

Module 4 – Managing the Assessment and Reporting Process

Overview

This module discusses the involvement of various groups of people, including the public, in the integrated assessment and reporting process. It also outlines some of the arrangements for its management.

In this module you will learn:

- Why the IEA and reporting process is important
- Who should get involved in it and at what level
- How important issues in the process should be decided
- How the process could be managed at different levels

4.1 Introduction

Environmental assessment and reporting should be looked at as a continuous process. Its organization and management must be carefully planned to allow scientists in various fields of environmental pursuits to choose the important issues for analysis in collaboration with a broad but manageable range of civil society members. Also the institutional setting that is entrusted with the leadership should have a legal mandate to conduct or provide leadership in all aspects of environmental assessment and reporting, and to expect the participation of other institutions as an obligation.

4.2 Importance of the process

The IEA and reporting process is important first and foremost because it is in itself a learning process. With a wide range of stakeholders involved from different sectors of society to influence decision making, it becomes a capacity-building process encouraging stakeholders, both individuals and institutions, to learn about the process of sustainable development and environmental protection. Through interaction to develop and produce an assessment report, more and more people learn about how they can work together for the greater good. This is important in all situations but is particularly important where expertise and financial resources are limited. The interest in sustainable development spreads from individual sectors or ministries, to a set of stakeholders in all sectors providing a much broader base for:

- Supporting sustainable development by identifying economic, social and environmental linkages and the synergies among them. By answering the questions in Figure 3.1 in sequence, IEA and reporting provides a step-by-step linkage between human activity and environment. "What is happening to the environment?" and "Why is it happening?" directly link the pressures humankind is putting on the environment. This information is essential before we can decide to link the state of the current environment to policy formulation. In asking "What is being done about it and how effective is it?", we can evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies in mitigating the problems of the environment. Lastly, by asking "What will happen if we do not act now?", we present a new basis for influencing decision making. Since these questions are asked all the time, we offer a continuous basis for influencing policy formulation for sustainable development with subsequent IEA reports. Some linkages will obviously be more beneficial and provide greater synergies than others. Skills should be developed to identify the most beneficial linkages.
- Exploring linkages between a particular policy, the economy, society and the environment. If the part of the IEA and reporting process stated above is carried out successfully and continuously with appropriate participation/consultation of a wide range of stakeholders, it will encourage decision-makers to develop sustainable development strategies and policies. Through a learning process, assumptions and expectations are clearly identified through the participation of a large number of stakeholders, and decision-makers will learn how to build support for their goals.
- Developing appropriate policy packages. Often, a country or a region may have a specific theme as the focus of its sustainable development effort and may need a

set of related policies to achieve this theme. The policy package developed for sustainable development may differ and IEA and reporting may be used to develop the appropriate package for a region or country. Poverty alleviation, for example, has been the main focus of NEPAD in the African region in line with the MDGs. It is a major challenge in practice to put together a package of policies that will promote equity (i.e. greatest benefits to the poorest people) with policies for sustainable development. Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA) and reporting provides a good basis for meeting this challenge.

- Encouraging good governance and ownership of the report. The report produced using IEA and reporting is very important as a final document. However, the process of its production is just as important particularly in making those who produce it feel a sense of ownership of the report. The involvement of a wide range of government departments on one hand, and the private sector, industry, academia, local communities and other domestic interest groups helps to ensure that a wide range of views are considered. It also increases transparency and accountability in decision making, and helps to build consensus and to strengthen national capacities through doing. Widespread participation in the process and good governance increase the chances that the report will be taken seriously by both the public and the decision-makers.
- Bringing together fragmented knowledge and streamlining issues for policy formulation. The range of knowledge required in IEA and reporting is to be found in many government departments and in institutions and organizations outside government. Table 4.1 gives the main topics on which knowledge was required in writing the Uganda State of Environment Report in 2001 (national level) and the West African State of the Environment (sub-regional level) respectively, implying that the sources of information needed were many and varied. Investigation of each of these themes required cooperation from a range of Departments at the national level for Uganda, and the regional level (for West Africa) normally used to fighting for their turf. The potential for tension along professional, bureaucratic, religious or political lines is considerable. Trust, confidence and cooperation both between organizations and key individuals are key for success, but they can only occur over time and need facilitating

