

Environmental Justice Network in Action (EJNA)

Biennial Report (2004-2005)

Background

In February of 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order #12898¹ calling for all Federal agencies to:

"...make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States"

Since 2002, the Environmental Justice Network in Action (EJNA) program has been conducting community-based research and outreach on environmental and environmental health issues in immigrant and refugee communities throughout Seattle and King County. From 2002-2004, program participants conducted needs assessments in these communities before changing the program's goal from needs assessment to action steps.

In collaboration with local agency and community-based organizations (CBO) partners, EJNA's team members (comprised of SPU employees) developed a list of common goals and values that best reflected EJNA's commitment to addressing the environmental and environmental health concerns of its community members. The EJNA program is guided by five goals, which include:

- Building meaningful, reciprocal relationships with CBOs serving immigrant and refugee communities
- To ensure rate-payer equity and Seattle Public Utilities' triple bottom line to all communities
- To build CBO capacity in order to effectively address the community's environmental health concerns on their own
- Continue to ask what the top environmental health and social concerns are in each neighborhood
- Continue to find the most effective service delivery methods for community members

The EJNA program is founded on the belief that meaningful, reciprocal relationships and flexible partnerships are the most essential elements for collaboration with refugee and immigrant communities. Through these relationships, EJNA partners build trust. EJNA team members feel that only through earnest and honest discussion about environmental health inequities will government agencies be able to establish meaningful relationships with immigrant and refugee populations. Any solution to the disproportionate environmental

¹ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
<http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/FHLaws/EXO12898.cfm>

and environmental health effects in communities of color will require community trust and participation.

The EJNA program has partnerships with both local governmental agency and community-based organizations, which help to involve, educate, train, and organize community members. Below is a list of EJNA partners.

Agency Partners

- Local Hazardous Waste Management Program
- Seattle Public Utilities
- Seattle-King County Public Health
- UW Center for Ecogenetics and Environmental Health
- Seattle City Light
- King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
- Environmental Coalition of South Seattle
- American Lung Association of Washington – Master Home Environmentalist

Community-based Organization Partners

- International District Housing Alliance
- Asian Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center
- Khmer Community Services of Seattle – King County
- Horn of Africa
- Somali Community Services
- Planeta (Latino Community)
- Pasefica (Samoan Community Youth Outreach)

EJNA Accomplishments

EJNA and its partners were able to claim a number of accomplishments over the past two years. EJNA welcomed the addition of the Khmer community in 2004 and the Latino community in 2005 to its list of CBO partners, while adding the Environmental Coalition of South Seattle (ECOSS) to its list of local agency partners.

In 2004, EJNA conducted a survey with a sample size of over 1,080 respondents from each CBO community asking a variety of environmental and environmental health related questions. There was a general consensus that public safety/crime was a major concern for all respondents and many respondents felt there was a lack of information on City utility rate assistance programs. In 2005, EJNA held its first crime forum led by Benjamin Kinlow, the Crime Prevention Coordinator of Seattle Police Department's Southwest Precinct. Also, EJNA partners participated in an information session on Seattle City Light's Low-Income Rate Assistance (LIRA) program led by Brenda Sevilla from the Human Services Department.

In November of 2005, EJNA played a vital role in helping the International District Housing Alliance (IDHA), a founding partner of the EJNA program, receive an \$86,264 Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) Grant from the EPA. The grant was awarded to the IDHA because of their community-oriented approach to *identify and reduce risks from lead paint, mold, asbestos, air toxins and other forms of pollution*².

² Environmental Protection Agency, CARE Grant (2005).
<http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/homepage.nsf/0/457d24fe5ec72e1e882570b2005ebcad?OpenDocument>

In July of 2005, at the request of the Asian Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center, EJNA team members hosted visitors from the Pangasinan province of the Philippines as part of an environmental exchange program organized by the Pangasinan-Washington Sister State Association. The visitors included the Mayor of Dagupan, two City Council members, and the Editorial Assistant from the Philippine Daily Inquirer. The Filipino delegates were very impressed with the EJNA model and were interested in replicating the program in the Philippines.

