

CEP PUBLIC PARTICIPATIONS GROUND TRUTHING REPORT

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1. Review of the Legislative Framework

Summarise the **key changes** over the last three years since the first Ground Truthing Report in terms of access to information and public participation.

- Shiraz Environmental NGOs meeting in June 2003 as the results of formation of provincial and regional Environmental NGOs Networks.
- Declaration of legal definition of NGO by government and publication of guidelines and procedures for legal registration.
- Acceptance and approval of the constitution of the Countrywide Network of Environmental NGOs.
- Revision of some of the government classified information for permitting public access to them.
- Admittance of membership of representatives of NGOs in provincial Planning and Development Working Groups.
- Establishment of Public Participation office in some ministries and related provincial offices.
- Second round of the election of the City and Village Islamic Councils.
- Increased public interest in formation of NGOs or membership in existing ones.
- Establishment of new cultural centres in larger communities which are usually used for NGO gatherings and activities.
- New approach of the government towards public participation by showing interest in the issue and making investment for empowerment of NGOs and CBOs and conducting capacity building activities.
- UNEP supported workshops for government authorities and sectoral managers in Tehran.
- Increased level of dialogue between NGOs and Government sectors.
- Increased level of press recognition of active environmental NGOs and interest in obtaining their news/views and interviewing them at local, provincial and national levels.
- Raised levels of recognition of importance of public participation and involvement in sustainable development of the country.

Include the main participation issues in the National Constitution, ministerial level rules & regulations and executive by-laws as well as organizational directives and guidelines.

- Most participation issues in the national constitution are based around the subjects dealing with the general and local elections. This itself may be translated as public participation in decision making processes. The actual public participation in planning and decision making for countries development is yet to evolve.

Compare the actual practices with the legislative texts and if they differ, explain why?

- As most legal texts and documents rule, major developmental and social planning are made, implemented and monitored by the government. Citizens' rights for free access to environmental information and judicial support in environmental claims are not clearly defined and transparent. Necessary public awareness for legal follow up of environmental cases is not at a sufficient level yet, although as part of the empowerment and capacity building programs that are foreseen for the environmental NGOs, such awareness rising practices are accounted for.
- In the shadow of all the post-revolution political disorder and war-time socio-economic hardship, environmental misdemeanours and felonies were less valued and cared for in the country's judicial systems of the 2 decades of 80's and 90's. The trend has been slowly turning in favour of the environment and several amendments have been made to different laws and regulations protecting the natural resources, biodiversity and safety of the environment and human health.

2. Communication Culture

1. Where do the general public get **most** information about the environment? List the major media for different target groups.
 - Television, Radio, newspapers and periodicals are the major media providing general and case-sensitive environmental issues to the public. Radio and television broadcasting stations are entirely owned by the state. There are 5 stations that broadcast their round-the-clock programs nationally, and all the provinces have their own broadcasting systems that relay national programs as well. Newspapers rank second in dissemination of information. There are press that are specialized in different fields and address certain target groups, but most daily and weekly papers and periodicals cover general news and issues and address general public.
2. What is the relative role of the different media that promote environmental issues to the general public? Which media is most important for different stakeholder groups?
 - As the most powerful, widely broadcasted and efficient media (Audio+visual), television could have been the best and strongest tool for elevating the level of public environmental awareness. Considering the fact that environmental education is definitely a very specialized field that requires both the knowledge and the art of presentation and relaying the knowledge to the complex layers of public, it can be judged that in respect to rapidly growing

environmental problems and issues, the state-owned television network system is slowly moving along a narrow and winding evolutionary course.

