty-one countries and many observers at this workshop, but this evidently reflected more the determination and dedication of a small and underfunded SDNP Secretariat than the intentions or even the hopes of top UNDP management.
10. SDNP had steadily, often with an iterative process, developed a set of operating guidelines and principles. Last summarised at the Third Global Workshop these needed updating but remained surprisingly intact and valid. What had changed was the operating environment, with the explosive growth of the internet during this period in particular and the varying positive and negative attitudes of governments towards this technology. In this context one early external evaluation of SDNP has urged focus almost entirely on providing countries with external or international access to internet backbones (a practice SDNP had fortuitously not accepted) and its efforts to also address the need to develop and strengthen national connectivity. SDNP had performed invaluable in extending accessibility to a wide variety of stakeholders.
11. Several SDNPs are now experiencing stiff competition from private sector ISPs, some of which are unhappy about SDNP operations being temporarily subsidised. This situation necessitates agility and flexibility by national Coordinators. Judicious alliances needed to be built with ISPs and agreements brokered; much needs to be done at the national level and there was room for several players. SDNPs could survive and thrive, but they needed to find and maintain a market niche focusing on SHD activities. SDNPs must be quick to perceive and to adapt to change in this rapidly moving environment. A marketing approach and the characterisation of market segments only works if there is a selection of products and services to users. Being able to predict shifts in the market place and being able to respond creatively with new or adapted products and services will help ensure sustainability and success. Thus, strong and ongoing efforts in market research and in remaining close to customers or potential ones will remain essential. The quality and integrity of information they managed would also be a key factor in ensuring their nodes thrive. In many SDNP countries, and especially among organisations responsible for sustainable development, there is very little knowledge and experience in setting up and operating Internet services, or in exploiting the internet and related technologies. Knowledge management technologies and practices are lacking. This is another opportunity for the SDNP. Most ISPs are only partially interested, if at all, in training users. This is another opportunity for the SDNP.

Training could include information management. The full text of the presentation is attached as [Annex 5](#).

IV. Feedback by Spokespersons for Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and the Near East

12. Participants grouped into one of four regional meetings. The objectives were to examine the utility of this allocation of time from the perspective of the participants themselves and to enable participants to share experiences and discuss needs in a regional context. Participants appreciated this time together, indeed additional time was later admitted into the agenda and participants organised further meetings outside the workshop.
 13. Participants grouped by regions recognized that economies of scale were now possible. Language could be a unifying factor in the case of Latin America or certain parts of Africa, for example. Sharing experiences between countries with broadly similar language and cultural characteristics may be advantageous.
 14. Summaries of statements by the four spokespersons are provided in Annex 6.
-
-

V. SDNP and Sustainable Human Development: the Linkage

15. The national Coordinator from Morocco addressed this item of the agenda and [Annex 7](#) provides additional notes.
16. It was important for SDNP collaborators to recall their own trail or origins : Rio - Agenda 21 - Chapter 40 - UNDP's mandate for Capacity Building - and Capacity 21. In Rio governments had pledged to work toward improving access to information relevant to sustainable development for all participants in the development process. Unless participants had access to information their roles would only be symbolic or perfunctory. This was SDNP's critical function and objective.
17. A review of SDNP and other networking activities showed that most governments had lived up to their commitments in Rio and were not only willing to share but also to promote the sharing of information. Some governments had hesitations, which were based on concerns about an invasion of counter-cultural materials or materials critical of their societies. Some of these concerns were genuine and needed to be addressed, but many were based on ignorance and unjustified fear. SDNP was pioneering a quite radical change of culture and attitudes. Change was often threatening.
18. SDNP/NY had not attempted to define what information should or should not be seen as pertaining to SHD. This was a matter for review and decision by Coordinators and/or Steering Committees. In general, SDNP's Secretariat had encouraged the most liberal interpretation and it was particularly underlined that SDNP should not be viewed as an environmental network. Censorship was not to be encouraged and it was noted that access to offensive materials could be controlled.
19. A criticism of the communications/information revolution was the risk that the powerful could become more powerful and the marginal further marginalised. That risk existed, but the explosion in access and awareness to which SDNP was modestly contributing in some

countries was surely the best response.

