

# **NPPR Partnership Grant Assessment**

## **Final Report--Highlights**

**Evaluation of the Grant Agreement between the  
National Pollution Prevention Roundtable (NPPR)  
and the US-Asian Environmental Partnership (US-AEP)**

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## **I INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

The primary objective of the partnership grant between The US-based National Pollution Prevention Roundtable (NPPR) and the US-Asian Environmental Partnership (US-AEP)<sup>1</sup> was to create up to eight country-level pollution prevention and clean production (P2/CP) roundtables in Asia and, where appropriate, make them functionally sustainable. The grant agreement was to be flexible, allowing for a new regional roundtable to off-set the strict country-level numerical target. The agreement also allowed for roundtable structure and function to vary according to unique country-based needs and evolving developments favorable to P2/CP promotion. Secondary grant objectives were to broadly strengthen P2/CP linkages between Asia and the US. NPPR officially began grant activities in January 1997 and the original cooperative agreement ended in March 1999. It was extended an additional year. This evaluation focused on activities accomplished during the original grant period.

## **II. FUNDING**

The U S government's portion of the original grant was \$372,900 (over a 27-month period). An additional \$234,435 was expended by US-AEP's Environmental Exchange Program (EEP) partner to support a number of NPPR domestic and overseas activities. Some of these support activities were at NPPR's sole request, others were joint solicitations (NPPR and US-AEP field staff), while others were at the request of US-AEP field and technical representatives. The partnership grant was extended for one year and \$70,000 was added to cover NPPR salary and travel expenses until March 2000.

## **III. RESEARCH METHODS**

Major evaluation tools included document reviews (Contract Award, yearly NPPR Workplans, Trip Reports, NPPR Annual Report, EEP records, etc ) and interviews. Site visits were conducted in April and May 1999 to Indonesia and the Philippines. Interviews were also conducted in April and May 1999 at the Second Asia-Pacific Roundtable on Cleaner Production (APRPC) in Brisbane, Australia. In depth interviews were also conducted with prior and current NPPR Staff and with US-AEP Washington and field-based staff.

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<sup>1</sup> US-AEP is the lead organization within the U S Agency for International Development (USAID) focused on promoting pollution prevention and clean production in Asia.

#### **IV. CAVEATS**

Of the five grant objectives, only establishing P2/CP networks and self-sustainable roundtables lends itself to a relatively unambiguous interpretation. Fortunately, from an evaluation standpoint, establishing sustainable P2/CP networks and roundtables was the primary objective. The other objectives do not easily lend themselves to a straightforward evaluation, since they were not operationally or functionally well defined in the grant agreement (build or strengthen links, facilitate or promote access, etc) nor were baselines, targets or thresholds established for meeting those objectives. This in no way minimizes their importance--but simply that they can't be unambiguously assessed.

#### **V. MAJOR FINDINGS:**

##### **1. FORMAL P2/CP ROUNDTABLE CREATION**

The US-based National Pollution Prevention Roundtable (NPPR), under their partnership agreement with US-AEP (AEP-0015-A-00-6033-00), created country-level P2/CP roundtables (or built on existing ones) in three targeted Asian countries. NPPR helped to establish roundtables in Indonesia (January 1997), the Philippines (July 1997), and Thailand (March 1999) during their original 27-month grant period. In three other targeted countries (Malaysia, South Korea, India) NPPR facilitated various organizing and network-supporting activities leading to heightened P2/CP awareness and increase the likelihood of formal roundtable formation. In three additional countries (Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong), NPPR worked to create country-level roundtables. These roundtables were either at an exploratory stage, just beginning to function, or temporarily on hold.

At a regional-level, NPPR was instrumental in helping to launch a first-ever roundtable in Bangkok, Thailand (November 1997) and a successor regional-level roundtable was held in Brisbane, Australia (April 1999).

##### **2. P2/CP ROUNDTABLE SUSTAINABILITY**

In addition to creating country-level roundtables, the grantee was to make these roundtables self-sustaining and independent of NPPR. For existing country-level roundtables in Indonesia and Philippines, likely sustainability over the next 3-5 years is moderate to high. That is, the Indonesian and the Philippines Roundtables continue to function independent of NPPR but at a somewhat lower level of intensity than in the first year of the grant. In Indonesia, the current economic crisis appears to have placed a great strain on the roundtable, but other factors continue to challenge roundtable viability. The Philippines

Roundtable appears to have suffered less from the economic downturn that swept Asia, but also faces other organizational challenges. It is simply too early to assess the sustainability of the Thai Roundtable but preliminary signs look very encouraging. The remaining country-based P2/CP networks and emerging roundtable-like entities are just forming, so sustainability can not be judged.

