

Annex A

Capacity development for Strategic Environmental Assessment

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The OECD DAC SEA task team has paid significant attention to help build capacity of individuals and organisations involved in development co-operation to make use of SEAs. This annex reports on some of the activities that have been undertaken by those engaged in SEAs for development co-operation. It outlines the progress that has been made and describes some of the tools that have been developed to support capacity building.

Introduction

This review has concluded that the lack of relevant capacity remains as a major constraint to the implementation of SEAs. The donor community has already initiated various capacity development and training programmes to meet this challenge. This annex reviews two capacity development programmes implemented by the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment and the German agency GIZ.

The preparation of the Guidance in SEA for development co-operation has been a core activity for the OECD DAC SEA task team over the past five years. Its tasks have included disseminating information, and helping to build capacity among existing and potential users of the guidelines and preparing advisory notes. This chapter reports on some of the activities that have been undertaken by those engaged in SEA for development co-operation. It outlines the progress that has been made and describes some of the tools that have been developed to support capacity development for the implementation of SEAs.

Capacity development for SEA: A Dutch approach

Current thinking about capacity, as well as research into the effectiveness of capacity development, has led to a more complex conceptualisation of the term “capacity”. It is now interpreted more broadly, to mean different levels and types of capacity, from the individual level to the institutional level. The Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) has been working to make the institutional dimension a more explicit part of its SEA capacity development, and has drawn some lessons from the various experiences.

Institutionalising of SEAs is the structural embedding of SEAs into a country’s planning practice. In the NCEA’s view, SEA is institutionalised when:

- sufficient expertise in SEA application is available;
- a sound legal and financial basis for SEA is in place;
- there is a clear institutional structure with agreed allocation of roles and responsibilities in the SEA system.

Clearly, these characteristics are closely interlinked.

Generally, not all three pillars receive equal attention: the expertise in application of SEAs to develop plans and programmes is continually growing. In tandem, a lot of work is being done on SEA legislation, *e.g.* as a result of requirements for EU accession. However, there is less attention for the institutional structure of the SEA system.

Figure A.1. **Three pillars for institutionalising SEA*****How to develop institutional capacity?***

1. Start with an institutional analysis by using local studies, plans and programmes and existing studies such as OECD country reports and, World Bank country assessment strategies. Based on the outcomes of the institutional analysis and the roles and responsibilities generally needed in SEA (Box A.1) a country-specific SEA institutional framework can be gradually moulded.

Box A.1. Roles and responsibilities that need to be allocated

- screening on the need for SEA of individual plans/policies;
- SEA terms of reference drafting;
- quality review of SEA report and process undertaking SEA studies;
- monitoring plan/programme implementation;
- supporting SEA processes with legal and procedural advice;
- organising and managing the SEA process including public participation;
- drafting SEA regulations or legislation;
- maintaining a register or database of individual SEAs;
- maintaining a website/library on SEA in general;
- creating high-level commitment/political support;
- SEA awareness-raising and training;
- funding SEA in state/department budgets;
- developing SEA guidance material.

2. Seek partners in ministries and layers of government to form networks which can jointly improve capacity for sustainable governance. Here, people are invited to discuss roles and responsibilities. If necessary, international advisors can help these network participants in their own thinking process. Such networks are attractive targets for sponsorship by donor organisations that want to assist development of institutional capacity by stimulating inter-agency co-operation. In the end, these networks can become institutionalised, with staff and budgets.
3. Experiment with pilot models for SEA institutional set-up for individual SEA processes on an informal basis. When these prove successful, they will boost SEA acceptance and speed up formalisation. Choose pilots with potentially big added value and low controversy and avoid externally driven SEAs.

4. Make careful use of existing examples of SEA models in countries with similar characteristics, but avoid a copy-paste exercise.

Lessons learned

Since 2000, the NCEA has assisted around 15 countries with the introduction of SEAs. There are many positive results, but practical experiences increasingly stress the need for a careful design of the institutional structure for an SEA. Some of the lessons learned are summarised in the paragraphs that follow:

Assure sufficient time and resources for SEA

In several cases, the EIA departments of environment ministries have been given responsibility for the implementation of an SEA. However, these departments are invariably already overloaded with EIA work. They are responsible for everything: drafting legislation, quality control of impact assessments for single projects and plans, issuing environmental licenses, taking care of training, arranging inspection and enforcement – and always with limited human and financial resources. This can make it difficult to take on additional responsibilities for SEAs.

