

THE ROLE OF THE CHM IN IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

The CHM is a key mechanism for supporting implementation of the Convention, i.e. for helping to overcome the barriers to implementation by promoting and facilitating technical and scientific cooperation.

The Meeting on the Strategic Plan has implementation as a key agenda item. It is important that the IAC provide advice to that meeting on the role that the CHM can play, and the way the CHM must develop in order to effectively play that role.

Barriers to Implementation

The key barriers to implementation are:

- Lack of understanding, or inaccurate understanding, of needs and options for response, on the part of stakeholders and decision-makers
- Lack of a willingness to respond to known problems (e.g. lack of political will)
- Institutional and infrastructural problems (e.g. poor legal systems, gaps in institutional arrangements, poor communication systems)
- Lack of effective techniques for carrying out biodiversity management (e.g. methods to control alien species)
- Lack of resources (money, trained staff, equipment)

The Role of the CHM

The CHM has three components that can play different roles in helping overcome these barriers:

1. the CHM staff within the Secretariat
2. the CHM focal points (national, regional and international)
3. the information network (electronic and paper) that they create or use

The CHM's role is to foster scientific and technical cooperation. Given the elements we have, it can do that in four main ways:

1. by connecting people to people
2. by connecting people to information and ideas
3. by connecting people to techniques (i.e. technology transfer)
4. by connecting or manipulating data to provide new information
5. by assisting in the development of new initiatives

Cooperation may occur at national, bilateral, regional or global scales.

Priority for Inter-Country Cooperation

It is my view that, in the short term, the CHM should have two focuses:

- facilitating inter-country technical cooperation (bilateral or between small groups of countries) between countries that have similar issues (e.g. the cooperative arrangements NZ has with Chile and Argentina, which share similar biodiversity); and
- facilitating inter-country cooperation between larger groups of countries on key issues that warrant such an approach (e.g. the proposed international island alien species initiative, which recognizes that all islands have similar alien species problems).

I believe that these areas would produce high benefits, while being manageable with the current state of development of the CHM.

Technical cooperation work should be focused on the priority elements in NBSAPs.

Cooperation might include:

- jointly developing solutions to similar problems
- undertaking implementation work at a supra-national level (e.g. catchment management across national borders)
- pooling or sharing expertise and technical resources (e.g. taxonomic capacity)
- transferring experience between countries, through staff exchanges, training courses, conferences, etc

In addition, the CHM could help to connect donors to those cooperative initiatives, in order to ensure that the financial support is available.

Overcoming the Barriers to Cooperation

The key barriers to cooperation identified in the alien species work are:

- lack of information on the potential for cooperation
- practical difficulties of initiating cooperation – knowing who to talk to, overcoming language and time zone problems, finding funding for the initial interaction
- lack of coordination within a country, making cooperation with other countries more difficult
- political barriers to technical cooperation
- funding for cooperative work (since funding is generally restricted to project work)
- maintaining the cooperative initiative in the face of staff changes, etc

The CHM could help overcome those problems in several very important ways.

Firstly and probably most importantly, it could provide a mechanism for allowing people to find potential partners – a lonely hearts club for technical cooperation. This might be

through the CHM focal points providing a first point of contact; the Secretariat staff connecting people; listservers that allow people to ask about potential partners; synthesis of information by the Secretariat staff, drawing from NBSAPs, case studies, national reports, information data bases, etc. This is the key role for the NZ CHM.

Regional or thematic focal points or nodes could provide an ongoing facilitating network for work in the region or related to the issue. This is a key potential role for GISP as international focal point for alien species, for example. SPREP is an example of a successful regional mechanism.

The Secretariat staff could play a key role in helping to connect cooperative initiatives with donors, and promoting donor support for this work.

The Secretariat staff and experts among the CHM focal points could also provide technical support for the use of information technology to support this work.