20. Users should be encouraged to open up their information and to share it in the spirit of SDNP, and resources should focus on building internal connectivity. SDNP assisted activities should always be viewed as complementing human networking.
-
-

VI. SDNP Financing, Cost Recovery, Sustainability, and Budgets

21. Self-sustainability will remain a challenging goal for many SDNPs in the foreseeable future. As providers of information to the developmental sector, and for education and research and development, there may always be a need to subsidize access to them. Even in countries such as the USA, where networks provide extensive service, considerable subsidies are provided to the non-profit sector such as education. But SDNP operations cannot rely for more than 2 or a maximum of 3-4 years on support from UNDP. They must therefore find innovative means of generating funds through user-charges, contract work and supplementary donor support.
22. During the discussion several Coordinators advised workshop participants how they are generating revenue. Consultancies in special training needs, assistance in setting up websites, etc. were common activities. Coordinators urged aggressive and imaginative approaches to ensure survival, but there was clear optimism that attaining financial self-sufficiency was already realistic at many sites. The point was repeatedly made that the quality and integrity of the information managed by SDNP nodes would be a key factor in ensuring the survival of the national SDNP initiative.
23. Charging practices were discussed. Some Coordinators had unilaterally established charges commensurate with their business plans; others had held protracted negotiations with their Steering Committees, which had insisted on full involvement. Some Coordinators had adopted a "Robin Hood" approach, charging according to the perceived ability of the user to pay. Others had more sophisticated methods that took into account the nature of the institution, frequency of use, volume and nature of traffic, etc. Coordinators recognised a fundamental responsibility to endeavor to enable all user groups to be able to afford access to information relevant to their interests and activities in SHD. Examples were also given of free access, for example to organizations in the health sector responsible for blood drives and organ transplants.
24. Billing practices were discussed. Some SDNP's required a deposit for services while others did not. Some required immediate payment for services, others were billing clients monthly, quarterly, or when their invoices reached a significant account.
25. Although SDNP/NY had often advocated initial free access for most users to stimulate interest and usage most Coordinators favoured introducing some charge from the outset, albeit a heavily subsidised one. Coordinators also urged care in establishing initial charge levels. The market as well as their business plan needed careful appraisal. It was much more difficult to raise charges when faced with deficits than to lower them. Coordinators agreed they should move forward from the initial "connectivity phase" of their operations into being substantive providers of information as soon as possible.
26. Overall, it was concluded that while guiding SDNP principles must be respected the actual means for transiting from external financial support to financial sustainability and independence had to be the prime responsibility of national Coordinators in accordance with

the prevailing circumstances, which clearly differed from country to country.

27. It became clear that few Coordinators had received formal training in business management and SDNP/NY was urged to offer such opportunities to those Coordinators of operational nodes who considered this would be helpful and to take this into account in budgeting for new nodes.
28. [Annex 8](#) provides some further information relevant to experience in Pakistan as well as a reference to other documentation already on SDNP's website that is relevant.

VII. Putting National Information Resources Online: Creating an SDNP Web server: Why, How, Content, Costs and Benefits

29. There was a detailed presentation on the importance of placing national information online and establishing websites. Coordinators were advised to carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of establishing national websites before initiating action. In summary, websites can be a most valuable management tool insofar as they encourage decisions to organise materials, they can save Coordinators considerable time and money, and they are great promotional devices for SDNP. But websites demand human and financial resources to monitor and update. A poor website can be very negative advertising for the local SDNP.
30. Discussion turned to the type of information that should be posted. It was concluded that decisions had to be made locally, material should be verifiable and reliable, and obviously the more clearly related to SHD the better. Finally, while acknowledging that English was becoming the working language of the internet there was agreement that Coordinators should try to encourage the use and maintenance of national languages and traditions through their websites.
31. For more detailed information on this agenda item see [Annex 9](#).

VIII. The Participatory Approach and Steering Committees

32. The presentation focused on the case of the Philippines, where the SDNP had been converted into a non-profit/no-share foundation, the Philippine Sustainable Development Network, the management of which was very closely followed and monitored by an active Board of Trustees. Details of the presentation can be found in [Annex 10](#) attached.
33. As with other items on the agenda the debate revealed the depth of diversity of situations and responses. It was agreed that where countries could mobilise a conscientious group of networking advocates or champions, persons of distinction and integrity who were prepared to meet two or three times a year or occasionally on short notice if requested by the Coordinator, then such bodies could indeed be of inestimable value. Ideally, Steering Committees should be "on call" and willing and positioned to press at the highest levels for policy changes whenever needed.
34. There was a discussion on the relationship between the Coordinator and his/her Steering Committee. Generally Coordinators were not members of Steering Committees. Rather they participated in deliberations, but served as "secretaries" to the Steering Committees.
35. During the discussion of this agenda item the relationship between the national Coordinator and the user-community was also discussed. A five point summary was posted on a bulletin

board by one Coordinator which clearly found resonance amongst workshop participants and it is provided in [Annex 12](#).

