Step1

Constituting the Planning Team

Who are the "right" people to get involved in creating the environmental plan? Anyone who is concerned enough about the quality of life in the community to invest some time and energy. The community organisation will also need people with some expertise on environmental and health issues. The Field Workers will probably find that people welcome the chance to work together to find solutions to challenging issues that will shape the community's future.

A well developed community involvement program brings people together and allow them to share ideas and concepts and to arrive at a consensus on what is best for the community. Community involvement is an opportunity to get "grassroots" participation in the Environmentally concerned Communities program. To be successful, it is important to engage community involvement process, bringing the community together for meaningful discussion of problems and to sustain the planning process. Effective community involvement can:

- Provide a way for community members to share information
- Encourage a more democratic process
- Provide dialogue between the community and the community development programme staff.
- Generate creative alternatives and solutions.
- Help reach consensus on solving issues and problems in the community.

The community involvement process should begin early and often. Early involvement at the community assessment stage will:

- Enable community members to feel they are a part of the process.
- Develop a spirit of cooperation among community members.
- Encourage the flow of accurate and unbiased information.

Forming a Planning Team

Someone needs to oversee the community's environmental plan. That "someone" can be a planning team made up of people who represent the different views and constituencies in the community. The planning team will guide the community through each step of the planning process, including developing a community vision, identifying needs and possible solutions, setting priorities for action, and carrying out the plan.

There are many possible approaches to forming a planning team. For example, many communities already have land use planning committees due to one or another development or environment related programme. This committee has demonstrated an interest and commitment to community environmental issues, and might be willing to oversee the environmental planning process. This approach will ensure that the environmental planning process is well integrated with the community's comprehensive land use plan, and vice versa.

No matter what approach the field workers may use, the community's planning team should include some of the following types of people:

■ **Managers or operators of environmental facilities** (such as water and wastewater systems if one is in place), who are knowledgeable about environmental issues and the condition of existing facilities.

■ **Elected officials or board members,** who already are involved in managing local communities and are familiar with issues that affect the area's environment.

■ **Local physicians, engineers, and scientists,** who can provide technical information about environmental and health issues, links between pollution and health, and other key data.

■ **Health department,** which can provide local, state, and national health statistics so that local conditions can be compared with state and national averages.

■ **Community residents,** who represent specific interests or the "general public."

■ **Religious and social leaders and farmers,** who represent important views in the community and can help determine future trends. (Getting agriculture or nearby industrial enterprise involved is especially important if the industry or enterprise is a current or potential source of pollution.)

Make an open invitation to the members of the community to join the planning team and see who is interested. Try to assemble a planning team of a workable size. A team of 20 people would probably be unwieldy, but only one or two people probably would be unable to handle all the work involved, and probably could not represent the diverse interests of the community. If too many people volunteer, divide up into different teams to handle specific problems or to seek out different types of information. Never turn anyone away—they can always find some productive way to use someone's time and energy. If too few people volunteer, keep spreading the word. No matter how large or small the team, however, the team **must** include effective leaders who can produce

agreement on solutions and get results for the community.

Finding Local Experts

Right in the community, the field workers probably have some of the expertise they need to develop a sound environmental plan. For example, managers or operators of systems that can directly affect the environment and people's health—drinking water, wastewater, and solid waste management systems—have the most detailed knowledge of the operation of these systems. Scientists or engineers from local businesses and schools might be able to answer technical and scientific questions that arise. Long-time residents often are a gold mine of information about the community, past and present, and they might also have financial, management, or other experience to contribute. Physicians or environmental health professionals can provide public health statistics that might identify problems that need to be solved immediately.

Every knowledgeable person in the community does not need to serve on the planning team. Some people can give advice to the team when needed, even if they don't have time to attend regular meetings. Some ways local experts can assist the committee include answering questions by phone, providing written materials, reviewing technical documents that deal with relevant information, and speaking at public meetings. The team should seek advice from local experts early on. In this way, experts can help shape the plan from the beginning, knowing their ideas are valued and will be considered throughout the process.

Working With Local Govt and Non-govt. Officials

As the team develops its environmental plan, the field workers should consult with people in local government or line departments, IUCN staff and professionals from other NGOs. Most of these people will do their best to be a valuable source of information and assistance for the environmental concerns the community faces. In fact, IUCN or EPA is generally the best place to obtain assistance for dealing with environmental issues.

