

Acknowledgements

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BACKGROUND

The Training Manual on Integrated Environmental Assessment and Reporting in Africa is the first in a series of training materials and guidelines whose main objective is to build capacity in the region in environmental assessment and reporting at different levels. The other materials include:

- Africa Environment Information Network (AEIN) implementation guidelines
- Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) Data and Indicators tool
- Guidelines for National Integrated Environmental Reporting in Africa (NIER)
- Methodology for the Preparation of AEO Cities Reports
- Presentations which highlight the environment outlook reporting process

These and other related materials have been prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in collaboration with many stakeholders, including government agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) has, through its Africa Programme, coordinated this initiative. The implementation of this initiative is within the context of UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) decisions and those of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. The decisions relate to the implementation of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process as well as the AEO and AEIN processes. Both the AEO and AEIN were mandated by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN).

At the global level, the GEO process, which incorporates different activities including capacity-building and production of a report series and other materials, aims to:

- Track yearly environmental issues and developments, highlighting them as well as emerging issues and technological developments for policymakers and other stakeholders in the GEO Year Book report series, .
- Undertake, once every five years, a comprehensive and policy-relevant assessment of the state of the global environment, analysing environmental trends, their driving forces, current policies and emerging issues. The GEO reports also assess the impacts of the changing environment on people and ecosystems.

The AEO process is an AMCEN initiative which started in 2000 and whose objective is to monitor sustainable environmental management in Africa and provide a framework for national and sub-regional environmental reporting. It provides a more comprehensive assessment of the regional environment compared to the GEO report series, which is more aggregated to provide a global picture of environmental issues and trends. It is also designed to support the policy initiatives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), particularly the implementation of the Environment Action Plan.

The GEO process also facilitates capacity-building at a global level, enhancing North-South and South-South cooperation and interaction in environmental assessment and reporting. This takes the form of hands-on training, professional exchanges, and production of training manuals and guidelines. The preparation and publishing of the materials highlighted above is in the context of the overall GEO process, and they form a body of knowledge aimed at enhancing the skills and expertise in environmental assessment and reporting in Africa.

For Africa, this level of the effort is also in support of regional initiatives “to provide reliable assessments of, and information on, environmental conditions to guide policy formulation and decision making, and to create an informed citizenry who feel empowered to act intelligently at their own levels in managing environmental resources for the benefit of themselves and society as a whole” (UNEP 2003).

The training to be supported by this manual and the other materials builds on previous efforts exerted in Africa. Several initiatives in environmental assessment have been attempted in the region since the early 1970s to build skills to make environmental information available for decision making and policy formulation. However, most of these initiatives were pilot activities whose information was used mostly in narrowly defined project-level decision making or in building databases for specific objectives.

Capacity-building in the management of environmental information was likewise directed at the project level. One of the more successful broad-based programs in capacity-building launched in the early 1990s, was the World Bank's Programme on Environmental Information Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (EIS-SSA). The main objective of the programme was to assist sub-Saharan countries to build sufficient capacity for assessing their needs in environmental management and sustainable development.

National Conservation Strategies (NCS) and National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs), which were adopted by governments in the region, provided a basis for further capacity-building and other programmes at the national level. Of particular importance in this regard, were the:

- UNEP Environment and Natural Resources Information Network (ENRIN);
- Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS); and
- Environmental Information Systems on the Internet (SISEI).

At the sub-regional level, significant capacity-building efforts were implemented under the:

- Regional Environment Information Management Programme (REIMP) in Central Africa;

- Southern African Development Community (SADC) Environmental Training and Education Sub-programme (SETES); and
- Southern African Network for Training and Research on the Environment (SANTREN) in Southern Africa.

The list of initiatives highlighted above is not comprehensive but is a good indicator of the multiplicity of efforts that tried to create skills in the management of environmental information and the awareness of their relevance to sustainable development. While technical and technological issues were appropriately addressed, organizational issues were not. There are two challenges that relate to organizational issues:

- The multiplicity of sources of information that require standardizing to facilitate cooperation among the people involved in the disparate projects in this field. Adjustments were required in the data collected and used by individual groups, to obtain overall assessments of the state of the environment. This challenge has received a lot of attention at regional, sub-regional and national levels, for example, through the AEIN and the UN Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA) Commission on Development Information (CODI). This links into a global concern for standardized data that can be used for multiple purposes.
- The ability to integrate this information with the broader issues relevant to decision making and sustainable development. Environmental assessment for sustainable development has to be integrated with social and economic issues. There must be "an understanding of the development aspirations of society; the characteristics of the *environment* within which "development" will take place, the conflicts that could arise, and the means of resolving them as well as acceptable trade-offs" (UNEP 2003). A good sense must also be developed of the alternatives in terms of development paths and their potential future impacts. This manual facilitates capacity-building to overcome this challenge.