- In comparison to the television network, the state-owned radio network is probably next in line from the point of view of effectiveness. Despite the smaller number of audience which usually are from specific public layers, the radio network has proven attractive when listeners' favourite and/or hot issues are discussed or broadcasted. Drivers, shop-keepers, housewives and senior citizens compose 90% of the radio listeners. Not unless an "issue of the day" is being discussed or an attractive program is being broadcasted, the radio remains a murmuring companion. Again this issue can be raised that the producers of the radio programs must have sufficient knowledge of environmental education and the hot issues in all local, provincial, national, regional and global levels.
- During the first couple of years of the presidency of president Khatami and within the so-called open political arena, many new daily, weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines were born. The readers population also grew along the same path and the "writer" and "reader" curves climbed parallel. Several specialized magazines started their activities, among which were few that had environmental interest to lesser or higher degree. Few of the many periodicals started an environmental column or section from their very beginning days. The articles varied from simple wildlife facts to complicated issues like utilization of vital forest and range resources, or different pollution cases. Although a number of these publications disappeared due to mismanagement, financial or political reasons, but some others replaced them and the important outcome was the emergence of a new and young generation of journalists, who mostly are environmentally sensitive. As the results, one may observe growing information dissemination in the area of environment and related problems and issues.
- Local press seem to have more interest in the field of environment and related problems and issues. This is more conspicuous in 3 Caspian coastal provinces, where ecosystems are more diverse and development has a faster pace than most other areas of the country.

3. What is the quality of reporting in the different media? Do they examine issues in depth looking for causes or just report the news? Are economic or political issues and causes ever discussed?

- The frequency of production of TV and radio commentary programs that discuss socio-economic topics that include both general and specific environmental problems and issues is increasing. Press also follow up the same themes and scheme, but not as effective. It can be said that interest groups still have to be formed to follow up on specific issues and make the media effect longer lasting and more fruitful.

4. Do the media ever take a lobbying or campaigning role?
 - It is obvious that followed up and more detailed discussion of a specific problem or issue will finally take the shape of lobbying. Topics such as solid waste and recycling which seems to be priority environmental issues of the country constantly appears in different TV and radio stations' talk shows and discussed in various depths in most localities and communities. As usual, press also follow up such hot issues. All-together, the topic seems to get hotter as the country speeds up the development and environmental planning and activities lag behind.
5. How free is the media or is it politically or economically influenced?
 - It has been noticed that environmental issues had been, in many instances, used as political levers and pressure tools. In a rapidly developing country like Iran, although the state-owned radio and television and the press are constantly given the opportunity to bring up social and environmental issues for increasingly detailed discussion, it can not be expected to witness same level of freedom that European media, for instance, experience. The culturally diverse communities and societies of Iran are just beginning to practice democracy and experience freedom. Therefore it is necessary for both the government and people to learn the rules of the game for a fair and decent play.
6. What kind of impact do the media actually have?
 - As per any other community, Iranian communities can be greatly influenced by the media of all types. The atypically wide base of the population pyramid in Iran, which indicated the greatness of the number of youth, makes the importance of the role of media in wise guidance and utilization of such potential force for country's safe and sound development. Public environmental awareness is an area where media can create the best desired impact and pave the road for sustainable development.
7. Is it possible to detect any changes in the balance of different communication media? For example, is television becoming more popular?
 - While the television can be rated as the most popular and effective media in Iran, alongside of it, the internet is gradually becoming a potential competitor. The fate of this race is not foreseeable yet, but having the ability to provide most desirable space and atmosphere for its users, by giving more choices of specialised environments for various interests and tastes, the internet may in the near future become the number one choice of not only the young generation, but the middle age citizens.
One the other hand, hundreds of satellite transmitted programs that are becoming more easily accessible by simpler equipments, forms a band of media that competes with the local television stations that broadcast in native language.
If the average time that every individual spends watching television is an indicator of the amount of information he or she receives, then

it is the quality of the programming of the managers and producers that determines the kind and depth of the impact on the spectators. Press are also no exception to this rule and naturally compete for attracting more audience. But as a rule, the role of the audio-visual media and press can not be easily compared and each one of them has its established base in societies around the globe.

