

Module 2 National IEA Process Design and Organization

Overview

Integrated environmental assessment (IEA) is a way of understanding and mapping environment-society interactions¹. A national IEA is complex and dynamic, so it requires careful planning. This module on design and organization of a national IEA is based on UNEP's GEO approach to IEA. The module provides an overview of why the process is important, how it is established and governed, who would participate and in what role. It gives advice on the allocation of resources, and explains the stages involved in setting up and implementing a GEO-based IEA process. It will give you a better understanding of the role and structure of the process, and your role in participating or managing it. This module also explains how other modules in this resource book fit into the IEA process.

The module concentrates on the following aspects of the IEA process:

- securing institutional commitment for an IEA;
- identification of stakeholders and defining their roles ;
- instruments for conducting the process;
- allocation of required resources (time, human, financial); and
- interactive process design and its benefits.

A key feature of the GEO approach is the participation and interaction of different experts and stakeholders. This module explains how to identify relevant stakeholders and their roles. It shows approaches to using a participatory process, which could also enhance the capacities of the stakeholders to lead similar processes elsewhere.

Through a participatory process, IEA promotes a better use of existing capacities and information at the national level, which reduces the amount of effort allotted for IE and financial costs. Given its interactive process² an IEA helps to capitalize on the experience of assessment practitioners and facilitate information exchange.

Course Materials

1. Introduction and objectives

A successful integrated environmental assessment at the national level requires good advance planning. This starts with understanding the design and organization of the process, as well as identification of the main steps and activities needed to achieve the GEO goals.

After successfully completing this module, you will have developed the capacity to conceptualize, participate in and manage the design and organization of a national IEA process. You will be able to:

- understand the main stages of the IEA process;
- understand the institutional arrangements to be developed;
- learn to lead an interactive and participatory way;
- identify the main activities and procedures for preparing IEA report and promoting their findings to achieve maximum impact; and
- be aware of and able to manage challenges of running the process while involving the public.

¹ For more detailed regarding GEO and the Integrated Environmental Assessment review modules 1 and 5.

² Interactive process stands for a process that stimulates the exchange of ideas, consider different points of view based on scientific and empirical evidence, that generates a value added knowledge and enrich the analysis..

In order to achieve this competence and these capacities, the module incorporates three interactive training elements: case examples, discussion questions and exercises.

The module is organized in three main sections, of which this introduction is the first. The second section explains the main contributions of the IEA process in terms of capacity building and network development. The third section presents in detail the organization and design of the national IEA process, explaining each stage of the process from start-up and institutional framework through the final steps for reporting and follow-up.

Preparation of this module was based on practical experience gained by the authors through participation in national IEA projects in the Asia-Pacific region.

2. IEA process features

National IEA and reporting process are designed to generate information on the status and dynamics of the environment and its interaction with human well-being. IEAs are typically known first and foremost for their products: reports, websites or databases. However, in order to produce such information and expect it to have both high levels of scientific credibility and policy relevance, an IEA also must have a well-planned and well-managed process.

The ultimate success of IEA process depends on who is in charge of and who participates in the process, in what specific role, how the process is structured, and how it allows for flexibility to adapt to local cultural, administrative, political, legal and other conditions.

Based on the experience of GEO preparation at global level and national IEA in the region, we have identified key attributes that can help guide planning of new initiatives at the national and sub-national level.

- **Participatory.** Involving different stakeholders is a way to achieve a better understanding of themes incorporating the issues to improve the process and quality of policy making and establish the ownership.
- **Multidisciplinary and multisectoral.** IEA deals with multidisciplinary knowledge and also involves multisectors, therefore participation of multidisciplinary and multisectoral stakeholder is necessary to carry out a sound assessment as well as to ensure that results of the assessment lead to articulate responses and actions from different sectors.
- **Integrated.** IEA deals with numbers of aspects in integrated way in the assessment:
 - linking the state of the environment analysis with policy analysis;
 - incorporating global and sub-global perspectives;
 - incorporating historical and future perspectives;
 - covering a broad spectrum of issues and policies; and
 - looking at dynamic and complex interactions between the environment and human well-being in place-based contexts (e.g., particular countries, ecosystems, cities, regions, watersheds)³.
- **Multi-product.** IEA process generates family of products targeting the wide key audience. The products range from simple posters through fact sheets, data compendia to the main IEA reports and summaries.

³ See Module 1 for details.

- **Institutionalized.** IEA stimulates assessing and reporting on the environment and its interaction with human well-being as an integral part of governance mechanisms for sustainable development. IEA-based process needs to be built with a long-term perspective in mind where assessment is cyclical, and where periodic products and continuous interaction among participants in policy and science communities and other elements of the public are part of the process. As long as this is an active process, based on stakeholders' participation, stakeholders will take ownership of the process and lead it.

