

"Wetlands: water, life and culture"

**8th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to
the Wetlands Convention (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)**

Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002

Resolution VIII.36

Participatory Environmental Management (PEM) as a tool for management and wise use of wetlands

1. AWARE that sustainable management of wetlands requires an integrated approach incorporating knowledge from many sources – local and regional, traditional and scientific – for identification and prioritisation of the most important problems and for proposing efficient solutions to those problems;
2. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the participation of all sectors in sustainable management of wetlands optimizes human, economic and environmental resources to the point that in many regions it is considered a process that can contribute to reducing poverty and improving the quality of life;
3. RECOGNIZING the close relationship between societies and wetlands and taking into account the importance of these ecosystems in the cultural, ecological, social, political and economic aspects of the life of local inhabitants;
4. RECALLING the *Guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept* (Recommendation IV.10) and *Additional guidance for the implementation of the wise use concept* (Resolution V.6), which promote participation of local communities and indigenous peoples in the preparation of management plans and in the decision-making process regarding wetlands designated as Ramsar sites;
5. ALSO RECALLING Resolution VII.8, entitled *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands*;
6. FURTHER RECALLING that the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, paragraph 26, recognizes that sustainable development requires broad-based participation in policy formulation, decision-making and implementation at all levels, and that the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, paragraph 128, underscores the importance of ensuring public participation in decision-making, so as to further Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development;
7. ALSO AWARE of the need to involve many social actors (the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations and local communities, among others) in the management and sustainable use of wetlands;
8. ALSO RECOGNIZING that strategies of local participation contribute to the implementation of activities that promote sustainable use and exploitation of the natural resources of wetlands;

9. FULLY AWARE that Participatory Environmental Management (PEM) is a learning process that helps improve joint capacities for study and action among all those involved in the conservation of wetlands;
10. ALSO TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that PEM promotes active and full participation of local communities and indigenous peoples in the adoption and application of decisions related to the use and sustainable management of wetlands;
11. RECALLING that Decision IV/4 of COP4 of the Convention on Biological Diversity on status and trends of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems and options for conservation and sustainable use, Annex I, paragraph 9(e), recommends Parties to involve as far as possible, and as appropriate, local communities and indigenous people in development of management plans and in projects that may affect inland water biological diversity;
12. FURTHER RECOGNIZING that PEM improves communication and exchange of information, contributing to a reduction of environmental conflicts, promoting continuity and sustainability of management activities;
13. FURTHER TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that there are positive experiences of participatory management of wetlands involving local communities, indigenous peoples, the private sector, universities, non-governmental organizations and the public sector that sustainably manage resources within wetlands; and
14. NOTING the experiences and case studies around the world presented at the Third Technical Session of Ramsar COP7 on “Participation at all levels for conservation and wise use of wetlands”;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

15. RECOGNIZES Participatory Environmental Management (PEM) as a useful tool for achieving sustainability in the use and management of wetlands;
16. REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to prepare for COP9 methodologies or guidelines for effective implementation of PEM, gathering case studies and taking into account the content of the annex to this resolution;
17. URGES the Contracting Parties to inform COP9 on progress and successful experiences in applying PEM strategies; and
18. ALSO URGES multilateral and bilateral donors to provide financial resources for projects that promote the use of PEM strategies for wetland management.

ANNEX

Introduction

1. Participatory Environmental Management (PEM) is a tool that by including knowledge from many sources – traditional, scientific, technical and administrative, among others – permits an integrated approach to problems and priority activities. This makes the management of ecosystems, specifically wetlands, more efficient, effective and lasting in social, environmental and economic terms. Because it optimizes resources and makes management more effective, PEM is now considered to be a process that can contribute to overcoming poverty in many regions.

Benefits of PEM

2. Participatory Environmental Management:
 - a) is a tool that can help reduce poverty and improve the quality of life;
 - b) facilitates a coherent definition of the needs in accordance with the context and reality of the region;
 - c) by allowing incorporation of all actors (the public and private sectors, local communities, universities and others), strengthens and provides training for the structures of local organization;
 - d) identifies more efficient, effective and lasting solutions in economic, social and environmental terms, thus creating collateral benefits;
 - e) optimizes resources (technical, financial and cultural) available for environmental management strategies;
 - f) by incorporating knowledge from many sources and points of view (especially those directly related to the wetlands in question), facilitates the exchange of knowledge;
 - g) promotes capacities from the base up and the cultural appropriation of the territory;
 - h) by improving communication and exchange of information among actors, creates an environment of confidence;
 - i) can be used for settling environmental conflicts; and
 - j) promotes opportunities for participation in other areas.
3. It should be taken into account that PEM, as any process, requires time and adequate planning, both in terms of land use and in relation to the required economic resources.
4. However, there are external elements that if “used” adequately can strengthen PEM strategies, such as those related to the development or application of legal mechanisms of social participation in the management of natural areas.
5. Two aspects that can lead to positive short-term or medium-term results are: a) the signing, application and compliance with international agreements, namely the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), among others; and b) the strengthening of transnational networks for the exchange of experiences, access and diffusion of information and improvement of local technical capacities in the taking of joint decisions and the management of resources.

6. Equally important long-term but tangible results may be obtained through: a) mechanisms for international environmental cooperation that include the requirement of a specific commitment to use PEM techniques in the development of environmental projects; b) incentives for social participation in management strategies for natural areas; and c) advice and technical assistance for development of PEM projects.

Some aspects to be taken into account in the preparation and application of PEM strategies

7. Some of the main aspects to be taken into account for preparation and application of PEM strategies or for strengthening existing PEM strategies:
 - a) education and environmental awareness at all levels;
 - b) training of all participants;
 - c) identification of the need to assign specific funds for activities aimed at strengthening PEM;
 - d) equitable access to information;
 - e) application of participatory mechanisms through identification of local or regional leaders; and
 - f) monitoring and participatory research on the socio-cultural context and integrated analysis for identification of priorities and possible lines of action, and for early detection of conflicts.