The planning team might want to offer some NGOs working in the field of environment – IUCN etc -- an open invitation to attend the planning team meetings. The main role of outsiders, however, will be to provide information that the planning team has determined to be important to its efforts. Local resource providers.

Encouraging Public Participation

The public includes everyone in the community. Members of conservation and environmental groups, long-time residents, and people who are active in the community are good candidates to become involved in creating the environmental plan. Including the public in local environmental planning is essential for the following reasons:

■   The residents of the community are the ones who will end up working on most new environmental projects.

■   Residents will benefit from good environmental planning and management.

■   The public knows the community and has ideas about the kind of place in which they want to live.

■   If concerned, responsible community leaders are involved in the process, they are more likely to generate broader support for the environmental plan and for the work needed to carry it out.

With their knowledge and ideas, community residents can help the planning team define environmental needs and priorities.

Once the planning team is set up, local experts are committed, and key residents identified, the field workers are ready for the next step: creating a vision of what residents want their community to be like in the future.

Steps in Designing Community Involvement Programs

The field workers shall:
(a)Identify Issues, Needs and Concerns. Solicit Opinions and Get the Community Involved.
(b)Identify Stakeholders.
(c)Establish Goals and Objectives for Community Involvement.
(d)Organize the Community Involvement Program.
(e)Develop a Community Involvement Plan.
(f)Get the Media Involved.
(g)Select Tools and Techniques.
(h)Implement the Program.

Effective community involvement does not just happen but requires careful planning. The first step in this process is determining the needs of the community. The following is a checklist of items that should be considered by the field workers in planning and organizing a community involvement program in environmental management.

The field workers should:

●   Talk to local officials, business leaders and other interested groups and officials. Get their opinions and get them involved. Identify issues, needs and concerns.
●   Identify the stakeholders. Make a list, notify them and get them to the meetings.
   ○   Meet with them personally to discuss the project and get their support.
   ○   Ask to speak at their meetings about the concerns for the community and the opportunities for greening the community.

- ○ Ensure that they represent the diversity of the community.
- ○ Ask groups to recommend other stakeholders to ensure broad and complete representation of the community
- Develop goals for the community involvement program.
  - ○ Inform and educate the public about the environment issues in the community that have led the respective community development programme to initiate the greening programme.
  - ○ Keep the community informed throughout the entire process.
  - ○ Establish the means for the public to provide information.
- Organize the community involvement program.
  - ○ Establish committees and leadership for the program. At this early stage in the process, a planning committee of the community organisation may be enough.
- Develop a plan to guide the community involvement program.

Ways The Planning Team Can Encourage Public Participation

- **Distribute flyers and other information**, such as one-page fact sheets on local environmental issues written by local experts, minutes of planning team meetings, or information about important team decisions. The field workers can give out these materials at public meetings, through mailings (such as with utility bills), and at local stores, and publish them as notices or articles in the local newspaper. The planning team should develop a mailing list of interested groups and individuals.

- **Talk to local groups, such as CBOs, NGOs, religious leaders**. Tell them about the issues the planning team will address, how the community will be affected, and why it would be valuable for them to participate at this stage of the planning process.

- **Publicize the meetings of the planning team**, or hold special meetings to get community input, so that residents, experts, and team members can express
- their concerns, exchange views, and explore possible solutions. These meetings can be large or small. If they are held as part of a town meeting, they may have the benefit of more people attending, but the agenda will probably be quite full and the evening a long one. Be sure to advertise the meetings well in advance.

- **Ask for volunteers** for tasks such as conducting surveys, taking minutes at team meetings, organizing public meetings, and reviewing information.

- **Do a survey**. Ask people how they feel about local environmental issues. The survey can include questions such as: "Which of the following do they think is the most important environmental issue in our community, and why?" List areas of particular concern in the community. Also, use the survey to find out whether and how much people would be willing to pay for improvements in the areas about which they are most concerned. The survey can be done in several ways, such as mailing the survey to all or a percentage of town residents (perhaps with a utility bill) or interview-ing people about their concerns. Make sure that survey respondents explain their views (such as why drinking water quality is an important concern to them).

