



WORLD
RESOURCES
INSTITUTE

Strengthening The Right To Information for People and the Environment: Lessons & Findings

The
Access
Initiative

PHOTO SOURCE: ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK/FLICKR



MEET ADI, AN INDONESIAN POND FISHERMAN



Photo Source: WALHI/Friends of the Earth Indonesia

LIFE ALONG THE POLLUTED CIUJUNG



Photo Source: ICEL

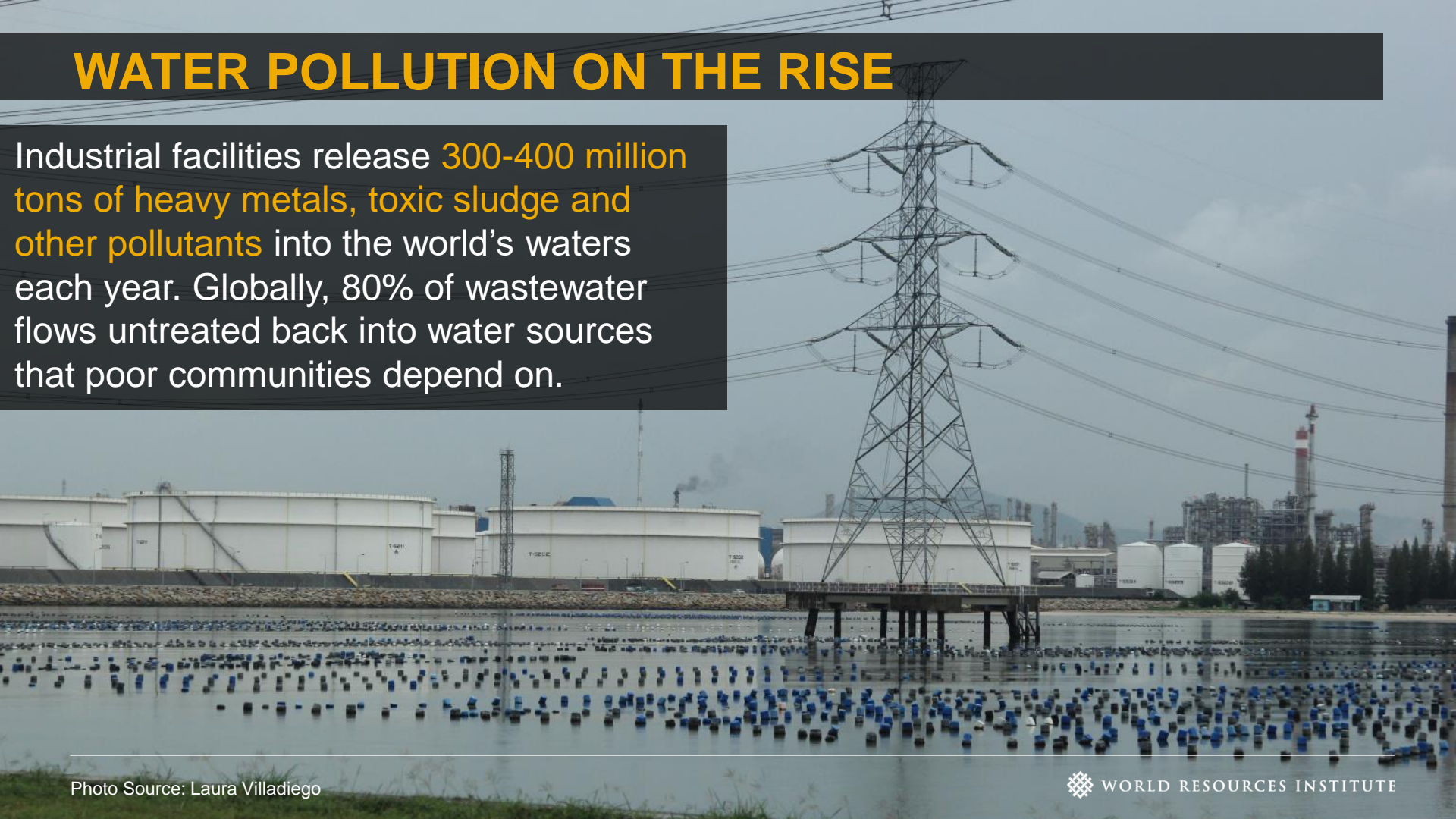
STRUGGLING FOR CHANGE



Photo Source: ICEL

WATER POLLUTION ON THE RISE

Industrial facilities release 300-400 million tons of heavy metals, toxic sludge and other pollutants into the world's waters each year. Globally, 80% of wastewater flows untreated back into water sources that poor communities depend on.