8. What is your view about the most effective way of communicating an environmental message?
 - To reach the desired objectives and goals, which in this case is sustainable development and protection of natural environment and human health, all effective tools must be utilized. It is natural that some tools may work better in certain localities and under certain conditions, but in Iran, and especially in Caspian region, the television can play the most crucial role and create the most desirable impact, in a relatively shorter time.
- 9- Do the environmental groups have their own public media and how effective they are?
 - When comparing the total number of the environmental groups to the ones that have routinely published newsletters or bulletins, one can judge that the environmental groups and NGOs still have a long way to go to actually create and impact in this regards and have a media effect. It seems that disseminating news and explaining a problem is not enough for solving the problem or eradicating it. Individuals and groups must be encouraged to think of best possible and applicable solutions and participate in implementation of the related plans and projects.

3. SWOT and Change

1. Do the SWOT analysis, possibly as an activity in your workshop or consultation with experts and stakeholders.
 “What is the current state of public participation in your country?”

Strengths now	<u>Scale</u>	Weaknesses now	<u>Scale</u>
Increasing environmental awareness and sensitivity	2	Increased environmental carelessness	4
Growing positive and constructive dialogue amongst government and NGOs	3	Insufficient knowledge, experience and capacities to manage the NGOs effectively	4
Increasing number of enthusiastic individuals and groups to either join the existing NGOs , or form new ones	2	Destructive and negative competition/communication among NGOs and members (internally)	4

Opportunities in the future	Scale	Threats in the future	Scale
Solidarity and stronger bonds among NGOs in the frames of provincial, regional and countrywide networks	4	Prove incapability to run the NGOs effectively in the direction of goals and objectives	4
Link up with the regional and international NGOs and NGO networks	5	Shifting towards politics and create tension with government	5

For each SWOT statement indicate how strong it is on scale from 1 to 5 (1 = Not Significant, 2 = Slightly Significant, 3 = Moderately Significant, 4 = Significant, 5 = Very Significant).

1. Make a list of the ways public participation has improved and the ways public participation have not improved over the last three years on the table below.

Improved:

- Increased numbers of NGOs and CBOs (**S**)
- Recognition of NGOs by media, specially press, as a local source of information, news and concern (**S**)
- Greater acceptance of public participation phenomena by the government (**M**)
- Increased activities, attendance and participation of NGOs and CBOs in meetings and workshops (not necessarily fruitful) (**M**)
- Establishment of transparent registration procedures (**M**)
- Increased formal and informal dialogue among government and NGOs (**M**)
- Increased efforts for empowerment and capacitating NGOs (**M**)
- Formation of provincial, regional & national networks of environmental NGOs (**S**)
- Relative enhancement of information & news dissemination amongst ENGOS (**N**)

Not Improved:

- Institutional weakness and unorganized structure of most ENGOS (**S**)
- Negative competition among NGOs and members within a NGO (**S**)
- Lack of specific goals, objectives & internal rules in the main frames of ENGOS (**S**)
- Unfamiliarity of NGOs with effective means and procedures for planning, development and implementation of environmental projects (**S**)

- Financial weakness of NGOs and their lack of knowledge of ways of locating and securing funds for their activities (**S**)
- Lack of communication skills for establishment constructive dialogue with government authorities (**S**)
- Low level of environmental knowledge amongst decision makers and community leaders (**S**)
- Low levels of experience of the government authorities in dealing with the new phenomena of public participation (**S**)
- Unclear and weakly defined rules, procedures and regulations (Rules of the Game) in regards to public participation (**S**)
- General decrease in observation of environmental laws and norms (**M**)
- Reduced hope for reversed trends in environmental carelessness (**N**)
- Retreat of some very active individuals from the scene of environmental activities (**M**)

When ranking how much better or worse participation has got, rank the changes as:

- S:** Significant - the general public have noticed these changes
M: Moderately Significant – the general public have not noticed but NGOs and professional groups have noticed a change
N: Not Very Significant – only those with an interest in public participation have noticed.

