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 IEAare 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	- 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	- 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	- 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	- 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

Opportunities	Issues/threats
· 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	- Climate variability: impact on health, food security, human settlements - Climate change - Air pollution
· 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	- 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