IX. Training: National Workshops and User Training: INET: How to apply Information in Decision Making

36. Three Discussion Leaders spoke about user training. Key points were the importance of training users to use information in the decision making process. Different users have different needs, and training should be planned accordingly to meet their expectations. Initially, users need training in how to get connected, or use the tools, but after getting connected, they need to be trained in using information.
37. The conduct of national training workshops was discussed. Users could be classified as providers of information, users of information, and potential users. They could all come from different sectors of society like government, academia, NGOs and the private sector.
38. Several national SDNP's, as well as other organizations such as CIESIN and USAID, have now well developed training materials. It would be helpful if these could be compared and shared, especially for the Coordinators of new nodes.
39. It was recalled that training for SDNP Coordinators, or Managers, and for technical staff had been mixed together in the First and Second Global Workshops. In the Third Workshop two distinct training programmes had been introduced, with both managers and technicians sharing some common plenary sessions. The SDNP Secretariat had concluded that with the growing number of participants a clear distinction between training for managers and technical staff had become necessary. This Fourth Workshop was only for Managers or Coordinators. Twelve to fifteen SDNP technical staff had participated in INET '95 and a similar number would travel to INET '96 in Montreal. The Director of SDNP noted with pride that two of his colleagues from New York had been teachers already at INET '95 and would again serve in this capacity at INET '96.
-
-

X. "What does this all mean and Where do we go from Here?"

40. The workshop was fortunate that the participant from India was Dr. S. Ramani, an early champion and mentor of SDNP; host of the Second and Third Global workshops at the National Centre for Software Technology in India, which he directed; currently Chairman of the Commonwealth Network of Information Technology for Development; and Secretary General of the International Council for Computer Communication. Dr. Ramani graciously agreed to a request by the Director of SDNP on short notice to address the workshop on the subject given above.
41. The outline of his stimulating address is to be found in [Annex 13](#).
-
-

XI. Negotiating with PTTs and other Bureaucracies, including UNDP

42. In most developing countries PTTs are still monopolistic enterprises that function on the principle of excess demand for a limited supply of services. One result is that prices for

services are relatively high and unaffordable by the vast majority of the population - not to mention the bureaucratic problems that PTT clients face when requesting services. Projects such as SDNP can be affected as both its ongoing operations as well as its long term sustainability are directly at stake. In this light, it is recommended that SDNPs enlist UNDP offices as key partners in negotiating with PTTs (telecommunications) and national governments (information sources), as well as endeavoring to obtain support from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). PTTs should be seen as partners and be trained in the new technologies, while being made aware that the main goals and targets of SDNP are developmental and non-profit. The participation by a senior PTT official in the national SDNP Steering Committee merits careful consideration.

43. Workshop participants noted that corporate SDNP had been asked by the Third Global Workshop in Bombay to prepare an advisory note for Coordinators on "How to negotiate with PTTs". Such assistance was clearly even more urgent now given the experience of several Coordinators. The Director of SDNP noted that a consultant had been identified for the work, but deferment of the assignment was just one of many casualties of SDNP's financial situation in 1995. He promised a priority effort now, adding that one solution might be an experienced former PTT official who could serve on short notice as a roving consultant for negotiating sessions between national SDNPs and the respective PTT authorities.
44. Coordinators recounted relationships with their respective UNDP Resident Representatives and staff, which ranged from harassment and indifference to bold leadership and creative support. The Director of SDNP noted that the Administrator of UNDP is about to announce his determination to provide full access to the Internet to all of UNDP's 136 country offices. This underlines the importance he attaches to the information revolution and will serve to give more credibility and support to SDNP's efforts in this regard. UNDP country offices should become subscribers to SDNP nodes and through them both users and providers of information relative to SHD activities. More details about this session of the workshop are included in [Annex 14](#).

