Examples of Capacity Building Cooperation

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Executive Summary

Odense Waste Management Company (OWMC) covers the municipality of Odense having around 185,000 inhabitants. With roots more than a 100 years back it was in 1994 transformed from a municipal waste management department to a limited company owned by the municipality. OWMC is a not-for-profit company, where all services are paid for by the users.

OWMC is participating in international development activities because many of the staff think it is important, interesting, challenging and fun to contribute with their know-how, and learning a lot as well. We usually put it this way: “We are just doing it for the fun of it!”

The management and board of the company give full support and very flexible frames for this international cooperation. Further it fits well into the overall municipal objective and strategy of increasing participation in international cooperation activities.

Capacity building within waste management may comprise a wide range of different components, among these are appropriate training and practice which give staff the right knowledge and tools to fulfil their jobs in an effective and efficient way. Within this field it is our belief that the staff of OWMC may give a small contribution towards a less polluted world and a more sustainable development through cooperation with colleagues in other countries.

In response to a growing demand for a more structured dissemination of the acquired know-how within the company, OWMC has been transforming its many years of experience and lessons learned into flexible packages of operation & maintenance support and manuals as well as flexible modular training and practice services. These services are focusing on the practical application of well established solid waste management technologies and knowledge.

The main approach we attempt to apply, when we undertake training and practice for our own staff as well as for international cooperation partners, is to keep things simple and easily understandable, even if there may sometimes be rather complex processes and activities involved.

This approach has seemingly been working well, not only with our own staff, but also within the international projects where we have so far had the opportunity to contribute. In 2003-05 OWMC participated as sub-consultants to NIRAS Consulting Engineers and Planners, in a project for Koszalin and Slupsk Municipalities in Northern Poland, and in 2005-06 OWMC has participated as sub-consultants to COWI Consulting Engineers and Planners, in a project for the newly established Solid Waste Management Department of Beni Suef City in Egypt.
Further, key staff from OWMC has at various occasions been invited to international conferences for presentation of papers with examples of our innovative projects, and many national as well as international guests visit every year OWMC to see and hear about how we manage in Odense.

Would it be possible to imagine a future waste management sector with more know-how sharing mechanisms in place aiming at “driving waste management towards sustainable development”? Could the establishment of a capacity building working group e.g. within the framework of ISWA be an important step forward in this context?

And finally, why don’t we just start now? We could establish “exchange-relationships” between like minded solid waste management companies and authorities with the objective of non-formal exchange of know-how among colleagues across borders. At OWMC we think it can be done, - and we wait for you to contact us in case you might be interested.

Introduction

Odense is the town, where the fairytale writer Hans Christian Andersen was born 201 years ago. Situated in the centre of the country, Odense is today Denmark’s third largest city having around 185 000 inhabitants.

Odense Waste Management Company Ltd. (OWMC) has got roots more than 100 years back. In 1994 it was transformed from a municipal waste management department to a limited company owned by the municipality. With this organisational setup OWMC faces the opportunities and challenges of a “private limited company”. At the same time it is under the full control of the municipal council having appointed all members of the board, except the staff representatives.

OWMC is a not-for-profit company, where all services are paid for by the users, being the households, institutions and enterprises in Odense.

Why then, should OWMC show an interest in participating in international development projects and activities?

In the company we usually put it this way: “We are just doing it for the fun of it!”

Alright, the municipality of Odense has got an overall objective and strategy of participating increasingly in international cooperation activities. This gives naturally an incentive for the board and management of OWMC to support an international profile, - and they give very wide and flexible frames for how this international cooperation may materialise in the company.

However, the main driving force for OWMC being increasingly interested in contributing to international activities and projects is the enthusiasm of its staff. In the beginning, only a few enthusiastic persons found international activities challenging, but along with our involvement in more new projects more and more persons are now becoming seriously interested in contributing to our international cooperation activities.

So in short, OWMC is participating in international development activities because many of the staff think it is important, interesting, challenging and fun to contribute with their know-how, - and learning a lot as well.

A Capacity Building Approach based on Practical Experience
Capacity building within waste management may comprise a wide range of different components, e.g.:

- Elaboration of appropriate legislation and regulations
- Development of effective and efficient scientific solutions and technology
- Development and improvement of organisational structures
- Appropriate training and practice giving staff the right knowledge and tools to fulfil their jobs in an effective and efficient way

It is our belief that the staff of OWMC may give a small contribution towards a less polluted world and a more sustainable development through cooperation with colleagues in other countries. This may be in a nearby neighbouring country as e.g. Poland, faced with the challenge of fulfilling all environmental regulations of EU on equal terms with all other member-states, - or it may be in e.g. Egypt, where effective and efficient handling of solid waste has in general never got high priority among people and leaders.

OWMC covers a wide range of well-functioning solid waste management activities and solutions within a limited urban area and within one organisational set-up, such as:

- collection of household refuse, hazardous waste and recyclable paper from 82 000 households,
- operation of 8 residential recycling stations and 1 industrial recycling station as well as about 150 bring banks for bottles,
- participation in operation of central sorting facility for industrial waste in cooperation with private waste handling company,
- operation of Odense Environmental Centre which comprises landfilling, sorting, recycling and composting activities as well as OWMC’s Training Centre
- extraction of landfill gas from the former Stige Island dumpsite, providing electricity via the public grid for about 5 000 households and heating via the district heating grid for about 900 households
- closure and aftercare of the old dumpsite at Stige Island, including careful monitoring, collection and treatment of leachate.