Table 4.1: Major topics for which data was acquired for Uganda's 2000/2001 SOE Report

Theme	Issue for policy formulation
Land	degradation, tenure
Forests and woodlands	deforestation
Wetlands	degradation
Freshwater	access and quality
Biodiversity	loss of biodiversity and introduction of alien species
Urban areas	unplanned settlements, sanitation, waste management

Theme	Issue for policy formulation
Atmosphere	climate change, variability, and air pollution
Human health and environment	disease prevalence, HIV/AIDS
Environmental disasters	wars and conflicts, droughts, floods

Source: NEMA 2000

Comment [M1]: I am assuming that this is the source? CHRIS TO CONFIRM.

- Facilitating cooperation between policymakers across government and beyond. Bringing together the fragmented knowledge stated above for IEA and reporting requires the cooperation of policymakers and scientists, some of whom may have had little cooperation with each other before. The process is a learning experience in cooperation across sectors, disciplines, and ideological lines whose value goes beyond the report produced.

4.3 Involvement in the integrated environmental assessment and reporting process

African communities have extreme contrasts in social class, levels of awareness of the development processes, levels of education, etc. Poverty is widespread and new ideas which cannot be easily linked to poverty reduction are very difficult to communicate. You may therefore need extra effort to link civil society and decision-makers. It is advisable that you do not take the involvement (particularly of the poorer communities) of civil society in the environmental assessment process for granted. The management of IEA and reporting encourages the participation of all sections of society in areas of the report where their contribution is important. The rural communities would particularly contribute indigenous knowledge on environmental issues, some of which may not be readily available to urban-based decision-makers. This attitude to involvement in environmental assessment should be extended to all sections of civil society.

There are three major levels of involvement in the IEA and reporting process:

- Information dissemination: this is a fairly low level of involvement. Here, civil society is informed of policies either about to be made or already made on the environment. They may comment and their comments may be listened to but may not influence the final outcome of environmental policy that is eventually practiced.
- Consultation: this is a higher level of involvement under which, at some point before environmental policy is put into practice, opinions of stakeholders are solicited. That point may be before or after the policy is drawn up for discussion. Those drafting the policy are expected to take into consideration the comments and advice that they get from the stakeholders that they consult.
- Participation: this is a three-way and continuous communication process between stakeholders, those who draft environmental policy, and decision-makers. Policy is the result of the complete and direct involvement of all the three groups, and when

it is necessary to change various components of existing policy, the same level of involvement is expected.

While it is desirable that civil society should participate widely in environmental policy formulation under IEA and reporting, it is not practical that all sectors of society will participate to the same degree. For practical reasons, you should identify those stakeholders who are most involved in a specified part of environmental policy to directly participate in its formulation. Those who are indirectly affected may be consulted, while those whose interest is tangential to the policy may be informed. Realize that no group of people may be suitable for designing, drafting and formulating all environmental policy under IEA and reporting. Table 4.2 gives some possible illustrations where different levels of involvement may be expected. Information must be available at an early stage to enable different groups of civil society to get involved in the environmental assessment and reporting process.

The AEO process uses all three levels of involvement.

- Specialised working groups of experts, (e.g. on policy, capacity-building, data, etc.), CCs and other special interest institutions, participate in identifying key issues of concern in the various areas of their interest, in line with the various environmental initiatives in Africa.
- Thematic groups (e.g. on the marine environment) and youth are consulted on issues of interest to them
- Sub-regional/national participants (e.g. Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, Northern Africa, etc.); are consulted to scrutinise the issues and add or modify those issues that may be of interest at the sub-regional and national levels
- The public in general is informed of the progress of the consultations via the internet, national radio and television systems, and pamphlets.