XII. Connectivity Technology and SDNP Policy

45. Based on direct field experience SDNP/NY has developed and implemented a simple and open policy regarding networking technologies. It can be summarized as follows:
- it is an open policy that allows for the particular needs and requirements of each country. However, support for all technologies is not provided;
 - the role of SDNP/NY is to advise and recommend specific technologies, but the final decision is left to the country and the SDNP Coordinator; and
 - since SDNP budgets for equipment are relatively small, SDNP/NY recommends cost efficient and reliable technologies instead of other more expensive and commercial alternatives.
46. For additional discussion elements see the full text of the presentation in [Annex 15](#).
47. At the conclusion of this item of the agenda the national Coordinator for the Peoples' Republic of China provided participants with a detailed account of SDNP's connectivity policy in China. China was fully committed to the implementation of China's Agenda 21, an economic development pattern that would transit China to a market driven, energy and resource efficient economy.

48. The Coordinator's description of SDNP activities was a useful counterbalance to recent negative press that had emphasised restrictions by the Government toward access to and use of the internet. Further details of the Coordinator's statement are given in [Annex 16](#).

XIII. Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation

49. The Coordinator for the South Pacific Regional SDNP spoke about the reporting, monitoring and evaluation processes that SDNP should use, highlighting the experiences of the project he coordinated. He emphasised that it is important for SDNP Headquarters, UNDP Country Offices and especially Coordinators to have clearly defined reporting procedures on what information must be provided and its periodicity for UNDP, the Steering Committee or other parties. Monitoring and self-evaluation should be a continuous process. This is only possible if the workplan has clearly defined short and long term objectives and measurable outputs. It is important to document all the milestones in the project for external evaluators. Qualitative indicators like the volume of information exchanged does not tell the full story.

50. It was emphasised that monitoring represents a key management function for all Coordinators. For example, the circumstances under which SDNP users or clients utilize the information provided to them will help understand what they need and how best to provide this information. Knowing how users have applied the information SDNP has provided them can be useful for marketing and publicity purposes. In Pakistan, timely access to reliable information acquired to deal with an environmental emergency brought attention from the media and generated interest. SDNPs need to constantly communicate with their constituents. Self appraisals, surveys, interventions by outside consultants or observations made by impartial third parties are an input for strategizing and forward planning.

51. The complete presentation is available as [Annex 17](#).

XIV. Information Management: The Policy Framework

52. Access to information has increased along with the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as the Internet. Policy implications can be felt at the organizational level and especially at the national level. Organizations are better able to adapt to the new realities imposed by ICTs. Governments, and especially those in developing countries, are not as flexible.

53. This has serious implications for programmes, such as national SDNPs, which encourage fair and equitable access to the Internet for SHD. Under most circumstances, governments and PTTs do not have policies that support optimal use of ICTs for development. Short sighted financial concerns dominate policy making in these institutions. Capacity and understanding of the Internet and of related technologies are missing. This has serious implications for national SDNPs. Additional material pertaining to this item of the agenda is to be found in [Annex 18](#).

XV. Other Items

SDNP Brochure

54. A mock-up of a revised SDNP brochure was presented for comment. Although the 1992 effort was still surprisingly valid there was agreement that an updated document is needed, particularly for presentation to donors. Many useful comments were received, including the need to report on results already achieved.

55. The Director of SDNP noted that donor organizations which had been financing the Capacity 21 programme would assemble in Rabat, Morocco, from 16-18 June 1996 to undertake a review of the progress achieved by Capacity 21 since 1993. SDNP would participate and it is intended to introduce the new brochure on that occasion.

The Proposed Conference and Workshop in California

56. The initial concept and plan was discussed, which had been dependent on substantive buy-in from the Apple Corporation. Unfortunately the company was and continued to be focusing heavily on its internal situation and no definite timetable for a combined international conference around the theme "The Role of Informatics in Sustainable Development" with an SDNP workshop could be set at present. Participants were enthusiastic about such an arrangement which could afford them direct contact with a range of hardware and software manufacturers. The SDNP Secretariat was encouraged to pursue the concept, with other major companies as well, if appropriate.