Ensure inter-ministerial co-ordination

Countries that are in the process of introducing SEAs often face the contentious issue of deciding on the co-ordination of mandates and ownership. There are examples where both the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Development Planning claim to be in charge of SEA introduction and development. A deadlock invariably results if no agreement is reached on the most adequate institutional embedding for the SEA process. This stresses the importance of consensus on allocation of roles and responsibilities from the outset.

Support committed leaders widely

A couple of countries identified SEAs as a priority in their multi-annual plans. Key persons, who were convinced of the benefits of SEA, started ambitiously: an analysis was made of existing strategic planning practice, SEA regulation was elaborated, capacity-building workshops took place and practical experience was gained through SEA pilots. However, insufficient commitment and support remained among colleagues to ensure effective continuation when this key person or SEA champion left. Wider commitment and capacity should have been explicitly built into the initial programme to ensure continuation of the SEA work.

Guarantee financial continuity

In general, donors tend to finance individual SEAs or SEA programmes with a fixed budget and strict deadlines, whereas SEA practice often requires flexibility and a long-term commitment. SEA pilots and introduction programmes take at least a couple of years. SEA institutionalisation, however, needs a 10-15 year time horizon to allow for a continual learning process, exchange of SEA experiences and SEA strengthening. Continuity in political support and financing for each SEA and for strengthening the system itself is essential for a careful design and building of the required institutional framework.

Don't "copy & paste" SEA institutional models

SEA institutions and SEA practice should co-evolve gradually; there is no blueprint for the SEA institutional model. Instead, the model is the outcome of a gradual process of testing different options. For this reason, the SEA institutional architecture should not be legally prescribed in the first instance, but be decided on over time on the basis of practical experience with SEA. Different options can be considered, here are two examples:

SEA teams around individual SEAs

In Turkey, the Ministry of Tourism created an SEA unit for their Tourism Master Plan. In Ghana, the SEA team was created for the SEA for the PRSP. This team had members of the Environmental Protection Agency and of the National Development Planning Commission. Both teams were temporarily installed for approximately 18 months. The first stopped functioning when the SEA was finalised, while the second has continued to operate but with new remits.

SEA teams/staff for SEA introduction programmes

In Georgia, a seven-member SEA task force was installed, with clear terms of reference and a two year budget. In Colombia, the Ministry of Environment appointed a permanent staff member responsible for guiding SEA introduction.

Capacity development for SEA: A German approach

In 2006, GIZ developed an SEA training course, as part of the support given by the German government for capacity development to developing countries. Its main goals are to:

- provide an overview of the main conceptual and methodological approaches of SEA;
- increase practical knowledge of performing SEAs through case work on practice-oriented planning situations in developing countries;
- illustrate the benefits of SEAs through real examples.

The target groups include environmental and planning experts of public administration, decision-makers, experts from the consulting sector and NGO representatives.

The course (full version) is designed for a period of 4½ days. Streamlined versions are conducted over two to three days. However, good results are achieved even with a rapid version of half a day to expose decision-makers to the essentials and benefits of SEAs.

Background and context

The SEA course follows the approach to SEAs and capacity development outlined in the SEA guidance and provides tools to support its implementation. It shows how to integrate environmental and sustainability considerations into policies, plans and programmes. Accordingly, the course has been endorsed by OECD DAC ENVIRONET as an official training approach for implementing the SEA guidance.

Important elements of an SEA as formulated in the SEA guidance, which are relevant for the course, include:

- **Non-blueprint approach:** The course is not based on a rigid understanding of how a perfect SEA should look. Actual impact assessments in developing countries might have very different shapes depending on local practices and institutional conditions, influenced by available resources and capacities, or the aims and objectives for the SEA. The course supports a meaningful and flexible application of core elements of an SEA.
- **Outcome/result orientation:** The final goal of capacity development for SEAs is not a well-done SEA but improved sustainability and environmental considerations in planning and decision-making. Therefore, the training does not focus merely on certain techniques for assessment but on the inter-linkages between planning, SEA and decision-making.
- **Learning orientation:** The course strengthens the capabilities to continuously improve the decision-making and implementation process. It aims at stimulating these institution-building processes rather than enabling a stand-alone SEA. It tries to build on the implementing country's existing capacities and potentials rather than establishing new ones. This implies that the course will be hand-tailored along the concrete conditions and institutional systems of the country for each application.

