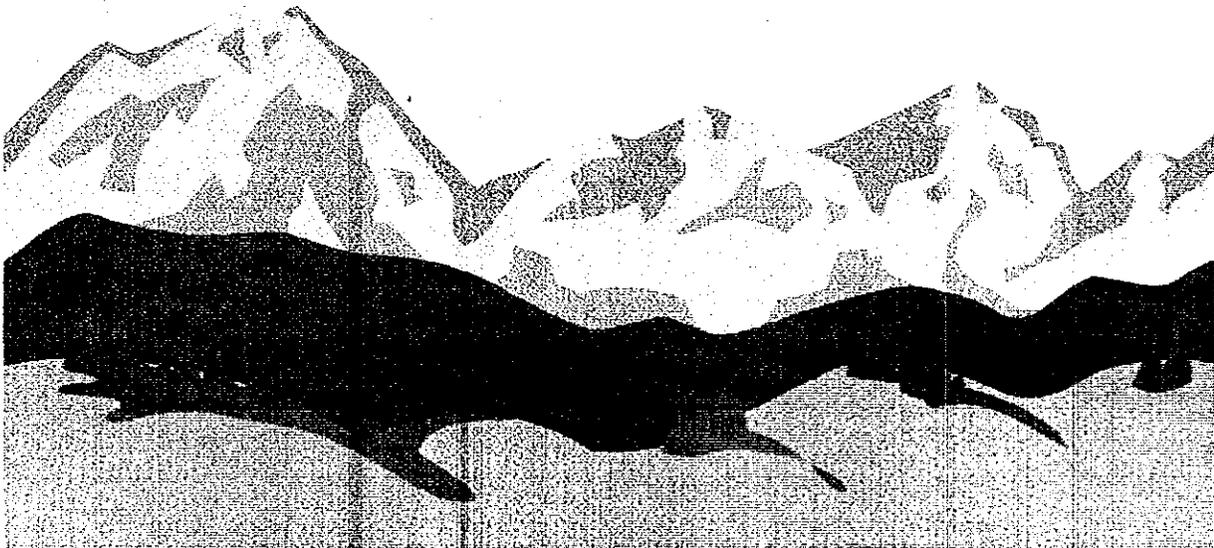


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EISN

First Quarter Report

1999



DevTech Systems, Inc.

A

Introduction to Environmental Information Systems and Networking

A key element in finding solutions to the serious environmental situation in Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States is the sharing of environmental information. USAID's Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) division of its Europe and New Independent States (ENI) bureau created the Environmental Information Systems and Networks (EISN) project. Through this contract, DevTech Systems, an institutional contractor, assists USAID in ensuring that lessons learned regarding solutions to these problems are shared in several areas: internally, externally, and regionally. Under the direction of ENR, EISN addresses environmental information needs of both USAID development professionals-in the Missions in the ENI Region and in Washington-and environmental professionals throughout the region and in the United States by developing a system for managing and disseminating environmental information.

EISN creates systems to share and publicize information within USAID as well as raising awareness of ENR activities. DevTech Systems staff facilitates information sharing among ENR and USAID Missions in the ENI Region, such as through the creation of an internal web site and calendar system. They provide consultants for quick-response information demands and other information-related needs. Project staff also train ENR and Mission staff in the use of these systems to ensure their day-to-day utility for USAID professionals.

The project informs the U.S. public and professionals in the ENI region of USAID activities, successes, and regional environmental issues. It has created an external web site, www.eni-environment.net, that provides access to past project documents for environmental professionals in the field. EISN staff develop presentations and training materials for briefings and cross-border workshops, and they will help ENR conduct four such workshops to share lessons learned in past USAID projects. Project consultants will also update the "Measuring the Environmental Transition in Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States" Report, to assure continued relevance to the initial report.

EISN also facilitates the exchange of information among professionals within the region and with their counterparts in the United States through the creation of networks, thus increasing their capacity to manage and use environmental information. DevTech Systems staff and consultants provide technical assistance to regional environmental organizations on information transfer technology and work to strengthen regional networks of environmental professionals.

ITERNAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS working in the ENI region face several obstacles. Despite the re-engineering and team building process, information sharing among relevant staff only takes place either on an ad-hoc, individual basis or as part of the annual budget process. USAID staffers need regularized, streamlined ways of sharing environmental information. Additionally, they need the capability to quickly access and assemble this information in graphic formats for the many reports, information requests, and presentations that normally are required.

EISN addresses these needs in two results of its contract. First, it is creating a way to share important information among environmental professionals in ENR, Global, and the Missions. When completed, USAID staff in relevant divisions and Missions will be oriented and trained on its use. EISN is also making the retrieval of this and other important division information easier and quicker. Second, the project is creating a quick information response capability and training ENR personnel in its use. In the first year, this quick response effort has focused on providing the office with up to date technology for presentations and filing systems and designing interactive tools to help missions make decisions on environmental compliance policy requirements.

Result One – Internal Info System

Performance Standard over the four year period:

“Seven Field Teams connected to electronic system and have received orientation on its use”

Target for first quarter of 1999: Calendar System problems worked through; decide on where (which server) to place the system on; Maintenance of intranet site.

Results this quarter:

Internal Website

- Converted, optimized for Web, and posted several CH2M Hill documents for W/NIS, CAR, and RFE programs
- Researched and started procurement process for alternate web-based calendar for ENR
- Applied for and received SmartGate access to post and update intranet site from IRM
- Placed ENI and Mission contact info on intranet site
- Continued to assist in creation/testing/instruction of ENR calendar system
- Instructed Stephanie on HTML maintenance and posted events changes to intranet site
- Coordinated with G/EIC on environmental information sharing
- Updated events and conferences on website

Ecolinks Internal Information

- Designed and created internal website for Ecolinks staff
- Customized and installed calendar for EcoLinks internal site
- Attended three day meeting in January
- Prepared, revised and sent out contact lists for Ecolinks
- Prepared notes on internal meeting between Ecolinks coordination committee members
- Hired a temp for the Ecolinks conference
- Wrote two drafts of the promotion strategy for Ecolinks
- Attended all monthly meetings
- Wrote up action items and notes for conference call/meeting
- Wrote up and circulated status report on website to committee members
- Attended Ecolinks meeting: recorded minutes

HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT QUARTER:

- Calendar software updated (Sandy completed in April)
- Training started on calendar software, including materials created for use in training overseas missions as needed.

Result Two – System for Quick Response

Performance Standard over the four year period:

“100% of staff trained”

Target for first quarter of 1999: IEE Decision Tree created and posted on website; Investigate off-the-shelf software for electronic document filing system; respond to information requests as needed; help with questions concerning software.

Results this quarter:

Information Dissemination

- Responded to information request for success stories involving children for ENI WID/Strat contractor
- Responded to several requests for quick information for Hatty Babbitt.
- Forwarded computer tips and environmental items of interest to ENR staff

216 Compliance Information

- Update of 216 site
- Added document to 216 website
- Formatted and posted list of IEEs to 216 website
- IEE research on eco-fund compliance and meetings on the same subject

Media Center Maintenance

- Diagnosed, procured, and installed AntiVirus software for project computers, assisted ENR in elimination of Word Macro virii
- Diagnosed and repaired problems on one color printer, other sent to Epson for repair
- Assisted ENR staff members with transition to new software

HIGHLIGHTS FOR QUARTER:

- Continue to work on IEE electronic decision tree and filing system
- Training on IEE Decision Tree; IEE forms for SO's if needed
- Maintenance of media center

GATHERING AND SHARING INFORMATION WITH THE PUBLIC

SINCE USAID ASSISTANCE to the ENI region is meant to be transitional, information services are needed to assist the closeout process and help ensure sustainability of environmental progress. In order to make this information useful beyond USAID presence in a country, this information will then need to be transmitted across borders on websites, through conferences and workshops, and in printed materials. To meet these needs, EISN will update the Environmental Transition report, hire consultants to research priority environmental topics, publish information electronically and hold cross-border conferences and workshop to disseminate lessons learned.

Result Three – Transition Report

Performance Standard over the four year period:

“Two rankings (ever other year)”

Target for first quarter of 1999: Continue to hire consultants overseas to complete country reports; finalize report and question format; finalize methodology for ranking exercise.

