



ARCTIC COUNCIL

*Sustainable Development Working Group*



**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP  
2009-11 REPORT TO ARCTIC COUNCIL SENIOR ARCTIC OFFICIALS  
MARCH 2011**



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The SDWG is chaired during each biennial period by the same country chairing the Arctic Council. The Chairmanship of Denmark, Greenland and Faroe Islands of the SDWG began in April 2009 following the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting (April 2009) in Tromsø, Norway. ICC (Greenland) and Sweden acted as SDWG Co-Vice-Chairs.

### **A. CHALLENGES**

The Sustainable Development Working Group conducts activities to address six broad challenges facing the peoples of the Arctic:

- Arctic Human Health: Developing concrete initiatives to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples and other Arctic residents.
- Arctic Socio-Economic Issues: Advancing our understanding of the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities.
- Adaptation to Climate Change: Reducing vulnerability and implementing adaptation initiatives related to climate change in the Arctic, including practical community-based actions.
- Energy and Arctic Communities: Considering the unique demands of the Arctic region as an energy consumer, and the importance of environmentally friendly economic activity in the energy sector to ongoing social and economic development in the Arctic region.
- Management of Natural Resources: Managing of natural resources in a holistic and integrative manner, to further the socio-economic development of the region and to ensure the well-being of Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities.
- Arctic Cultures and Languages: Supporting Arctic cultures and effort to reduce the loss of Arctic Indigenous languages.

### **B. 2009-11 SDWG DELIVERABLES BY THEMATIC AREA**

In response to the mandate provided by Arctic Council Ministers in Tromsø, the Sustainable Development Working Group undertook activities to improve our understanding of the human condition under the umbrella of thematic areas. The following are the projects and initiatives completed, and organized respectively within the framework of the SDWG thematic areas.

#### **1. ARCTIC HUMAN HEALTH**

##### **Hope and Resilience in Suicide Prevention Seminar** (Greenland/ Denmark/Canada)

Planned and implemented in collaboration with Inuit Circumpolar Council (Greenland) and the Government of Greenland, the "Hope and Resilience in Suicide Prevention" seminar was held in Nuuk, Greenland on November 7-8, 2009. This first activity under the auspices of the SDWG Arctic Human Health Expert Group (AHHEG) brought together social workers and health practitioners, researchers, policy makers and politicians to exchange best practices aimed at reducing the number of suicides in the Arctic countries, particularly among youth. The seminar participants produced recommendations for future actions, a DVD including a video produced by the youth participants and a seminar report which was translated into Russian with funding provided by Canada.

### **Circumpolar Health Observatory (CircHOB) (Canada/Denmark/Greenland)**

CircHOB ([www.circhob.circumpolarhealth.org](http://www.circhob.circumpolarhealth.org)) is an international collaborative health information system housed in Yellowknife, Canada. The purpose of this project is to monitor trends and patterns in health status, health determinants, and health care. It also provides a continuous knowledge base and analytical support to decision-makers, service providers, academic researchers and consumers. CircHOB promotes capacity building through training and research and has been identified by the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks initiative (SAON) as a Task. CircHob maintains a searchable and interactive databank where relevant circumpolar human health publications and statistical reports can be sourced. The website currently contains circumpolar health data for 2000-04 and the 2005-09 data updates are underway.

### **Circumpolar Nutrition Guide (Canada/Denmark/Greenland)**

An AHHEG project and managed by the Greenland Institute for Health Research, this 2-year project assembled existing information on nutritional guidelines in circumpolar countries to inform government health agencies and community organizations on circumpolar wide nutritional approaches and structures. The final report on this project was peer reviewed and completed by AHHEG. It was published as a Circumpolar Health Supplement in the International Journal for Circumpolar Health in 2011 ([http://www.ijch.fi/CHS/CHS\\_2011\(8\)](http://www.ijch.fi/CHS/CHS_2011(8))).

### **Arctic Human Health Initiative (AHHI) (USA)**

The Arctic Human Health Initiative, led by the United States, began as an International Polar Year (IPY) coordinating project to serve as a focal point for human health research, education, outreach, and communications activities. The overall goals of the AHHI are to increase awareness and visibility of human health concerns of Arctic peoples, foster human health research, and promote health strategies that improve health and well being of all Arctic residents. Following the conclusion of the IPY, 28 projects have continued under the AHHI umbrella. AHHI has now been incorporated into the Arctic Human Health Expert Group. A Circumpolar Health Supplement of the International Journal of Circumpolar Health (2010:6) describes the vision of the AHHI and the nature of its projects. The website (<http://www.arctichealth.org/ahhi/>) contains journal articles and other publications emerging from AHHI projects.