The IEA process is made up of a number of activities including:

1. *Establish an institutional framework for collaboration and organization of IEA.* Identify and enter into formal or informal cooperative agreements with different organizations with interest, capacity and/or mandate concerning the environment. Discuss and agree on objectives and roles to be adopted in production of your report.

2. *Establish and maintain an information base (i.e., set up information system, gather and update high quality data).* The information-gathering process during the preparation of the report provides an opportunity to analyze the quality and usefulness of information in the national environmental system. It is also an opportunity for institutional data sharing and harmonisation. Also, during this activity, it is possible to identify themes and information needs, as well as data availability. This step further allows identification of indicators of key environmental issues.

3. *Discussion forum.* An IEA represents an opportunity for discussions on topics such as a common methodology, trends of the driving forces and pressures, key environmental issues, policies, policy options and scenarios. The discussions involve the public and private sectors. Also, this provides an opportunity to analyze environmental policy and practice with involvement of different stakeholders.

5. *Capacity-building activities.* Based on interactive workshops and other non-workshop based interactions such as distance learning or Internet fora, the GEO process emphasizes a *learning by doing* approach to master the methodology and disseminate it, thus enhancing national capacities for integrated environmental assessment. Further, it is an opportunity to identify any capacity-building needs, and determine whether they can be met from resources within the country or require additional input.

6. *Define and implement a communication and impact strategy.* From the beginning of the process, it is necessary to understand who your various audiences are, so you can establish an efficient and effective communication and impact strategy. Strategies should include implementation plans as well as evaluation measures.

Discussion questions

1. Identify the main organizations that use an integrated approach to lead participatory processes focused on environment-development interactions in your country. Explain briefly the main activities that were/are involved.
2. What key initiatives are ongoing in your country that could be strengthened by the IEA process?
3. What opportunities do you see in your country to help drive the IEA process?

3. The Overview of the IEA Process

This section provides a general view of the national IEA process, identifying its main components and the relationships among them. It will help you to understand how the process can be structured in order to provide an answer to key questions in a GEO-based report (Figure 1- can be referred in another module to reduce the page). These are further explained in Modules 5 and 6.

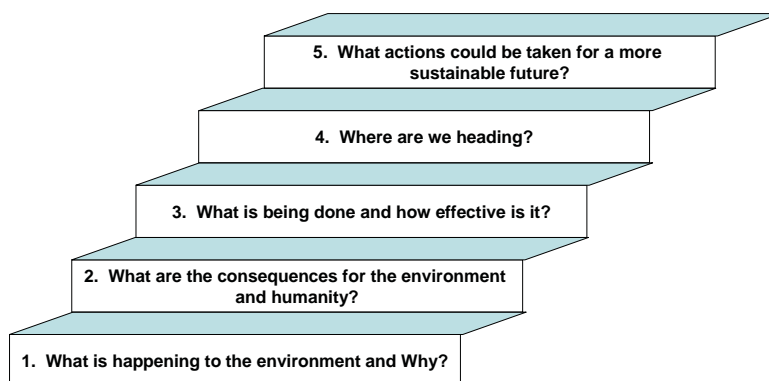


Figure 1: Schematic view of key questions to be answered by the GEO approach

3.1. Objectives and importance

The objectives of the process are the following:

- bring together relevant organizations and individuals with interests in IEA and potential for significant contribution, some of whom may not otherwise have a history of collaboration;
- involve policy-makers in order to secure their support for the process and its key findings; and
- facilitate the process of interaction based on a common methodology, fostering the dialogue between science and policy.

The IEA process is important because:

- it provides an opportunity for policy-makers to have close contact with various experts and stakeholders to discuss key environmental issues from an integrated perspective, to develop a better understanding of their points of view and define together an agenda for action.
- promotes learning from experts and organizations based on their interaction as they proceed with the assessment (Box 1).
- opportunity to discuss possible environmental futures, identifying emerging issues and analysing scenarios.

The principal output of the process is the main IEA report. As explained in Modules 3 and 7, its audience is typically broad, including decision makers in the private and public sectors, scientists and resource managers, the general public, youth and community groups, and the education community. Therefore, the IEA main reports need to be non-academic, but sub-products may be needed to target specific audiences.