THINGS THAT HAVE GOT BETTER	RANKING OF CHANGES	THINGS THAT HAVE GOT WORSE	RANKING OF CHANGES

4. Current Information on the Stakeholder Groups

Complete the table for the major public participation stakeholder groups

STAKEHOLDER	TARGET GROUP	MAJOR PP ACTIVITIES OF STAKEHOLDER	EFFECTIVENESS OF ACTIVITIES - ON A SCALE OF 1 (VERY POOR) THROUGH TO 5 (VERY EFFECTIVE)	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT
Education	Youth + students	Education	2	Participatory planning
ENGOS	General Public	Public awareness, capacity building and involvement	2	Empowerment and capacity building

Clergies	General public	Discussing political and socio-economic issues	4	Capacity building for relaying environmental messages
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NGO	TARGET GROUP	MAJOR PP ACTIVITIES OF NGO	EFFECTIVENESS OF ACTIVITIES - ON A SCALE OF 1 (VERY POOR) THROUGH TO 5 (VERY EFFECTIVE)	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT
AGRA	Rice Farmers	Non-chemical Pest management	3	The project is funded by GEF-SGP
SCIENSE	General public	Environmental education, Public awareness	3	Provide funding and equipment
Mazandaran Green Network	Forest dwelling communities	Capacity building	2	Funded and backed up by F&O and German Government
Women's Association for Prevention of Pollution	Women and General Public	Capacity building and Public Awareness	2	Provide financial and technical backup

(Do not indicate contact names and other details of the NGOs)

5. Public Participation Activities

1. What have been the major public participation activities in your country from May 2003 through to April 2004? List the key events, activities and publications that have been undertaken.
2. Evaluated the impact of the major events and explain why they have been successful or unsuccessful.

EVENT OR ACTIVITY	ORGANISED BY	TARGET GROUP	IMPACT
3 rd Annual National Gathering of Environmental NGOs in Shiraz	National ENGO Network and DOE	ENGOS	Official establishment and registration of the National Environmental NGO Network (Successful)
Parliamentary and Islamic Councils Election	Government	General Public	Participation Practice (Successful)
Many workshops and meetings	Government agencies and ENGOS	ENGOS, government staff and General public	Capacity building and raised awareness and knowledge (Semi-Successful)

6. Definition of Public Participation

Describe the perception of the stakeholders on the meaning of public participation and its importance. Which one of the following descriptions fits their view?

Telling (T)	people are just being given information or taking part in an event
Asking (A)	setting up systems to ask people their view, but then decisions are still made by the decision makers
Discussing (D)	setting up systems for community dialogue and decisions being made jointly after discussion

No	STAKEHOLDER GROUP	WHAT IS THE MAIN EMPHASIS T, A OR D
1	Environmental NGOS	D
2	Municipalities, District and township authorities	A (Islamic City & village Councils are elected by people)
3	Businesses and cooperatives	D
etc	Others	A

7. Barriers to Public Awareness and Participation & Access to Justice

List the barriers to raise public awareness and participation in your country. Then score them according to the strength and importance of the barriers.

Barrier	Strength (1 to 5)	Importance (1 to 5)
Policy	2	5
Funding	1	5
Organization	2	4
Planning	2	4
Available Capacities	2	5
Cooperation (inter-agency)	1	4
Communication & Information Exchange/Dissemination	1	5

Is there a right (in the Constitution) for member of the public to appeal to Justice and to the court for decisions, actions and/or failure of state bodies (or local authorities) causing environmental and/or health damage? If this right exists - how easy is it to access this right (in scale of 1 to 5)?

- **Article 50, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran states that: In the Islamic Republic, it is considered a public duty to protect the environment where the present and future generations are to have a thriving social life. Thus, any form of activities, whether economic or otherwise, that causes pollution of or irreparable damage to the environment is prohibited.**
- **Article 20 All citizens of the country, both men and women, equally enjoy the protection of the law and enjoy all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in conformity with Islamic criteria.**

Is there a right (in the Constitution) for members of the public to appeal to Justice and to the court against polluters?

- **Article 34 of the constitution declares that it is the indisputable right of every citizen to seek justice by recourse to competent courts. All citizens have right of access to such courts, and no one can be barred from courts to which he has a legal right of recourse.**

If this right exists – how easy is it to access this right (in scale of 1 to 5)?