In 2005, representatives of the Washington State Board of Health were invited to Beijing, China to discuss the Beijing Olympics Health Legacy assessment program. In Beijing, the Board of Health Representatives shared information with Chinese environmental health officials about the EJNA model and its community-oriented approach to addressing environmental and environmental health issues.

List of EJNA accomplishments for 2004-2005:

- Distributed over 1,000 green cleaning kits.
- Joint partnerships with seven CBO partners which serve the Filipino, Samoan, Khmer, East African, Somali, Latino, Vietnamese, and Chinese communities throughout Seattle and King County.
- Partnered with CBO and agency partners to conduct over 160+ hours of EJNA project planning and training activities.
- Offered two “how to” training workshops for city staff on replicating the environmental justice model to other city and county programs.
- CBOs helped in the development of household hazardous waste fliers for eight new languages, including: Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Oromo, Tigrigna, Amharic, and Spanish.
- CBOs completed over 1,100 hours of community outreach through festivals, events, and presentations.
- CBO and agency partners participated or led field trips with over 300 community members to the Cedar River Watershed, the Duwamish River, the South Transfer Station, the Ballard Locks, the Water Quality Lab, and the University of Washington Toxicology Lab.
- EJNA received the 2005 World Class Environmental Stewardship Award from SPU

Project Planning

One of the lessons learned after the 2004 needs assessment was the need to better define partner roles and responsibilities. Accordingly, SPU team members were assigned to CBOs to be a “tag” or liaison between SPU and the CBO. Tag members and CBO partners spent a great deal of time creating memorandums of agreements (MOAs), crunching budget numbers, and creating customized work-plans to best fit each CBO.

Each MOA represented a contract between the City of Seattle and the CBO outlining the terms of agreement, the billing and payment process, and the scope of the services. Every tag person met with a CBO executive and worked diligently on the completion of the MOA and the work-plan by EJNA’s first monthly meeting.

The work-plan provided explicit detail on the responsibilities and activities for each CBO partner. For example, each CBO was required to conduct a minimum of two community events and participate in a minimum of three field trips for the entire year. Because EJNA's goals shifted from needs assessments to action steps, the work-plan reflected this and the community's desire to create change through action.

Each CBO's task included a brief description of the activity and an estimated billable amount with the corresponding activity based on a standard hourly wage. The work-plan accounted for any overhead or miscellaneous charges, which could be assessed to an activity or event, with the maximum reimbursement of \$10,000 for each CBO.

Methodology

EJNA team members utilized several collaborative educational, outreach and evaluative methods over the past two years, including: a) presentations, b) field trips, c) focus groups, and d) surveys. As in the past, EJNA hosted monthly community meetings from February to October in both 2004 and 2005. At these community meetings, agency partners and EJNA team members gave presentations on a number of issues, including recycling, household hazardous waste, water conservation, air and water quality, low-income rate assistance, crime/public safety, seafood safety, and weatherization.

EJNA has always used field trips as a tool for involving, educating and mobilizing community members about environmental and environmental health issues. In 2005, EJNA began pairing monthly presentation themes with its corresponding field trip. For example, for the month of May, Michael Davis, EJNA program manager, offered a presentation on water conservation at EJNA's monthly meeting and led a field trip to the Cedar River Watershed for interested CBO partners.

Another EJNA addition in 2005 was reporting forms. Reporting forms were instrumental in helping EJNA and CBO partners gather data on each CBO's activity or event. Also, the reporting form made it easier for EJNA team members to document CBO activities and gather feedback on the activities effectiveness.

New and recent EJNA CBO partners were asked to complete a focus group discussion in order to assess community needs and concerns. Focus groups discussions are lead by the CBO and have been an extremely useful method for gauging community concerns. Over the past two years, the Khmer and Latino communities have conducted focus group discussions with their community members.

At the completion of the Environmental Justice Needs Assessment project in 2004, EJNA CBO partners surveyed approximately 1,081 community residents from the East African, Filipino, Samoan, Chinese, Khmer (Cambodian), and Vietnamese communities. The results of the survey are provided below by community.