3.2. Basic conditions for initiating a GEO process

IEA process involves a range of complex activities and promotes active engagement of government, the academic community, NGOs and the private sector. One key element is political will and commitment of the national environmental authority or equivalent to support the IEA process. A legal mandate and requirement to produce an IEA helps, as it may oblige government to support a meaningful assessment and create a basis for accountability in the political system. The mandate should be clearly laid out in the context of laws and regulations. Some key issues in such a legal mandate include the following:

- legislation may call for collaboration among government agencies that contribute to the IEA;
- a common methodology for data collection may be identified among the national authority, private and public organizations, and scientists or technical experts;
- the legislation may refer to environmental reports to be produced by a range of public and private organizations;
- legislation may promote exchange of data and harmonization of reporting initiatives; and
- the lead agency's role in preparing the way for consultations and external participation.

Some examples of legal mandates countries have for preparing environmental assessments and reports are given in boxes 1 to 3.

Box 1: India Case

The Government of India scheme for preparation of state of environment reporting in each state/UT was launched during the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002 – 2007), with the objective of highlighting the upstream and downstream linkages with environment issues besides creating a baseline document in form of SoE reports. In view of growing environmental stress and the need to conserve natural resources, the scheme has been continued in the 11th five year plan as well. There are efforts being made to regularize the preparation of these reports in the future. (Source: Development Alternative, India)

Box 2: North Korea Case

In North Korea, the UNDP office has assisted the Ministry of Land and Environment Protection with the preparation of the National Framework of Environmental Database Management for Environment Assessment and Reporting in DPR Korea. This framework states that every five years the country will prepare a state of the environment report.

Source: UNEP-RRCAP.

Box 3: China Case

In China, the national Environmental Protection Law ordains that the competent departments of national or sub-national environmental protection administration shall regularly issue bulletins on environmental situations. Since 1989, the State of Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) has begun to issue the national SOE reports annually, with the goals of publishing the real environmental information, providing foundational information for different policy makers, and measuring the process and efforts for sustainable development. The sub-national SOE reports also have been issued regularly in recent ten years by the governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government according to their capability and actual situations.

Source: SEPA website, China

It is necessary to have national technical capacity to conduct the process. This requires leading institutions that can mobilize a range of stakeholders through the process. Also, the institutions should have professionals on environmental issues to lead and contribute to the analysis.

3.3. General Structure of the IEA Process

The various stages of the process creates a structure around which activities and participation can be organized, capacities built, resources and time allocated, and release of outputs scheduled.

Details of the process may change country by country, and they may need to be modified as the IEA proceeds in order to adapt to how events unfold. However, based on the practical experience of previous GEO-style reports and other assessments in the region, we can outline elements of a generic process with key elements that one way or another need to be considered in such an assessment.

Based on this body of experience we can identify seven stages of a generic national IEA process, as well as a set of generic activities and outcomes related to them (Figure 2). Each stage is explained in this module.

while details of how to manage specific components of the assessment (e.g., analysis of environmental trends and conditions, policy analysis, data and indicators, and scenario analysis) are explained in other modules in this resource book. The national IEA process in general followed in the Asia Pacific region are given in the Box 4 (?).

As shown on Figure 2, IEA is an ongoing process. It aims to improve decision making, enhance national capacities, and provides systematically collected, analyzed and presented information. Activities and outputs can be identified for every stage, and these, along with expected outcomes, provide a basis for evaluation, learning and improvement. Besides internal learning, the fact that many countries use the IEA approach presents an opportunity for sharing lessons learned across a wide range of initiatives. It is necessary to define expected results at different stages (Figure 2). Technical and political partners will identify lessons learned from the process and thus can improve it. As such, the process is enriched by continuous feedback at the national level, and information is often exchanged with other countries using a GEO approach.

3.4 The role of participation in the IEA process

An IEA requires blending knowledge and perspectives from many different points of view. It also aims to influence audiences with different interests and information needs. In order to maximize impact, it is essential to have the participation of a wide range of actors, either as contributors to the assessment, as audiences, or as both, throughout the process (Figure 3 – ??).

IEA can and often does provide a forum for continuous dialogue, although the number of actual participants involved in the assessment and reporting often needs to be kept at manageable levels.

Participation is important not only because it helps to identify key environmental issues from the different stakeholders' perspectives, but also because it can offer options for addressing those issues. If participation is open and transparent, it is more likely that interests of different stakeholders, including interests of poor, vulnerable groups and women will be recognized and better reflected in the formulation of policy responses. A basic definition of stakeholders includes those:

- whose interests are affected by environmental problems, or whose decisions have environmental effects;
- who have information, resources or expertise required for policy formulation and strategy implementation; and/or
- who control key mechanisms for policy and strategy formulation and implementation. Potential stakeholders and partners whose support for the whole IEA process is crucial may include the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ political leaders; political party representatives; ▪ officials of national and regional public offices (such as ministries, institutes, councils, directorates and the military); ▪ local authorities; ▪ scientific community; academia (universities and research centres); ▪ representatives of industry or entrepreneurial associations; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ private sector representatives; ▪ professional schools or associations; ▪ non-government organizations; ▪ mass media; ▪ youth groups, women groups; ▪ indigenous communities and groups; ▪ civil society organizations; ▪ community and religious groups; and ▪ opinion leaders.
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Figure 2: Stages of National IEA Process

