

Module 6 – Preparing for the Assessment and Reporting Process

Overview

The module gives outlines on how to prepare for the assessment and reporting process.

By the end of the module you will know:

- How to prepare for the assessment process as a project
- How to outline the stages of the assessment, which will be associated with specific activities
- How to organize tasks by institutions responsible for each task and the output to be expected from each task
- How to communicate the message on environmental assessment effectively

6.1 Introduction

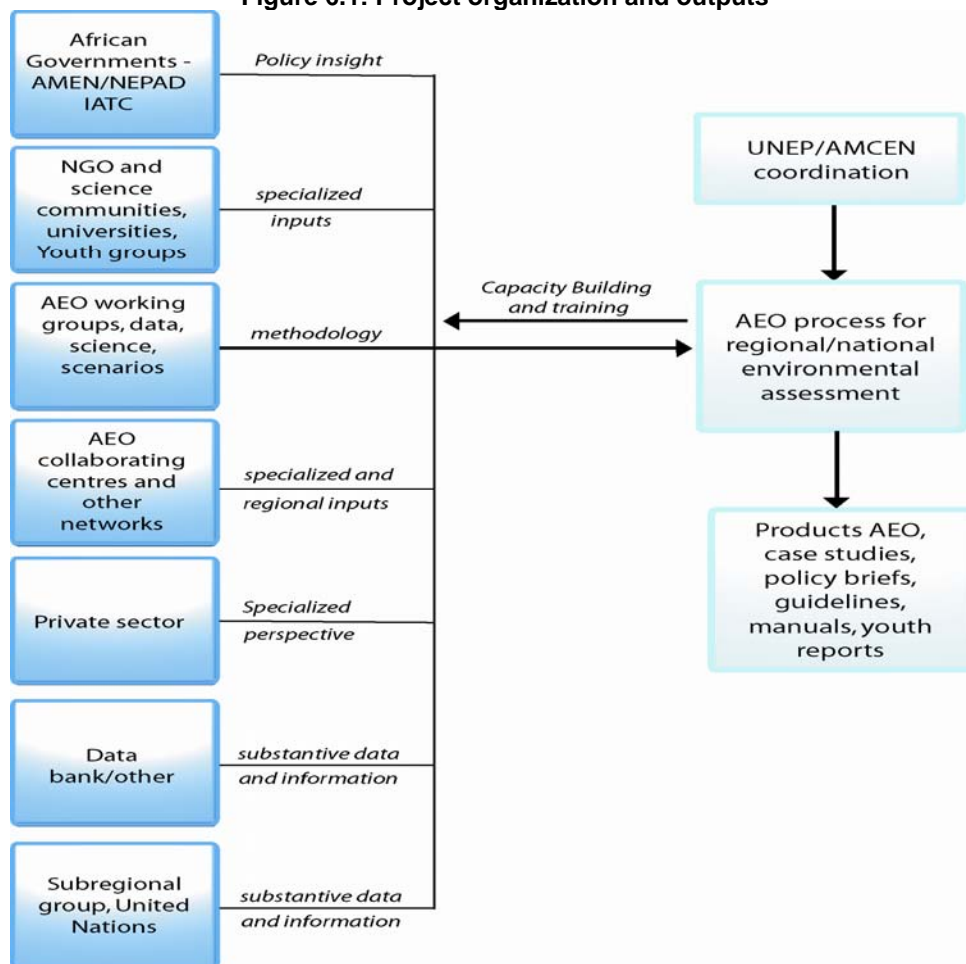
This module gives some basic outlines on planning for environmental assessment using IEA and reporting and provides examples from South Africa where this process has been used successfully in national and sub-national SOE reporting.

To prepare for the whole process from conceptualization to production to dissemination of the report, you should have a complete plan of all activities to be conducted before starting. Even if you may have to adjust some of the stages, include a plan which, at the time of planning, looks like the best option. Your preparation should also include a strategy for communicating the message of your activities to the public. It is essential for the public to be convinced that they should participate in your activities and that they will actually benefit. Currently there are many SOE reports that use IEA which have been carried out and from which important lessons have been learned. If you are starting the process for the first time, these would be particularly useful to learn from.

6.2 Outline the SOE report as a project

You may want to start planning for the process by drawing it out as a project. Outline the main participants by major groups, and state what the overall responsibility of each group is, what the organization of the project is expected to be like, and the major outputs in the various categories. Figure 6.1 illustrates how this planning was done for AEO-2. Clear guidelines for each of the major players should be developed in consultation with those players and other relevant stakeholders.