- It may be necessary to scale the level of knowledge of the people about their legal rights and also investigate their familiarity with legal procedures through which violations to environmental laws could be taken to courts of law by any individual, interest group, stakeholders or public.
- Special courts of law have been established to investigate the cases that concern environmental issues.

8. Gender issues in Public Participation

Assess the barriers that face women in terms of participation (certain groups might find it difficult to join NGOs, rural women might find social barriers to participation, or time barriers in terms of their workload in the home and in income generation)

- It seems that if someday civil and government working women decide to collectively take a week off work, most of the activities in the country would face great problems. It is an obvious fact that that women have struggled their way up from simple housewives to positions like vice president, members of the parliament, high government offices and other key offices in the government, the highest scientific and academic levels, great fame in arts and literature, Noble prizes, professional positions and successful business figures in the past 3-4 decades. Almost 2/3 of the office works are done by women today and good 50% of the labour forces in light industries are composed of women. It is absolutely amazing that the majority of the high school graduates that pass the difficult university entrance examinations are females. On the other hand, there are still great many women who carry the heavy load of house work and raising children on their shoulders. Village women are not only responsible for the home affairs, but participate in agricultural activities and create income by making all sorts of handicrafts.

There are still few communities in which women are restricted, to some degrees, from social activities such as working in public offices or business firms, higher education or specific jobs, but it seems that these barriers are being slowly removed by time.

Article 21 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran dictates that:

The government must ensure the rights of women in all respects, in conformity with Islamic criteria, and accomplish the following goals:

- 1.create a favourable environment for the growth of woman's personality and the restoration of her rights, both the material and intellectual;
- 2.the protection of mothers, particularly during pregnancy and childbearing, and the protection of children without guardians;
- 3.establishing competent courts to protect and preserve the family;

- 4.the provision of special insurance for widows, and aged women and women without support;
- 5.the awarding of guardianship of children to worthy mothers, in order to protect the interests of the children, in the absence of a legal guardian.

9. Visions for Enhancement of Public Awareness and Participation

The Caspian Environment Programme (CEP) and Strategic Action Programme (SAP) have emphasis on public participation, which is envisioned in their documents.

Write your five main visions for public awareness and participation

VISION STATEMENT	
1	Capacitated and institutionally well-arranged local and regional ENGOs and CBOs with wisely selected goals and objectives and well developed plans of operation
2	Acceptable level of environmental awareness and knowledge reached among both public and authorities
3	Constructive and meaningful dialogue, and mutual trust established between public and government
4	Legal statute developed and put to force to protect the citizens' environmental rights
5	Participatory decision making, planning and implementation of environmental activities set to practice

10. Future Activities

Public Participation is a strand throughout all activities. There are also direct public awareness raising and participation activities that are mentioned in the Project Document and the SAP. Look through the list of Public Participation activities indicated in Project Document and rank them as high, medium and lower priorities:

OUTCOME IN CEP PROJECT DOCUMENT	ACTIVITY	PRIORITY
A5	Create and train Caspian Watch Groups for Biodiversity Monitoring	M
B1	Establish an Eco Net and Run public biodiversity awareness campaigns	M
E3	Public awareness campaign against the use of banned pesticides	H

G1	Develop a CEP media kit	H
G2	Strengthen Caspian NGO community	H
G3	Establish Caspian Concern Groups	M
G4	Establish an Environmental Awareness training programme for policy makers	H
G5	Strengthened private sector participation in CEP	M
G6	Create a public participation plan	H

SAP EQO INDICATOR	ACTIVITY	PRIORITY
EQO II 1.5	Biodiversity Awareness Raising	H
EQO V 1.1	Create a Caspian Environment Centre (but after year 5)	M
EQO V 1.2	Create a CEP Press Bureau	M
EQO V 1.3	Promote broader access to environmental information	H
EQO V 1.4	Develop an Academic Curriculum for school and university	H
EQO V 1.5	Set up a micro funds grant	H
EQO V 2.1	Establish issues awareness training programmes for local administrations	H
EQO V 2.2	Implement EIA procedures	H
EQO V 2.3	Host mayors conferences	M
EQO V 2.4	Promote Eco Tourism	M
EQO V 3.1	Promote NGO/government/private sector partnerships	H