THE COST OF UNSAFE WATER

884 million people lack even a basic drinking-water service, and an estimated 842,000 people die from diseases caused by unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.



POLLUTION & GOOD GOVERNANCE



Countries around the world recognize the need for transparency, participation and accountability in environmental decision-making.

THE STRIPE PROJECT



Photo Source: Laura Villadiego

WHAT WE DO

STRIPE focuses on addressing pollution and environmental health in local communities.

We conduct research and develop advocacy campaigns to achieve policy and legal reforms.



CITIZEN-LED ACTION

STRIPE helps communities drive change by:

- Empowering citizens to use Right to Information (RTI) laws to access water quality information
- Helping them understand government agencies' roles and responsibilities
- Supporting evidence-based advocacy campaigns



INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY CHANGES

STRIPE partners work with governments and civil society organizations to accelerate policy changes by:

- Prioritizing the proactive release of information in legal frameworks
- Working with both local and national government officials
- Improving public participation forums



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OUTCOMES

STRIPE outcomes include:

- Increased use of RTI laws and participation in water governance forums
- Improved utilization of pollution information in advocacy and public education campaigns
- Expanded government disclosure of environmental information
- Better enforcement of existing permits



THIRSTING FOR JUSTICE

Transparency and Poor People's Struggle
for Clean Water in Indonesia, Mongolia,
and Thailand

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



Laws | What access to information policies and practices exist in each country? What pollution information is required to be disclosed both proactively and reactively?

Implementation | How are these laws and regulations implemented in practice?

Local Communities' Access | Is information reaching local communities in forms that they can use to address growing pollution problems?

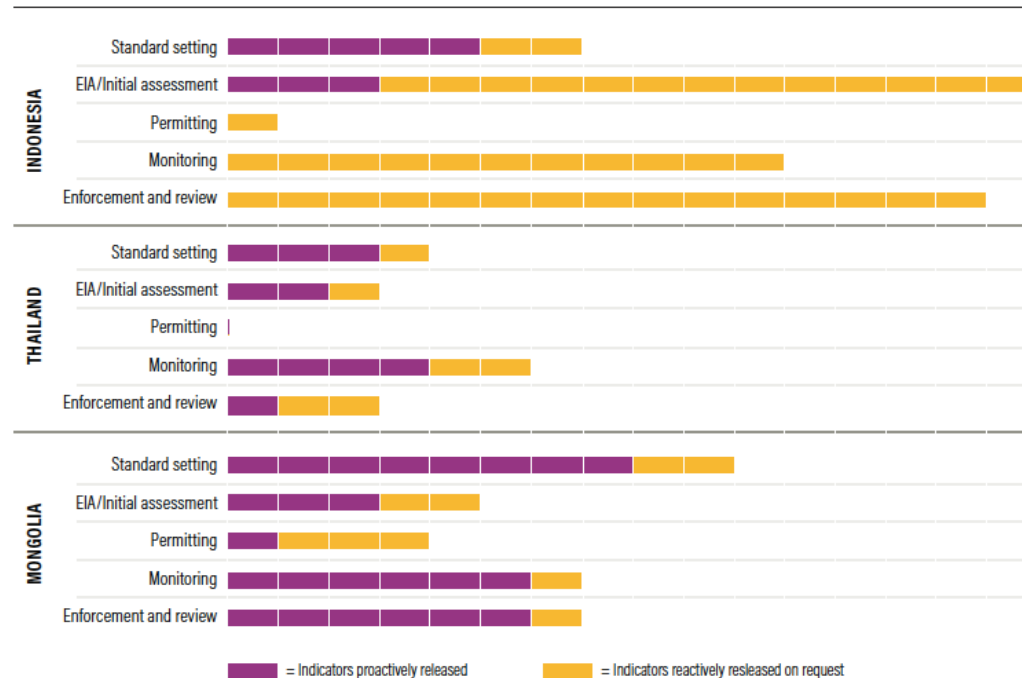
COMMUNITIES NEED LOCAL, FACILITY-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Table 1 | Type of Pollution Information Communities Need