Results this quarter:

- Submitted four options on how to format the report
- Met with Carol Pierstorff about the report and how to proceed
- After the meeting, researched other options
- Put together cross-country index idea
- Researched available data for index
- Wrote up ideas for in-depth country analysis
- Worked on the reformulation of the index for the report (how much data needed, whether or not we can get comparable data across countries etc. – the process has taken a lot of time because of the research involved)
- Contacted all consultants with an update with how the report is progressing
- Sent out a draft of the report to consultants for them to comment on (whether or not they would be able to obtain the data asked for and to try and get an idea of cost)

HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT QUARTER:

- Work with Carol Pierstorff to finalize format of report
- Finalize depth and specific questions of survey
- Finalize methodology for ranking countries
- Finalize agreements with consultants
- Preparation for surveys, reports and indexing, which will be conducted during the summer months.
- TDY planned for May/June to Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria

UPDATE: The decision has been made to focus on 4 countries. In these focus countries, in-depth reporting and surveys will be done by local consultants. In addition to these reports, a cross country index based on World Bank and U.N. data will be created for all countries in ENI. See Annex for proposed SOW and outline of the report.

Result Four – Share Lessons Across ENI Borders

Performance Standard over the four year period:

“Four events”

Target for first quarter of 1999: Contact ROLL project about sharing Russian success stories with other NIS countries; Present 10th anniversary strategy to EEUD; discuss how big, the focus, whether to use a PR firm, etc.; put together briefing materials as needed for events that distribute information.

Results for this quarter:

Transition Conference

- Met with Irmgard Hunt several times to update her on the progress towards a decision from ENR; she briefed me on progress she had made on contacting potential partners
- Consultant submitted proposal for the conference to DevTech and ENR
- Comments from Loren and KC were submitted to the consultant and a revised proposal was emailed out to Loren and KC.
- Waiting on final decision from PCS about their “Transition” Conference in November.

Possible Demonstration Events to Share Lessons Learned Across Borders

- Discussed with ISC (U.S.) and had a brief discussion with ROLL (Moscow) of the possibility of funding demonstration projects of Russian successes outside of Russia

Preparation of Briefing Materials

- Drafted, edited, and created presentation for Pressley briefing, assisted with technical setup
- Formatted power point presentation for Carl Mitchell’s Houston Presentation
- Meeting with PADCO (Global Bureau Contractor) about their country summaries

Preparation of Briefing Materials for Ecolinks

- Edited EcoLinks Logo for use by REC
- Prepared Ecolinks Presentation materials and emailed them out to coordination committee members
- Created, solicited feedback, edited, and distributed style sheets for EcoLinks letterhead and business cards

HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT YEAR:

- ROLL lessons learned presented outside of Russia
- Attend regional conferences in order to pass out informational brochures about USAID programs (ECOLINKS) if needed
- Talk to PCS about hiring a speaker(s) to present success stories at regional meetings
- Create briefing materials as needed
- Preparation for media events and 10th anniversary conference once the okay is given to one or both of these activities – possible scale down to PR events only

UPDATE: In addition to the conference, EISN is talking to ROLL about disseminating their lessons learned outside of Russia. ROLL does not have the authority to spend money outside of Russia. We would therefore use our regional funds to take these lessons across borders.

Result Five – LD Learning & Change to Demand Driven Consultants

Performance Standard over the four year period:

EISN proposes the following change: Result 5 would become "Provide Technical Expertise for Short-Term Research Projects and Presentations." The performance measure would be the number of reports that receive technical assistance. The performance standard would be eight reports, and the acceptable standard would be four reports.

Results this quarter:

- Woods Hole Group finished work on Caspian Sea report
- Nancy Diamond hired to work in Georgia; finished report in April
- Nancy Diamond hired to work on project surveys with Angela Crooks; finished summaries in April

EISN's Contribution to Research

- Comments on G/ENV/EIC description of Poland Mission's environment portfolio

HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT QUARTER:

- SOW for work with Alicia Grimes (green issues), and Carl Mitchell (Caspian Sea).

I mproving Outreach and Networking

Both the U.S. public and ENI environmental professionals suffer from a lack of environmental information, albeit in different ways. The U.S. public is unaware of foreign aid programs in general and USAID assistance in particular.

Environmental professionals in ENI, on the other hand, have been conditioned to keep, rather than share, information. Thus informal networks of information, either with compatriots or foreigners, are rare in transition societies.