Policy consultations with these various groups are held in various parts of Africa, or at UNEP in Nairobi, to ensure broad participation of a wide range of stakeholders. At the same time, the AEO process has to link up with international consultative and working groups for its input into the GEO process, and through UNEP, to the rest of the UN system. The broad involvement encourages scientists, policymakers and civil society to engage in policy-related discussions and debates, which is the very basis of integrated environmental assessment. A network of universities for capacity-building in environmental assessment has been established.

Table 4.2: Possible different levels of involvement in various integrated environmental assessment and reporting themes.

Focus of policy	Section of civil society	Level of involvement
Improvement of crop yield	Farming rural communities	Participate
	Agricultural extension officers	Participate
	Taxi drivers	Inform

Focus of policy	Section of civil society	Level of involvement
Sanitation in urban areas	Urban communities	Participate
	Peri-urban communities	Participate
	Rural communities	Inform
Assessment of the potential impact of an impending drought	All	Participate
Developing indicators for assessing deforestation	Rural communities in/near forested areas	Participate
	Scientists with interest in vegetation communities	Participate
	School teachers	Participate
	General urban communities	Consult
	Mining communities	Inform

4.4 Deciding important issues in the process.

The range of issues relevant to IEA are far more than can possibly be addressed in a report. A selection of the most important issues has to be made early in the process. Important issues differ at different levels of analysis (regional, sub-regional, national, sub-national, and community level). Stakeholders may have several meetings before they decide on a final list of issues to be addressed in the report. A suggested long list may be made by a small group of experts for a region from which sub-regions or countries may select those which are most relevant and/or add those issues which may be important at the national but not at the regional level. For example, a detailed analysis of the coastal marine environment may be a critical issue for Southern Africa as a sub-region. At the national level, however, it may be of great importance to Mauritius but not to Botswana which is a land-locked country.

It is important to clearly state how the issues will be addressed and how they will be used to achieve the objectives of the report. In the development of issues important for AEO-2, a consultative group on data and issues was formed which identified a long list of broad potential issues shown in Table 4.3. This list was then sent to national level stakeholders who either added or eliminated thematic areas proposed depending on their importance to the national environments and gave details of variables they wanted addressed within each broad theme. Trainees may note that the thematic areas in the Table are very broad and (with the exception of marine environments) would be general enough to be included at the national level.

Table 4.3: AEO-2 Consolidated (Africa) Regional Issues decided from a series of meetings of experts and participation of civil society throughout the Africa region

Thematic area	Asset	Opportunities	Issues/threats
Land	Land as a factor of production and wealth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Production, e.g. food security, livestock - Development of dwellings/settlements - Other purposes, e.g. investment, collateral, ecotourism, urban development, transportation - Dryland for reclamation, restoration and use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land tenure/ownership - Land degradation: soil fertility, water scarcity, desertification, overgrazing, low lying lands - Land management:: land use planning and classification, poor agricultural practices, marginal lands, loss of arable land
Forests and Woodlands	Forest and woodland resources for use as energy, food, timber and non-timber products and potential for wealth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forest conservation: diversity of opportunities and returns through ecotourism, leisure activities for local communities, habitats, reservoir of biodiversity, medicinal benefits for incurable diseases through technological advancement and research, climate regulation, - Catchment protection: reservoir of soil and water - Source of wealth through carbon sinks and carbon trading, sustainable harvesting of timber and non-timber products - Afforestation as an opportunity for investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deforestation and declining forest quality - Incomplete inventorying, monitoring and management - Governance (community involvement, decentralization) and valuation of natural resources (goods-and-services) - Unsustainable exploitation of forest resources