- **Organize school activities on local environmental issues.** They can hold a workshop, classroom program, or festival on water conservation, afforestation, overgrazing, the use of fertilisers and pesticides, recycling, or other environmental issues. These events can be set up so that the activities are fun for both adults and children. Children are the best sources as they often communicate ideas from school projects to their parents.

- **Invite the public to attend planning team meetings**. Allowing the public to attend the meetings is necessary. In any case, having at least some of the team meetings open to interested members of the public is a good idea.

Initial Contact

The planning team, comprising of the field workers and community activists, should fully support of this event which formally announces the start of the process and solicits involvement from the community to assess "**Where is the Community Now**?" An evening meeting is usually the best time to attract the most of the community members. Ensure that the location of the meeting is easily accessible for the community. Once the field workers start holding meetings, it is best to change the locations to enable the widest attendance.

The field workers should keep in mind that they shall look for the following information during the initial assessment of a community for preparing an environmental plan with them:

i. Community members Participation

(1)   How visible and active are community members?
(2)   Do community members know how local NGOs and government work?
(3)   Is participation proactive or reactive?
(4)   Are community members actively involved in major projects undertaken by other organisations?

ii. Community Leadership

(1)   Is there active community organisation leadership?
(2)   Is government willing to share leadership turf?
(3)   Are there training programs to nurture new leaders?
(4)   Is leadership results-oriented?
(5)   Do leaders take the long-term view?

iii. Intergroup Relations

(1)   Is the community dealing with ethnic and racial diversity?
(2)   Does the community promote communication among community members?
(3)   Do all groups have the skills to become involved in the community?
(4)   Do groups cooperate in resolving broad disputes?
(5)   Do small, specific conflicts escalate into larger ones?

iv. Community Information Sharing

(1)   Do community members have enough information to make good decisions regarding their environment?
(2)   What role does government and other organisations play in making information available?
(3)   Are any planning activities carried out on a regional basis?

Step 2

Developing Community's Vision

A community vision is an expression of possibility, an ideal future state that the community hopes to attain. Such a vision must be shared by the entire community so that it is truly owned by all -- so that it is "ours" in the inclusive sense.

Visioning is the process which focuses on where a community wants to be within a specified timeframe, whether 5, 10, 20 or 30 years down the road. Visioning empowers the community to move beyond the probable future scenarios developed through: "Where Is the Community Going?". Visioning can lead to the desired future of a healthy environment, a strong economy, and a high quality of life.

Community participation is key which is done through bringing people together, including business, industry, and education, along with planners, civic leaders, environmental groups and community associations. It allows the vision to capture the values and interests of a broad constituency. Brainstorming ideas from the entire community results in a synergistic effect which can bring out a myriad of ideas that reflect the values and interests of the community as a whole.

The Visioning Process will result in a Vision Statement with one or more alternative "futures" proposed. These "futures" should represent variations on a theme aimed at achieving sustainable solutions for the environment, economy and social well-being. Once a vision is created, the community can work towards realizing its goals in an effective and deliberate way.

What do they want the community to be like in 10 or 20 years? This is one of the first questions that planning team members should ask them-selves and other people in the community. The picture they come up with is the community vision. This vision should address not only environmental issues but all the issues the field workers consider central to the community's future, such as economic development, education, government services, and quality of life. The field workers will be creating a framework to help they make choices about environmental goals and solutions as they develop the comprehensive environmental plan.

To create the community vision, the field workers should let their imagination go along with that of the community. Forget about what needs to get done by tomorrow at noon, and instead picture what they would like to see when they look at their village some time in the future.

Involving the Community

Because the community vision will shape important decisions, it needs to represent a broad consensus. The field workers and the community team need to make residents aware of what is at stake for the community and invite them to participate in creating the vision. If they have done this well, they are much more likely to have support for the work they do later in the planning process.

A community meeting is a good place to develop a vision for the future. Explain to those attending what comprehensive environmental planning is all about, and ask them to guide the planning team by defining what they want for their community.

Asking the Right Questions

The field workers can ask questions to help people focus on what they would like the community to be like in the future. Questions that can help the process along include:

v. What makes our community what it is today? Who makes up our population (average age, income, and other characteristics)? What is unique and important about our community socially, culturally, and historically? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy? What are important characteristics of the community's natural environment?