Building capacity in integrated environmental assessment (IEA) and reporting encourages broad-based participation of civil society in environmental policy formulation. In a region where the majority of people are often not involved in formulating environmental policy, the AEO capacity-building initiative is an opportunity to develop the skills of governmental agencies in the preparation of IEA reports, and to enhance the skills of civil society organizations (CSOs) in environmental policy formulation.

Manual content and design

The main objective of the manual is to enhance understanding the role of environmental assessment and reporting to policy processes and sustainable development. Ultimately, a good environmental assessment report can only be effective if it conveys scientific developments and trends for the policymaker to respond with appropriate decisions and policies to address a particular problem of challenge.

The manual is designed in modular format and may be used either in its entirety or in modules, depending on the duration of the training period. The content is broad enough to be applicable at different spatial levels – from the city level to national, sub-regional, regional, and ultimately, the global level. The manual can be used by both trainers – individuals involved in IEA and reporting or lecturers; and trainees – individuals who are keen to build upon their expertise or who are completely new to the area of environmental assessment and reporting. There are many case studies to illustrate the theoretical aspects of the manual. The expected length of the training period is five days of intensive discussion, but the manual is designed in such a way

that trainers may add or leave out sections for a specific training session to shorten or lengthen the suggested period. The training is expected to take place in a workshop setting, but, once again, trainers may modify the format to suit their preference.

Structure and conduct

The manual recognizes the importance of building the skills to conduct IEA and reporting. However, the process of learning used in the AEO/GEO process and followed in this manual, tries to make trainees realize that there is as much value in facilitating the participation of a wide range of stakeholders for whom the assessment reports are prepared as in making the information accessible. It is very important that trainees bring to the training workshop data from their own daily work. A questionnaire is attached at the end of the manual for trainees to complete, and preferably send to the training centre ahead of the actual training session. This helps the trainer(s) to tailor the whole course to address the needs of all the trainees. As an alternative and back up, the trainers are encouraged to build up data, probably from local sources, to use for the training workshop in case the data sent in by trainees is insufficient.

The manual follows a sequence of questions answered with the participation of the trainees:

1. What is happening to the environment and why (state and pressure)?
2. What is the consequence for the environment and humanity (impact)?
3. What is being done about it and how effective is it (response)?
4. What could be alternative futures of environmentally sustainable (or unsustainable) development (scenarios)?
5. What alternative action could be taken (options for action)?

There are eleven modules which trainees cover to answer these questions and to realize their value in IEA and reporting. Each of the modules has a brief introductory lecture, participatory exercises, case studies, and discussions. In addition, some of the modules have demonstrations and/or individual study sections.

Module 1 gives the background to IEA and its relevance to recent efforts to develop policies for sustainable development in Africa. Module 2 discusses the meaning of IEA and reporting while Module 3 looks at two approaches that have been used in the preparation of the AEO-1 and AEO-2 reports. Module 4 discusses the management of the IEA and reporting process. Modules 5 introduces the concept of peer review and its benefits and possible contributions. Module 6 focuses on the preparation for the assessment process and how to communicate the message of the activity itself, while Module 7 goes through the steps of assessing the state of the environment. Module 8 is a role playing exercises for trainees to conduct a mock IEA. Modules 9 illustrates the link between environmental assessment and policy formulation and Module 10 highlights one possible theme to the assessment, which is Human Vulnerability to Environmental Change. The last module, Module 11, discusses the development of scenarios and the alternative paths that may be taken in different situations, and how to assess their potential impact.

Course evaluation

At the end of the training course, an evaluation is requested from each individual trainee. The evaluation allows trainees to highlight points that will assist trainers to improve their delivery of the course. The trainers are requested to forward these comments to the DEWA Africa Regional Coordinator to facilitate the review and revision of the manual over time.

Figure 0.1: Countries and sub-regions of Africa



Reference

UNEP (2003). *Africa Environment Information Network (AEIN): Framework for Capacity Building in Integrated Environmental Assessments and Reporting in Africa*. United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi.

http://www.unep.org/dewa/africa/docs/en/AEIN_framework_Document.pdf