



National Steering Committees and National Working Groups for Health-Care Waste Management Policy Development and Planning

The WHO policy paper “Safe health-care waste management” (August 2004) calls on countries to develop and implement national plans, policies, and legislation on health-care waste. This paper describes an organizational model and strategy for developing health-care waste management policies and plans through National Steering Committees and National Working Groups.

1 – Stakeholder participation is important in developing national policies and plans.

Effective stakeholder participation is increasingly accepted as an operational strategy in policy making and planning. The meaningful participation of stakeholders is often critical to the success of many public activities. Stakeholder participation is based on the principles of transparency, accountability, and democratic participation in decision-making. Through stakeholder participation, the skills, knowledge, and experience of non-governmental organizations and the private sector are utilized; valuable partnerships are created; policy makers and planners are guided by accurate information and differing perspectives; the concerns and needs of affected communities are addressed; and stakeholders develop a sense of ownership of the policies and plans, thereby increasing the likelihood of public support and successful implementation.

Stakeholders can be defined as groups or organizations that have influence over or are affected by the processes and outcomes of policy making and planning. Stakeholders include those that ...

- may have information useful to decision-makers, planners, and implementers;
- have a vested interest in the impact of the policies and plans on their organization or community;
- have to implement changes as a result of the policies and plans;
- need to “buy in” to the policies and plans in order for the policies and plans to be implemented successfully.

2 – Organizational Model

There are many ways of actively engaging stakeholders in policy making and planning. One approach is through the formation of a National Steering Committee and a National Working Group, with the assistance of a national consultant and support staff. This simple organizational model, as shown in Figure 1, has been used successfully in the seven countries involved in the health-care waste management project of the Global Environmental Facility (see www.gefmedwaste.org). This model, or a similar one adapted to local conditions, is recommended for policy development and planning.

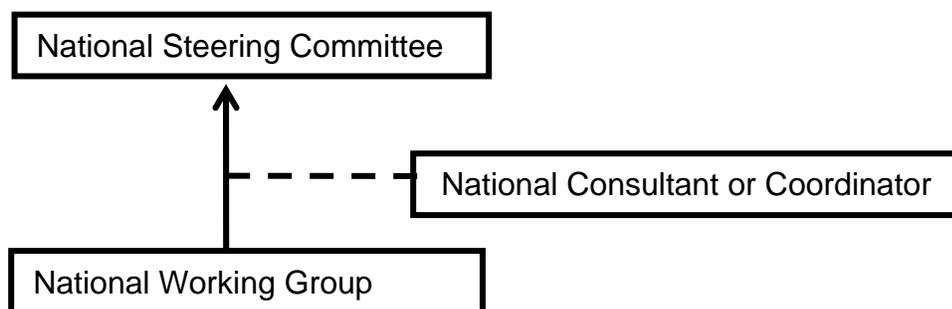


Figure 1. Organizational Model

3 – The National Steering Committee

The National Steering Committee (NSC) is a formal policy-making body comprised of senior-level government officials responsible for national health-care waste management, working in collaboration with representatives of other relevant governmental agencies as well as key national non-governmental organizations and international bodies. During the process of policy development and planning, the NSC meets every few months to review and approve recommendations from the National Working Group.

The functions of the National Steering Committee are:

- To assume overall responsibility for the development of health-care waste management policies and plans
- To ensure cooperation between agencies or organizations
- To empower a National Working Group to engage with stakeholders and develop recommendations
- To allocate support for the work of the National Working Group
- To review, revise, and approve recommendations from the National Working Group
- To promulgate the national policies and plans.

The many issues involved in health-care waste management are of concern to both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment. The Ministry of Health is concerned with preventing the spread of diseases through proper handling and disposal of health-care waste. The Ministry of Environment is concerned with protecting the environment through the use of environmentally sound methods of treatment and disposal. For this reason, it is recommended that the National Steering Committee be co-chaired by senior representatives of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment.

