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Action Plans and Reporting

Discussion Paper

1. Purpose

The purpose of this discussion paper is to outline the history and current status of Methane to Markets Action Plans reporting of Partnership activities and accomplishments. It also explores the newly revised Terms of Reference (TOR) language regarding Action Plans and reporting. This paper also provides suggested next steps for the Steering Committee's consideration to identify way(s) to assist Partners in developing national methane Action Plans and in improving the reporting and communication of activities and accomplishments to the Partnership.

2. Action Plans

Background

When the Methane to Markets Partnership was launched in 2004, the TOR stated that each Subcommittee should develop a sector Action Plan. The Charge to the Subcommittees adopted by the Steering Committee noted that "ideally, Action Plans would identify needs, opportunities, and priorities for project development in the sector and for interested Partners, and would be developed with input from members of the Project Network." The charge outlined specific elements to be included in the Subcommittee Action Plans, including the following:

- An overview of methane recovery and use opportunities and descriptions of available technologies and best practices.
- Identification of key barriers and issues for project development.
- Identification of possible cooperative activities to increase methane recovery and use.
- Discussion of country-specific needs, opportunities, and barriers.
- Outreach to engage Project Network members.

The Subcommittee Action Plans were intended to be "living documents" that would be updated on an ongoing basis to reflect new projects, activities, and priorities as the work of the Subcommittees evolved. These Subcommittee Action Plans have been revised periodically to respond to new charges from the Steering Committee (e.g., preparation for the 2007 Partnership Expo) and to reflect developments within the respective sectors.

After the Subcommittees completed these Action Plans, the Steering Committee considered the potential benefits of refining the level of detail to better focus on the needs and opportunities for methane activities at the country level. The Steering Committee determined that incorporating country-specific information would be beneficial. This information would provide a framework to advance project development by providing a better understanding of emission sources; institutions, policies, and measures impacting project development; and mitigation barriers and opportunities.

At its October 2007 meeting in Beijing, the Steering Committee discussed the need to create country-specific Action Plans to implement methane-related activities most suitable for each country, taking into account each country’s resources, technical and financial status, infrastructure, and capacity. Based on this discussion, the Steering Committee directed the four Subcommittees to work with Partners to develop country-specific plans that would focus Subcommittee activities on the experiences and needs of each Partner country. Each Subcommittee subsequently created country profile and action plan templates to identify and capture the information requested by the Steering Committee.

To date, the following number of country action plans have been completed within the sectors noted.

Table 1: Number of Country Action Plans Completed

Sector	Number of Subcommittee Members	Number of Country Action Plans Completed
Agriculture	24	13
Coal Mines	23	7
Landfills	30	9
Oil & Gas	25	7

Revised TOR Language

At its September 2009 meeting in Washington, D.C., the Steering Committee expressed strong support for emphasizing and improving the country-specific Action Plans as an effective and important mechanism to focus and organize Partnership efforts. Partners recognized the importance of countries developing comprehensive and integrated methane action plans across multiple sectors (where this would be appropriate). As such, during the revision of the TOR in New Delhi in March 2010, delegates agreed to revise the TOR language regarding action plans as follows:

“Partners will seek to.....Develop and implement action plans that outline a series of concrete activities and actions that directly support the core goals and functions of the Partnership. Action plans can be useful tools in advancing project implementation, facilitating investment, and creating appropriate policy frameworks that support methane abatement, recovery, and use.” [section 2.10]

Several Partners expressed concern, however, regarding their readiness to develop and implement such Action Plans given their available resources (such as funding and personnel). Based on these concerns, the Steering Committee agreed to encourage the Subcommittees to find ways to provide support to these Partners (whether technical or financial) for Action Plan development and implementation. As a result, the following TOR language was adopted:

“Each Subcommittee will work to implement its program of action, offer assistance to Partners in the development and implementation of their action plans,...” [section 3.4]

Suggested Next Steps

Each Partner country could designate an appropriate point of contact for coordination, development, and reporting on the progress of these Action Plans to the Steering Committee.

The ASG could develop and provide a clear template (or outline) describing the key elements to be included in the Action Plan, along with the appropriate level of detail that would be (ideally) provided. These templates will provide sufficient flexibility for countries to adapt to their own needs and situations but would clearly indicate information requested.