Stages	Activities	Outputs	Organizations' Participation
Stage 1 Start-up (4-6 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure legal mandate for environmental assessment and reporting. Identify a local technical team within the lead agency. Develop a basic outline for conceptual framework and process, capacity, time and resources required. Hold start-up meetings to discuss adjust and finalize the process and institutional arrangements. Secure commitment for resources and in-kind contributions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOUs reviewed Conceptual framework 	National environmental authority, local technical team
Stage 2 Institutional set-up (1-3 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define roles and responsibilities of the political and technical partners. Establish mechanisms of coordination among partners and collaborating institutions. Define an institutional framework. Discuss the elements for the impact strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOUs signed Institutional Framework. Stakeholders map 	National environmental authority, local technical team
Stage 3 Scoping and design (2-4 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify methodological issues. Establish geographic boundary and detailed timeline for producing the report. Identify key environmental issues. Identify indicators, data requirements and sources of information. Draft an outline of the report. Identify the target audience. Develop the impact strategy. Discuss the elements for a communications and outreach strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design document (including annotated structure or outline). Impact strategy 	National environmental authority, local technical team, designated organizations and experts
Stage 4 Planning (4-6 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define activities in the process, assign responsibilities and identify expected outputs. Allocate financial and human resources. Review and adjust the impact strategy and define indicators of impact. Develop a communication and outreach strategy. Establish a monitoring and evaluation system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation plan. Adjusted impact strategy. Communication and outreach strategy. 	National environmental authority, local technical team, designated organizations and experts
Stage 5 Implementation (10-12 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validate priority environment/development issues and their connection according to the IEA framework. Collect, process and analyze data and information. Present and discuss preliminary results with relevant partner organizations. Write draft report, organize peer review and finalize report based on feedback. Translation and publication (hardcopy, CD, website, etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report and complementary results, in different media 	National environmental authority, local technical team and stakeholders
Stage 6 Communication of results & outreach (1-2 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote different IEA products and messages. Organize interviews with the media. Organize presentations for stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report and complementary products in the public domain 	National environmental authority, local technical team and stakeholders
Stage 7 Monitoring, evaluation and learning (1-2 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the process. Identify lessons learned. Evaluate the impact of the process in terms of contribution to policy planning capacity building and public awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IEA impacts and recommendations for the future. 	National environmental authority, local technical team and stakeholders

Box 4: National IEA process in Asia Pacific Region

One of the key features of the GEO process is its flexibility. The following description illustrates the process followed in national IEA initiatives supported by UNEP in the Asia Pacific region.

1. Hold Initial discussions with the government after receiving the letter of interest.
2. Identify a National Collaborating Centre (NCC) through consultation with the government. If the NCC has inadequate capacity, look for a collaborating centre (CC) in neighbouring countries or within the sub-region. For instance, while preparing the Bhutan and Laos SoE reports, two collaborating organizations, the Tata Energy Research Institute) in India and the Thailand Environment Institute in Thailand, both GEO CCs, provided assistance.
3. Hold training workshop(s) with about 30 participants each. Participants include representatives of government line agencies dealing with environmental matters, NGOs, the scientific community, business and civil society. During the training participants develop and agree upon the conceptual framework of the report. A focal point for data provision from each government department is identified that to help the NCC collect the required information.
4. The NCC starts collecting the environmental information required (based on the conceptual framework developed during the training workshop) by contacting the focal points in national agencies. The NCC will proceed to analyze the information collected and start to prepare the first draft report based on an outline developed and accepted during the training workshop.
5. Consult with stakeholders including relevant line agencies, academia, journalists, major groups and international donor agencies, to discuss and validate first draft of the report. Consultation serves not only to help orient and improve the draft document, but also to build awareness about the process in the wider national community.
6. Prepare second draft, taking into account comments from consultation workshop; circulate that draft to relevant line agencies and experts for review and comments. Comments are collected by the NCC to be addressed in the final report.
7. Design the layout of the report. This is usually done by the NCC under supervision of a relevant national government agency and UNEP, following UNEP publication guidelines. The report usually displays logos of both the relevant government agencies and the NCC.
8. Proofread final draft, and submit it, along with the graphic design, to the government for review and clearance publication.
9. A national launch event for the report is organized, inviting distinguished individuals who have significant political, social and/or scientific profiles. Special attention is given to inviting local, national and as applicable, international press, and to coordinating a simultaneous press release issued with UNEP.

Source: UNEP-Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific.

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