Figure 6.1: Project organization and outputs



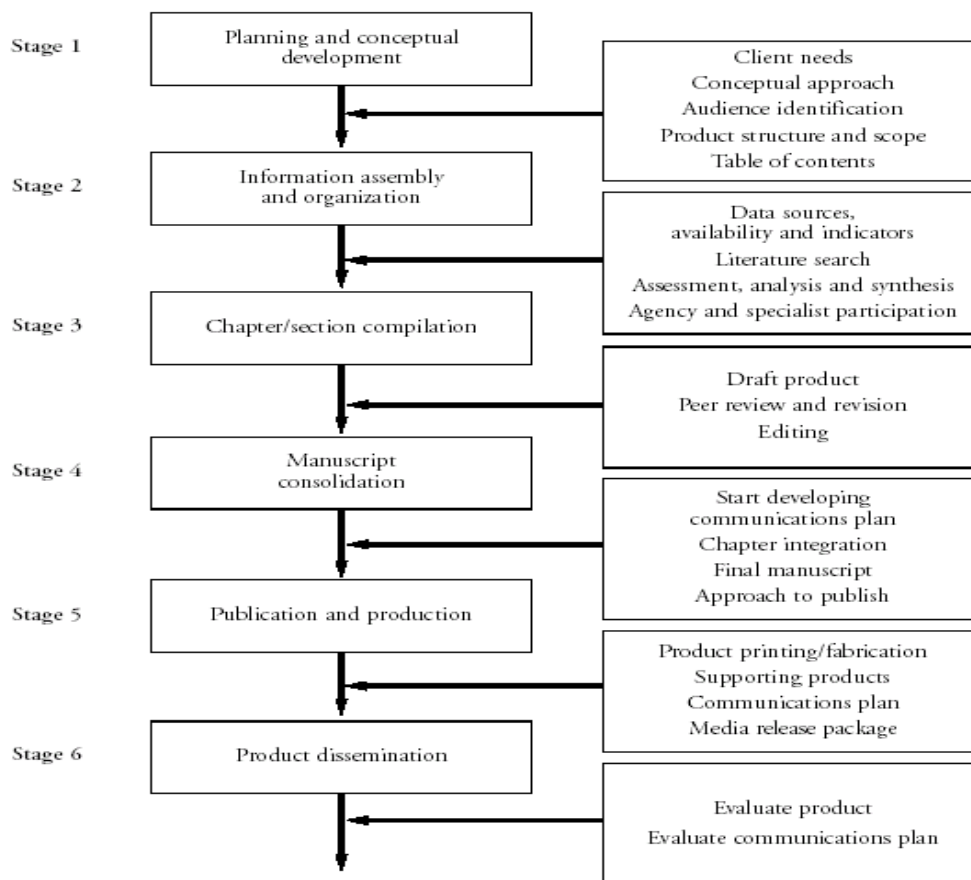
Source: UNEP/AMCEN 2004

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6.3 Clearly state all stages and assign responsibilities

In preparing for IEA and reporting, make sure the sequence of activities is clear to all those who are managing the process. Several idealized and generalized schedules for planning SOE reports are available. The stages or steps in the plan may vary but they all suggest an outline that covers the whole process. Figure 6.2 shows an example developed by Rump (1996). It has six stages, with each stage associated with specific activities.

Figure 6.2: An ideal example of stages in the development of an SOE Report



Source: Rump 1996

More flowcharts may be required to clearly communicate your plan to stakeholders and potential participants in all aspects. Supplement the main flowchart with others to communicate the different aspects of the plan. Figure 6.3 provides a real life example of the AEO-2 plan. Several groups participated in the definition of issues, outlining the contents of chapters, writing, and reviewing the chapters as they progressed. If you want to model your plan based on Figure 6.3, clearly state the tasks involved at each stage, the organization involved in carrying out each task, and the output expected. It may be

difficult to stick to a strict schedule, but draw up one anyway so that institutions know what to expect from others to help them complete their own tasks.

