

Strategic Monitoring and Audit

Chapter 20



CHAPTER TWENTY

STRATEGIC MONITORING AND AUDIT

1. Following on from the concept of developing strategic environmental monitoring plans and programmes, it is also recommended that the well developed concept of environmental monitoring and audit which is practised in Hong Kong is expanded to encompass the regional context.
2. The aim of the Regional Environmental Monitoring and Audit Programme (herein refers as REMAP - which in itself emphasises the changing nature of Hong Kong from an uninhabited island it was 150-200 years ago to an international port would be to generate comprehensive environmental baselines at, inter alia, regional, intra-territorial, district and local level (four tiers of definitions) proposed to define existing conditions.
3. There are many practical difficulties and institutional mechanisms to overcome, but in simplistic terms these baselines would be most useful if they are formatted in databases that can be accessed by all users (local and regional government) (for all levels of information) and which can be easily updated. There is little long term benefit to be gained from obtaining information in a certain format in Hong Kong, if for example, the Macaunese Authorities use a completely incompatible method of collection, analysis and interpretation. These problems have been highlighted in the Deep Bay area where data were collected by various organisations for similar purposes but are not able to be integrated to achieve the common goals.
4. Another of the hurdles which needs to be overcome is the volume of data which could be collected for the updating of baseline conditions. This could be easily achieved through the enhancement of the GIS system already in place (Consultancy Study to be completed in the very near future for the development of the water/marine pollution GIS database). There is however currently no GIS database for air quality and it is recommended that consideration is given to developing such a facility at the earliest opportunity to assist with planning and implementation of development proposals.
5. Detailed consideration will need to be given to the aims of the environmental monitoring and audit programmes prior to the development of the database for baseline conditions. The goals, objectives and use to which the baseline information is to be applied, will be paramount in defining the scope, scale and nature of the data collection programmes.
6. It is recommended that data bases are not confined to the standard water quality, air quality, ecology and noise climates but that a holistic approach is taken to seek the causes as well as the effects of changes in the environment. To state for example that air pollution is solely due to traffic on roads, is to ignore many other contributors to the air quality problems, as these are manifold and include industrial emissions, domestic activities, stripping of land (viz. Guangdong Province where vast tracts of land have been denuded to prepare for the massive development boom), to name a few.
7. It is recommended that the fundamental principles of the REMAP are to:
 - (a) define regional conditions;
 - (b) define carrying capacities for all subdivisions;
 - (c) identify causes for the results obtained;
 - (d) prioritise action: "first aid measures, medium urgency and long term strategic plans

- of action"; and
- (e) review the monitoring results in association with the forecasts and modify any monitoring programmes or development plans in accordance with the overall findings as appropriate.
8. Once the baseline conditions have been defined, the monitoring and audit of the development proposals need to be reviewed in the context of the Strategic Environmental Management Plans (SEMPs) and subject to the REMAP. While there are many local government organisations already collecting data in the region it is recommended that a single body is established to centralise data collection and dissemination of information. This would ideally be an offshoot of the EPD. While the institutional implications of this are beyond the scope of this Report, it is nonetheless an appropriate forum to highlight some of the issues which need to be addressed at the earliest opportunity.