The NSC should also include representatives from other relevant ministries, such as: the Ministry of Finance, to ensure that a sufficient annual budget is allocated for health-care waste management; the Ministry of Local Government, to involve provincial, district and city governments which will implement health-care waste policies and plans in their jurisdictions; and the Ministry of Public Works, which regulates domestic waste collection, transportation infrastructure, and landfill disposal.

Many countries have signed or ratified the Basel Convention on Hazardous Waste and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Both conventions have provisions relating to health-care waste. Thus, the NSC should also include the national focal points within the government dealing with compliance and implementation of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions. The NSC should also include country representatives of international bodies concerned with health-care waste, in particular, World Health Organization, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, and the United Nations Childrens’ Fund.

Last but not least, the NSC should have representatives from national non-governmental organizations dealing with health-care waste, including the national hospital association, national societies of health professionals, environmental groups working on waste, and donor agencies that fund related health-sector and environmental projects.

In summary, the National Steering Committee is comprised of:

- Senior representatives of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment (co-chairs)
- Representatives of other relevant ministries: Public Works, Finance, Local Government, etc.
- National focal points for the implementation of the Stockholm and Basel Conventions
- Country representatives of WHO, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF, etc.
- Representatives of national non-governmental organizations concerned with medical waste, such as the national hospital association, association of health professionals, environmental organizations, and donor agencies.

4 – The National Working Group

The National Working Group (NWG) is a consultative body with broad public representation for the purpose of involving stakeholders in developing and recommending policies and plans to the National Steering Committee. During the process of policy development and planning, the NWG may meet every week or as often as necessary to complete its work.

The functions of the National Working Group are:

- To coordinate the gathering and evaluation of data
- To review options, develop strategies, and draft recommendations
- To assist in networking and build partnerships among stakeholders
- To provide a venue for stakeholder input
- To recommend policies and plans to the National Steering Committee.

Unlike the NSC which is composed of high-level government officials and heads of national organizations, the NWG is a working group of middle-level government officials and technical staff working closely with local stakeholders. The National Working Group may be comprised of:

- Mid-level officials of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment (co-chairs)
- Technical staff and experts from other relevant ministries
- Representatives of major hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, and health centers
- Faculty and researchers from medical and nursing colleges, and public health schools
- Health professionals including infection control officers, nurses, doctors, etc.
- Trade unions or representatives of health workers and waste workers
- Environmental and community health groups concerned with pollution and waste disposal
- Representatives of city, provincial, and other local governments
- Parliamentary representatives or legislative staff interested in developing legislation on health-care waste.

The day-to-day work of the National Working Group is coordinated by a national consultant (or national coordinator) with staff support provided by one or more of the ministries. The role of the national consultant is to ensure that the activities of the NWG are completed on time, that stakeholders are adequately consulted, and that the NSC is kept informed of significant developments. If it is not possible for the NWG to meeting frequently, the national consultant must ensure that there is regular and clear communications between the members of the NWG, allowing members to review and provide input on reports and draft documents.

5 – Process of Policy Making and Planning

The process begins with an initial meeting of the National Steering Committee, during which the NSC is formally constituted, its objectives and procedures are established, and the overall process is agreed upon. The NSC can then empower an ad hoc organizing body and consultant to organize a national workshop with broad stakeholder representation, leading to the creation of the National Working Group.

The National Workshop on Health-Care Waste is an important forum for raising awareness about the problem of health-care waste and developing a strategy to address the problem. The ad hoc body or consultant should ensure that all the major stakeholders are invited to the workshop. The purposes of the national workshop are:

- To define the problem regarding health-care waste
- To set goals resulting in the development of proposed policies and plans
- To identify action steps towards meeting the goals
- To create the National Working Group or NWG.

The work of the NWG is coordinated by the consultant, as members of the NWG undertake the action steps agreed upon. So as to ensure stakeholder participation and the flow of communication, the NWG embarks on a series of meetings and consultations in order to:

- Gather and/or review quantitative baseline data
- Conduct a rapid assessment or review existing assessments
- Identify information gaps
- Plan and implement activities to obtain data or updates, as needed
- Evaluate options and develop comprehensive strategies for health-care waste management, including financing and sustainability
- Build consensus on draft policies and plans
- Consult with the National Steering Committee, as needed.