At the regional-level, the Asian Pacific Roundtable for Cleaner Production (APRCP) met in Brisbane, Australia (April, 1999) with strong organizational and leadership support from NPPR. APRCP sustainability appears to be very strong. This is based on APRCP's ability to attract and recruit members, draft a charter, form an interim Secretariat, actively plan for its next regional meeting, draw region-wide support, and gather increased high level multi-donor participation.

### **3. STRENGTHENING P2/CP ASIA-US LINKAGES**

NPPR's secondary objectives, collectively, were to strengthen P2/CP links (communication, professional, information sharing, etc.) between Asia and the US. Without baselines, targets, or thresholds defined in the original partnership agreement (or specified/refined in the 1997 and 1998 NPPR Annual Workplans) these objectives can't be formally assessed. However, grantee reports, other documents, and interviews with host-country participants revealed that NPPR has been very active on a number of important fronts to strengthen P2/CP linkages and to engage US-AEP partners where possible. Most interviewees rated the Asia-to-US exchanges (to attend NPPR's annual US meetings) as one of the best ways to strengthen linkages and to inform nascent Asian roundtables. Use of NPPR's listserves, e-mail communication, P2/CP literature distribution, were viewed as helpful, but only of modest value at this time.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

### **Country-Level Roundtable Formation**

NPPR's performance assessed against the stated objectives of the grant agreement and their 1997 and 1998 Annual Workplans indicates that fewer country-level roundtables were established than the initially planned target of eight. Of those established, roundtable sustainability is moderate to high. Roundtable formation and functioning in the five remaining targeted countries is at various stages of development. The probability of formal roundtable establishment depends on a range of variables, many outside the scope of this cooperative agreement, such as severe economic downturns, turnover of key roundtable advocates and sponsors, and inevitable shifts in host-country government and related ministry interests.

### Regional-Level Roundtable Formation

The grantee nurtured development of the first regional-level roundtable in Bangkok (November, 1997) and the second meeting in Brisbane (April, 1999). By most accounts NPPR support was instrumental in making these meetings a reality. The importance of establishing a region-wide roundtable was noted in the original grant agreement and its success may provide a greater than anticipated dividend.

### Roundtable Characteristics

There appears to have been a working understanding between USAEP and NPPR that the exact form of the roundtable could vary by country. That is, roundtable structure should be driven more by individual countries' needs, emerging within-country CP trends, availability and interest of roundtable advocates, and the presence of other CP-like organizations. Interviews with key USAEP staff and those at NPPR indicate that it was generally understood that flexibility and creativity were essential for executing this cooperative agreement.

### Grant Agreement Intent

The evaluation shows that the grantee did not reach its strict numerical goal of establishing eight country-level roundtables. However, using a more flexible definition of roundtable, ranging from networks of active CP professionals at one end, to a more formal roundtable-like organization capable of hosting an annual meeting at the other end, the evaluation shows that NPPR fully met the cooperative agreement's primary intent.

### Manageable Interests and Other Factors

The grant agreement notes that the establishment of the country-level roundtables is predicated on no "unforeseen" events. At the time of the grant signing there was no obvious sign of a looming Asian economic crisis. This crisis has been blamed for undermining NPPR's ability to meet its strict country-level targets. There appears to be merit to this assertion, but other factors are also likely. For example, lower-than-expected demand for Asian P2/CP (unrelated to the economic downturn), the real "exportability" to Asia of the US-based NPPR model (annual meeting, secretariat, membership dues, etc.), country-specific hesitation to form new organizations, and the emergence of other P2/CP forums appears to have undercut NPPR's strong efforts. NPPR actively advanced pollution prevention awareness in targeted Asia countries and nurtured roundtable organizational capacity-building. Most respondents had very favorable feedback about

grantee field support and interviewees also rated NPPR's US-based national conferences as very valuable

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Refinements in NPPR's field implementation efforts are recommended to more closely align on-the-ground field activities with the status of country-level roundtable formation and development. With limited funding and staff resources, a more strategic approach by NPPR may yield even better results during the grant extension. More frequent NPPR communication with USAEP will also help facilitate improved coordination with USAEP's many partners. Discussions with USAEP and NPPR indicate that many of these recommendations are already underway.