DRAFT Session II Report
How to Address Social Concerns?

Moderator: J. Kotra
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Introduction

To address the means for addressing social concerns, all of the discussion groups recognized that a variety of tools exist. Among them are tools for sharing information, specific programs offering incentives, financial and otherwise, as well as modifications of institutional behaviors, both general and specific. However, many groups emphasized that social concerns and effective solutions for them, when they exist, are highly site- and community-specific. The selection of appropriate tools, therefore, can only be approached after the sources or origins of site-specific concerns has been identified.   Specific sources of concerns that emerged from presentation of Canadian case studies were discussed, as well as general and specific examples from other countries and programs.   All of the concerns discussed, or to which allusion was made, involved the absence or erosion of trust. A deficit of trust may arise from lack of familiarity, misinformation or missing information, changing sensibilities of society over time, specific past failures of particular institutions, or inadequate general education. Virtually all of the tools discussed by the groups for addressing social concerns were also means for building--or rebuilding--social trust.

What kinds of concerns are best addressed by economic solutions? Other types of solution? What about the needs of future generations?

Regardless of whether an economic solution or other mitigation measures are applied, most of the discussion groups observed that *process* is as important as the particular solution applied. The fairness, integrity and transparency of process must be well worked out.

Specific observations about application of economic solutions included:

Economic solutions work for many of the concerns identified, but safety is not to be bought.

Moneys should not be distributed indiscriminately. Financial incentives work best if they are, instead, linked to specific compensation issues. The aim should be an enduring development plan for the community that includes, but is not limited to the facility.

Financial incentives provided one community can, and on at least one occasion in Canada did, create competition and conflict.

Failure to address needs and concerns of adjacent or neighboring communities is a risk if the target audience for incentives is drawn too narrowly.

If joined too early in the process, discussions of economic incentives may "taint" the credibility of assertions about safety, environmental, and even economic impacts.

A sound, accountable infrastructure, under the control of a neutral party, is desirable to administer funding and incentive distribution.

Attachment 2

With regard to the needs of future generations, consideration should be given to providing funding mechanisms/devices that will ensure resources for long-term monitoring as well as unforseen repair and/or remediation.

Are there opportunities for public participation throughout the project lifetime? How are national and local precesses, roles and powers articulated? Is balance achieved between local needs and national imperatives?

To the extent that the various groups addressed these questions directly, most agreed that workshop participants had been given ample evidence that through Canada's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, the public has opportunity for consultation throughout the project lifetime, both nationwide (for choosing an option) and with affected communities (for defining acceptable concept, siting and design). This is both necessary and appropriate. It was recognized by at least one group that distinct regional and cultural differences could be discerned with differing social values and concerns (*e.g.* Aboriginal peoples, Northern provinces, more industrialized Southern provinces, *etc.*). Communities in regions of very low population density face special challenges when attempting to coordinate with others wishing to raise similar social concerns.

Are concerned citizens and communities satisfied that they are treated in an equitable matter? What are the views of neighboring communities? Of special interest groups?

By and large, most groups recognized that communities facing disposal of radioactive waste, or location of other undesirable facilities, approach any consultation with strong concerns that they have not and are not being treated equitably. Organizations should recognize from the outset that communities may well perceive that they have not been treated equally. Often richer communities have more influence than less advantaged ones. Trust is all the harder to build in communities that (for reasons perhaps unrelated to a proposed action) already feel marginalized and less informed. For these reasons, all of the groups identified continuity and integrity of process as being of paramount importance. Also noted was the value of involving "unaffected" neighboring communities in dialogue to create witnesses of credible behavior.

In cases where risks were neither immediate or large, stigma and the economic impact of that stigma were seen as driving factors, as well as concerns about future generations and concern or fear that government may not be there for the long-term. While stigma may not be permanent, when communities are experiencing the rejection and measuring the losses, responsible institutions cannot just say "give it time." The very real problems resulting from such perceptions must be addressed in real time, or feelings of inequity may become exacerbated. Likewise, addressing forthrightly concerns about potential losses of property value and other economic losses is a powerful demonstration that institutions are listening to and responsive to issues that matter to local communities.

Can any impacts on social trust be observed at this time?

As noted above, the importance of trust, establishing it, rebuilding it, enhancing it, and retaining it animated most of the discussions during this session. Among the many observations noted by the various discussion groups were:

Social trust takes time and is built upon relationships.
Trust is hard to build and easy to lose.

Trust can be built on ignorance, but is less robust, over the long term, than trust founded on knowledge and understanding.

Trust built on knowledge requires a process of informing people and may, at least initially, decrease trust.

Institutions that declare their interests and their motivations up front and openly are more trusted.

It is difficult to trust organizations if people don't understand who the players are and their respective roles.

"Triple bottom line reporting," where corporations ascribe monetary value to environmental and social costs and benefits, is improving behavior of organizations and increasing trust. Although driven by monetary concern, the reputation of corporations are getting more scrutiny and corporations understand that the public perceptions that emerge, for better or for worse, do affect their profits.

Information, education takes time, and past history, for better or worse, plays a role in a community's willingness to trust.

Locally-driven solutions are more likely to be trusted

What changes may be required in the managing organizations to address or resolve social concerns?

Virtually all of the discussion groups acknowledged that addressing social concerns requires commitment of adequate resource. That is, resources to provide for safety, resources for monitoring, resources for early, frequent and long-term consultation and information exchange with affected communities, resources for appropriate compensation and resources for visible, and long-term involvement, both with the project and with the community. Integrity of process is also essential. This means that commitments must be fulfilled and legal agreements honored. Specific observations included:

Top management needs to meet with local communities regularly.

Those in authority need to be accessible

Government, regulators, implementers all need to recognize that social concerns are important and commit resources to address them.

Organizations need to reach out to identify concerns directly and address the concerns as they find them

Organizations should cultivate a reputation as a responsible and honest neighbor by reporting all operating incidents honestly and in a timely manner.

Organizations should work to establish a history of providing balanced, credible information

Organizations must demonstrate long-term commitment to safety.

Institutions should be pro-active in identifying issues and concerns.

Managing organizations should recognize that addressing social concerns is not the same as "community relations."

Proving resources for communities to obtain independent expertise can help mitigate concerns[1].

Expertise must be credible and, ideally, free of an agenda. If agenda exists, it must be clear.

Adequate funding must be provided to ensure independence.

Information policy should involve individuals who are part of and respected by the community

Managing organizations should take the time to explore solutions with the public on a step-wise basis.

Managing organizations should explain clearly the roles and responsibilities of the various players at each step and overall

Always have a "Plan B" to demonstrate that responsible organizations recognize that things can go wrong.

Involve local opinion leaders to both formulate solutions and implement them.

Create a formal, but flexible structure for the relationship between the implementor and the community.

To be most effective in addressing social concerns, organizations need to become :
more adaptable to change, more open minded, willing to embrace social sciences as part of the decision making processes. Ultimately, they may have to accept, that when it comes to addressing social concerns, institutions are not in full control of process–they may need to be willing to give up some measure of control in exchange for greater social trust and acceptance.

---

[1] In some countries the public is satisfied with the regulator as the provider of this independence. In others, additional expertise, independent of both the implementer and the regulator is desired.