Thematic area	Asset	Opportunities	Issues/threats
Atmosphere	Potential for new and renewable sources of energy and modification of ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investment in renewable energy - Strengthen existing monitoring programmes - Source of water through untapped precipitation (water-harvesting) - Potential to support agriculture and tourism - Strategic investments in pollution control could lead to health improvement - Provides for the adoption of cleaner technologies - External costs of pollution could be internalized (polluter pays principle - PPP) - Development of early warning systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate variability: impact on health, food security, human settlements - Climate change - Air pollution
Freshwater	Africa's extensive surface and groundwater resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water as a factor of production and investment (energy, agriculture, industry, fisheries, etc.) - Water as a social and economic good - Infrastructure and transport - Integrated water resources management (IWRM) providing opportunity for regional cooperation - Domestic utilization and sanitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality and quantity - Availability, variability and accessibility - Water management - Low investment (technology), exploration and assessment of freshwater potential - Legislative and institutional framework - Water-borne diseases: e.g. bilharzia, river blindness, sleeping sickness

Thematic area	Asset	Opportunities	Issues/threats
Wetlands	Ecosystem services and resources for human use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ecotourism development - Fish farming and agriculture - Buffering capacity (against pollution, flooding, siltation) - Ecological services (fish breeding ground, habitat for migratory birds, climatic modification, seasonal pastures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health hazards - Pollution of wetlands - Rapid conversion (land filling, draining for agriculture, loss of habitat and biodiversity) - Management and legislation (includes attitude towards wetlands as wastelands) - Excessive sedimentation and dumping of solid waste and sewage
Human Settlements (rural and urban)	Existence of shelter with human resources for human welfare and services, space, labour, markets, and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of planned settlements using public-private-partnerships and NGOs - Centres for easy communication and joint use of infrastructure and trade (economic growth/economies of scale) - Cultural, social and economic exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to basic social services (including security, electricity, transport, water, sanitation, housing, education, health, markets) - Pressures by population change: migrants, refugees, squatters - Pollution and waste disposal - Investment - Land use and management - Deterioration/erosion of social, economic and cultural exchange and values - Localized heat waves

Thematic area	Asset	Opportunities	Issues/threats
Coastal and marine	Existence of extensive and diverse coastal and marine resources. Long coastline with a large Exclusive Economic Zone with a lot of potential for marine fisheries, seaweed harvesting, tourism, oil exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ecotourism potential - Coastal and marine biodiversity and products, e.g. desalinated water, salt - Energy potential (tidal waves, oil and gas) - Potential for development of international maritime industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coastal erosion and sea level rise - Destruction of coral reefs and loss of coastal and marine biodiversity - Integrated coastal area management (local and international legislation) - Pollution - Salt intrusion in low-lying areas
Biodiversity	Extensive reserve of biological resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential to support livelihoods (tourism, traditional medicine, food security, trade) - Potential to support education, science and technology - Ecosystem services (ecosystem and species diversity, gene pool variability, ecological integrity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disturbance, loss of habitats, species and genetic diversity - Governance (management and legislation) - Alien invasive species (AIS)

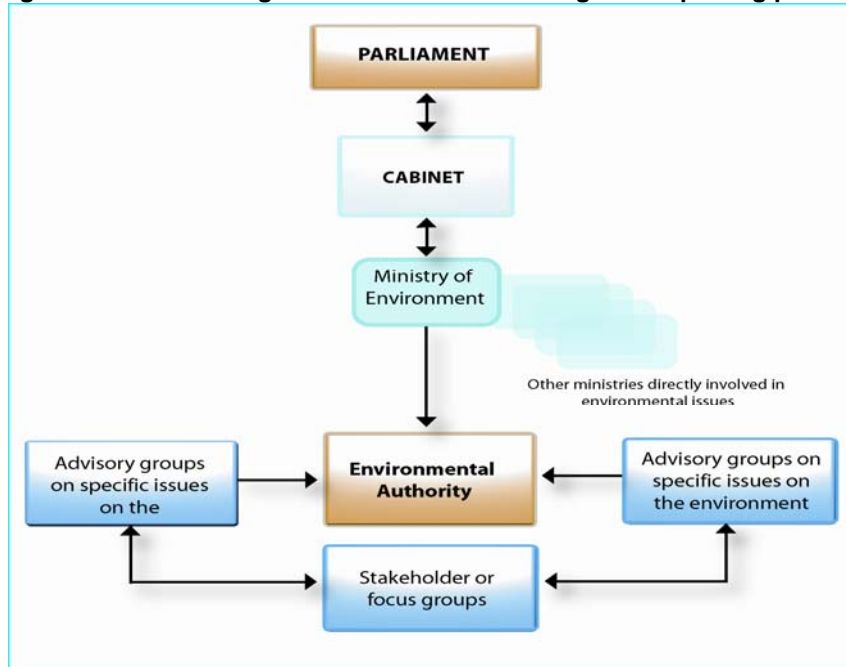
Thematic area	Asset	Opportunities	Issues/threats
Energy	Energy as a driver for economic development through the existence of new and renewable and fossil fuel energy sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential for developing new and renewable energy sources through private-public partnerships - Potential for industry and technology development - Promoting renewable/alternative energy sources for environmental protection, e.g. incineration of waste for energy production, solar energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate economic framework for assessing options - Availability, access and cost including start-up capital - Efficiency: production, transmission, usage - [Vulnerability to disasters] - Appropriate technology - Management and legislation - Over-reliance on biomass

