

provide the residents with the information, skills, and tools to more effectively achieve their goals. These mechanisms may lead to better documentation and assessment of an environmental and/or public health problem. Documentation and assessment mechanisms range from neighborhood surveys to the use of mapping tools through the EPA's geographic information systems. A particularly helpful tool in this regard would be the Environmental Justice Mapper which is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/whereyoulive.html>. Other capacity-building mechanisms may involve increasing the community's ability to understand the permitting process and to use legal tools to participate in the environmental decisionmaking process, such as those described in the Environmental Law Institute's "A Citizen's Guide to Using Environmental Laws to Secure Environmental Justice." This publication is available at: [http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/citizen\\_guide\\_ej.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/citizen_guide_ej.pdf).

A third type of capacity-building mechanism may involve enhancing the community's understanding and appreciation of the partnership development process, consensus building, and the use of alternative dispute resolution to address local environmental and/or public health concerns.

#### *What Does the OEJ Mean by Constructive Engagement and Collaborative Problem-Solving?*

Constructive engagement and collaborative problem-solving are essential approaches to address local environmental and/or public health concerns. A key starting point is the community's involvement in clearly formulating and articulating a goal to be accomplished (e.g., establishment of a health clinic or medical screening program; or replacement of diesel buses with clean fuel buses). Constructive engagement means outreach and education to affected community residents and other stakeholders. Collaborative problem-solving requires an understanding of the need to seek other partners such as industry; federal, state and local governments; academia; and environmental organizations to address the community's environmental and/or public health concerns. It involves developing strategic partnerships, by including all organizations which can play a role in addressing the problems. Collaborative problem-solving involves a well-designed and strategic plan to sustain the partnership and to work towards

addressing the local environmental and/or public health issues.

### **III. Description of the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model**

The elements of the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model are discussed in detail in below. A sample of a project where the elements of the Model have been used is also provided below. The elements of the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model are discussed in detail below. A sample of a project where the elements of the Model have been used is also included below. More examples of how the Model has been applied can be found on the Internet, the "Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice Status Report, (February 2002). (<http://epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/iwg-status-02042002.pdf>), an evaluation report for six of the 2002 demonstration projects <http://www.epa.gov/evaluate/ej.htm> and, the recent 2003 List of Revitalization Projects <http://epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/iwg-2003.pdf>.

#### *1. Issue Identification, Community Vision, and Strategic Goal Setting*

Long-standing concerns in the affected community tend to surface from the efforts of one individual or a small group of individuals who are particularly active in the community. These concerns can include "substantive issues" such as high asthma rates, children suffering from high levels of lead poisoning, undesirable land uses, the close proximity of residences to pollution-generating facilities, the lack of parks and recreational areas, or the lack of access to health care or medical monitoring. These concerns also can include "process issues" such as the need to strengthen public participation, identifying leaders or leadership development, improved education of stakeholders, and trust among stakeholder groups to work together. Collaborative problem-solving stresses moving beyond merely identifying the issues to formulating viable strategies to address and resolve them. Involving the broader community in a planning process usually leads to greater clarity in the goals set, common understanding and trust, and the ability to act collectively. Strategic goals should not only address the problem but also lead to greater community capacity, viable partnerships, and leveraging of resources-institutional, technical, and financial. A key step in the goal-setting process is determining whether or not

the conditions are ripe for a collaborative problem-solving process. The following list provides several important steps a community-based organization can take to identify an issue, articulate a community vision, and set strategic goals:

- Building upon existing leadership and expertise in the affected community;
- Conducting local education and outreach efforts, fact-finding and assessments;
- Involving affected community residents early in identifying concerns and crystallizing issues;
- Identifying early on potential partners from all stakeholder groups;
- Building upon a strong understanding of community history and practices;
- Building upon a clearly articulated community vision of its goals; and,
- Employing tools for involving the affected community residents in planning project activities.

#### *2. Community Capacity Building*

Capacity building refers to mechanisms which provide the community-based organizations with information, skills, and tools to more effectively achieve the community's goals. These mechanisms may involve better documentation and assessment of a problem, use of consensus building, and alternative dispute resolution. Capacity building efforts should focus on residents of the affected community as well as other stakeholders. Leadership skills in areas such as strategic thinking, management processes, and effective communications are very critical. The ability to build trust and build partnerships across stakeholder groups is one such leadership skill. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to nurturing the leadership skills of key individuals in a project. Capacity building and leadership development can be accomplished through a range of activities, from attendance at meetings, workshops, and training sessions to participation in mentoring opportunities. Several key steps toward community capacity building and to acquiring successful leadership skills could include:

- Building upon existing organizational capacity in the affected community;
- Identifying specific capacity building mechanisms which are tailored to community needs and project goals;
- Fostering capacity through training, mentoring, technical assistance, or resource support;