Survey Results

International District Housing Alliance Survey Results

- 43% of respondents drink tap water
- 27% of respondents or their family members suffer from allergies
- 22% of respondents say dust/pollen exists in their home
- 33% of respondents always read warning labels, but 32% say they never read warning labels
- 72% of respondents feel their neighborhood is safe
- 21% of respondents feel TV is the best way to get information

Somali Community Survey Results

- 72% of respondents drink tap water
- 30% of respondents or their family members suffer from asthma
- 29% of respondents say dust/pollen exists in their home
- 54% of respondents never read warning labels
- 43% of respondents feel their neighborhood is sometimes not safe
- 34% of respondents feel the best way to get information is from community members

East African Community Survey Results

- 45% of respondents drink bottled water
- 33% of respondents or their family members suffer from asthma, but 34% answered “no response”
- 32% of respondents say smoking exists in their home, but 35% answered “no response”
- 75% of respondents sometimes read warning labels
- 61% of respondents feel their neighborhood is safe
- 31% of respondents feel TV is the best way to get information

Filipino Community Survey Results

- 29% of respondents drink both bottled water and tap water, but 40% of respondents answered “other”
- 29% of respondents or their family members suffer from allergies, but 27% answered “no response”
- 24% of respondents say dust/pollen exists in their home
- 40% of respondents always read warning labels, but 39% sometimes read warning labels
- 45% of respondents feel their neighborhood is safe, but 41% feel their neighborhood is sometimes not safe
- 23% of respondents feel TV is the best way to get information

Khmer Community Survey Results

- 40% of respondents drink bottled water, but 37% drink filtered water
- 30% of respondents or their families suffer from allergies, but 34% said they or their families suffered from “other”
- 31% of respondents say a pond and/or garden exist in their homes
- 50% of respondents sometimes read warning labels
- 67% of respondents feel their neighborhood is safe
- 26% of respondents feel the best way to get information is from a community member, but 23% feel TV is best

Focus Group Results

In 2004, the Khmer community was the only EJNA CBO partner to hold a focus group. The discussion focused on their living environment with a number of participants concerned with indoor air quality, water quality, and household chemicals. A number of community members expressed concern with the color of their tap water and asked if it was good to drink. Also, participants felt there was too much garbage in the community and there are a lot of drug dealers or users.

In 2005, both the Khmer and Latino communities participated in EJNA focus groups. Participants in the Khmer community’s focus group were young adults ages 10 – 18 who expressed concern with pollution, litter, drugs/drug dealers, smoking, homeless, alcoholics, gangs, and construction odor in the community. Furthermore, participants felt their environment was dangerous, “ghetto,” rainy, polluted, and had “kind of clean” water.

The Latino community’s focus group centered on South Park where most, if not all, of the participants lived. Most of the community participants felt crime is the biggest concern in the community. There were a number of comments about the Seattle Police Department (SPD) and the lack of trust community members have of the SPD. Participants felt the Mayor’s office is out of touch with the community by designating “community leaders” who are not respected by the community.

Participants felt the best way to disseminate information was through brochures, flyers at local stores or public places, the mail, and through the media (radio, newspaper, etc). Participants felt the cost of garbage pick up was very high and they discussed concern over the lack of Spanish speaking City employees whom they could work with. Also, there was a lot of concern over the new recycling laws. Community members wanted the City to distribute recycling brochures in Spanish and to hold a recycling workshop specifically for Spanish speakers. Participants did not know the difference between organic and inorganic material let alone where to put them. Moreover, a number of community members live in apartments and do not have access to a recycle dumpster.

Next Steps

In September of 2005, EJNA held a full-day retreat with all its partners in order to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing EJNA. Each CBO and agency partner wanted to stay involved in EJNA and help expand the programs partnerships and outreach methods into new communities. Possible community partnerships were identified in a number of neighborhoods, including Burien, Tukwila, North Seattle, and High Point.

At the retreat, Michael explained that other City agencies have requested more trainings and information on how to implement EJNA's community partnerships model. Also, Michael explained the opportunities SPU's re-organization presented for EJNA and Environmental Justice as a whole. Moreover, a number of EJNA partners and EJNA team members expressed interests in having EJNA address institutional racism, look at other environmental justice models, and reduce the barriers to City partnerships (grants, contracts, and low income programs).