4.5 Management of the process at the national level

The importance of environmental assessment as a critical part of planning for sustainable development is quite recent in African countries. As was outlined in Table 2.1, many of the early assessments and reports soon after the Rio conference in 1992 were carried out at the encouragement of an external organization, institution or donor. But by the late 1990s environmental assessment and reporting was being conducted at the insistence of national governments usually with the assistance of UNEP. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) has been the end result of a long progress towards African governments owning and being responsible for their own affairs in environmental issues and many countries depend entirely on skills available locally. It provides overall direction for the region in environmental issues and has sought the assistance of UNEP in developing various aspects of national environmental outlooks as part of the GEO process.

There is no Africa-wide model in the management of the environmental assessment process, but in the more successful programmes (Ghana and Uganda are good examples), a department, directorate, agency, or authority in a relevant ministry champions the process. A possible generalized organizational chart based on many real organizational structures in many African countries is given in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: General organizational chart to manage the reporting process



The make up and responsibilities of these groups may be described as follows:

- *The Parliament:* IEA and reporting will be most successful under good governance. The final legislative and decision-making body under this arrangement would be a

body representing all society, preferably freely elected, such as a parliament. Members of Parliament should carry the views of their constituents on issues related to the environment

- *The Cabinet:* is the final decision making authority in all environmental matters, but under IEA and reporting receives its advice from the other groups below it.
- *The Ministry of Environment:* now a common ministry in many African countries coordinates all environmental matters. Its minister attends AMCEN meetings to link national environmental policy to that of other countries in the African region. Under IEA and reporting, this Ministry may have representatives in many other Ministries (the equivalent of help desks) considered more directly involved in environment-related matters and could chair a roundtable of these representatives and other multi-stakeholder representatives (e.g. a few NGOs, academia). The roundtable provides a forum for continuing dialogue throughout government and high level civil society representatives.
- *The Environmental Authority (or a similar group):* This may be an independent authority but is commonly the workhorse in the Ministry of Environment. It is the planning department for environmental issues. It may provide an alternative forum for some of the representatives of the committee discussed under the Ministry of Environment above.
- *Expert or technical advisory groups:* participants from various government departments and other organizations who have specialized knowledge and direct access to primary data.
- *Stakeholder or focus group:* representatives of a variety of social organizations. Focus groups have been used for qualitative participatory research, but only recently have they been introduced as a tool in integrated assessment. Their purpose is to inform decision-makers about social preferences, opinion and concerns and to provide decision support for complex policy issues (Dürrenberger and others 1997).

4.6 Management of the process at the sub-national level

Many SOE reports using IEA and reporting are now being produced at sub-national levels by municipalities, NGO's, corporations, and district level governments. These reports should follow the framework used at the national level and add value to the national reporting process by providing synergies with a different but complimentary perspective. The institutional arrangement for reporting should particularly be consistent with the broader national arrangement. With more and more African countries setting up Ministries of Environment, it is common to have a department under this Ministry to manage the process. However, sub-national SOE reporting should more critically consider whether an existing Government department or an independent or semi-independent agency is more appropriate for managing the process. Each has advantages and disadvantages (Pinter and others 1999).