Figure 6.3: Consecutive tasks, responsibilities and results as outlined for AEO-2

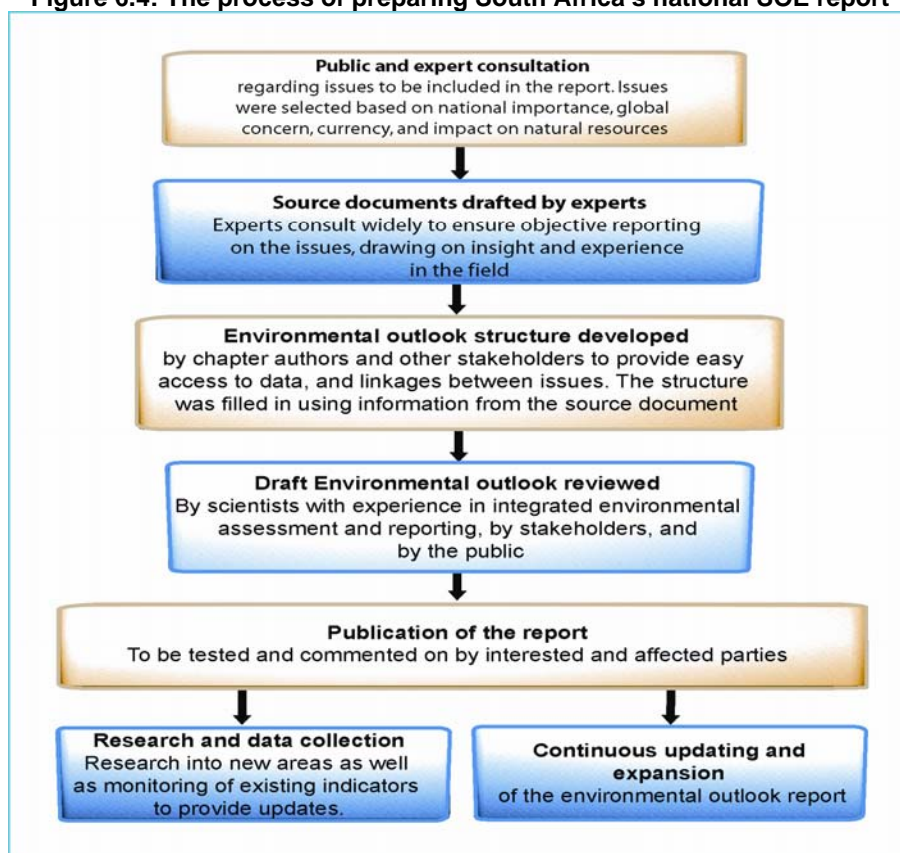
Tasks	Organizations involved	Outputs
Task 1: Engage participating CCs	UNEP-DEWA	Draft agreements with CCs
Task 2: Prepare production guidelines and assessment report outlines	CCs*, African experts and special groups invited by UNEP-DEWA	Guidelines for production of the AEO report
Task 3: Identify key issues at regional level	CCs, relevant groups of African experts and other stakeholders	A first list of key issues at the regional level
Task 4: Conduct sub-regional/national/topic consultations	CCs, sub-regional organizations, national governments, experts and other stakeholders	Comments on key issues by topic, and at regional, sub-regional and national level
Task 5: Revise key issues	CCs, various relevant consultative groups	Final list of key issues
Task 6: Prepare first draft	CCs, UNEP-DEWA expert authors in Africa	First draft of AEO report
Task 7: Review first draft	CCs, UNEP-DEWA expert reviewers throughout the continent	Comments on first draft
Task 8: Review second draft	CCs, UNEP-DEWA expert reviewers throughout the continent	Comments on second draft
Task 9: Final revisions of second draft	CCs, UNEP-DEWA	Final draft
Task 10: Printing and launch	UNEP-DEWA	Finished report
Task 11: Distribution	UNEP-DEWA	Copies of report
Task 12: Monitor and report on usage	UNEP-DEWA	User survey

*CCs refers to African Collaborating Centres

6.4 A real life example from South Africa

South Africa has developed its capacity for national SOE reports since the early 1990s. The country's experience may prove very valuable as a best practice from which other African countries may learn. At the 1992 Rio Conference, South Africa was only an observer because it could not be allowed to be a full participant; however, it presented a plan that it intended to follow which culminated in the steps reproduced in Figure 6.4. It has experience in producing reports at national, provincial and city levels in response to a legal mandate. The National Environmental Management Act, Act No. 107 of 1998, states that "every person is entitled to have access to information held by the State and organs of state which relates to the implementation of this Act and any other law affecting the environment, and to the state of the environment and actual and future threats to the environment, including any emissions to water, air or soil and the production, handling, transportation, treatment, storage and disposal of hazardous waste and substances" (RSA 1998).