## **2. ARCTIC SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES**

### **Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic (SLiCA) (Denmark/Greenland)**

The Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic (SLiCA) ([www.arcticlivingconditions.org](http://www.arcticlivingconditions.org)) was an international joint effort of researchers and Indigenous Peoples aimed at: measuring living conditions in a way relevant to Arctic communities; documenting and comparing the present state of living conditions among the indigenous peoples of the Arctic; improving the understanding of living conditions to the benefit of Arctic communities; and to providing local, regional, national and international organizations an improved basis for decision-making. Phase I of the project consisted of the development of an international core questionnaire and phase II focused on validation of data, data entry, processing of data and analyses. An executive summary of SLiCA findings will be presented to the AC Ministerial Meeting in Nuuk, Greenland.

## **3. ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE.**

### **EALAT: Reindeer herding, traditional knowledge, adaptation to climate change and loss of grazing land** (Norway/ Association of World Reindeer Herders (WRH))

The EALÁT project was initiated in 2006 and was designed to gather information about the environmental changes which Arctic reindeer herders are facing and to give concrete examples of herders' traditional knowledge leading their adaptation to changing conditions, e.g. traditional uses of grazing land. In all, 18 workshops were held in herding communities in the most important reindeer herding regions. The challenge of EALÁT- Information is to transfer herders' knowledge into action for sustainable development of the Arctic. The EALÁT work in Russia has developed into two regional centres for reindeer husbandry. It is recommended for SAOs that the work and methods of EALÁT are continued with a focus on circumpolar

reindeer herding youth. For the Nuuk Ministerial Meeting, EALAT produced a final report based on data from community workshops completed; an Executive Summary with graphics and recommendations; and a 30-minute documentary movie.

#### **4. ENERGY AND ARCTIC COMMUNITIES**

##### **Arctic Energy Summit (AES) (USA)**

Arctic Energy Summit was the first phase of a two-year IPY project held on 15-18 October, 2007. The Summit brought focus to the areas of developing resources while addressing the need for affordable energy in rural areas throughout the Arctic. The goal was to initiate technology transfer on issues related to the Arctic as an emerging energy province. To sustain the momentum, an Arctic Energy Action Team (AEAT) was established to develop a roadmap for the enhancement of extractive energy recovery in the Arctic and deployment of energy sources to total Arctic communities. The energy challenges identified were: coal mining in the circumpolar north, tidal power, and alternative transportation fuel in the Arctic. The Arctic Energy Summit report was published and is available electronically on the SDWG website (<http://portal.sdwg.org/>).

#### **5. MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

##### **Circumpolar Information Guide on Mining for Indigenous Peoples & Northern Communities (Canada)**

The mining information guide is a layman's version aimed at providing the information and best practices to strengthen Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities and their capacity to better understand and take advantage of the opportunities offered by mining development in their region. The mining guide includes explanations and best practices on the mining industry; contributions to sustainable communities; integration of environmental, social and economic considerations; protection of traditional ways of life; issues and problems common to both Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities; and, potential opportunities and benefits for communities. The Guide is posted on the SDWG website (<http://portal.sdwg.org/>).

#### **C. ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Over the course of the Chairmanship, the SDWG has completed its internal and external assessment of its operations and effectiveness, in consultation with other AC Working Groups and other stakeholders, as a first step toward completing the SDWG Strategic Plan. As a first phase the SDWG examined key areas that are influencing and/or asserting pressure on the work of the SDWG. Its findings underscored the need for the SDWG to strengthen its operational and institutional capacity in order to keep pace with the rapid changes occurring in the Arctic.
- As an example of the SDWG efforts to create effective mechanisms to bring together the requisite expertise to improve its institutional capacity, the Arctic Human Health activities were energized during the Chairmanship of Denmark, Greenland and Faroe Islands by the launch of the Arctic Human Health Expert Group. The AHHEG provided guidance on circumpolar human health issues and priorities, and undertook practical actions to acquire knowledge and to build capacity in the circumpolar region. The AHHEG was also engaged in the planning of and actively participated at the Arctic Human Health Ministers' Meeting held in Nuuk, Greenland in February 2011.
- The integration of local and traditional knowledge and collaborations that include Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities as respected partners in research is a critical link to building knowledge and capacity at the community level. The SDWG/IPY EALAT and the Circumpolar Mining Guide for Indigenous Peoples and Northern Communities were examples of strengthening the capacity of Indigenous Peoples and Arctic communities.