On the one hand, an existing Government department:

- Exercises more control in the management of the process. It reduces the possibility of the proliferation of competing special agencies in the establishment of the process. However, the department is likely to be saddled with its old loyalties and might not be recognized as independent by other Government departments.
- Will have the advantage of being part of its old and existing networks. This advantage, however, may not encourage the Department to vigorously seek new stakeholders to broaden participation essential for changing from traditional SOE to IEA and reporting.
- Will have the advantage of knowledge of and access to existing data in Government, but may as a result be willing to protect the status quo even where necessity of change may be obvious.

On the other hand, an independent or semi-independent agency:

- Starts off with a clean slate as an autonomous unit with a high profile and visibility and a potential for innovation. However, its mandate, authority associated with reporting, and powers to access existing data may have to be negotiated with existing institutions which may resist its innovations.
- May obtain a lot of donor funding or have direct funds from a line item in the budget in its early operations. Funds to sustain its innovations, however, may eventually be limited since it will have no minister championing its cause in cabinet.
- Easily links to NGOs, but it would have to build its own networks within Government, an unmistakable source of problems in obtaining data from ministries for IEA and reporting in African countries, which puts it at a disadvantage.

4.7 The legal mandate

Integrated environmental assessment (IEA) and reporting requires that a large number of organizations, institutions, ministries and individuals work together attending to specific responsibilities in a process that may have time limits. Each of the components participating in the process should have authorization to carry out what is expected of it. It should also have authority to demand what is expected of others for it to be able to carry out its responsibilities. Legislation at the national level must be included in any environmental policy at all levels of the IEA and reporting process to define the responsibilities of the reporting department or agency, its special relationship with other ministries or departments most relevant in the process (e.g. the central statistics authority and other Departments relevant to environmental monitoring programmes). Where common issues are assessed beyond the national level (e.g. by early warning systems), national governments should provide a mandate to the appropriate reporting institutions.

4.8 Developing an impact strategy for your Integrated Environmental Assessment

Environmental assessment and reporting is carried out continuously with specific objectives to be achieved. The first time the objective may be difficult to identify priority issues related to a specific policy. However, the report may be useful in creating interest

and political pressure on decision-makers to formulate policy and carry out planning recommended by the report. Decision-makers may have their priorities which may be different from environmental issues in the recommendations of the report. The impact strategy is designed to make sure that the right decision-makers pay attention and set their priorities in line with the recommendations of the report, either as a result of the knowledge that they themselves acquire from the assessment process, or through pressure from those who have access to them, or from the public.

An impact strategy should be set out from the beginning as part of the assessment process, consisting of clear steps to ensure that the work carried out will promote actual progress on key concerns or issues that the IEA addresses. It is set out in advance of the activities of the assessment but should be adaptive to changes and shifts in the priorities of government and the public.

In attempting to develop the strategy, study the total environment in which you are working, including the potential supporters and detractors. Analyze available knowledge to determine knowledge needed by your helpers to help you achieve the impact. You may then continuously monitor and evaluate the results of your actions to find out whether the appropriate targets you want supported are gathering more support, which may give you some idea as to how to modify your first step in a second effort.

Further discussion on how this effort may be linked to policy formulation to achieve expected impacts is given in Module 9.

4.9 Questions for discussion

Use the following study questions to guide you

Q: What is or should be the institutional setting for environmental reporting in your country?

A: _____

Q: Is the existing setting appropriate and effective?

A: _____

Q: Is environmental reporting required by legislation in your country?

A: _____

Q: If it isn't, how could the process for legislation be initiated?

A: _____

4.10 Exercise 4.1

Before coming to the training workshop, participants should have been asked to fill out a questionnaire and draw the organizational structure for SOE reporting in their country. In groups of three or four, participants will present the organizational charts to each other. They will then present each to the rest of the participants comparing those in the group and pointing out the advantages and disadvantages in each.

4.11 References

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