

Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR)

A Project of the Arctic Council

SUMMARY

The work on an Arctic Human Development Report was initiated at the November 2001 meeting of the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) and endorsed by the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) of the Arctic Council (AC), in response to a request from the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR). A task force drafted a project proposal for the May meeting of SDWG and SAOs in Oulu 2002 where the initiative was accepted as a new project of the SDWG, to be formally adopted by the AC Ministerial Meeting in Inari October 2002.

A comprehensive assessment of human conditions in the entire circumpolar region has not been carried out previously. The Report is designed to be a valuable contribution to the Sustainable Development Programme of the Arctic Council. Given the nature of northern economies and environments, there should be particular emphasis on common denominators of human-environment relations in the Arctic as well as on the ties between individual well-being and the health of northern communities.

The Report can provide an instrument in assessing progress toward sustainable human development, a tool to educate the public, and a handbook for policy makers engaged in international cooperation in the Arctic. As a baseline, the AHDR will not only identify problems encountered in the North today but also lift out success stories and processes to be studied and adapted as fuel for building human and social capacity and enhancing community viability across the region.

The bulk of the AHDR can be synthesized from already existing research results. Recognized social scientists and others will provide scientifically sound and up-to-date materials for the report, which should also include a strong component consisting of contributions from the people of the region that will give insights into the everyday circumstances and thoughts of residents from different walks of life. The final structure and table of contents of the AHDR will be subject to the deliberations and judgments of a Report Steering Committee but the Task Force envisions a report containing thirteen substantive chapters along with a preface, an executive summary, and a concluding chapter. The chapters include: Introduction to Sustainable Human Development in the Arctic; Arctic Demography; Arctic Economies; Arctic environments and Resource Governance in the Arctic; Arctic Political Systems; Arctic Legal Issues; Arctic Cultures; Rapid Social Change; Human Health in the Arctic; Human and Social Capital in the Arctic; Community Viability in the Arctic; Gender Issues in the Arctic; International Cooperation in the Arctic; and Conclusions and Key Issues.

The organization, management procedures and final product for the proposed AHDR draw on experience gained from the preparation of the concise Arctic Monitoring and Assessment (AMAP) 1997 report and the 2001 Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) report and on the arrangements created for the ongoing work of Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), including a Report Steering Committee, a Secretariat, a Multiple-Source Scientific Strategy and a Lead Author Procedure. The principal product will be a scientifically-based overview and assessment written for the non-specialist, highlighting issues of particular concern for Arctic livelihoods, human well-being and community viability. The goal is to have the initial AHDR completed in time for presentation at the fall 2004 ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council.

The development of an AHDR is a timely initiative that promises to provide a coherent framework for the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Programme and as a periodically updated baseline can play a key role in identifying priority issues for the work of the Sustainable Development Working Group during the foreseeable future.

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