Subcommittees could consider how they can support and assist in both the development and implementation of the Action Plans.

3. Reporting

Background

At the November 2005 Buenos Aires meeting, the Steering Committee charged the ASG with developing an on-line “tracking system” that would encompass Partnership projects and activities, along with their associated emissions reductions (e.g., feasibility studies, technology demonstrations, projects under development or ongoing, and project opportunities identified and showcased at Partnership Expo events). Since the online tracking system was developed, the Steering Committee has charged the Subcommittees to utilize the system for comprehensive, periodic monitoring of Partnership activities including reviewing and updating information kept in the system. To date, more than 300 project ideas and ongoing projects have been entered into the project tracking system. However, based on anecdotal evidence, the ASG believes that there are many more Partnership-related activities that have not been reported and are therefore not included in the Partnership’s discussions, accomplishments, or communications.

During development of the *Partnership Accomplishments Report: 2005 – 2009*, the ASG requested Partners and Project Network members submit project information, including any associated emission reductions, for inclusion in the report. Sector-specific templates were created and circulated, but relatively few responses were received (13 Partners and two Project Network Members). The ASG also made several attempts to obtain information on the status of nearly 90 project opportunities that were showcased at the 2007 Partnership Expo, but received information on only one-third of them.

More consistent, thorough, and systematic reporting is critical to the future of the Partnership. First, such reporting would enable the Partners to effectively communicate their actions and accomplishments and promote the Partnership’s successful endeavors. Second, with the Partnership encouraging the development and implementation of Partner Action Plans, improved reporting will be important to focus assistance efforts and gauge progress. In particular, clear, effective reporting would allow Partners to strategically plan appropriate, complementary work in support of the Action Plans, enabling the leveraging of resources and improved coordination of assistance efforts.

Revised TOR Language

At its September 2009 meeting, the Steering Committee discussed adding language to the TOR that would require reporting from Partners on an annual basis, without imposing an undue burden and maintaining appropriate flexibility. Steering Committee delegates commented on the need to identify existing tools (e.g., templates, Web-based systems) to support future reporting.

During its revision of the TOR in March 2010, the Steering Committee worked to establish a more systematic reporting process that retained flexibility regarding the frequency and type of information to be reported. The Steering Committee added the following elements for reporting:

Partners will seek to... Communicate their progress and accomplishments in implementing action plans and undertaking other activities to support the Partnership’s goal. [section 2.11]

Periodically assess the effectiveness of the Partnership's efforts to achieve its goals. [section 2.12]

Suggested Next Steps

Partners could commit to annual reporting of their activities and accomplishments in support of their Action Plans. Partners could provide specific comments to the ASG on aspects of the current reporting system that could be improved to facilitate future accounting of their activities.

The ASG could explore options or processes for facilitating enhanced reporting of Partnership-related activities, such as reporting mechanisms employed by programs similar to Methane to Markets (e.g., one-page Asia-Pacific Partnership Project Status Report Form) or re-evaluating the online project tracking system.

5. Issues for Steering Committee Consideration

Action Plans:

Does the Steering Committee wish to task the ASG with creating a template or “model” Partner Action Plan that builds upon the previous work of the Subcommittee and contains an outline of the key elements, including a description of these elements, and the desired level of detail?

Does the Steering Committee wish to commit that each Partner will work to draft such an Action Plan and submit it to the Steering Committee? Should a timeframe be established?

Does the Steering Committee wish to Charge the Subcommittees with identifying how they can support and assist Partners in both the development and implementation of the Action Plans?

Reporting:

Does the Steering Committee wish to commit that each Partner country will commit to annual reporting of their activities and accomplishments in support of their Action Plans?

Does the Steering Committee wish to request that Partners provide the ASG with specific comments on aspects of the current reporting system that could be improved to facilitate future reporting?

Does the Steering Committee wish to task the ASG with identifying possible recommendations for streamlining reporting such as development of a template or general guidelines?

Does the Steering Committee wish to task the ASG with soliciting specific feedback about the performance and operability of the on-line tracking system?