- **What are our community's values with respect to the environment, economic growth, and lifestyle?** For example, different communities have different attitudes toward growth: some prize stability and traditional ways of life, while others view economic growth as much more important. Some communities place great value on preserving their surroundings in a natural state; others are more interested in promoting population growth or industrial development.

- **What changes or improvements would we like to see?** Changes or improvements in the following areas might be appropriate:

— *Our community's natural environment.* Do we see any trends, such as loss of natural resources or increasing pollution, that should be reversed?

— *Land use.* Is the current mix of land used for industrial, commercial, residential, and recreational purposes a good balance? Should some areas be used differently in the future? What is happening in surrounding areas? Could a major manufacturing plant be built in the town next door? Should the planning area be enlarged to include such possibilities? What does the county comprehensive plan call for?

— *Infrastructure (roads, environmental facilities, parks, schools, libraries, police and fire departments, etc.).* What level of services do we think the community should provide? Do we need to correct problems with our current infrastructure? How old are components of the infrastructure, and how long will they

last? If we expect the population to grow, what new services or facilities will we need? How can these best be integrated with existing services and facilities within the community and neighbouring communities?

— *Economic growth.* Do we want to attract new businesses to our community? What kinds? What resources should be developed to attract new businesses? How will this affect our quality of life?

— *Community health.* Does our community need to address health problems such as infant mortality, childhood lead poisoning, nutrition, or access to health care? How does public health in our community compare with national, state, and rural norms?

— *Quality of life.* What is our vision for our community in areas such as economic well-being of residents, safety, recreational activities, aesthetics, and our sense of community?

— *Local government.* Would we like to change the size, role, or structure of local government? Should it take on or drop any areas of responsibility? Will it be adequate given how we see our community changing in the future?

Issues that Spark the Visioning Process.

Water Supply/Water Resources
- What can we do as a community to reduce the pollution of our surface waters?
- What will be our future demand for water and how can we meet that demand?
- How can we reduce flooding in our watershed?

Community Assessment/Profile
- What are our most valued community treasures (cultural, social and natural resources) and how may we preserve them?
- Which of our local regulations and policies do not foster sustainability or may restrict innovative approaches to environmental protection?

Loss of Sensitive Land and Open Space
- How can we preserve our agricultural lands and keep small family farms in production?
- Are we encouraging development in areas which should be left in open space, providing protection to our streams, wetlands and forests?

Human Health
- How can we reduce our exposure to lead and radon?
- What can we do to reduce air pollution in our community?

Envisioning the future of a community can be a powerful experience. Creating a Vision Statement, based on shared values and future hopes can act as a catalyst for change and commitment. Key to this process is active community participation, capturing diverse

viewpoints and wide representation of community interests and taking a longer view of the community's assets. Successful visioning gives people several opportunities to participate. Although a community's vision should be grounded in realistic expectations, explore beyond that which is practical today...for tomorrow may bring new leadership, new opportunities and new advances in science and technology.

Below are examples of visioning techniques, real-world vision statements from working communities and "benchmarks" or indicators that can mark the progress toward achieving a vision.

For visioning exercise the field workers will need to get broader community involvement to ensure that the Vision Statement truly reflects the community's desired future(s). An outside facilitator is often valuable in ensuring that all the community's interests are being considered and integrated into the Vision Statement.

Tips for Success: The field workers shall:

■   Hold visioning brainstorming sessions in a variety of locations like traditional meeting places -- Hujra etc.
■   Strive to work with larger groups to encourage that synergistic effect associated with brainstorming.
■   Provide access to drawing materials to create visual representation of ideas.
■   Make use of small break for groups to contemplate their future scenario.

Pulling the Vision Together

The field workers shall list all the suggestions for elements of a community vision on a flip chart or blackboard in the meeting room. After they have discussed the above mentioned and other questions, they are likely to have a fairly long "wish list" for the future—as well as a list of problems that residents are concerned about. The field workers might want to take a straw poll to let participants choose the five or six elements of the community vision that are most important to them. More discussion shall be asked on the items that seem controversial, and take another straw poll. Alternatively, use a technique like that described in the following box.