2. Are all of the actions above **sufficient** to meet the visions in the previous section? Is there any other idea for public participation which is not included in the lists above?
- Achieving meaningful and effective public participation in environmental planning, implementation and monitoring will take time. The length of time would depend on the level of success in elevating the public environmental awareness and sensitivity.
 - It is obvious that along with awareness raising and environmental education programs, the grounds must be prepared for active public participation. This may include modification of some laws and regulations, involvement of media in effective dissemination of necessary information, making adjustments in operations and effectiveness of law enforcement system and finally, development and implementation of plans for strengthening and enhancement of socio-economic conditions of the human societies.

3. Are all of the actions mentioned above **necessary** to achieve these visions?
 - Collectively, yes. As discussed in previous sections, achievement of some important goals may depend on simultaneous or consecutive successful implementation of on, two or several minor activities. Thus, it can be concluded that meaningful and effective public participation will be the results of successful planning and implementation of a collection of activities which may vary from time to time and place to place.

11. Additional Questions

1. How many NGOs active in your country's coastal region deal with environmental issues?
 - About 80 environmentally oriented NGOs are active in the 3 coastal provinces
 - a. What is the size of membership?
 - The membership may vary from a few to several hundreds
 - b. What is the primary focus of these? (Oil industry, biodiversity, public health, civil society etc.)
 - Natural resources, biodiversity, pollution, public awareness, environmental education, capacity building, integrated pest management, water quality,...
 - c. Where does their funding come from?
 - Funding the activities seems to be the main problem of most NGOs. Some have succeeded in receiving small scale grants from organizations like GEF, but others still need to build up their capacities to define fundable projects
 - d. What is the biggest challenge that they face in project implementation, other than lack of funds?
 - Lack of experienced or management skills can be considered as main limiting factors that create challenge for NGOs. Main focus have to be on development and implementation of empowerment and capacity building programs for both present NGOs and the ones that will emerge soon
2. How many CBOs exist in coastal areas?
 - CBOs can be interpreted as local religious groups, Islamic City and Village Councils, Cultural societies, sports groups, youth groups, different cooperatives, women's groups, students associations; etc...
 - The real numbers are high and may reach several thousands.
 - a. How are they addressing environmental issues?
 - Very few. Less than 100 in the total coastal area.
 - b. What is the size of membership?
 - Varies from a few to several hundreds
3. How many media organizations in the coastal region report at least monthly on environmental issues?

- Almost all media cover one or more environmental issues in each of their daily, weekly or monthly programs/publications
4. What is the estimated population of coastal regions in your country?
 - 7.5 million residents, and at least 3 times as much visitors and vacationers each year
 5. What is the number of protected areas (either coastal, marine or otherwise) in the coastal regions?
 6. What are the top 5 income earning industries in the coastal region?
 - Agriculture
 - Tourism (services)
 - Construction
 - Fisheries
 - Civil services

For Fisheries Ministry/Fisheries Committee or Ministry in charge of fisheries

1. Other than lack of money, what is the biggest obstacle to successful fisheries management?
 - Proper Planning
 2. What is being done to protect genetic diversity of fish from hatcheries?
 - Establishment of Gene Banks by the state owned Fisheries Company
- What is the biggest challenge to enforcing the CITES ban on fisheries?

For Public Health Care Provider

1. What is the most prevalent illness of your patients?
 - Allergic reactions
2. Do your patients think there is a relationship between their health and environmental conditions?
 - Never discussed
3. What is your biggest concern about the health of people who you treat?
 - Degrading environmental qualities

For Coastal Zone Residents

1. Where do you get information about the environment?
 - Television and newspapers
2. What is the main source of income for coastal zone residents?
 - Agriculture and business/services