

Impact Assessment and biodiversity: an international overview

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“The most important lesson of the last ten years is that the objectives of the Convention will be impossible to meet until consideration of biodiversity is fully integrated into other sectors. The need to mainstream the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources across all sectors of the national economy, the society and the policy-making framework is a complex challenge at the heart of the Convention.”

(Hague Ministerial Declaration from COP VI to WSSD, 2002)

"Impact Assessment is an important mainstreaming tool, ensuring that biodiversity values are built into decision-making, from the strategic to the local level"

The CBD has endorsed new guidance on biodiversity-inclusive EIA and SEA

the CBD voluntary guidelines are available in 6 languages from:

<http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meeting.asp?lg=0&mtg=cop-08> (document number 44).

Is there a capacity problem in IA?

What can we do to ensure that biodiversity issues can be assessed and managed effectively?

How can we ensure that biodiversity values and uses are recognised?

How can we promote biodiversity-inclusive decision-making and planning?

Biodiversity values in impact assessment

Although biodiversity yields many economically important goods and services, these values tend to be under-emphasised or ignored in decision-making. There is seen to be little economic benefit to conserving biodiversity and few economic costs to biodiversity degradation and loss

How do we overcome problems of under-valuation regarding biodiversity?

- Biodiversity tends to be persistently under-valued
- In particular, non-marketed environmental services and subsistence-level biodiversity benefits tend to be marginalised in decision-making
- This has equity as well as efficiency implications

How do we identify the total economic value of biodiversity?

Traditionally, economists value goods and services by looking at their market prices. Yet many biodiversity goods and services are not marketed, or market prices under-represent their true value to society

Because of the difficulty in valuation, many of these biodiversity values have remained unarticulated, and unrepresented in decision making and economic assessment

What methods can be used to articulate and express non-marketed biodiversity values?

Strategic Environmental Assessment as a tool:

- Do we need to consider biodiversity in a different way?
- Are there special needs for biodiversity information?

What are the ingredients of effective SEA?

e.g: Value of wetland waste water treatment based on estimates of replacement costs for other technical options

- Replacement cost: upgrading coverage of piped sewerage supply, improving slum sanitation facilities, instituting industrial treatment processes *\$1 million*
- Mitigative expenditures: increased treatment costs for city water intake *\$1.75 million*
- Less costs of managing wetland for waste treatment *\$235,000*

The course considers how we can improve IA with respect to biodiversity

It addresses some important needs which have been identified through CBBIA

It focuses on tools for mainstreaming biodiversity into planning and decision making processes

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Getting Ecology/ Biodiversity into IA

- **Screening:** Are there important ecological/ biodiversity-triggers for IA?
- **Scoping:** Which ecological aspects should be addressed and how? (consider spatial and temporal coincidence of proposal activities and the features/resources affected)
- **Refine TORs** on the basis of biodiversity values: consider importance of features and resources and people who might be affected.. Consider criteria which will be used in decision-making.

Getting Ecology/ Biodiversity into IA

- **Impact Assessment:** Obtain data to quantify effects (consider: type, location, timing, frequency of activities and their ecological effects in terms of magnitude, range, duration).
- **Impact significance:** Are the predicted effects ecologically significant? Consider proportion of resource affected and reversibility. Will integrity or status be adversely affected?
- **Who cares?:** Take account of values and importance to people.
- **Impact Mitigation:** Measures to avoid, reduce or remedy adverse impacts. What kind of biodiversity mitigation is possible or acceptable?
- **Monitoring and follow-up:** information, auditing of implementation. Systematic biodiversity monitoring and review.