When the community members reached some consensus, the field workers shall ask the members to discuss how the different parts of the vision fit together. Do any of the goals for the future seem to conflict with each other (such as preserving the natural environment and attracting certain businesses)? If so, ask the participants to come up with some ideas for solving the conflict.

A strong, unbiased chairperson or facilitator for this meeting is crucial to make sure that everyone has a chance to participate and to keep the discussion on track. But there is no need to worry about dotting every "i" and crossing every "t" in the vision statement. The

important thing is to get direction from the community as a whole about where the community should be going.

To tap the creativity and energy that people will bring to the meeting the facilitator need to be flexible and make the meeting fun. Don't burden people with speeches that are too long or too technical. Make sure everyone understands that they have something to contribute, even if they have no training in planning or environmental issues.

After creating the initial community vision, it's time for the next step: developing a plan to make that vision a reality. This will be a dynamic process—the community will need to revise its vision as the team gathers new information and the community makes new decisions.

DEVELOPING A VISION

Community Visioning is both a process and an outcome. Its success is most clearly visible in an improved quality of life, but it can also give individual community members and the community as a whole a new approach to meeting challenges and solving problems.

Visioning Process
Creating a common vision is a several step process. Here is how it might go!
Over the course of several working sessions:

- Brainstorm ideas and capture on flip charts or other means.
- Break into smaller groups and discuss and record ideas more fully.
- Present small group discussions to the larger group.
- Group similar ideas together.
- Assign responsibility for gathering the additional information needed.
- Determine focus areas to ascertain if environmental, economic and social attributes are captured.

Once the additional information is collected, bring together stakeholders to:

- Develop scenarios for alternative futures.
- Produce a pictorial/graphic representation of the alternative future (s).
- Create the first draft of the Vision Statement
- Circulate the draft Vision Statement and gather feedback from community members.
- Revise the Vision Statement and recirculate.
- Create the Final Vision Statement.

The field workers shall note that creating a Vision Statement may take time and work to achieve broad consensus. Outreach to the community via newsletters or newspaper articles will facilitate the process.

Ideas for Public Reviews:
- Meetings with community organizations
- Public Surveys or questionnaires
- Presentations or displays at community events

CONSENSUS BUILDING

Bringing a large group of people to consensus can seem like an impossible task. Besides dealing with differences in opinion, and different levels of knowledge and education, there may be hidden agendas, and there may be people who will not voice their opinions in front of other people. And, there may be people who believe that the meetings are a waste of time because nothing will change. Collaborative processes, the sharing of information and pooling resources, can build a better understanding of issues and result in better decisions. Special interests will be less inclined to overwhelm the process or roadblock action planning and implementation. Collaboration, although not appropriate for every situation, is key to successful visioning.

The following represent key ingredients in achieving successful collaborative efforts:
- People with varied interests and ideas participate throughout the entire process and contribute to the final outcomes, adding credibility to the results.
- Traditional "power brokers" truly empower community members.
- Individual agendas and baggage are set aside, focusing on common issues and goals.
- Spirited leadership comes from all sectors and interests.
- Community members take personal responsibility for the process and its outcomes.
- The group outlines specific recommendations, identifying responsible parties, timelines and costs.
- Individuals remove racial, economic and sectoral barriers and develop good working relationships based on trust, understanding and respect.
- Community members "hang in there" despite occasional frustrations.
- Projects are well timed-they are launched when they will have most impact.
- The group uses consensus to reach desired outcomes.

Brainstorming Procedure

- Identify a problem for discussion
- Ask each group to select a recorder.
- Explain the purpose and rules of brainstorming:

Quantity is the goal: More ideas mean more likelihood of winners.
Defer judgment: Do not criticize. Evaluation comes later.
Be creative: Wild ideas are great, because they spark wilder ideas. It is easier to tame a wild idea than to think up new ideas.

Combine and amend ideas: Expand, delete, consolidate, substitute, reverse, make analogies, make the problem bigger and smaller.

- Brainstorm responses to the problem or question. The recorder lists all ideas on flip charts. Give a two minute warning before calling time.
- Analyze: discuss unfamiliar terms or ideas. Establish criteria for selecting the best ideas, then evaluate each idea against those criteria.
- Action-plan: For the idea(s) chosen, outline the steps needed to implement the solution.
- List forces (situations, people, events) that work for and against implementation of this solution.

