

THEMATIC WORKSHOP ON SYNERGIES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING UNDER
INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS ADDRESSING CHEMICAL AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

ABSTRACT

CHALLENGES IN CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT IN SIDS - FROM SMALL ISLAND
PERSPECTIVE. HOW ARE WE DIFFERENT COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES?

In 1989, the Fiji Government, as a new party to the Montreal Protocol, embarked on a nation-wide programme to phase out ozone depleting substances. The first challenge was to end consumption of CFCs by the year 2000 and second, to initiate government and industry actions to supplement the phase out. After the legalisation of the 2000 phase out date, and subsequent precautionary measures taken by importers, Fiji achieved its target officially on paper. However, maintaining such trends by importers alone is not enough. It necessitates private sector compliance in totality to prevent backlashes. Consequently unforeseen issues that could only be addressed with legislation emerged. It is possible that, other than reprimanding the odd aberrant importer, the administration had very little regard of the depth at which substantive technical issues and capacity building were to be addressed within the framework of the legislation. Over time, the implementation of the Protocol evolved into something unexpected for a small island developing state like Fiji, which was to achieve a conservative level of environmental compliance from the private sector without greatly impacting economy and trade. This meant finding answers to issues concerning both the private and public sector and requiring intense multi-stakeholder co-operation and collaboration.

Case Study –1

While the Montreal Protocol does not require the phase out of the CFCs per unit per vehicle, the fact that it is still being imported is a concern. The reason being is that at some point in time consumers will have to bear the cost of environmental compliance. Vehicles and equipment containing CFC or using CFC are, under Fijian laws, prohibited from being imported into Fiji. In spite of all the Customs capacity building programmes, importers were still proving to be non-compliant. Fiji eventually found a new ally in all of this. They are the authorities that look after the Ports or known as the Ports Authority of Fiji.

Case Study – 2

The UNEP funded train-the-trainers project has been extremely beneficial to the NOU in achieving the phase out of CFCs. However it also opens doors to other institutional issues that require deeper involvement from both Customs and the NOU. Therefore it is important that the NOU or Environment Department understands fully the institutional and organisational framework of enforcement bodies in order to successfully capitalise on their existing mechanisms that are pertinent to any chemical phase out.

Case Study – 3

Licensing of technicians is not an easy task, especially, in a developing country where technicians do not necessarily go through formal education. The qualifications of each individual can range from a diploma or certificate holder to a person with 20

years experience and no formal qualification. Like the Train-the-trainers of Customs Officers, a similar programme was developed for technicians already serving the industry, known as Good Practices in Refrigeration. As a result of 3 years of training, over 300 technicians have been licensed. Even after the completion, companies are volunteering their services to host such workshops.

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