EISN is tasked to publicize USAID environmental work in the ENI region to mainstream media outlets in the US. It will also raise awareness within USAID of ENR activities. To facilitate information sharing in the region, it is in the process of improving the capacity of regional NGOs to utilize and share information. Finally, EISN has also created electronic networks among environmental professionals within the region and between regional organizations and environmental professionals in the US.

Result Six – Articles Published in U.S. & Through Electronic and Published Media

Performance Standard over the four year period:

“Eight mainstream articles – twenty-four internal publications”

Note: “mainstream publications is defined as major newspapers or magazines or on electronic bulletin boards, e-mail, the Internet, videos, satellite and/or teleconferencing.”

Target for first quarter 1999: Hire consultants to write four mainstream articles and place the articles once list of topics finalized; write ENR newsletter articles for website each month; place at least one article in other electronic newsletters which discuss environment in the region.

Results this quarter:

Mainstream Articles

- Started making initial plans and contacts for trip to Russia to collect information for mainstream and electronically distributed articles
- Concluded negotiations with consultants for mainstream articles

Electronic Newsletter

- The following articles were written, cleared and posted on the external website:
 - a) Successes in Poland
 - b) USAID Announces ECOLINKS, a Major New Environmental Partnership Initiative
 - c) Project Silesia: A Model of Sustainability
- The following articles were written and are currently in the clearance process:
 - a) ISAR article
 - b) ETP article

HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT QUARTER:

- Three more articles on web site
- Consultants write articles on Russia Far East and ROLL
- Stephanie Merkens travels to Russia to do research on RFE and ROLL
- Articles from Stephanie’s trip distributed through electronic distribution network similar to Reuter’s (may fall in the third quarter)

Update: Stephanie Merkens Travel to the Russia Far East

List of possible article topics from RFE Trip. This topics will be the basis for at least five articles written for newsletters (ENR and outside newsletters) and for at least two mainstream articles:

ISC:

-ROLL:

Possible articles from each of the five priority areas of ROLL:

- 1) Legal and legislative issues
- 2) Natural Resources planning and management techniques
- 3) Education and public awareness
- 4) Policy and risk assessment
- 5) Strengthening role of NGO

Will meet with numerous grantees from all three rounds of projects in the RFE

- Targeted Grants Program:

ISAR:

Success and sustainability of ISAR projects (effect in community) after completion of ENR funding:

- 1) One Reaps What One Sows"Program
- 2) Publication grants
- 3) Silver Web
- 4) Leaves in the Palm
- 5) NGO involvement and strengthening

Pacific Rim Taiga:

- 1) Non-timber forest products
- 2) Eco-business links

World Wildlife Fund:

- 1) Efforts in Biodiversity protection: Eco-tourism programs, Siberian tiger
- 2) Forest Fire assistance and forest regeneration

Wildlife Foundation:

Forest fire and forest regeneration

Result Seven – Information Training

Performance Standard over the four year period:

“Four (regional) organizations”

Target for first quarter of 1999: Respond to requests from missions for internet, website, etc. training; talk with ROLL and ISAR on training workshops in NIS or at 10th anniversary conference.

Results this quarter:

- ISAR/EISN internet training workshops continue in CAR
- Currently reviewing a proposal from a Russian NGO about establishing a server and conducting internet training in Russia.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT QUARTER:

- Training event(s) in conjunction (during) 10th anniversary conference (either the ENR or the PCS conference. Will talk to PCS about this possibility.
- Respond to proposal from NGO in Russia about helping provide internet services and training there.

Training activity No. 2 Under EISN's Result 7: Proposal from CCI to replicate a successful Russian Environmental Information service activity in the Caspian Sea Area.

For nearly three years, the Socio-Ecological Union (SEU), the largest environmental umbrella organization in the former Soviet Union, has successfully run the information service "What's New" on the Internet (<newinfo@cci.glasnet.ru>; <<http://www.ecoline.ru/news.html>>). An analogous service, modified for the Caspian program, can be set up in 1-2 months with the support of the Center for Coordination and Information (CCI). CCI is the information wing of the SEU and provides a wide range of information to NGOs throughout the FSU and beyond. The service provides a selection of informational materials for distribution on the Internet, their annotation (usually 1-2 sentences) and placement on the Internet server of CCI and Ecoline (another environmental NGO based in Moscow) in the form of text or binary (Word format, Excel, GIF, etc.) files.