SAMPLE VISION STATEMENTS

ENVIRONMENT - Natural areas and habitat have been preserved. Agricultural land and open space preserves the view from surrounding hillsides. Automobiles are used less, preserving air quality, a environmentally concerned way system links pedestrian paths along clean rivers and streams. Residents are actively involved in protecting and conserving the natural areas. Plenty of space is provided for enjoying animals and the earth.

HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND WELL BEING - Health care is provided locally through a one-stop health care facility. Community members may change their sedentary lifestyles. Social services are available locally. Cultural diversity creates challenges and local residents meet the challenge. General happiness, personal, spiritual growth, and families are encouraged and promoted.

EDUCATION AND NEEDS OF YOUTH - All levels of education are available, there is a strong business/school partnership. Parents are involved; community membership training is important. Classes are culturally diverse; individual needs are addressed. Technological changes provide easy access to information and education for all Valley residents. Nurturing our youth is a priority and youth are encouraged to be involved in all aspects of our community.

Techniques for The Community Meeting

Many different techniques are available for helping a group define problems and agree on solutions. One of these is the Nominal Group Technique, developed by Dr. Andre Delbecq of the University of Wisconsin/Madison. It is designed to help a group of people from different backgrounds and experiences to clarify issues, achieve insights into complex problems, and come to a shared judgment. The technique allows the group to reach conclusions in just a few hours, and it ensures equal participation by preventing more outspoken participants from having too much influence in group decisions.

No special training is necessary to lead a group through the Nominal Group Technique. Materials for the method include paper, pencils, and 3x5 index cards for the participants, and a blackboard or flip chart for each group leader. The seven steps in the process are described below.

Step 1: Introduction and Statement of Task
(5 to 10 minutes). On a flip chart, the coordinator writes the question that the participants are to respond to and briefly explains what is going to happen. Participants are then divided into groups of five to seven people with a leader assigned to each group. The coordinator can lead a group, or float between groups to ensure they are keeping on roughly the same schedule.

Step 2: Silent Generation of Ideas (10 to 20 minutes**).**
Each person works silently and independently using paper supplied to list his or her own items in response to the statement of the task. The group leader can also participate.

Step 3: Round-Robin Listing of Items on Flip Chart (10 to 25 minutes). Each group member concisely states one item from his or her list. The group leader writes the item (without rewording) on the flip chart and assigns it a number. There is no discussion at this time. Do not be concerned if items appear to duplicate or overlap. Continue in round-robin fashion until all items have been covered.

Step 4: Discussion of Items (15 to 30 minutes).
Each group member, in turn, clarifies one of the items he or she has listed on the sheet. Other members may ask questions about the item to be sure of its meaning. Do not combine items. This continues until each item has been discussed.

Step 5: Silent Listing and Ranking by Priority (5 to 10minutes).
On separate 3x5 cards, each group member lists, by name and number, 10 of the items that he or she considers most important from the total list. Group members then rank the items according to their personal priorities and write a large number 10 (for 10 points) on the corner of the card that has the highest priority; 9 (for 9 points) on the next, and so forth for all 10 cards. The group leader collects the cards and has someone help record directly on the flip chart the number of votes each item received. The number of votes received for each item is tabulated.

Step 6: Discussion of Vote (10 to 15 minutes)**.**
The group discusses the results of the vote. If necessary, the group members can get additional clarification about the meaning of individual items.

Step 7: Silent Re-Ranking of Items (5 to 10 minutes). Using the same procedure as in Step 5, re-rank those 10 items which received the highest total scores. Remember, use the number 10 for the highest priority item and the number 1 for the lowest priority item. The group leader and his or her assistant collect the cards, record the number of votes each item received, and tabulate them. If there is more than one group, each group leader turns in the completed flip chart and the 3x5 cards to the coordinator.

Many other methods exist for reaching agreement in a group. (See Effective Meeting Skills: A Guide for More Productive Meeting, by Marion E. Haynes, Crisp Publications, Inc., 95 First Street, Los Altos, CA 94022.)