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MEASURING, MAPPING, & STRENGTHENING RIGHTS: THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY INDEX

The Environmental Democracy Index (EDI) is a new interactive platform and tool that allows users to track their countries' progress in protecting the public's rights to information, participation, and justice in environmental decision-making—principles that make up the foundation of environmental democracy.

PROBLEM | People around the world often lack the ability to participate in decisions that impact their environment—yet no independent tool currently exists to measure and map these gaps in rights.

Without credible measurement, marginalized groups are unable to advocate for a greater voice in environmental and development decisions and support outcomes that benefit people and the planet. On the other side, policy-makers who have made commitments to transparency and citizen engagement need credible and accessible tools to track progress and provide guidance.

Dozens of laws on environmental democracy have been passed in recent years—especially on the right

to information—yet laws and regulations protecting citizens’ rights to participate in decisions that impact their environment are too often either toothless, vague, or absent. Public participation opportunities are often confined to environmental impact assessments, and even then far too often the public is only consulted after the decision has been made. When these processes fail to protect the public interest, ensuring justice requires mechanisms for grievance and compensation.

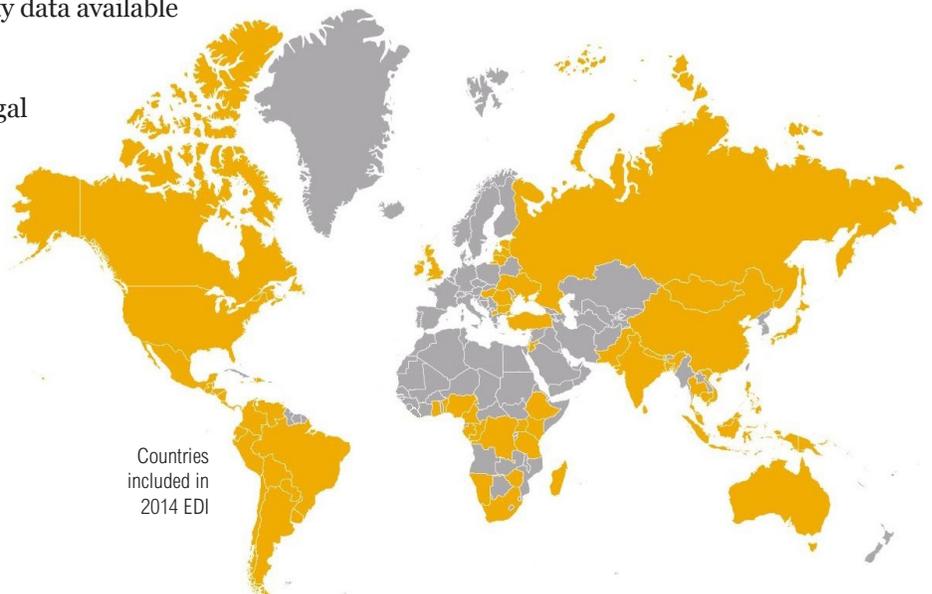
SOLUTION | For the first time, citizens and advocates will be empowered with a credible, independent source to understand what rights they have to participate in decisions about their environment. Governments will be able to benchmark their progress against an international standard, while learning about model laws and practice from around the world. Stakeholders will be able to view and download data, make comparisons, and rank countries’ performance at any level of detail.

The Environmental Democracy Index will dramatically increase a country’s ability to identify gaps in environmental rights and key aspects of performance by measuring progress against an international standard: the United Nations Environment Programme’s 2010 Bali Guidelines on Principle 10. EDI is composed of 75 legal indicators that benchmark legislative progress at the national level. In addition, 24 indicators that look at performance provide a snapshot of how these laws are faring in practice. These performance indicators will help users assess, for instance, which capital cities are proactively making air and water quality data available on a regular basis.

By establishing a centralized hub of legal analysis and implementation data on procedural rights, EDI will help governments and advocates identify gaps and prioritize reforms. EDI is designed to help address global environmental problems including:

- **AIR AND WATER POLLUTION**
- **FOREST LOSS**
- **EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY IMPACTS**
- **PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT**

EDI will synergize with other ongoing efforts—such as those of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)—to build capacity and political will to implement environmental rights.