In particular Odense Environmental Centre, which was built in 1994 as one of the most modern and environmentally safe landfills in Northern Europe, has been receiving a lot of attention. From 1997 combustible not recyclable household and industrial waste was in Denmark no longer allowed to be landfilled, but had in stead to be incinerated for energy production. This change in legislation shifted the estimated lifetime of the landfill from the planned 30 years till at least 100 years.

On the other hand new environmental problems end up at Odense Environmental Centre, e.g. various waste sorting and recycling activities, treatment of slightly oil-polluted soil and not least composting of biomass, consisting of sewage sludge carefully analyzed for contents of heavy metals etc. before composted together with straw and cuttings from parks and gardens. The annual production amounts to about 35 000 tonnes of final compost.

In response to a growing demand for a more structured dissemination of the acquired know-how within the company, OWMC has been transforming its many years of experience and lessons learned into flexible packages of operation & maintenance support and manuals as well as flexible modular training and practice services. These services are focusing on the practical application of well established solid waste management technologies and knowledge. The training and not least practice may take place at OWMC’s recently established Training Centre or at the venue of the cooperation partner.
The main approach we attempt to apply, when we undertake training and practice for our own staff as well as for international cooperation partners, is to keep things simple and easily understandable, even if there may sometimes be rather complex processes and activities involved. Most people in OWMC do not have long academic records, - and some of the workers are not even too familiar with reading technical manuals etc. It is our experience so far that the same applies to our colleagues abroad.

So the main training elements comprise as far as possible the use of e.g.:
- Simple text, diagrams and drawings explaining theoretical background information
- Where applicable, illustrative photos and video-sequences demonstrating the practical application of skills
- And not least, - lots of hands-on practice with the computers and / or the machines

This approach has seemingly been working well, not only with our own staff, but also within the international projects where we have so far had the opportunity to contribute.

Examples of Capacity Building Cooperation

In 2003-05 OWMC participated as sub-consultants to NIRAS Consulting Engineers and Planners, in a project for Koszalin and Slupsk Municipalities in Northern Poland, comprising:
- support in the conceptual design of the composting plant,
- advice during the tender-procedure,
- supervision and commissioning of machinery and equipment,
- development of a complete O&M Manual,
- execution of a two-week training course for Polish technicians as well as machine-operators at OWMC’s Training Centre,
- support to operational control of the composting process during start-up,
- follow-up support the first year via internet, phone, fax or visits as required,
- adaptation of the computer-based operation and monitoring system being used for biomass-composting by OWMC.

In 2005-06 OWMC has participated as sub-consultants to COWI Consulting Engineers and Planners, in a project for the newly established Solid Waste Management Department of Beni Suef City in Egypt, comprising:
- Support to the director and the managers in the daily management of the Beni Suef Solid Waste Management Organisation,
- Development/improvement of monitoring indicators for solid waste management as well as management tools to be used for data collection and registration, quality control, monitoring etc.,
- Support in the planning and implementation of a proposed new waste collection and source separation system and in improvements of the existing street cleaning, waste collection, sorting, composting and landfill operation activities including assistance in training of the staff;
- Support in development of proper service and maintenance procedures for collection trucks and other solid waste management equipment including improvement of the operation of an existing garage and small workshop.

New projects where OWMC will participate are under development in Bulgaria, Poland and Egypt.

Further, key staff from OWMC has at various occasions been invited to international conferences for presentation of papers with examples of our innovative projects, e.g.:
• Operating the largest landfill in Denmark with use of environmental Management
  Information System
• Design of an Innovative Monitoring Programme for Stige Island Landfill
• Closure and aftercare of Stige Island Landfill
• Composting of sewage sludge
• Development of an Electronic Reporting and Information System for Danish Landfills
• An Innovative Underground Waste Collection System

Finally, many national as well as international guests visit every year OWMC to see and hear about
how we manage in Odense. We are always welcoming visitors, especially those asking “strange”
questions about why we are doing this and that, - sometimes we may this way learn about new view
points as well.

Conclusion

Would it be possible to imagine a future waste management sector with more know-how sharing
mechanisms in place aiming at “driving waste management towards sustainable development” ?
A sector where appropriate know-how would be shared openly with and made available for all
interested partners, - and where mechanisms were in place to tear down existing barriers to and
facilitate and support appropriate know-how sharing initiatives.

Could the establishment of a capacity building working group e.g. within the framework of ISWA
be an important step forward in this context ?

And finally, why don’t we just start now ?

We could establish “exchange-relationships” between like minded solid waste management
companies and authorities with the objective of non-formal exchange of know-how among
colleagues across borders. Maybe some less well-off companies would need a bit of support for
travelling etc., but on the main such exchange-relationships could be more or less self sustained by
the participating companies.

At Odense Waste Management Company we think it can be done, - and we will be awaiting you to
contact us in case you might be interested in some kind of cooperation.