The needs in capacity development in the context of SEA are formulated in the SEA Guidance as follows:

- There is limited knowledge among decision-makers and administrations regarding the potential value of SEA for development effectiveness. Therefore, some modules of the course focus strongly on the links of SEA to the planning and decision-making process and the benefits SEA can provide in this respect.
- There can be limited experience of using systematic decision-making tools such as SEA within the relevant institutions. To respond to this challenge, the course leads through a whole SEA process with practical exercises and explains concrete tools and methodologies.

Training concept, method and contents

The course is based on the Harvard Business School case methodology, which is a well-established approach for practice-oriented, interactive learning. Teaching is mainly based on the intensive examination and discussion of a particular case of relevance to the teaching objectives. The Harvard case methodology stimulates exploration and development of conclusions by the trainees, rather than providing ready-made teaching messages. It has a high relevance for the development of practice-oriented knowledge required by people who are involved in SEA activities, and employs innovative methods of learning and group interaction.

This methodology is applied in SEA training to allow participants to gain hands-on exposure to the crucial steps of an SEA through so-called case works. Using different materials, participants of the training will practically structure and implement an SEA in the fictitious country of Ganama. An important module towards the end of the training focuses on real-life examples of planning challenges presented by selected trainees. The peer trainees analyse the cases in the light of the lessons learned and provide advice on how to tackle the challenges.

The case-based approach requires the development of a consistent case during course preparations. So far, the following cases have been developed and are available:

- transport planning;
- land use planning;
- regional development planning;
- poverty reduction strategy paper;
- climate change.

A case usually consists of the following case works (but can be reduced to a lower number of case works for streamlined applications):

- Case work 1: Screening/review the need for the SEA;
- Case work 2: Determine the right issues and scope of assessment;
- Case work 3: Analyse the baseline trends;
- Case work 4: Analyse proposed development objectives and their alternatives;
- Case work 5: Analyse proposed actions and their alternatives ;
- Case work 6: Link policy, plan or programme and SEA;
- Case work 7: Use effective means of participation;
- Case work 8: Manage SEA effectively within budgetary and time constraints.

Experience with applications

The SEA course has been delivered in a range of countries with diverse participants from both development partners and partner countries. In Vietnam, the national efforts to build up an SEA system have led to an internationally supported National SEA Training Programme. This programme developed local materials for SEA training in key sector ministries. The training was modelled on a flexible interactive SEA training approach developed under Sida's SEA capacity-building project in Yunnan, China but it also incorporates elements of case-based SEA training promoted by the GIZ course, and it includes Vietnamese SEA case studies in order to adapt to the local context.

An example from Tunisia illustrates the value of the interactive training course. For a large infrastructure programme, a pilot SEA (without legal requirements) was conducted in order to gain a common view on SEA, its potentials and methodological approaches. The training was given to members of the Tunisian public administration and private consultancy companies. This was a crucial step in order to avoid an EIA-focused assessment and to give the administration the chance to discuss their specific concerns with the consultancy firms. The consultancy firms that wanted to make an offer for the large-scale SEA, were required to participate in the training.

In academic circles, the SEA training has gained attention due to its combination of methodological approach and practical application combined with international (and practical) efforts to promote SEA in development co-operation. GIZ agreed with the international McGill-UNEP Master Programme in Environmental Assessment at McGill University (Canada) to use the training package for its students from all over the world. After the training, the students were given the possibility to exchange their views on the training. They also discussed its relevance to their personal context with experts from German development co-operation, which facilitated an important learning opportunity for both sides. Currently, GIZ is discussing the use of the GIZ training with a German university in the context of a new Master Programme in Development Studies.

