



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Local involvement in CDM biogas projects: Argentine experiences

Serna Martín, A.; Dietz, T.

Publication date
2008

Published in
joint implementation quarterly

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Serna Martín, A., & Dietz, T. (2008). Local involvement in CDM biogas projects: Argentine experiences. *joint implementation quarterly*, 14(1), 10-11.

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, P.O. Box 19185, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Local Involvement in CDM Biogas Projects: Argentine experiences

by Alberto Serna Martín & Ton Dietz

Mitigating climate change and contributing to the sustainable development of host countries are the goals of the CDM. In order to achieve these goals, projects follow an implementation chain, which starts with the design and ends with the issuance of Certified Emission Reductions (CERs). During the project design phase, as a means of maximizing the contribution of projects to sustainable development, the input of local stakeholders (Non-Governmental Organisations, Community Based Organisations) is required in a process of public consultation. Drawing on conclusions from a recent study¹ of the multi-stakeholder interaction of two Argentine biogas projects, this article identifies some of the shortcomings of the CDM when it comes to the involvement of local stakeholders in the process of consultation, and highlights how this relates to the sustainable development goal of the CDM.

Biogas projects in Argentina

Biogas projects fall under the scope of waste handling and disposal, which is the second most popular CDM modality currently accounting for almost 21% of CDM projects worldwide.² These projects capture CH₄ present in sanitary landfills and convert it into CO₂, which has a 23 times lower global warming potential. The metropolitan area of the city of Buenos Aires, with its 380,000 tonnes of produced solid waste per month turning into a CH₄ generator after disposal, has a high emission reduction potential. Moreover, the absence of a domestic regulatory framework to deal with biogas makes meeting additionality criteria a relatively easy task for project developers. All of this makes the implementation of CDM biogas projects in Buenos Aires an attractive activity for both CEAMSE (*Coordinación Ecológica Metropolitana Sociedad del Estado*, state company that owns the landfills) and project developers. At the moment, all of CEAMSE's landfills (active or inactive) host a CDM project.

The study this article refers to does not evaluate the achievement of the sustainable development and mitigation goals of the projects (it is too early for that), but studies the process by which these goals have been established. It pays attention to the input of all project participants (project developers, DNAs, DOEs, local

stakeholders, Annex-I countries, intermediaries, local administrations, the press, *etc.*) during the different stages of the project life cycle. In this article, a summary of some main conclusions is presented.

Local input is only present at the early stages of the project life cycle during the design phase. This is the moment when most of the project participants deliberate about the goals that projects should deliver. The result of this deliberation process is that project developers set the mitigation and sustainable development goals of the projects almost unilaterally. The input of local stakeholders in this process has little or no effect on the decision making around these matters.

If local involvement in the CDM is relevant for sustainable development, why does it have such a limited effect in establishing the sustainable development goals of the projects? The answer to this question lies in aspects inherent to the social context in which the CDM projects are implemented, and in aspects related to the practicalities of the procedures of the CDM.

Social context

The following aspects are related to the social context for CDM projects:

- **Structural conflicts between participants:** sanitary landfills in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires have always been a source of conflict between local communities dwelling in the vicinity of the landfills and CEAMSE. Leachate and landfill gas mismanagement are held responsible for the health problems of the neighbouring communities (skin eruptions, respiratory and digestive problems, and even cancer). As a result, some local stakeholders are structurally against any activity from which CEAMSE might benefit, either economically or technically. Therefore, there has been a lack of trust between these local stakeholders and project developers during the consultation period, which has hindered a transparent dialogue between project participants.

¹ The study is based on the master's thesis of Alberto Serna Martín, for the Research Master's programme in Human Geography, Planning, and International Development Studies at the University of Amsterdam: 'Global Environmental Governance and the CDM as an instrument for tackling Climate Change: a case study of landfill gas recovery projects in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires' (2008). Mr Ton Dietz was his supervisor. For more information contact authors: alberto.sernamartin@student.uva.nl, or a.j.dietz@uva.nl

² <http://cdm.unfccc.int/Statistics/Registration/RegisteredProjByScopePieChart.html> (24-03-2008).



increased the distrust of local stakeholders towards CEAMSE and the project developers.

- **No contact between DOEs and local stakeholders:** the DOEs in charge of performing the validations have no contact whatsoever with local stakeholders. All the information they use for their assessments comes from project developers who, on some occasions, have ignored the local input. Validation of projects and subsequent submission for registration has occurred with minimised local involvement, and with a lack of consensus on the sustainable development goals.

Local involvement and sustainable development

The social context in which CDM projects are implemented and some procedural issues of the implementation have limited the effective utilisation of local input when establishing the sustainable development goals of CDM biogas projects in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. Addressing conflicts between participants prior to the existence of the projects, assessing the capacity of local stakeholders to fully take part in the consultations, constructing a more adequate consultation framework, and ensuring a dialogue between DOEs and local stakeholders are matters that deserve the attention of policy makers, both at the national and the international level. In this way, the process of consultation will become a more useful tool for enhancing the sustainable development goal of the CDM, which, according to the text of the Kyoto Protocol, should have the same status as the GHG mitigation objective of CDM projects.

- **Low educational and economic level of local stakeholders:** the poverty situation of some local stakeholders is so extreme that their livelihoods often depend on the food and the recyclable goods they can find in the landfills. Involvement in the consultation process of a CDM project is not a priority. In the cases that their involvement was requested, availability of communication equipment needed to express comments (computers and internet) was a problem. Furthermore, these stakeholders generally have a limited knowledge of the climate change issue, 'Kyoto' and the CDM.

Procedural issues

The following procedural issues have been identified:

- **Inadequate handling of local stakeholder comments:** in some cases local stakeholders have rejected a project because of its negative impact on the sustainability of the landfill and the surrounding areas, and have requested more information and corrective actions by the project developer. Some local stakeholders used all the formal tools offered by the consultation process (meetings, letters, Internet), but their requests have not been handled. This is possible because no single regulatory entity, such as the CDM Executive Board or the Argentine DNA, has developed a framework for handling the outcomes of the consultation process. This has