WHY IS EDI UNIQUE?

- **BROAD EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY.** There is no index that evaluates all the elements of Principle 10. Existing transparency-related indices measure only access to information; none of them assess and rank laws and practices relating to public participation and/or access to justice.
- **INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING STANDARD.** EDI benchmarks rights against an international standard established by UNEP.
- **ACTIONABLE EVIDENCE.** The indicators are actionable and supported by legal evidence and corroborated with examples of practice.
- **ASSESSMENT OF LAWS IN PRACTICE.** A set of practice indicators, piloted in the 2014 EDI, will provide a snapshot of legal implementation of access rights.
- **TRACKING PROGRESS OVER TIME.** EDI will be carried out every two years to ensure that the scores remain relevant, useful, and comparative.

OUR APPROACH | The World Resources Institute is the Secretariat of the Access Initiative (TAI)—the world’s largest civil society network dedicated to ensuring that people have the right and ability to influence decisions that affect their communities and the natural resources on which they rely. TAI’s 14 years of experience and 200+ member network in over 50 countries will help launch advocacy campaigns and spread greater awareness of EDI.

WRI and TAI have extensive expertise developing tools, working with partners across the world, and conducting research that can be directly applied to advocacy. In addition, TAI has been deeply involved in national, regional, and international efforts to strengthen and expand access rights that are fundamental to sustainable development. The TAI network was instrumental in advocating for the establishment of the National Green Tribunal in India, strengthening public participation in Chile, and the Rio+20 Latin American and Caribbean Declaration on Principle 10.

EDI builds on the success of past tools that TAI has developed, while integrating feedback and responding to recent international developments. EDI is a unique platform that features:

- **IN-DEPTH COUNTRY INFORMATION.** Each country assessment will provide in-depth information on its scores, including a summary of areas of strength and areas for improvement and contextual information to help users better understand the economic and demographic situation of the country.
- **COMPARISONS.** EDI allows users to compare countries’ performances at multiple levels and download data on environmental democracy measures.
- **RANKINGS.** Countries around the world will be ranked according to their progress in achieving environmental democracy.
- **GOVERNMENT FEEDBACK.** In order to promote a collaborative dialogue around environmental democracy, each country page will provide a space for the government to respond and react to their country’s scores.

COUNTRY SELECTION

The 2014 EDI includes countries that are members of TAI, countries which have made commitments to the Open Government Partnership (OGP), and other countries with public interest and environmental law networks. The selection process emphasized countries which are not party to the Aarhus Convention (unless they are part of TAI or OGP), due to methodological concerns and to promote greater global diversity. If you have questions regarding country selection, please contact WRI using the email below.

SPOTLIGHT ON EDI INDICATORS

EDI includes 75 legal indicators and 24 practice indicators developed to measure the degree to which countries are implementing the UNEP Bali Guidelines. Legal indicators measure the strength of the law while practice indicators provide insight on a country's performance in implementation. This type of information can help mobilize advocacy and help policymakers prioritize reforms.

Example of a legal indicator for access to justice:
"To what extent does the law recognize broad legal standing in proceedings concerned with environmental matters?"

Example of a practice indicator on access to information: *"Are real time air quality data for the capital city of your country made available online by the government?"*

LAUNCH

EDI will launch in May 2015. To find out more about how you can participate in or support EDI, visit www.wri.org/tai or contact Jesse Worker at jworker@wri.org

Cover photo by Simone D. McCourtie, World Bank.

PARTNERSHIPS

EDI is part of the Eye on Earth Access for All (A4A) Special Initiative, developed by the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative. The goal of A4A is to promote and encourage further implementation of environmental democracy by engaging global stakeholders and advocates that strive to fill the data and information gaps in its implementation.

ABOUT TAI

TAI is a global network that promotes access to information, participation, and justice in environmental decision-making.

To find out more, visit www.accessinitiative.org

ABOUT WRI

World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research organization spanning more than 50 countries, with offices in the US, China, India, Brazil, Europe, and Indonesia. Our more than 450 experts and staff work closely with leaders to turn big ideas into action to sustain our natural resources—the foundation of economic opportunity and human well-being.



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