Development Watch

57. The concept, preparation of a "Dow Jones" index representing annual measurement of a countries combined socio-economic and environmental health, was presented. A trial programme in eight countries was underway, viz. Bolivia, Botswana, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Morocco, Tunisia, South Africa and the Ukraine. SDNP Coordinators in these countries should be attentive to coordination possibilities and mutual benefits.

Sub-Regional Information Managers

58. The UNDP Division for Administrative and Information Services (DAIS) had posted 18 staff in strategic locations, each typically serving 8-10 countries, to give UNDP Country Offices advice and support in modernising their information management procedures and to introduce new technology. In response to a query as to why SDNP had not taken more advantage of this human resource it was explained that so far only 2 of the SRIMS had demonstrated they had technical training and practical experience in the advanced systems offered by SDNP to be of assistance. The workshop was advised that more advanced training for SRIMS was foreseen in the near future. Efforts to achieve closer cooperation with SDNP should begin forthwith.

Presentation by some SDNP Partners

59. In opening this item of the agenda the SDNP Secretariat noted it was now cooperating actively with a long list of other institutions ranging from the World Bank to small national NGOs. With the exception of cooperation with UNEP Infoterra, for which a Memorandum of Understanding had been jointly signed, cooperation was on an informal basis and mutually beneficial and constructive from SDNP's viewpoint. Six partners, with programmes judged to be of special significance and relevance to participants in the workshop had been invited to give presentations. All six presentations were appreciated. Details of the presentations, several of which included multiple overheads, are not included in this workshop report. Rather, interested parties are invited to contact the representatives of the institutions directly at the following locations:

- The Consortium for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), Email: CIESIN.Info@ciesin.org
- Technological Information Promotion System (TIPS), Email: tips@chasque.apc.org
- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Email: unepinfo@unep.org
- Earth Resources Observation System (EROS), Email: grid@gridl.cr.usgs.gov
- Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Email: support@comlink.apc.org
- InfoDev, Email: infodev@worldbank.org

XVI. Evaluation and Feedback

60. All participants were distributed a form on the last day of the workshop and asked to comment on the effectiveness of the workshop. Identification was voluntary. Twenty eight returns were submitted. The questionnaire is reproduced in [Annex 19](#).

61. Feedback indicated the following:

- *Quality of presentations:* (where 1 was poor and 5 excellent) a rating of 3.6 was given indicating satisfaction, but clear room for improvement. Two returns complained about the number of presentations and downgraded the result.
- *Quality and relevance of documentation:* (where 1 was poor and 5 excellent) a rating of 4.1 was given.
- Was the *mix of skills* a great advantage (5) or great disadvantage (1): a rating of 4.3 was given.
- *Duration of the workshop:* (where 1 was too short, 5 too long and a perfect duration was 3) a rating of 3.3 was given.
- *Time management:* (where 1 was poor and 5 excellent) a rating of 3.4 was given indicating room for improvement. Some participants commented they would have preferred more time on fewer subjects. Some participants indicated they wished that additional materials could have been introduced. Others found the workshop too intense. Others favoured more breakout-time for the discussion of subjects in depth or for regional meetings.
- *Number of participants:* (where 1 was too small, 5 too large and 3 a perfect size) a rating of 3.2 was given.
- *Meeting expectations:* (where 1 was poor and 5 excellent) a rating of 4.1 was given.
- *Cost savings:* (where 1 was inappropriate and 5 appropriate given SDNP's financial circumstances and participants would agree to similar restrictions in travel and subsistence allowances again if necessary) a rating of 4.2 was given. Only one participant indicated firm dissatisfaction.
- *Service by ITESM:* (where 1 was poor and 5 excellent) a rating of 4.4 was given.
- *Service by SDNP's secretariat:* (where 1 was poor and 5 excellent) a rating of 4.4 was given.

62. Other comments were offered of significance for the secretariat including:-

- *Visas:* notwithstanding efforts initiated 8 weeks before the workshop, several participants commented on the problems. Two participants arrived late.
- *Connectivity:* the ITESM was holding mid-term student examinations during the workshop and as a result connectivity speed on the computers used by participants and the secretariat was very slow and caused all kinds of difficulties.
- *Group sessions:* some participants felt more time for smaller group discussions would have been preferable. A division between global and regional experiences and

problems was also suggested.

