

## Executive summary

### Introduction

This report has three objectives: Firstly, it illustrates how SEAs can be applied in development co-operation by presenting nine detailed case studies. Secondly, it reviews the outcome of these nine SEAs by examining how the SEA process changed original policies, plans and programmes. Finally, it concludes with lessons that can be learned from these case studies, for future practice.

It reviews strategic environmental assessment experiences in development co-operation in the following developing countries: Benin, Bhutan, Ghana, Honduras, Mauritius, Montenegro, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Vietnam.

In 2006, a task team of experts from development agencies in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) drafted the SEA guidance document “Applying Strategic Environmental Assessment: Good Practice Guidance for Development Co-operation”.

The introductory chapter of this report provides contextual background on the situation before the SEA Good Practice Guidance was published. It contains some of the rationale behind the publication of the SEA guidance, and concludes with an overview of the structure followed in this review.

Chapter 1 outlines the latest status of SEA application in developing countries. The practice of carrying out SEAs in development co-operation is becoming ever more popular, and in recent years its implementation has evolved immensely. The case studies reviewed in chapters 2 to 10 are indicative of the early stage in the adoption and application of SEAs. Chapter 1 fills the reader in on the most recent developments, and includes examples of countries that have started using SEAs since 2009.

Chapters 2 to 10 explore SEA experiences in nine developing countries. These case studies illustrate important lessons for future SEA applications. The context in which the SEAs are carried out are extremely varied:

Vietnam:	Quang Nam Hydropower Plan
Bhutan:	Environmental Mainstreaming
Namibia:	Millennium Challenge Account Programme
Mauritius:	Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategy for the Sugar Cane Sector
Benin:	Poverty Reduction Strategy
Ghana:	Environmental Mainstreaming
Sierra Leone:	Mining Sector
Honduras:	Municipal Planning
Montenegro:	National Spatial Plan

The conclusion summarises the lessons learned from the case studies and recommends six key policies to improve SEA practices.

## Key findings

### ***1. SEAs contribute to development effectiveness and harmonisation***

In many countries where SEAs were carried out, the SEA process not only brought together ministries within governments, but also marginalised sections of society and civil society groups. There are encouraging signs that donors are collaborating to support SEAs, often promoting capacity-building exercises to achieve further harmonisation.

### ***2. Long-term planning is important***

Many case studies emphasise the importance of long-term planning and engagement, instead of a one-shot attempt to implement an SEA. The case on the Mauritius study notes: “A follow-up to the SEA is essential to maintain momentum. Discussions between the donor and the government on how to use the results of the SEA in subsequent decision-making should not be neglected ...ensure follow-up on SEA recommendations.”

### ***3. SEAs should be linked with multi-donor budget support***

Some cases identified the need for, and the benefit of, co-ordinated efforts by donor agencies. In the case of Ghana it was noted that: “Most SEAs to date have been funded as part of individual donor programmes and the onus for maintaining this momentum will now shift with multi-donor budget support to the Government of Ghana and its key ministries.”

### ***4. Partner governments and donors need to be engaged***

Many of the case studies highlighted the critical importance of engaging donor and partner governments at an early stage. In particular, the Vietnam case stressed the importance of commitment and interest from the partner country. Donor-driven processes are likely to be ineffective and unsustainable.

### ***5. The SEA approach can be flexible***

Cases from Namibia, Montenegro and Honduras illustrated that a certain degree of flexibility can help make SEAs a success. Overly rigid process requirements may be unrealistic or discouraging to practitioners, especially if the time span is short. Flexibility is also needed for the use of the term “SEA”. The experience in Bhutan highlighted the negative influence that use of the term SEA can sometimes have, given its association among government ministries with EIAs as a regulatory process.

### ***6. Take baby steps when carrying out SEAs***

Being overly ambitious from the very beginning can be a risk, especially when the country lacks experience of conducting SEAs. In both Honduras and Vietnam, the case studies concluded that pilot SEAs should be carried out and should avoid being too ambitious.

### ***7. Encourage public participation***

Several studies noted the significant contributions made by individuals and public bodies, although full public participation can be difficult to organise in strategic-level assessments at the national level. The Honduras case notes that a high level of public participation was achieved with effective workshops.