The purpose of the service is to systematize and archive information, and to provide a simple, low cost way for NGOs of the Caspian basin and other interested organizations to access this information. Such information will be sent out to all who wish to "subscribe" to this service. The service will be free for users.

This system will be set up by CCI's donation of equipment and EISN's funding of information and computer training of a Caspian Sea Area coordinator. The coordinator will be trained to manage the service in Moscow, after which the server and the operation will be moved to Atyrau, Kazakhstan.

Result Eight – Creating Networks

Performance Standard over the four year period:

"Five networks"

Note: networks is defined as groups of U.S. professionals and ENI professionals which have the "capacity to share information... through various means including articles in major newspapers or magazines, or on electronic bulletin boards, e-mail, the Internet, videos, satellite and/or teleconferencing."

Target for first quarter 1999: work on expanding ECOLINKS website; improve design on website; update external site as needed.

Results this quarter:

ENR external website

- Responded to numerous requests for information from the external website and forwarded some on to ENR staff for more in-depth answers...
- Adapted, edited, cleared, and posted description of ROLL for external site
- continued to learn Perl CGI scripting to help with website administration
- Maintained the website—including posting new pages
- Searched for environmental events/conferences in region and posted on external web
- Updated every single page on the external site (approx. 100 pp.) to use the new USAID website header, including hacking the code to make it work on our server.
- Installed, received approval for, and posted a search form for external website
- Converted, optimized for Web, and posted several CH2M Hill documents for W/NIS, CAR, and RFE programs, as well as converting and recreating flowcharts for an EAPS environmental assessment sourcebook
- Convinced IRM to take down old version of ENR website and redirect users to ENI-Environment, received clearance to manage website externally.
- responded to information requests/bug reports from external users of ENI-Environment site

ECOLINKS external website

- Managed creation of the EcoLinks Website, including collecting and submitting materials, clearing writeups, and soliciting feedback
- Diagnosed a problem with the EcoLinks website's partner search form

- Wrote Word script (Kill_HTML) to provide temporary solution for partner search form, distributed to ENR as well
- Directed web site design firm to redesign form
- Added users to EcoLinks calendar
- Fixed several language changes for EcoLinks website
- Updated events page
- Answered website questions for companies calling in (ex: Raytheon)

HIGHLIGHTS FOR NEXT QUARTER:

- Update ECOLINKS website
- Listserve for environmental professionals in U.S. and ENI
- Begin creation of database for ECOLINKS website

The third and fourth network setup under Result 8 of the EISN project: Email Discussion Lists as Networks

One very good way to build a "community" of users around a particular website or topic is an email discussion list. Email discussion lists, or mailing lists or listserves, are a way to use email like a bulletin board. Any message sent to the list is re-emailed to all the members of that list. Therefore, public discussions can reach a large number of interested parties quickly and cheaply.

Email discussion lists have been around almost as long as email itself, and in the public domain, particularly at universities, you can find lists devoted to almost any topic. They are popular because they don't require special software or going to a specific address. As messages come in, they are delivered to each user's mailbox. They also require less of a server to run than websites, usenet boards, or bulletin boards. In short, they are a very user-friendly and efficient way to allow a community of users to share information, make requests, ask questions, or debate issues.

Since part of EISN's mission is to both build networks and disseminate lessons learned, an email discussion list based around sharing lessons learned would help meet several of its objectives. A best practices discussion list, with periodic input from USAID, would allow implementers and concerned citizens in the region to share experiences and ask for advice, as well as receive information about USAID's experiences.

Two discussion lists, one oriented towards "brown" technology-related best practices to accompany ECOLINKS and one oriented toward "green" biodiversity-related best practices to accompany the Transition Report will be established.

Discussion lists are ideal for USAID purposes for several reasons. They don't require lots of download time, which is crucial in the ENI region. They also require very little of a server, lowering the cost of implementation versus other options. They also require little in the way of resources and maintenance, not only enabling them to be added to EISN's portfolio easily, but also enhancing their sustainability: any organization with a server can take it over with very little effort or cost.