A final meeting of the National Working Group is held to review and approve the reports and recommendations made to the NSC. The National Steering Committee then meets to discuss, revise as needed, and adopt the recommendations. The process does not end here. With the finalization of the national policies and plans comes the next important phase—implementation of the policies and plans, monitoring, and evaluation.

For additional information see the WHO web site on health-care waste:

<http://www.healthcarewaste.org>

http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/en/

National Steering Committees and Working Groups

Defining Stakeholders

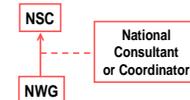
- Stakeholders:
 - Are those affected by the process and outcomes of policy development and planning
 - Have a vested interest in the impact of the policies and plans on their organization or community
 - May have information useful to decision-makers, planners, and implementers
 - Are those need to “buy in” to the policies and plans or who can change the outcomes
 - Are those who have to implement changes are a result of the policies and plans

Outline

- Basic concepts behind the GEF model
- Defining stakeholders
- Organization
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Membership
- Process

Organization

- GEF Medical Waste Project Organizational Model
 - National Steering Committee
 - National Working Group on Health-Care Waste
 - National coordinator or consultant and support staff



Basic Concepts

- Stakeholder involvement in decision-making
- Meaningful democratic participation of stakeholders
- Transparency and accountability
- Obtaining accurate information and different perspectives to guide policy making and planning
- Gaining support of stakeholders through developing “ownership” of the national policies and plans

Roles and Responsibilities

- National Steering Committee (NSC)
 - Decision-making body comprised of high-level government officials responsible for national medical waste management
 - Includes representatives of other key governmental, non-governmental and international agencies
 - To assume overall responsibility for the development of HCWM policies and plans
 - To ensure cooperation between their respective agencies or organizations
 - To empower a National Working Group (NWG) to develop recommendations on policies and plans
 - To identify and allocate support for the work of the NWG
 - To review/revise/approve recommendations
 - To promulgate policies and plans

Membership

- National Steering Committee
 - Senior representatives of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment (co-chairs)
 - Representatives of other relevant ministries: Public Works, Finance, Local Government, etc.
 - National focal points for the implementation of the Stockholm and Basel Conventions
 - WHO country representative, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF
 - Representatives of national non-governmental organizations concerned with medical waste
 - Hospital association, association of health professionals, environmental organization, agency dealing with waste collection, donor agencies

Process

- Creation of the National Steering Committee
 - Initial meeting
 - Empower an ad hoc body to organize a national workshop with broad stakeholder participation
- National workshop on medical waste
 - Define the problem
 - Set goals
 - Identify action steps
 - Create the National Working Group

Roles and Responsibilities

- National Working Group (NWG)
 - A consultative body to recommend policies and plans to the National Steering Committee
 - To coordinate the gathering and evaluation of data
 - To review options, develop strategies and draft recommendations for policies and plans
 - To assist in networking among stakeholders
 - To provide a venue for broad stakeholder participation
 - To work with the national coordinator or consultant in the day-to-day activities

Process

- Series of meetings and consultations of the National Working Group
 - Gather and/or review quantitative baseline data
 - Conduct rapid assessment or review existing assessment
 - Identify information gaps; plan and implement activities to obtain data or updates, if needed
 - Evaluate options and develop strategies for HCWM, including financing and sustainability
 - Build consensus on draft policies and plans
 - Consult with the National Steering Committee as needed

Membership

- National Working Group
 - Mid-level officials of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment (co-chairs)
 - Staff and experts from other relevant ministries
 - Representatives of hospitals, clinics/health centers, etc.
 - Representatives of medical and nursing colleges, public health schools; academics and researchers
 - Health professionals including infection control officers
 - Trade unions or representatives of health and waste workers
 - Environmental and community health groups
 - Representatives of city and provincial governments
 - Parliamentary representatives or legislative staff

Process

- Approval of the reports and recommendations by the National Working Group at a national meeting
- Discussion and approval of national policies and plans by the National Steering Committee at a meeting of the NSC

- Implementation, monitoring and evaluation