- *Time management*: distribution of more documentation before the workshop might have resulted in a better rating, although opinions were divided.
- *Relevance of documentation*: more control to ensure the relevance of documentation circulated during the workshop was suggested. The secretariat comments this would have been problematic, e.g. refusing to circulate a national report considered relatively unsuitable in terms of quality or relevance.
- *Review*: a more systematic review of the outcome and follow-up of recommendations from the Third Global Workshop was suggested.

XVII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

SDNP Corporate Issues

63. The SDNP model of a Steering Committee supporting a small national management coordination unit implanted in an existing organization agreeable to all principal sectors of civil society continues to be validated.

64. Implementation of Agenda 21, achieving sustainable development and the Capacity 21 programme of UNDP are the sources of SDNP's inspiration and motivation. These goals should be consistently and forthrightly stated.

Regional issues

65. For language and other reasons, there is a need for sharing information, experiences and resources regionally (especially training materials).

66. Regional groupings have reached a critical mass in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe. The Near East and North Africa should be in a similar position in 6-8 months. Central Asian participants may group with Europe or Asia until they also have a critical mass.

National Issues

67. The ability of SDNPs to sustain themselves financially is one important measure of success. Several countries are nearing financial self sustainability, including Pakistan, the Philippines, Nicaragua and Bolivia.

68. A user-needs survey and the identification of user circumstances is a critical first step in the SDNP business planning process. Surveyors should have a clear understanding of the SDNP concept and of the possible products and services an SDNP could offer. Coordinators, should however, make a point of routinely surveying user-community needs. Marketing SDNP products and services is vital and is likewise an ongoing task.

69. The idea of an electronic newsletter is good, but success will depend on active participation by the SDNP community.

Management

70. Most national Coordinators judged their experience with Steering Committees has been useful. Most SDNPs have shown that the Steering Committee conveys an advantage in securing local ownership and participation, and helps ensure that decisions can be acted upon quickly. It is most important for national Coordinators and their Steering Committees to know the decision making behaviour of their users and the impact of decisions made with SDNP information.

71. Planning, monitoring and evaluation is needed on an ongoing basis. It is an essential management tool for each national Coordinator and his/her Steering Committee as well.

Funding support

72. Funding comes from a variety of sources and the model of an SDNP fully funded by UNDP (IPF or Capacity 21) is gradually changing. Cost sharing, co-financing, and especially cost recovery are becoming a reality.

SDNP products and services

73. Internet connectivity is one of many tools the SDNP can use to provide products and services. These include classical information and communications methods and vehicles such as publications, databases, the media, etc.

74. As national Coordinators become less engaged by connectivity issues they should progressively give more attention to providing and managing information. This area of SDNP endeavour needs to be more creatively pursued in most countries.

75. Several SDNPs have successfully started to provide consulting services and a variety of training programmes and these are proving to be significant sources of revenue.

76. Training continues to be a most important component of all SDNP projects.

UNDP issues

77. The use of and the support given to SDNP by UNDP Country Offices is very uneven. Where Resident Representatives have shown personal interest and an understanding of the objectives of the SDNP then results have generally been very positive and sometimes spectacular. Unfortunately this has not always been the case and setbacks have occurred.

78. UNOPS still has some difficulty managing the SDNP in some countries. In a few countries, delays in equipment procurement have hindered SDNP operations. UNDP Country Offices vary greatly in their influence with national customs authorities in clearing SDNP equipment and materials.

79. SDNP/NY strongly discourages UNDP Country Offices to host the SDNP node. It has been temporarily accepted for a limited time in two instances where this approach was the only valid alternative to declining cooperation with SDNP. The understanding of SDNP's remit by UNDP Resident Representatives was varied, as was their appreciation of the SDNP's need for strong political support by their offices.

80. The practical use of the internet in UNDP Country Offices is only beginning.

Persuading Resident Representatives to use the SDNP is a challenging task for Coordinators. By subscribing to the services provided by SDNPs, UNDP offices would effectively contribute to longer term sustainability of the SDNP while building local capacity to use and manage the internet and other related technologies. Economies in communication costs should also be realistic.

