

Thematic Workshop on Governance, Civil Society, Participation and Strengthening Partnerships for Chemicals and Waste Management and SAICM Implementation

The case of Costa Rica

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It is a known and publicly recognized fact that while Costa Rica is in many respects an environmental leader on conservation issues; pressing pollution problems have not received the same level of attention and now demand urgent action. This necessary re-focus on "brown issues" will necessitate new and improved policies, better inter-agency coordination, and efficient management tools.

The National Development Plan of Costa Rica establishes that the country has to consolidate a national system of planning on sustainable development where the environmental management must be a transversal axis.

Costa Rica strongly supports the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and since the SAICM negotiations started at the international level, a local SAICM was starting to see the light.

It all began with the creation of the National Commission on Hazardous Substances (CONSUPEL) as a step forward in our efforts of modernizing the environmental sector. CONSUPEL was established and asked to recommend policies, strategies, and programs of action for the management of substances (wastes, pollutants, toxics, etc...) of concern.

With the creation of the Department of Management of Environmental Quality within the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) and in collaboration with the Direction of International Cooperation and Foreign Affairs, a suitable institutional/policy framework was established to take action, not only internationally but also locally, regarding chemical hazards.

What started as CONSUPEL has become lately the National Technical Secretariat for Hazardous Substances Management (Secretaría Técnica de Coordinación para la Gestión de Sustancias Tóxicas). The fact that the Secretariat was established by Decree put it in a higher level and in a certain way help prioritize topics related to chemicals with a stronger political support.

The Secretariat's Decree describes: its role and goals, Members to the Secretariat, responsibilities of the Members, the focal points for each international agreement related to chemicals (e.i. Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention) and the decision making procedures.

We would like to point out the benefits of having a National Committee (Secretariat) with a specific example. The Secretariat has been in charge of the National Implementation Plan (NIP) for the Stockholm Convention for Persistent Organic Pollutants for Costa Rica with a multi-stakeholders decision making process.

The Plan Objectives include:

1. To establish and consolidate the national coordination mechanisms and the organization process for the executing of the enabling activities of this project.
2. To complete a National Inventory of POPs (polychlorinated biphenols (PCBs), pesticides, dioxins and furans) for Costa Rica.
3. Assess the national capacities and existing infrastructure in the area of POPs management.
4. Define the priorities and formulate the objectives to be included in the National Implementation Plan.
5. Implement a communication and broadcasting among the civil population, with respect to the health and environmental risks that are derived from the POPs.
6. Formulate a National Implementation Plan with its corresponding Action Plans in the topics of POPs pesticides, Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), dioxins and furans, information, waste generation, investigation and development.

Most of the activities to implement the NIP in Costa Rica are being executed and are led by the National Technical Secretariat for Hazardous Substances Management, what facilitates a multi-stakeholders approach and guarantees sustainability in the actions taken.

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