MEASURING, MAPPING, & STRENGTHENING RIGHTS:
THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY INDEX

Communities around the world often lack the ability to participate in decisions that impact their environment—yet no independent tool currently exists to measure and map these gaps in rights. Without credible measurement, marginalized groups are unable to advocate for a greater voice in development decisions and support outcomes that benefit people and the planet.

VISION

By 2016, civil society organizations in 100+ countries will be using the Environmental Democracy Index (EDI) to assess their country's laws and practices on environmental transparency, participation, and accountability and advocate for reforms. Four countries will have passed legal reforms or significantly improved institutions or practices as a result. At least six countries will make efforts to significantly improve implementation of laws as a result of EDI-supported campaigns. EDI will be used by multilateral institutions and IFIs to assess environmental governance and performance.

CHALLENGE

No independent tool currently exists that measures the procedural rights of environmental democracy—access to information, public participation, and access to justice. Without credible measurement, governments cannot be held accountable.

Dozens of laws have been passed in recent years— especially on right to information—yet laws and regulations protecting citizens' rights to participate in decisions that impact their environment are too often either toothless, vague, or absent. Public participation opportunities are usually confined to Environmental Impact Assessments, and even then far too often the public is only consulted after the decision has been made.

The implementation of environmental democracy rights often lags well behind the law. EDI will support campaigns to hold governments accountable for ineffective laws and poor implementation.

EDI countries to be assessed in 2014

OPPORTUNITY

EDI will be the first tool to benchmark countries' progress in achieving environmental democracy rights against an international standard, the UNEP 2010 Bali Guidelines on Principle 10 (the environmental democracy principle of the Rio Declaration). The EDI indicators will enable benchmarking against the Guidelines.

WRI houses the Secretariat of the Access Initiative (TAI)—the world's largest civil society network dedicated to ensuring that people have the right and ability to influence decisions that affect their communities and the natural resources on which they rely. TAI's 14 years of experience and 200+-member network in 54 countries will help launch advocacy campaigns and spread greater awareness of EDI.

EDI will synergize with other ongoing efforts—such as those of UNEP and UNITAR—to build capacity and political will to implement environmental democracy measures.

OUR APPROACH

WRI and TAI have dozens of years of expertise developing tools, working with partners across the world, and conducting research that can be directly applied to advocacy. TAI has been deeply involved in national, regional and international efforts to strengthen and expand rights of access that are fundamental to sustainable development. The TAI network was instrumental in advocating the establishment of the National Green Tribunal in India, strengthening public participation in Chile, and the Rio+20 Latin-American and Caribbean Declaration on Principle 10.

TAI has garnered international visibility through collaborations with UNEP along with the local presence of over 200 civil society partners in over 50 countries. These collaborations have often involved tools that TAI has developed. EDI builds on the success of past tools, while integrating feedback and responding to recent international developments.

EDI can help produce transformational change through the following:

- **Providing a platform for learning and advocacy |** The EDI website will allow users to compare countries' performance at aggregated and disaggregated levels, download data, make comments and submit stories the creation and implementation of environmental democracy measures from their countries.

- **Assessing law and implementation |** a comprehensive legal assessment is bolstered with key indicators to assess the quality of implementation.

- **Results that can be translated easily into action |** EDI indicators are specific, actionable, and linked directly to the Bali Guidelines.

- **Biennially updated, enabling progress to be tracked over time |** Each biennial release of the index will include a launch event to promote progress and call political leaders to action.

- **Training and awareness-raising workshops |** Workshops on EDI will be held at international forums around the world.

- **Adaptable to sectoral research |** EDI can be adapted to evaluate environmental democracy rights for specific sectors to assess, for example, the ability of communities to participate in water allocation decisions, or the availability of air quality information.

TARGET OUTOMES BY 2016

- Civil society organizations in 100+ countries will use EDI to evaluate national and sectoral laws to support advocacy;

- Multilateral institutions and IFIs will use EDI to assess progress towards commitments of good environmental governance;

- At least four countries will reform laws to better protect environmental democracy rights as a result of campaigns using the index;

- At least six countries will make efforts to significantly improve implementation of laws as a result of EDI-supported campaigns;

- Member countries of the Open Government Partnership adopt EDI to measure their progress towards implementing Principle 10.

SUPPORT

This common platform for research, dialogue, and action has been possible with the generous support of a number of donors.

EDI is part of the Eye on Earth Access for All (A4A) Special Initiative. The goal of A4A is to promote and encourage further implementation of Principle 10 by engaging global stakeholders and advocates that strive to fill the data and information gaps in its implementation.

LEARN MORE

To find out more about how you can support and participate in EDI, visit www.accessinitiative.org or contact:

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ABOUT WRI | WRI is a global research organization that works closely with leaders to turn big ideas into action to sustain a healthy environment—the foundation of economic opportunity and human well-being.

ABOUT TAI | TAI is a global network that promotes access to information, participation, and justice in environmental decision-making.

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