SOURCES OF POLLUTION	EXAMPLE
General company information	Parent company or owner information, its location, and environmental officer contact details
Pollutant information including specific types and discharge quantities	Often imbedded in water quality monitoring reports; includes locations of water monitoring and pollution discharge sites
Regulatory permitting documents	Discharge permit limits, EIAs, and compliance and enforcement reports
General water quality of local water bodies	Ambient water quality standards and monitoring reports
Mitigation or cleanup efforts or requirements	Specific company actions and/or government issued mitigation or clean up orders
EFFECTS OF POLLUTION	EXAMPLE
Potential short-term and long-term health impacts of pollutants being released	Public health assessments; EIAs
Potential health impact of using contaminated water	Ongoing monitoring and assessments of health impact of drinking, bathing, and other household uses
Biological monitoring	Ongoing monitoring and assessments of impact to livestock, agriculture, and/or fishing

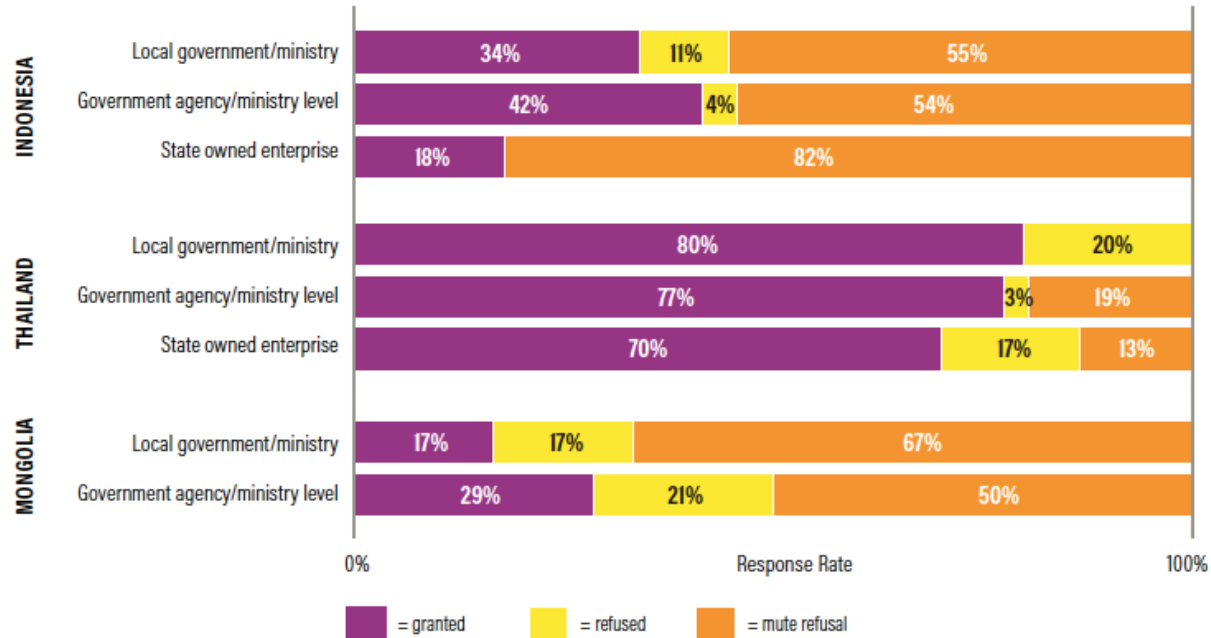
STRONG TRANSPARENCY LAWS ≠ ACCESS TO WATER POLLUTION INFORMATION IN PRACTICE

Figure 4 | Number of Indicators of Public Information Disclosed in Five Regulatory Categories in Three Studied Countries



STRONG TRANSPARENCY LAWS ≠ ACCESS TO WATER POLLUTION INFORMATION IN PRACTICE

Figure 6 | Response Rates to Information Requests by Country and Type of Public Authority



LOCAL COMMUNITIES STILL FACE BARRIERS

Local community members, many of whom live below the poverty line, can neither access nor understand the information they need to make informed decisions about their water use.



RECOMMENDATIONS

A radical shift in information sharing is needed to protect people from using contaminated water that could harm their health and livelihoods. Governments must:

- Address local communities' information needs
- Improve implementation
- Increase public dialogue and engagement



THE WAY FORWARD

Key lessons learned:

- We must ensure that meaningful public engagement and citizen-driven accountability mechanisms are embedded in regulatory processes and that they are fully implemented.
- We should focus on empowering communities through variety of tools.
- Solutions need to include technical and political processes.
- We need to strategically engage all stakeholders as a scaling approach.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What are some of the strategies you used in your work to ensure people have the space and voice to effectively participate in decisions on clean water?
- What are the challenges in your country in obtaining information about water quality, facility specific and enforcement and compliance information?
- How do we ensure Social Accountability approaches support assessing progress on SDG 6.b?