

An Earth Charter-Based Approach for Local Governments

Fundación Desarrollo y Naturaleza (DEYNA), SPAIN

Background

Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is the process of drawing up and implementing local sustainable development plans. It was first described in Agenda 21 - the global blueprint for sustainability that was agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio, Brazil. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 identifies local authorities as the sphere of governance closest to the people, and calls upon all local authorities to consult with their communities and develop and implement a local plan for sustainability - a 'Local Agenda 21'.



Agenda 21 mascot in Spain

Fundación Desarrollo y Naturaleza (DEYNA) was born in the same year as the Rio Summit in 1992. DEYNA has its official location in Soria and its operational address in Madrid. This foundation has developed a model of LA21, which in a

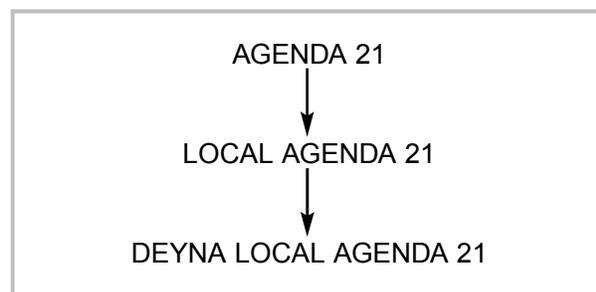
later stage incorporated the Earth Charter. This model is applicable to any municipal organization interested in implementing sustainable development initiatives.

Aim

The main objective of DEYNA's LA21 approach is to provide local communities with an effective tool to achieve sustainability through awareness and active participation from all sectors of society.

Participants

Although local government is the main target audience, throughout the LA21 elaboration process, the participation of citizens (women, youth, associations, private companies, NGOs, indigenous groups, and children) is of major importance. Participatory democracy, consensus and general awareness are central to this project.



Timeframe

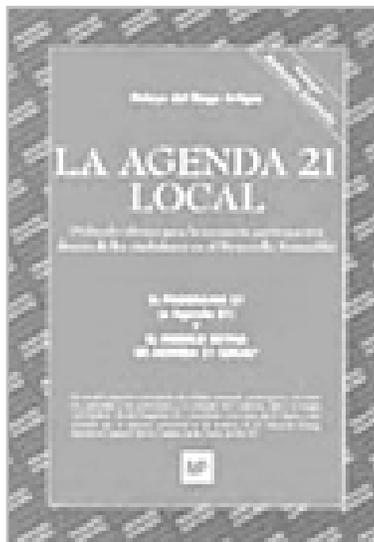
The DEYNA Agenda 21 model was initiated in 1995 and was ongoing at the time when this case was written in 2005.

Description

The DEYNA Agenda 21 model was originally designated to guide local communities towards sustainable development practices. It addresses the importance of engaging local governments in considering issues of sustainable development in decision-making.

The suggested process for developing a local Agenda 21 has three main phases:

- a) A stage where a task force is created. Meetings with local governors and the distribution of information are the basic activities in this stage.
- b) Individuals are distributed by groups (children, youth, retired people, women) where they elaborate their own pre-agenda. Then, the local Agenda 21 commission schedules meetings to select priorities and objectives, which usually takes place after a number of meetings and discussions. As a result, a local agenda is sent to the revision commission in order to be approved.



Cover of local Agenda 21 handbook developed by DEYNA

- c) Once objectives are prioritized in the simplest way for citizens to understand, the final document is transcribed and signed by the municipal authorities.

DEYNA has shared this project with a number of cities in Spain to amplify its scope. In August 2002, DEYNA developed an Earth Charter poster and distributed it to all 8,104 municipalities in Spain, in order to bring the Earth Charter to the attention of local government and to engage them to use the Earth Charter in their local development plans. In 2003, DEYNA distributed the Earth Charter to 2,000 educational institutions in the areas of Castilla and Leon, and invited them to consider endorsing and implementing it.

Funding

The economic resources are the same as those local governments have been using, with the difference that they were used for socioeconomic objectives.

Results

The Earth Charter has been endorsed by more than 200 local governments in Spain. A 200+ page handbook was developed on the Local Agenda 21 process, with a chapter devoted specifically to the Earth Charter. It became a tool awarded with a gold medal in the programme of International Projects at EXPO 2000 in Hanover, Germany. The handbook continues to guide local communities in Spain.

Conclusion

Agenda 21 talks about poverty, excessive consumerism, health and education, cities and agricultures, among other topics. It links all sectors of society in the difficult task of adopting a sustainable way of living. The documented approach developed by DEYNA is a contribution

for all those municipalities that wish to use this model developed by a Spanish foundation. The DEYNA model proposes a series of actions where democracy and participatory action become the

main strategic methods to take part in political-administrative actions, using the Earth Charter as an important ethical framework in this process.

This case was directly drawn from the following source:

- Local Agenda 21 handbook developed by DEYNA