### 8. *Technical skills are critical for sustainability*

Cases from Namibia, Honduras and Vietnam noted the importance of skills and technical capacities of developing country partners. This lesson emphasises the need for continued efforts to assist partner countries to develop technical and institutional capacities needed for the ongoing implementation of SEAs.

### 9. *The need for a new SEA methodology under special circumstances*

The need for further development of SEA methodology and approaches has been identified in two case studies: Montenegro and Sierra Leone. The case of Montenegro highlights the complexity of an SEA of spatial planning that requires a balanced treatment of social, economic and environmental factors. The Sierra Leone case study highlights the considerable difficulty of conducting an SEA in a fragile state. The case raises an observation that conventional single-issue SEAs are likely to fail in circumstances where a country has no institutional memory or capacity and is subject to frequent changes in government or administrative structure.

### 10. *SEA may reveal sensitive issues on resource distribution*

In Honduras, the SEA and planning processes revealed how access to natural resources is distributed among members of the municipality, exposing significant inequalities.

### 11. *The economic benefit of SEA needs to be recognised to secure support from industries*

In Mauritius, the sugar industry was concerned about the potential costs of implementing mitigation measures and that implementation of SEA recommendations could slow the transfer of funds. Key economic benefits were made explicit by the SEA report and this swayed the industrialists.

## Policy recommendations

**1. Development agency partners should initiate hands-on SEA pilot and demonstration projects**, integrating them into their ongoing development co-operation programmes and capacity-building activities. This can be sustained by working with partner-country institutions to identify and respond to their particular requirements for strengthening SEA process and practice.

**2. The benefits of SEAs to development policy making should be better documented and demonstrated.** Clear evidence of such benefit will add momentum to promote the implementation of SEAs. In particular, this effort should be directed at political leaders and senior managers, who are increasingly aware that an SEA is an administrative requirement as part of the approval chain, but have not necessarily grasped that an SEA is also a practical tool that can make development assistance more robust, successful and effective.

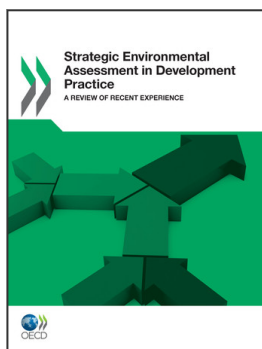
**3. Development agencies need to further harmonise their approaches to SEA to be consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.** Uncoordinated and fragmented approaches to SEAs are obstacles to its wider application. Despite positive advances by all stakeholders, donor agencies need to turn the spotlight on themselves and focus their attention on the way in which they plan, co-ordinate and execute their SEA processes and development programmes. This might represent an area for practical exchange among donor and partner countries to monitor progress and review experience,

possibly under the auspices of the SEA task team (reflecting the lessons from Vietnam where several donors have co-operated in support of a locally-led initiative as documented in this report).

**4. SEAs should be used to strengthen the linkage between Millennium Development Goals and budgetary support.** Since the Paris Declaration, budgetary support has increasingly become a major instrument of aid, and funds are ever more frequently paid directly to the relevant ministry. While recipient governments are required to stipulate carefully how they intend to allocate the development assistance, there is currently no built-in mechanism to ensure that such development plans guarantee a certain level of environmental sustainability (MDG 7). SEAs can be used to ensure that MDG 7 targets are explicitly incorporated within direct budget support mechanisms, as well as in sector-wide approaches (SWAs) agreements. More research and experience are needed to foster such applications.

**5. Development partners need to strengthen SEA monitoring and follow-up, notably on capacity development.** Experience from a number of the case studies indicates that, notwithstanding any agreements that may be in place, many developing countries lack the necessary institutional stability and continuity to promote and sustain SEAs with their own resources.

**6. Development partners need to discuss and disseminate SEA good practices with emerging economies.** The role of SEAs is critical in the emerging economies, such as Brazil, Russia, India and China, that are likely to shape our common economic and environmental future. However, partly because these countries are no longer priority targets for development assistance and capacity building by the donor community, little knowledge exists about SEA development in emerging economies. Comparative work on SEA practice in these countries is urgently needed.



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