Recommendations

SDNP Corporate

- 81. A new SDNP brochure that is closely focused, but which maintains continuity and reports the progress achieved, and which can be used for fund raising is badly needed. Early action is recommended. SDNP should endeavour, funds permitting, to publish brochures in the other principal languages of the UN, such as French and Spanish.**
- 82. Case studies of success stories should be systematically compiled and widely circulated.**
- 83. Participants recommended that the SDNP Secretariat continue to publish materials online using the WWW at the SDNP home page (<http://www3.undp.org>). The SDNP Secretariat and national SDNPs were encouraged to place other relevant reports and documents online.**
- 84. SDNP should assist national Coordinators in their negotiations with PTT authorities, for example, with policy and regulatory issues, in collaboration with ITU, AIF, ANI and others. The SDNP could, for example, hire a roving consultant, who could be retained as and when needed, to ensure punctual interventions on behalf of national SDNPs.**

Regional issues

- 85. It is recommended now that a critical mass of national SDNPs has been achieved in regions that the SDNP Secretariat encourage and support the organization of regional workshops.**

Global issues

- 86. Based on the very positive reaction of participants to the utility of the Fourth Global Workshop, the organization of the Fifth Global Workshop within the next 12 to 15 months was strongly recommended. A proposal that it be held in Africa received strong support.**

National SDNPs

- 87. It was recommended that national Coordinators consider the creation and/or support of Websites which allow offline access.**
- 88. National Coordinators should continuously reaffirm their close relationship with all national initiatives in support of the implementation of Agenda 21. Such action will also effectively tie SDNP activity in with the work of National Sustainable Development Commissions.**

- 89. It is recommended that regional groupings of SDNPs be formed to organize a regional newsletter and/or mailing list in order to facilitate the exchange of information on issues of common concern.**
- 90. To date national SDNPs have paid insufficient attention to analysing the use and impact of information in decision making. It is recommended that far more attention is paid in this regard in order to broaden their basis for popular and political support. Such action will also serve the needs of SDNP in New York. Countries that are considering the establishment of SDNPs will also find this information helpful.**
- 91. Monitoring of performance by national SDNPs is uneven. It is recommended that all Coordinators follow the procedures covered in the Capacity 21 Guidelines, and in project documents including tripartite review meetings and mid term reviews. This work should be considered an implicit part of sound management.**

Management

- 92. With very few exceptions, national Coordinators have not received training in business management including monitoring. It is recommended that steps be taken to survey needs and to take corrective steps as soon as possible.**
- 93. It is recommended that all national Coordinators should develop sound business plans and that they be reviewed by their Steering Committees and updated every 6 months as a minimum.**

Financial support

- 94. Two or three national Coordinators have been particularly successful in and lobbying key decision makers either individually or through their respective Steering Committees. It is recommended that all national Coordinators be more aggressive and creative in marketing their products and services. Furthermore, all Coordinators should more actively seek partnerships within and outside their countries with other organizations, such as UNEP, CIESIN, TIPS, APC, IUCN, as well as with multilateral and bilateral funding sources, including the World Bank and regional banks.**

SDNP products and services

- 95. SDNP workshop participants recommended SDNP continue to consider alternatives to providing Internet connectivity. Workshop participants recommended that national SDNPs become information providers.**
- 96. SDNP workshop participants recommended national SDNPs continue to look at the needs of their users for value added information and develop information products and services accordingly, and in collaboration with some major suppliers or providers on information about SHD.**
- 97. Particularly the following organizations should be sought out for their information: UNDPs' DevWatch Programme, UNEP's various environment information activities (GRID, GEMS, ENRIN, Infoterra), CIESIN, the United Nations system in general, the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) for their electronic conferences, the Inter Press Services (IPS) and others.**

UNDP

- 98.**The SDNP workshop participants and the SDNP Secretariat recommend that SDNPs work closer with the Sub-Regional Information Managers (SRIMS) of the Division of Administrative and Information Services (DAIS). They can have an important role to play in helping SDNPs and UNDP Country Offices work closer together and in influencing Resident Representatives.
- 99.**The SDNP workshop participants strongly recommended that SDNP/NY and DAIS continue to press UNDP Resident Representatives to assist SDNP endeavours and to examine how their respective offices can use SDNP for Internet connectivity.
-

XVIII. Closing Ceremony

- 100.**Closing statements of appreciation and thanks were made by Licenciada Yolanda Mejia Aguilar on behalf of ITESM, by Mr. Anthony Ngege of the Republic of the Cameroons on behalf of all participants and by Mr. Chuck Lankester, on behalf of UNDP and its SDNP Secretariat.

And many danced until daybreak!