

The Potential of a Centralised Electronic Database for Environmental & Related Data Reporting and Resource Management for Developing Countries and SIDS

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Data sharing and data accessibility can often be major constraints for researchers, investigators, decision makers, pedagogues, students and the general public, and particularly so in the developing countries (including the SIDS). Scarce resources for the setting up, maintenance and management of data repositories remain the key limiting factor, along with other politico-economic causes. Competition among data users, and vested interests are other important causal factors.

In several countries, local electronic database systems have been set up, in various sectors, such as health, legislation and environment. The small island developing state of Mauritius has recently set up one such interactive database on all information relating to environmental law and policy in the country.

This paper recommends the setting up of interactive, electronic, web-based databases on a sectoral basis at regional level. For instance, a Regional Environment Database could be developed that would integrate data and information on environmental issues of common interest to participating countries through the establishment of an Environmental Data and Information Network. In the first instance, such a database would promote co-sharing of environmental data and information, and at a later stage to sharing, and better utilisation, of human, technical and scientific resources. Furthermore, it would also help in enhancing/improving access to data and information needed for national reporting to international Conventions, e.g. the Biodiversity-related Conventions, the Rio Conventions, etc. In the long run, this may be expected to enable an integrated regional reporting region to the Conventions, thereby helping to maximum resource utilisation and optimise time and effort.