Challenges

The implementation of the SEA guidance over the last years made apparent some crucial challenges of capacity development, which should also be reflected by relevant training courses. The following conclusions reflect how far the GIZ course responds to these challenges and/or might be further developed:

- Training such as the GIZ SEA training based on the SEA guidance can only serve as a start-off for broader capacity development approaches. In many countries, the German development co-operation supports such long-term efforts.
- Especially with a view to the challenge of broader institution building and learning processes in partner countries, it is necessary to not only address professionals practically involved in SEA implementation but also high-level decision-makers, stakeholder groups, etc. In this respect, the highly condensed version of the course might become increasingly relevant as a kind of awareness-raising tool. The demand for the rapid version of the course increased over the past years, reflecting this sentiment.
- A further aspect of the envisaged broader SEA capacity-building processes for developing countries is that the course should be suitable for training of trainers and regular applications in the country without further outside support. For certain situations, the course should not be performed as a stand-alone exercise but in close co-operation with training institutions in the country to incorporate it into regular training schemes. Despite the relatively demanding preparations for the course (*e.g.* case development), it can easily be integrated into country training programmes, as in Vietnam.
- Sometimes it is necessary to conduct the course in the context of challenges resulting from concrete *planning emergencies* (*e.g.* the post-tsunami reconstruction planning in Aceh, Indonesia). For this purpose, case simulations are highly efficient. However, these cases have to be tailored to the concrete challenges.
- Other course applications are related to SEA institutionalisation in particular countries, often in the context of legislation processes on SEA (*e.g.* in Namibia). For these cases, it is most important to reflect the envisaged institutional set-up of the relevant country in the composition of the case (*e.g.* through adjusting the sequences of the simulated SEA to the ones required in the country).
- In line with broader applications of the course, it is necessary to develop some quality assurance mechanisms and to provide a platform for an exchange of experiences among the increasing number of trainers. GIZ organised such a platform which took place in September 2009 and addressed current and future trainers from development co-operation agencies and partner countries.

Key lessons of capacity development for SEA

- There is need for continued capacity development in the field of SEA at grassroots (community), institutional and decision-making levels.
- Local communities, if capable and informed, can play an important role in providing inputs into decision-making and policy formulation.

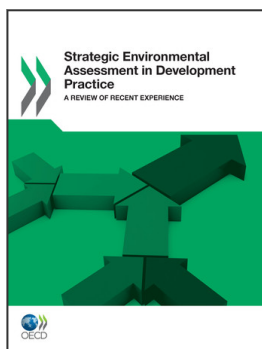
- Notwithstanding the fact that there are some similarities in SEA challenges throughout the world, effective SEA capacity development is dependent on the country, area and region's specific context, institutional setting and participation culture.
- Assessing the effectiveness of SEA capacity development is a challenge because of the influence of these context-specific factors.
- A good legal framework is vital as a basis for institutional capacity development. That means that capacity development is also required for law-drafting experts. These specialists should be made aware of good examples of legislation from other countries, and encouraged to consult with other countries in their region when drafting law.
- Capacity should be built to communicate SEA information in language that is understood by decision-makers.

Priority actions needed to improve SEA capacity

- Training needs to be provided at all levels, including that of decision-makers.
- There is a need to improve or establish the legislative base, not just for SEA, but EIA as well.
- Guidance material is also important: developing countries find it useful to have a platform for learning, integrating and adapting material for their specific context. This guidance should include documents on SEA best practice and information that helps practitioners, decision-makers, policy developers and planners to understand the usefulness of SEA better.
- Increasing the number of SEAs undertaken in each country can contribute to the awareness of the added value of SEA.
- Fostering co-operation and collaboration among stakeholders is a key element in promoting effective SEA development in respective countries.
- EIA/SEA practitioners should mentor newcomer professionals primarily through a “learning by doing” concept and not just through teaching theory.
- Training needs to be continuous and not a one-off event.

Notes

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From:
**Strategic Environmental Assessment in
Development Practice**
A Review of Recent Experience

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264166745-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

Nelson, Peter, *et al.* (2012), "Annex A: Capacity development for Strategic Environmental Assessment", in OECD, *Strategic Environmental Assessment in Development Practice: A Review of Recent Experience*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264166745-17-en>

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