Figure 6.4: The process of preparing South Africa's national SOE report



Source: Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 1999

6.5 Communicating the SOE Report message with the plan as an activity

Within the overall planning for IEA and reporting, communicating the message requires special attention, especially at the national and sub-national levels where more detailed

information on stakeholders might be appropriate. Communicate the message to a broad audience; it is essential to reach a very wide audience including many non-scientists. The message should therefore be:

- *Relevant:* Do not talk from your point of view (e.g. that contributing to environmental assessment is a duty for all) but seek out elements that may make your message desirable and of value to your audience. Find out what this is. For example, most small village groups would be eager to learn of anything that would improve their livelihoods and quality of life. Talk about how environmental assessment can be used to achieve those.
- *Understandable by the particular audience for which it is intended:* Skills in delivering an understandable message may be developed slowly over time. No message is appropriate for all audiences. Do not talk to village groups as you would talk to fellow scientific or environmental experts. Invest some time in understanding your audience, what it understands and what it may have problems comprehending, before you deliver your message.
- *Delivered by a very wide system:* People in your audience will have preference for the system that delivers your message. The same message may be packaged differently to suit different audiences. Short executive summaries or newsletters in print taking less than 15 minutes to read may be sufficient for Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Directors. Longer documents may be more useful for academia.

Keep the full report for specialized groups. The majority of the people may prefer public media (e.g. internet, radio, TV) or performances (e.g. songs, theatre, etc.). Messages on the environment may be delivered in very unconventional ways very effectively (e.g. church groups) or other social groups (e.g. women's groups, youth). The most important rule of thumb for all these and others is that the delivery system should be determined after studying what will be an effective method for delivering the message for a particular audience.

Box 6.1 shows one way of communicating the SOE report message as part of planning IEA and reporting. A coordinated and careful communication of the message ensures that national and sub-national SOE reports complement the AEO with more detailed information on issues over limited areas.

Box 6.1: One possible outline for communicating the SOE report message as part of planning integrated environmental assessment and reporting

Step 1: Management, experts and key stakeholders decide there is an issue. This decision is made in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

Step 2: Create an advisory group: multi-stakeholder, collaborative, solution-seeking.

Step 3: Set long-term goals. Refine goals.

Step 4: Identify most important/representative stakeholders and audiences for the issue of interest

Step 5: Determine their knowledge, beliefs, opinions, where and how they get information.

Step 6: Research what communication is being done by various parties now.

Step 7: Build a communication plan. No medium of communication will be appropriate for all issues, since for each issue a different group of civil society may be primarily targeted. Examples of groups: youths, women's groups, church groups. Examples of media: radio, TV, flyers.

Step 8: Develop first message based on research. Build on existing credible messages.

Step 9: Pre-test message. Does it make sense? Train communicators in workshops.

Step 10: Deliver messages. Help others to deliver compatible messages.

Step 11: Consult, survey and determine effectiveness of messages (This testing process establishes a feedback loop).

Step 12: Refine message, based on feedback. Modify messages. Develop other messages as necessary. Retrain communicators as necessary.

Step 13: Advise others on their messages.

Step 14: Continue to deliver and modify messages over time.

6.6 Study/discussion questions

Q: How realistic is the implementation of the ideal process in Figure 6.2 in your country?

A: _____

Q: Why?

A: _____

Q: What is the most important thing you can do to help establish a process similar to the one in the template you created for your home country?

A: _____

6.7 Exercise: 6.1

You were requested to fill out a questionnaire that would have information on the state of environment in the country where you work. Now you are aware what stage your country has reached in state of environment reporting, what structure it has, etc. In groups of three or four:

1. Discuss the data each one of you has and help each other to draw out a chart that shows the relationships of the institutions involved in developing the SOE report in your country (similar to Figure 6.1)
2. Draw a process diagram (similar to Figure 6.3) to show the stages involved in producing the SOE in your country.

6.8. References

Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (1999). *National State of the Environment Report 1999*. Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Pretoria.
<http://www.environment.gov.za/soer/nsoer/index.htm>

RSA (1998). National Environmental Management Act No. 107 of 1998. Republic of South Africa. *Government Gazette* (Vol. 401, No. 19519), Pretoria.
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Rump, P.C. (1996). *State of the Environment Reporting: Sourcebook of Methods and Approaches*. United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi

UNEP (1999). *Global Environment Outlook-2000*, United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi