LIAISE

Linking
Impact
Assessment
Instruments to
Sustainability
Expertise

Discussion Paper

Impact Assessments at International Organisations

An Overview of Strategies and Processes

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This study was initiated by the FP7 NoE LIAISE in order to provide an overview of the impact assessment (IA) practices and strategies of selected international organisations, to delineate their experiences, challenges and lessons learned, to find links to sustainable development, and to make recommendations for cooperation between LIAISE and international organisations. The task was given to the LIAISE partners SYKE and Alterra. Twelve international organisations with different perspectives and fields of operation were initially chosen to give as broad a view as possible: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The information gathered was structured as far as possible according to the following framework:

1. Background.
2. Purpose and use of IA.
3. Strategy for the application and use of IA.
4. Phases and methodology used in the IAs.
5. Review of IA practice.
6. Difficulties and challenges.
7. Expectations of IA and future outlooks.

Key findings

Background: As the main reasons for conducting IAs the organisations emphasise the need to minimise adverse environmental impacts, promote sustainable development, and improve the design and implementation of policies, programmes and projects. Several different types of IAs have been developed or are promoted by the organisations: Guidelines for EIA have been established by UNEP and FAO; SEA procedures are used by OECD, UNEP, and the World Bank; IAs focusing on sustainability have been developed by OECD and UNEP; while IA methods targeting poverty and social issues are emphasised by OECD, UNDP, the World Bank, EBRD, and AfDB etc.

Purpose and use of IA: The organisations see IA as a way of linking environmental issues to economic and social ones and to incorporate these into policies, plans and programmes. Many of the organisations are focusing on promoting their IA strategies to member countries, partners or borrowers, as a way of assisting them in developing more sustainable practices, or making sure that partners and borrowers conform to the principles of the organisation before getting involved in mutual projects.

Strategy for the application and use of IA: In general the organisations deliberately use very generic strategies, emphasising the fact that IAs should

be tailored to the specific context in which it is performed and be applied from an early stage. The IA should also identify options and alternatives and highlight gaps and the need for further assessments.

Phases and methodology used in the IAs: The strategies of the organisations follow quite similar principles and phases, emphasising the need for screening and scoping, involvement of stakeholders and dissemination of information, mitigation of negative impacts and enhancement of positive ones, and evaluation and monitoring.

Review of IA practice: Reviews and evaluations of the effectiveness of the IA strategies have been undertaken for most of the organisations in order to identify shortcomings and the need for improvements. These reviews have been implemented either by the organisations themselves or independent third parties. The reviews have highlighted a range of shortages that need to be dealt with, but also opportunities for future developments.

Difficulties and challenges identified: The difficulties with and obstacles to the proper implementation of IA as identified by the organisations are mostly directly related to the contexts of developing countries, where most of the work of the organisations is carried out. Ignorance about the added value and effectiveness of IAs, difficulties with involving stakeholders and the public, obstacles to the integration of the results of the IAs in decision making and policy processes, as well as lack of expertise, resources, capacity and time have been expressed by the organisations, to name just a few.

Expectations of IA and future outlooks: Several of the organisations have recognised the need for more collaboration between different aid organisations in order to mainstream IA procedures and strengthen institutional practices and capacity building, especially in developing countries. The organisations have also highlighted the need for methods and tools that are specifically tailored to the requirements of developing countries.

Differences and similarities in IA practices at the organisations

The organisations can be grouped into those focusing on the use of strategic assessments on policies, plans and programmes (OECD, WTO and the World Bank), those focusing on impact assessments of projects (FAO, EBRD and ADB), and those equally promoting both (UNEP, UNDP, WHO, AfDB and IUCN). A second way of clustering is between organisations with a main focus on advertising their IA strategies and guidelines to partner countries and beneficiaries (OECD, UNEP, WHO, WTO, EBRD and ADB), and organisations that use IA processes both for developing their own policies and programmes, as well as for their partners and beneficiaries (UNDP, FAO, World Bank, AfDB and IUCN).

Ten organisations have developed their own guidelines for IA, targeting aspects that are of particular importance to their specific operations. The tools and methodologies promoted in the guidelines are very general and include for the most part both quantitative and qualitative methods. Common features of all IA strategies are the emphasis on transparency, stakeholder involvement (including the general public), as well as dissemination of information. FAO and the development banks use similar systems of categorising potential projects into three or four categories depending on the project's potential impacts.

A lack of knowledge, expertise, resources, capacity, data and time were identified by the organisations as major obstacles to the implementation of IAs. Also highlighted were a widespread lack of awareness among host country governments and decision makers about the usefulness and effectiveness of IAs, as well as difficulties with ensuring a proper uptake of the results in decision making processes. The organisations recognise the need for better collaboration between agencies and organisations working in developing countries, as well as a need for more training and teaching on technical issues, methods and tools, and the appropriate use of IAs.

Conclusions and recommendations

A commitment to sustainable development has motivated the organisations to use IA processes, which generally are perceived to be beneficial and helpful in ensuring sustainability in policy, programme and project implementation. The IA strategies of the organisations are relatively new contributions to the sustainability policies, and the processes and methodologies still need to be refined and polished based on experience and training.

There are differences between the organisations with some focusing more on project level IAs and others also including strategic, policy level assessment processes. All of the studied organisations also to some degree promote IA strategies and instruments to member- and partner countries, beneficiaries or borrowers. This is a logical consequence of the fact that the objectives of the organisations include assisting member- and partner countries in achieving economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

Due to different history and focal areas (project, policy and programme) in assessing sustainability, there is some variability in the approaches and terminologies being used in the organisations. This creates some challenges for a comparative analysis. The exchange of practice and experiences therefore often requires a certain amout of "translation" in order to be applicable across organisations.

Many of the organisations work in developing countries and have been engaged in capacity building. Major challenges in developing IA practices are linked to the transparency of the process, which requires, among other things, effective ways to involve stakeholders and the public. Awareness raising, capacity building and improvement of the processes, tools and methods used in IAs have also been identified as areas where progress is needed to facilitate and improve the use of IA in policy processes.

Mainstreaming and harmonising of IA processes within organisations and also between different organisations is important when the organisations work together on development projects and programmes in developing countries or provide recommendations to member states.

Given the widespread use of and interest in IA instruments at international organisations, a future interaction with a community such as LIAISE could provide added value for both sides. It could contribute to the continuous improvement of IA by maintaining fora for developing the knowledge base and the practice of IA. The recommendation for LIAISE is to contact international organisations in order to explore how such a future cooperation could be developed in a mutually beneficial way.

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Introduction

The Network of Excellence LIAISE (Linking Impact Assessment Instruments to Sustainability Expertise, www.liaise-noe.eu) started in 2009 as a consortium of 15 research institutes from eight European countries, funded by the EC FP7 Environment Programme. Its research focus is an improved use of Impact Assessment (IA) tools for policymaking targeted at sustainable development (SD). Its disciplinary focus is centred on the combination of policy sciences, environmental sciences and economics. After the completion of the project in April 2014, LIAISE will continue as a Community of Practice for IA research on SD with an increased number of partners, a broader range of disciplines (also covering health impacts and impacts on employment and labour) and participants from outside the research community (e.g. consultants and organisations for research based advice).

In order to explore the potential field for future activities, LIAISE initiated this study to provide an overview of the state of play and recent developments in the field of applying and using IAs at international organisations. The emphasis was on strategic environmental assessment, but depending on the specific assessment processes applied or promoted by the organisations, also project level assessments have been included.

The task was given to the LIAISE partners SYKE and Alterra. The organisations to be studied was jointly decided upon by all participants and include the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). These specific organisations were chosen in order to provide a broad overview of organisations working in different fields of development and aid, keeping in mind the potential of LIAISE to reach out and contribute to the further development of the IA processes of the organisations. The main objectives of the report are to:

- Clarify the IA strategies of the selected international organisations.
- Delineate the expectations, experiences, needs and arrangements of the organisations.
- Find possible links to sustainable development.
- Analyse overall issues as relevant for the development of IA practice and LIAISE.

Conclusions and recommendations will be presented for a potential LIAISE role in contributing to the further development and improvement of the assessment practices and methods.

Approach and framework

The basic material for the analysis was gathered from websites, relevant reports of the organisations and scientific literature. Considerable diversity but also sim ilarities in the experience and practice of IA in the different organisations were expected. Information and material on IA strategies and processes were available to various extent for the organisations, with some of them providing easily accessible information on their websites, while others having minimal amounts of information publicly available. Based on the available information on each organisation the findings were structed according to the following framework:

1. Background; outlining the context in which the specific strategy of the organisation was developed.
2. Purpose and use of IA as a general overview.
3. Strategy for the application and use of IA; the position and role of IA in the organisation's activities.
4. Phases and methodology employed in the IAs; the structure of IA as used by the organisation, specific methods and guidance.
5. Review of IA practice; reflexive evaluation and examination of IA practice. (Not to be confused with ex-post evaluation of plans, programmes or projects, which is a frequently occurring phase in IAs and covered under point 3 above).
6. Difficulties and challenges identified in IA; specific obstacles and problems identified by the organisation or in scientific literature examining the organisation.
7. Expectations of IA and future outlooks; explicit statements by the organisation on needs and efforts to develop IA practice in the future.

Not all organisations were expected to provide extensive material on all points in the framework, but also missing points convey important information as they may indicate where an external network of experts such as LIAISE could make a contribution.

After making a systematic analysis of each organisation, a comparative analysis was done that forms the basis for the recommendations to LIAISE.

The draft report was sent to the organisations in order to collect feedback and recommendation on this study. This input was used in finalising the study.

Findings

This section describes the selected organisations one by one, analysing the strategies and processes used in IA based on the framework previously outlined. The section concludes with a summary of the main differences and similarities in the IA strategies of the organisations.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Background

The use of IA at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is based on the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD DAC 2006). In an effort to advance the use and effectiveness of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in development cooperation, a Task Force under the DAC (Development Assistance Committee) Working Party on Development Cooperation and the Environment was established in 2002. The Task Force is responsible for finding linkages between different approaches to development assistance used by donor and aid agencies, and to demonstrate the usability of a SEA strategy as an encompassing tool for all the approaches (Chaker et al. 2006). Through a so called Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) –approach, the OECD is assisting member states in assessing the impacts of proposed policies on the development prospects and competitiveness of developing countries (OECD 2008b).

The DAC Network on Poverty Reduction (DAC POVNET) is responsible for promoting pro-poor growth in OECD partner countries, and for helping with assessing the impacts programmes, policies and projects might have on poverty related issues. In light of this, DAC POVNET established an ex-ante Poverty Impact Assessment (PIA) approach in the mid-2000s (OECD DAC 2007).

OECD also introduced a guidance document on Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) in 1997 to help countries assess the likely economic, social and environmental impacts of regulations. RIAs are not conducted within the OECD itself, but support and assistance are provided to countries who need it (OECD 2008a). Guidelines on how to conduct Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIAs) have been published in order to help policy makers in OECD member countries assess the combined economic, social and environmental impacts of policies, programmes or plans (OECD 2010).

Purpose and use of IA

OECD utilises SEAs for country programmes and partnerships in cooperation with the partner countries in an effort to promote the integration of environmental and social issues into policy planning, identify both negative and positive impacts of proposed reforms, find ways to resolve or enhance the impacts, promote public involvement, and facilitate cooperation between countries and agencies (OECD DAC 2006). In addition to the general SEA strategy, OECD is also promoting SEA approaches particularly tailored to climate change adaptation, ecosystem services, disaster risk

reduction, and post-conflict development (Bouma 2008; Dolcemascolo 2008; Risse and Brooks 2008; SwedBio 2008).

The PIA strategy was developed as a tool for donors and partner countries, in collaboration with OECD or independently, to assess the impacts of their interventions on the well-being of the population, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalised. The strategy also aims to harmonise the development approaches between donor agencies. A PIA can be regarded as a shorter and simpler form of Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) (OECD DAC 2007).

RIAs have been used extensively by several OECD countries since the late 1970s. The RIAs focus to the most part on economic factors, with environmental and social dimensions included to a lesser extent. The reason for conducting RIAs varies, and differing RIA strategies have been adopted by different countries (OECD 2008a).

Strategy for the application and use of IA

The OECD describes SEA as a multitude of tools and methods to link environmental issues to economic and social ones and to incorporate these into policies, plans and programmes. OECD recognises that SEAs should be tailored to the specific context in which it is performed and be applied from an early stage. SEAs should preferably comply to the following principles (OECD DAC 2006):

- Have clear goals and targets.
- Be flexible and integrate the results of the SEA into existing policy structures.
- Establish a framework of principles and criteria for sustainability, against which the effects and risks of the SEA should be compared.
- Justify the recommended choices and trade-offs.
- Be transparent and involve stakeholders and the public as much as possible.
- Develop an efficient quality assurance system.
- Emphasise communication and dissemination of information.
- Ensure cost-effectiveness.
- Propose a review process and monitor the outcomes.
- Emphasise capacity-building and learning throughout the process.

The PIA strategy is fairly standardised as it combines already established approaches into a single easy-to-read model, so the results can be compared across agencies and institutions. The aim of the strategy is to provide an understanding of the connections between development and poverty reduction efforts, highlight the range of people that might be affected by the reform and in what way, assess the availability of reliable data, information, knowledge and expertise and identify gaps, and inform decision makers about the risks and opportunities of the reform as well as propose options and alternatives. The strategy is influenced by the scale of the reform, the timeframe, the budget, and the availability of data and expertise, and should be tailored to fit the prevailing conditions in the country (OECD DAC 2007).

Phases and methodology used in the IAs

OECD recommends the inclusion of the following stages when conducting SEAs on country programmes (OECD DAC 2006):

1. Perform a screening of the strategy, set objectives and identify relevant stakeholders.
2. Collect baseline data and information, compare alternatives and options, establish how to enhance opportunities and mitigate negative impacts.
3. Propose recommendations and solutions.
4. Monitor the implementation of decisions and evaluate the results.

The following priorities should be kept in mind during the SEA process (OECD DAC 2006):

- Analyse the existing management processes, governance systems, capacity and available resources of the country.
- Allocate sufficient time and effort on getting access to decision making processes.
- Support and promote improved governance and social accountability.
- Assist the country with the continuation of the SEA process.

Examples of tools and techniques promoted by the OECD for use in SEA or SIA can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of methodological guidance provided by the OECD for SIA (OECD 2010) and SEA (OECD DAC 2006).

Tools and techniques	Guidance	IA
Participatory tools (e.g. Delphi surveys, focus groups)	Integrate inputs from stakeholders and experts	SIA
Scenario tools (e.g. trends analysis, simulations, foresight exercises)	Identify different future scenarios for trends or development	SIA, SEA
Multi-criteria analysis (e.g. analytic hierarchy process, preference rankings, weighted summation)	Allow for consideration of criteria based on various measurement units	SIA, SEA
Cost-benefit analysis (e.g. cost-effectiveness analysis)	Compare costs and benefits with financial and economic parameters	SIA, SEA
Accounting tools (e.g. indicator sets, measures of well-being, ecological footprints)	Present different attributes (economic, physical)	SIA, SEA
Models (e.g. general equilibrium models, demographic models, climate models)	Simulate real world processes	SIA
Effect analysis (e.g. carrying capacity analysis, network analysis, transmission channels, overlay maps, quality of life assessment)	Predicting environmental and socio-economic effects	SEA
Compatibility appraisal	Ensures the compatibility of different strategic actions	SEA

The PIA strategy is made up of five guidance modules, of which all or just some of them may be used depending on the individual PIA. The information gathered from the modules should be inserted into a simple matrix for clear visualisation and comparison (OECD DAC 2007):

1. Clarify the objectives of the PIA based on planning documents such as national strategic plans, country assistance strategies and the MDGs and summarise the prevailing poverty situation in the country.
2. Assess the institutions and stakeholders likely to affect or be affected by the reform in order to improve the design of the reform.
3. Determine the channels to use for reaching the objectives.
4. Outline the likely results on different stakeholder and target groups.
5. Outline the impacts of the reform on international and national objectives, such as the MDGs.

Review of IA practice

The OECD recognises the importance of evaluating the IA process in use, to ensure that it is successful in achieving the intended goals and targets. The evaluation should highlight shortcomings in the process that need to be dealt with, as well as unintended positive outcomes that could be promoted in future assessments. The evaluation process is seen by the OECD as a learning process that strengthens the knowledgebase of the IA personnel (OECD DAC 2006). However, no evaluations of the OECD's own practices were found.

Difficulties and challenges

The OECD reports ignorance of the value and effectiveness of SEAs, as well as a lack of knowledge and expertise on how to conduct SEAs as major obstacles to the implementation of SEA. OECD points out that many developing countries lack an institutional practice of using decision-making tools and therefore regard IAs as applying to the developed world only (OECD DAC 2006).

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

The OECD believes that developed countries, multilateral aid organisations and NGOs should be more rigorously involved in capacity building of SEAs in developing countries. The support given needs to be tailored to the specific contexts of the country in question and might include technical training, awareness raising workshops, establishing regulatory frameworks, and networking for sharing experiences among donors (OECD DAC 2006).

United Nations Environment Programme

Background

IA at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was initiated at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. During the meetings of the UN Commission of Sustainable Development in 1994 and 1995, further requests were made to reinforce the work UNEP is doing with facilitating the assessment of environmental impacts of policies, especially trade policies (Abaza et al. 2004). IA is also a critical tool in UNEP's effort to promote integrated policymaking, focusing on all dimensions of sustainable development, as a natural part of decision making processes (Fritzen et al. 2009). The SEA strategy that UNEP promotes has been influenced to a significant degree by the SEA strategy developed by the OECD (UNEP 2009).

Purpose and use of IA

UNEP promotes EIA/SEA capacity building both nationally and internationally with a specific focus on developing countries and economies in transition. UNEP regards SEA as a useful tool for incorporating sustainable development into policies, plans and programmes, and for analysing environmental and social issues. In order to be useful, a SEA needs to include predictions and evaluations of possible social, economic and health impacts, in addition to environmental ones. The SEA should act as a proactive management tool and provide insights on consequences of certain choices. UNEP has developed a Strategic Integrated Planning for Sustainable Development-framework, based on common criteria and indicators of sustainability, to aid the integration of IA tools into all levels of decision making. The framework addresses large areas or regions, and focuses on long time-scales (Abaza et al. 2004).

The "*Strategic Integrated Assessment of Trade Policies*", developed in collaboration with UNCTAD, functions as a framework for assessing the environmental, economic and social impacts of international trade policies. It is targeted at policy makers in the environmental and trade sectors, environmental economists and EIA practitioners (Abaza and Hamwey 2001; Chaker et al. 2006).

Strategy for the application and use of IA

UNEP projects are all required to undergo a Situation Analysis, which can be regarded as a form of IA. The focus of the assessment should be on (UNEP 2005):

- Social consequences (who is impacted), with special emphasis on the poor and gender equality.
- Social, environmental, political, economic and technical contexts and appropriate response/mitigation strategies for risks and benefits.
- Conflicts of interest (existing or emerging) and appropriate response/mitigation strategies.
- Expectations of stakeholders and associated outcomes.

SEA is regarded by UNEP as being a modification of EIA focusing on higher level programmes and policies; the approach being policy-centred rather than impact-centred. As such, a SEA should be integrated into the policymaking process at the earliest stage possible to ensure maximum

efficiency in influencing the direction of the policy. By conducting SEAs on policies and programmes, the time and effort needed for conducting EIAs can be significantly reduced (Abaza et al. 2004; UNEP 2009, 2013).

The methodology used in SEAs is less strict and more adaptable to specific conditions than the methodology used in EIAs. However, the UNEP SEA strategy includes eight guiding principles for successfully designing and implementing SEAs (Abaza et al. 2004):

1. The SEA should be tailored to the specific context in which it is set.
2. Specific goals and objectives need to be identified.
3. The main goal of the SEA process should be to enhance sustainable development.
4. The SEA needs to be comprehensive and encompass all levels of decision making.
5. The final outcome of the SEA should be distributed and explained in a clear and appropriate way.
6. The SEA should be integrative and consider all potential aspects, such as poverty and health.
7. A broad range of stakeholders and the public should get the chance of being involved in the process and express their concerns and expectations.
8. The SEA should be as cost-effective and timesaving as possible without compromising the efficiency of the SEA.

Phases and methodology used in the IAs

A multitude of tools and techniques (see Table 2) can be used when conducting SEAs, depending on the context. As a rule of thumb, the easiest and least time-consuming method that still provides reliable results should be selected. A series of basic steps is proposed by UNEP for the effective implementation of SEAs (Abaza et al. 2004; Sadler and McCabe 2002):

1. Determine if a SEA is required and to what extent.
2. Identify relevant issues of concern.
3. Compile the necessary data and information and identify gaps.
4. Consider and compare options and alternatives taking into account potential risks and benefits.
5. Evaluate the significance of the impacts and compare costs and benefits.
6. Propose actions to avoid, reduce and offset negative impacts.
7. Prepare a report and describe the impacts and mitigation measures, to decision makers, stakeholders and the public.
8. Review the report and include views and concerns expressed during the previous step.
9. Monitor and evaluate the results of the SEA.

Table 2. Recommended methods for conducting SEA at different stages in the SEA process (Abaza et al. 2004; Sadler and McCabe 2002).

Tools and techniques	Stage of SEA
Listing environmental stocks and resources Points of reference	Baseline study
Environmental scan Analogues or case comparison Checklists and cause-effect networks	Screening/scoping
Scenario development Comparative risk assessment	Formulating options
Vulnerability mapping Environmental indicators and criteria Policy impact matrix Predictive and simulation models GIS, capacity/habitat analysis Benefit-cost analysis Multi-criteria analysis	Impact analysis
Cross-impact matrices Consistency analysis Sensitivity analysis Trade-off mapping / decision tree	Documentation for decision making

Review of IA practice

No information on the review of UNEP EIA/SEA practice was found.

Difficulties and challenges

UNEP has expressed concerns about difficulties with involving the public, lack of consistency in the performance of SEAs, and problems with ensuring proper uptake of the recommendations and results in decision making processes. EIAs and SEAs are frequently seen as add-on tools rather than an integral part of the policymaking process (Abaza et al. 2004).

UNEP also recognises the challenge of aligning its own EIA requirements with national requirements in project implementation. Considerable confusion and controversy can emerge when the requirements of UNEP differ remarkably from the requirements of the host country (Abaza et al. 2004).

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

UNEP expects SEA to function as an early warning system for potential effects and impacts of interventions and decisions, therefore guaranteeing compliance with the principles of sustainability. According to UNEP, EIA and SEA systems should be established in all developing countries as a prerequisite for mainstreaming integrated assessment in accordance with the WSSD Plan of Implementation (Abaza et al. 2004).

UNEP emphasises in the 2014-2017 Medium Term Strategy its commitment to enhancing its results-based management by strengthening the evaluation and monitoring process of programmes and projects. This includes, to a significant degree, reinforcing the utility and effectiveness of IA at all management levels (UNEP 2012). UNEP has also called for a SEA approach that would be more adaptable to the needs and requirements of developing countries, so as to help promote transparency and problem solving (Abaza et al. 2004).

United Nations Development Programme

Background

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) started employing IAs as part of its sustainable development strategy in the early 1990s with the Environmental Management Guidelines published in 1992. These Guidelines represented a first attempt to integrate IAs in development assistance, with the requirement to implement IAs at every stage in country programme and project cycles from an early start. The environment was defined in the Guidelines as incorporating social, cultural, health and economic issues as well as environmental ones. The Guidelines initially contained a wide variety of tools for their implementation; e.g. the programme/project environmental overview (EOP), the country environmental overview (EOC), and the environmental management strategy (EMS). However, the Guidelines rejected the use of a checklist approach, which was the most common IA-approach at the time (Brown 1997).

The Guidelines were later restructured into the Environmental Overview (EO), as a counterpart to the Strategic Overview (SO) (Brown 1997), and incorporated into the Environmental Mainstreaming Strategy adopted in the late 2000s (Opio-Odongo et al. 2004).

In 2003, UNDP raised awareness of the fact that trade liberalisation policies can have different impacts on different countries and groups of people, and suggested that all agreements under the World Trade Organization (WTO) should be succumbed to a Human Development Impact Assessment (HDIA), to ensure that human development standards are met. This proposal has yet to be incorporated by the WTO, and UNDP has since restructured the HDIA strategy to also fit individual country trade policies (Yamamoto and Oh 2012).

Purpose and use of IA

The Environmental Mainstreaming Strategy emanates from the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, and aims to enhance sustainable development and environmental soundness in all policies, programmes and operations of the UNDP. All country programmes are requested to undergo EOs to envision how environmental risks are taken into account in operations (Opio-Odongo et al. 2004). The EO is based on the presumption that the necessary skills and knowledge needed for the identification of outstanding environmental and social issues in development contexts can be found within a country and utilised through a participatory process of information sharing among relevant parties (Brown 1997).

The HDIA strategy is used within UNDP for assessing the impacts of changes in trade policies on human development, particularly in developing countries. UNDP recognises that trade liberalisation policies in themselves do not promote human development, and need to be accompanied by development schemes. The HDIA should therefore highlight the real costs of policies on human wellbeing and bring forth factors that would otherwise remain hidden (Yamamoto and Oh 2012).

UNDP has also established a Trust Fund to assist countries in conducting Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) on plans and policies, in order to shift the ownership of the PSIA from donor institutions to country governments. In addition to funding the PSIA, UNDP also provides technical

assistance and expertise. UNDP describes PSIA as an analysis for identifying intended and unintended impacts of policy reforms on the wellbeing of different groups of society. The aim of PSIA is defined as increasing the considerations of poverty reduction and equity in the formulation of policies. The process is expected to promote transparency, accountability and collaboration between stakeholders (Oxford Policy Management 2010).

Strategy for the application and use of IA

The EO is described as a process where a proposed development programme is scrutinised to identify potential environmental and social opportunities and challenges, after which options, alternatives and modifications are suggested in order to ensure sustainable outcomes. The process needs to be interdisciplinary, participatory and transparent, and involve a range of different stakeholders from different sectors (Opio-Odongo et al. 2004).

Four important aspects of a successful implementation of an Environmental Overview can be identified (Brown 1997):

1. The EO must be introduced at the earliest stage possible to guarantee maximum uptake.
2. The questions of the EO must be answered in a sequential and equal manner.
3. A wide range of stakeholders, experts, decision makers etc. from different fields must be consulted.
4. Modifications and suggestions to the draft programme/project must be sufficiently integrated into the whole process.

According to Brown (1997), when following these four aspects of the EO, the advantages of the strategy can be summarised as follows:

- The boundaries between environmental and biophysical dimensions of development assistance are blurred and environmental, economic, managerial and capacity issues are counterbalanced.
- Because of the encompassing nature of the strategy with regard to the whole process, participants are required to step outside of their own comfort zones.
- The baseline created by the EO can be used by decision makers and stakeholders to develop and compare priorities, needs and opportunities.
- The broad range of different participants increases the amount and value of knowledge and perspectives and creates a stimulating and participatory milieu for creative thinking and decision making.

The HDIA strategy focuses on the mainstreaming of human development issues into policies and plans by making policy makers aware of how their decisions affect different groups of people and providing options and guidance on how to mitigate harmful impacts. The aim of the strategy is to identify linkages between trade and human development and suggest indicators for monitoring of trade-related impacts (Yamamoto and Oh 2012).

SEA and EIA are promoted as useful tools for including green growth in national policy frameworks in the Inclusive Green Growth-strategy jointly created by UNDP, World Bank, OECD and AfDB (AfDB et al. 2013).

Phases and methodology used in the IAs

The process of conducting an EO involves answering a number of questions about the baseline conditions, impacts and opportunities, and how to integrate these into the programme/project in an efficient way. Monitoring and evaluation of the results is the final step of the process. The questions to be answered can be phrased similarly to the following example (Brown 1997; Dalal-Clayton and Sadler 1999; Kjörven and Lindhjem 2002):

1. What are the environmental and social settings of the project area?
2. What environmental and social issues exist?
3. What is the economic situation?
4. What management practices and capabilities are evident?
5. What environmental, social and economic impacts and opportunities associated with the project can be identified?
6. What options, modifications or alternatives exist?
7. Which operational strategy would best enhance sustainable development and address all the issues emerging from answering the previous questions?

The HDIA strategy follows several steps that should be adapted to the specific context in which the assessment is taking place (Yamamoto and Oh 2012):

1. Analyse the change in the trade policy and its potential effects.
2. Identify relevant stakeholders.
3. Draw up the relationship between the policy change and human development.
4. Develop a process for participation and consultation.
5. Establish the relevant indicators for monitoring change.
6. Choose appropriate tools and techniques.
7. Conduct the assessment and compile the report.
8. Hold consultations and dialogues with stakeholders about the outcome.
9. Rewrite the report and design an appropriate policy.

Table 3 provides examples of tools and techniques recommended by UNDP for the facilitation of the HDIA process.

Table 3. Examples of methods and tools promoted by the UNDP for conducting HDIAs (Yamamoto and Oh 2012).

Tools and techniques	IA process
Social Accounting Matrix (SAM)	HDIA
Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) models	HDIA
Partial equilibrium analysis	HDIA
Multiple Indicators and Multiple Causes (MIMIC)	HDIA
Structural Equation Models (SEMs)	HDIA

Review of IA practice

During 2007, UNDP conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness and use of IA methods in East European countries, in order to clarify the need for training and capacity development in the area. The survey showed that IA is still in its infancy in the countries examined and much needs to be done to increase the utilisation and efficiency of IA. The role of UNDP could be to

introduce training courses and strengthen the capacity for undertaking IAs, as well as raise awareness of its usefulness and importance (Staronova 2007).

The effectiveness of the PSIA Trust Fund was also subjected to ex-post evaluation in 2010. The main findings from the study showed that more efforts are needed by UNDP to ensure that the receiving countries are capable of performing PSIAs, both in regards to resources and knowledge, and that PSIAs are institutionalised in government processes (Oxford Policy Management 2010).

Difficulties and challenges

The evaluation of the PSIA process highlighted the difficulty of directly influencing the policy making process of developing countries. The institutional context of many countries is not embracive of new decision making tools introduced by developed countries or aid organisations. Prevailing suspicion of decision makers in developing countries towards interventions undertaken by western organisations can hamper the embrace of IA methods in some countries (Oxford Policy Management 2010).

UNDP also noted the fact that IA methods have not yet been sufficiently marketed and promoted in developing counties and countries in transition. Ignorance and low expertise remain major obstacles to the proper utilisation of IA in these countries, even though different IA methods have been introduced and legal arrangements are in place in many of them (Staronova 2007).

Another challenge highlighted by UNDP is the lack of data in developing countries on e.g. sex, age, ethnicity and income of the population. Gathering of primary data is a time-consuming and expensive process, which could discourage the implementation of a full-scale IA (Yamamoto and Oh 2012).

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

UNDP expects the process of IA to force decision makers and civil servants to broaden the scope and acknowledge aspects of an issue that would otherwise be overlooked. The IA process should also enhance learning among participants. The introduction of IA tools and instruments is expected to result in an improvement in the efficiency of administrative practice and make the comparison of different methods and alternatives routine procedure (Staronova 2007).

UNDP has also raised the idea of establishing an IA-network on a country basis to encourage the sharing of information and experiences among practitioners and stakeholders, thus promoting competence development and inspiration (Staronova 2007).

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Background

Sustainable growth, efficient management and use of natural resources, and improved food security are all strategic objectives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the basis for conduction of IAs of projects and actions (FAO 2012).

Purpose and use of IA

FAO recommends conducting EIAs on all projects that, through an initial screening process, are believed to possibly result in negative impacts or might be subject to significant public concern. The purpose of EIA is to ensure that all impacts are investigated and that the project reflects best practice and makes use of lessons learned and the best available technology. FAO recognises the close connection between the natural and social environment in its field of operation and promotes the inclusion of all dimensions of sustainability in EIAs (FAO 2012).

Strategy for the application and use of IA

As part of the EIA strategy, all projects are assigned an Environmental Category A, B or C, which mandates what type of EIA, if any, should be conducted for the project. Determining the category is based on a checklist. Category A applies to projects that could have significant or irreversible environmental or social impacts. Here a full-scale EIA is required. Examples: large-scale land reclamation projects, river basin development projects, and introductions of alien species. Category B projects supposedly have less significant, or easily mitigated impacts. Here a more basic environmental analysis is sufficient, e.g. reforestation/afforestation projects, climate change adaptation projects, and introductions of GMOs. Category C-projects have only negligible or no impacts, and further EIAs or analysis are hence not required. E.g. capacity development projects, micro-credit programmes or natural resource assessment projects (FAO 2012).

In addition to the general guidelines on EIA practice, FAO has also developed specific EIA approaches to certain sectors, e.g. the pulp and paper industry (FAO 1996). EIAs are also an important component of the FAO guidelines on sustainable forest harvesting practices (Dykstra and Heinrich 1996).

Phases and methodology used in the IA

The EIA process is initiated as early as possible with an environmental review, making use of the "Decision Tree" approach, to exempt Category C projects while retaining projects in Categories A and B. The environmental review should also identify the most prominent environmental and social issues, impacts and stakeholders associated with the project. The second step is composed of environmental screening, during which all potential risks and benefits are mapped and the remaining projects are assigned their final category, which might change if new evidence emerge at a later stage. The final step is undertaking environmental scoping in order to analyse the existing institutions, laws and regulations of the country in which the project is set, as well as options and alternatives for mitigating or enhancing impacts. Stakeholders, decision makers, the public and civil society should be involved at this stage (FAO 2012). Table 4 shows how the different steps of the EIA correlates with the steps of the project cycle.

Table 4. The project cycle and associated EIA steps (FAO 2012).

Project cycle steps	EIA process steps
Identification	Preliminary review and classification
Formulation	Formulation of EIA
Appraisal and approval	Clearance of the technical review
Implementation and monitoring	Monitoring the effectiveness of mitigation efforts and drafting an Environmental Management Plan
Closure	Final report and lessons learned
Evaluation	Ex-post evaluation of the impacts of the project

Review of IA practice

FAO conducted an evaluation of the use of EIA in aquaculture in the late 2000s, in order to investigate the need for further promotion and application of EIAs in this context. The study indicated that generally, EIAs are not sufficiently implemented in aquaculture, and especially monitoring of projects and actions is lacking (FAO 2009).

Difficulties and challenges

Weaknesses identified during the evaluation of EIA in aquaculture were poor integration and coordination between different levels of government, failure to incorporate stakeholders and the public, a lack of expertise and capacity, weak standards and excessive bureaucracy (FAO 2009).

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

The survey regarding EIA in aquaculture clearly showed that most aquaculture projects in developing countries are small-scale, for which the implementation of EIA is not required or feasible. The EIA applies for large-scale projects that will have a significant impact on the environment. Although the aquaculture projects are small-scaled, the social and environmental impacts need to be addressed. FAO concludes that the only way to address the cumulative environmental and social impacts of these projects is through SEA with a focus on a regional approach, which would address all aquaculture developments in a particular area on a higher level (FAO 2009).

FAO also emphasises the importance of regarding EIA as a tool among others, not a solution for everything, which is sometimes the case. FAO believes that EIAs should only be conducted for issues that can be adequately addressed by the assessment, such as site specific impacts on biodiversity and landscapes or social and economic issues. According to FAO, EIAs should not be conducted for more general regional or international issues, such as siting, sustainable sourcing, chemicals and disease, for which there are other and more suitable assessment tools (FAO 2009).

Strengthening of institutional capacity and environmental policymaking as well as increasing the awareness of the benefits of IA are seen by FAO as crucial steps in advancing the use of IA both in developed and developing countries (FAO 2009).

World Health Organization

Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) promotes the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as a means of ensuring that decision makers from a wide variety of sectors are sufficiently aware of the health consequences of their policies (Smith et al. 2010). In 1982, the World Health Assembly passed a resolution (WHA-35.17) introducing a framework for HIA development. This resolution urged WHO Member States to analyse in detail the possible health hazards and environmental dangers of existing and proposed development projects. The resolution also advised to integrate the HIA into project plans and implementing adequate measures in order to prevent the occurrence of health and environmental hazards (WHO 2014).

Purpose and use of IA

HIA aims to identify how development brings unintended changes in health determinants and resulting changes in health outcomes. HIA provides a basis to proactively address any risks associated with health hazards and health improvement opportunities (Quigley et al. 2006).

HIA can be a valuable tool for helping to develop policies and assisting decision makers. The usefulness and need of HIA within policy and decision making are as follows (WHO 2014):

HIA is used in projects, programmes and policies to:

- assist policy development,
- bring policies and people together,
- involve the public,
- provide information for decision makers,
- address many policy making requirements,
- recognise that other factors influence policy apart from HIA,
- function as a proactive process that improves positive outcomes and decreases negative outcomes, and
- provide what policy makers need.

Strategy for the application and use of IA

According to their website (WHO 2014), WHO Headquarters is expanding its programme of work to encourage development of HIA across the world. Therefore the WHO Executive Board identified several strategic directions in the corporate strategy, such as:

- To address the underlying social and economic determinants of health through policies and programmes that enhance health equity and integrate pro-poor, gender-responsive, and human rights-based approaches.
- To promote a healthier environment, intensify primary prevention and influence public policies in all sectors so as to address the root causes of environmental threats to health.

The website of WHO Global provides a comprehensive set of information on HIA provided by HIA practitioners and researchers. HIA-related information such as HIA guidance documents are provided by WHO Member States including examples of HIA. WHO gives information on guidance for how to carry out HIA on a policy level, and how to make HIA work with policy and

decision making. It also gives suggestions for how an HIA practitioner might interact with the policy process and policy makers (WHO 2014).

The WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) is assisting European member states in having a deeper understanding of HIA and health in IAs like EIA and SEA. WHO/Europe supports the integration of health into environmental assessments, such as EIAs and SEAs, and contributes to implementation of the SEA. This is done through capacity building as well as through developing methods and tools for the HIA of specific sectors within projects (WHO 2010, 2013).

Phases and methodology used in the IAs

According to the report *"Health and Strategic Environmental Assessment"* of WHO Europe, the key health entry points within a SEA can be divided into six main stages. Table 5 shows the process of a SEA with a linkage to some key health considerations to be made in the process (WHO 2010).

Table 5. Key health entry points within a SEA (WHO 2010).

IA-phase	Key health entry points
Screening	Health considerations should be included as part of the screening process, e.g. through active involvement of HIA experts or inclusion of health criteria in screening tools.
Scoping	Health must be adequately covered in the terms of reference, including in relation to the role and competencies of experts that will conduct the health related assessment activities.
Assessment and reporting:	Need to ensure quality and comprehensiveness of health related assessment, including stakeholder engagement activities, disclosure of information, assessment methodologies used, credibility of baseline, appropriateness of recommendations, etc.
Consultation and participation	Need to ensure that health sector actors and advocates are actively engaged in the policy, plan and programme process.
Decision making	Are health sector actors playing a meaningful role in these deliberations? In other words, are they actively engaged in decision-making activities?
Monitoring and evaluation	Health indicators are used for monitoring. They can also be used to help measure the overall impact and performance of the SEA. For example, many environmental issues will result in health problems, many of which have clear attributable risks, e.g. poor air quality/respiratory disorder. Health indicators could provide an opportunity to link SEA performance to wider development objectives, e.g. Millennium Development Goals (MDG)-related environmental and health indicators (those clearly attributed to environmental risk factors, e.g. water and sanitation).

Difficulties and challenges

- To raise more awareness in both the health sector and the environment sector: There is a need to enable the systematic participation of the health sector in general and health authorities in particular in the strategic stage of decision making in all sectors; to this end, the current consideration of health mainly through biophysical factors seems to be limited in scope. It still needs to

recognise the full potential to promote health and the value of instruments such as SEA. Health experts need to be equipped with the information, tools and arguments for making the case of health in SEA to others. Therefore, building relevant and sustainable capacities is of great importance, as is the provision of legal bases for health inclusive SEA.

- Data availability: Data may not be readily available, complete, reliable, or have the right level of resolution (local, regional, national level aggregates). However, even in a data-rich environment, the consideration of all possible health effects (direct, secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive or negative) is likely to be elusive if not impossible given the underlying complexity, for example because many health effects will only show after longer periods or are influenced by other factors.

- Consultation with stakeholders, paying attention to how to communicate effectively and credibly about health issues, and dealing with community perceptions of risk. Since the environmental report of any SEA has to provide information on all likely significant effects on the environment, including human health, it is desirable that health issues are considered in dedicated sections or documents.

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

- There is a need to further strengthen the case for health in SEA, through more advocacy and outreach aimed at health and other sector policy makers. Even though considerable progress has been made on including health in SEA and other forms of IA, health still does not get the attention it deserves in nowadays SEA.

- Lack of capacity and awareness within the health sector is one of the factors impeding the integration of health in SEA. To fulfil its stewardship role, the health sector should be made more systematically aware of the value that SEA can provide for health protection and health promotion; otherwise it will be difficult to engage meaningfully in the SEA process.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe is committed to producing further guidance on health in SEA with special reference to the WHO European Region. Main target group is the Member States of the WHO with their respective Ministries of Health and their subordinate health authorities.

World Trade Organization

Background

Since 1996, the Trade and Environment Committee of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been discussing environmental reviews followed by a more intense negotiation in 2001 during the Doha meeting. The purpose of an environmental review is to improve the ability of environmental and trade policies to integrate and to identify actions that will enhance positive environmental impacts and prevent negative ones. In 1996, the Committee on Trade and Environment started its work on environmental reviews under Item 2 "Environmental protection and the trading system" of its work programme. In 2001, the importance of environmental reviews in WTO trade negotiations was confirmed in paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration, which states: "*We take note of the efforts by Members to conduct national environmental assessments of trade policies on a voluntary basis.*" In Paragraph 33 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration Ministers "*encourage that expertise and experience be shared with Members wishing to perform environmental reviews at the national level*". The importance of reviews was also confirmed in the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development's Plan of Implementation of 2002 (WTO 2014).

Purpose and use of IA

The members of WTO agree that policies should promote trade and the environment to support each other. A way to support this element is to exchange information on the methodology and implementation of national environmental reviews (WTO 2008). The members of WTO believe that technical assistance in environmental reviews is needed. However, many countries have different approaches to environmental reviews, conducting the reviews is difficult and the methods are still evolving as "no member has the perfect tool". Moreover, the members of WTO believe that each review needs to be adapted to each particular situation. Some developing country members have stressed that the reviews should be voluntary and the procedure should not be "harmonised" for the reason that the developing countries' should not be made more onerous by requiring countries to use the same or similar procedures. This means that the reviews must be carried out based on the requirements of each country, its capability and resources, its level of development, its expertise and the local situation (WTO 2014).

Strategy for the application and use of IA

The Doha Declaration (Paragraph 33) asked members to share their experiences with each other. Several members have described the environmental reviews, environmental assessments or sustainability impact assessments of the WTO negotiations and other major trade agreements. For instance, among WTO members, the European Union carries out sustainability impact assessments (SIAs) on trade negotiations; Canada has done environmental assessments (EAs) of the WTO negotiation; and the US has conducted an environmental review (ER) of the Doha Development Agenda negotiations (WTO 2000). Furthermore, some organisations have also contributed. UNEP informed the Committee of Trade and Environment of its methods for environmental assessment of trade liberalisation and the projects has been set up in countries to assess the environmental effects of trade policies. During the Cancún Ministerial Conference in 2003, the

Committee reported on its work on sharing experiences on environmental reviews and since then members have continued to inform on their national environmental reviews and related activities. These include seminars and conferences to share expertise and experience. Some examples are (WTO 2008):

- An EU seminar in 2003 on "Sustainability Impact Assessment of Trade Agreements: Making Trade Sustainable?",
- a Canadian conference of the International Association of Impact Assessment in 2004,
- and an EU Conference on Impact Assessments in 2006.

Phases and methodology used in the IAs

No information on the phases and methodology of WTO IA practice was found.

Review of IA practice

No information on review of WTO IA practice was found.

Difficulties and challenges

There are different perspectives in environmental reviews within the WTO. One point of view is that the environmental review should identify the difficulties that developing countries experience, to overcome these difficulties and promote sustainable development. In case the review shows that trade liberalisation could cause some damage to the environment, then the country should examine how to prevent this by finding policies that would make the trade and environmental aspects work together without causing harm to each other. Another perspective is that environmental reviews should not be binding on decision makers; rather it should be a tool offering self-assessment as a means to make policies more coherent. Governments would also be able to act outside the trade agreement in order to mitigate the environmental impact. In some cases reassessment might be needed to work out longer term policies — these would take into account the economic valuation of the environmental degradation and the expected economic benefits of the trade liberalisation (WTO 2003).

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

No information on expectations and future outlooks of WTO IA practice was found.

World Bank

Background

The World Bank has been using IA as standard methodology for ensuring environmental sustainability in all its lending projects since the late 1980s. The World Bank was also one of the first organisations to mainstream the use of SEA with an emphasis on sectorial and regional IA, and the methods have been tested in a number of developing countries in association with programmatic lending operations (Kjörven and Lindhjem 2002). The responsibility for preparing the IA primarily lies with the borrower, while the World Bank is responsible for assisting, screening and monitoring (Goldberg 1993).

The World Bank increasingly uses the term SESA (strategic environmental and social assessment) when referring to SEA practices to highlight the importance of both environmental and social issues in IAs. SEA/SESA is frequently used as an umbrella term for all assessment processes aimed at influencing strategic decision making with the help of impact-centred tools (Loayza 2012).

As part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy adopted in 2001, the World Bank committed to conduct Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) on policy reforms in developing countries. Initially intended for low-income countries, the use of PSIA has now spread to middle-income countries as well (Coudouel et al. 2006).

Purpose and use of IA

The main reason for using IA in World Bank operations is to identify, avoid and mitigate potential negative impacts of proposed projects on the environment. The IA should improve decision making, ensure sustainability of project options, and guarantee the involvement of affected people (World Bank 2012). The World Bank is trying to apply IA at strategic levels in order to improve development planning and reduce the need for project specific EIAs (Rees 1999). The Environment Strategy adopted in 2001 reaffirms the bank's emphasis on SEA in order to influence the planning process at an early stage (World Bank 2001, 2013). The Bank describes SEA as a participatory approach for ensuring the inclusion of environmental and social issues in decision making, development planning and strategic implementation (World Bank 2005).

The approach used for implementing the Environment Strategy is a Structured Learning Programme (SLP), which focuses on the application of SEA to all operations, the relationship between SEA and other World Bank instruments, and added value to the outcomes of SEA processes. Analytical work is regarded as a key component in supporting this approach (World Bank 2005, 2013).

PSIAs are conducted for specific and well-defined policy reforms in developing countries in order to avoid negative social consequences, especially on poor and vulnerable groups. The purpose of the PSIA is to highlight these consequences and describe options to minimise the negative impacts and enhance the positive ones (Coudouel et al. 2006).

SEAs and PSIAs are also conducted on partner countries' own plans and programmes in order to ensure compliance with the policies of the World Bank (Coudouel et al. 2006; World Bank 2005).

Strategy for the application and use of IA

The IA strategy of the World Bank categorises proposed projects according to type, location, sensitivity and scale in order to determine the extent of assessment needed for the project. Category A is assigned to projects that are likely to have detrimental, irreversible or unprecedented negative impacts, and the borrower is required to conduct a full-scale EIA or a sectorial IA. Category B is reserved for projects which have less adverse negative impacts that are site specific and reversible. The IA required for Category B projects is less strict than for Category A. Projects that are assigned Category C should have no negative impacts and IAs are therefore unnecessary. Projects funded through financial intermediaries are assigned category FI (World Bank 2012).

The SEA-strategy developed at the World Bank differs slightly from most contemporary practices in that it focuses on institutions, rather than impacts. This is derived from the notion that policies are the result of historical, economic, social and cultural factors that influence institutions in different ways. The World Bank considers institutional frameworks to be one of the most important factors affecting environmental and social mainstreaming in a country context, and adapting the SEA to fit particular country policies is regarded as crucial for standardising sustainability issues in decision making (Axelsson et al. 2012; World Bank et al. 2011). As such, the strategy emphasises the importance of improved governance and social accountability and –learning, rather than assessing and mitigating impacts (Ahmed and Sánchez-Triana 2008). The strategy functions as a tool for promoting learning among stakeholders about the different dimensions (environmental, social, economic) associated with policy interventions and to reflect the priorities of the stakeholders. Another important aspect of the strategy is the inclusion of marginalised or vulnerable groups in the policy making process (Axelsson et al. 2012).

In addition to the institutional-centred SEA, the World Bank also uses other strategies when these are more convenient for the particular operation. Impact-centred approaches have been used for large infrastructure projects and plans, e.g. related to dams, power generation and land use. Regional and sectorial IAs are used for assessing environmental impacts and issues on a regional or sectorial scale. Hybrid SEAs have been conducted for operations concerning basin management, REDD+ activities and development corridors (Loayza 2012).

Because of the emphasis to be adaptive and responsive, the use of the SEA-strategy is not standardised across World Bank operations. The World Bank realises that standardisation would widen the use of SEA, but regards the flexibility of the strategy as its most important asset and fears that standardisation would impair its effectiveness and potential (Loayza 2012).

The PSIA-strategy is voluntarily used on a country-basis and is a collaboration between World Bank staff and stakeholders, decision makers, government officials, researchers, analysts etc. from the country in question, in order to facilitate a pro-poor policy making process and anchor PSIA in the poverty reduction strategy of the country. The World Bank recommends

that a PSIA is performed for every policy reform that is likely to have significant social impacts especially on poor people, but notes that this is not always possible (ODI 2009). The World Bank does not state that the most environmentally sound alternative identified by an IA must be the one implemented (Goldberg 1993).

Phases and methodology used in the IAs

Even though the methodology for conducting SEAs is not standardised across the World Bank, the strategy does include some core activities to follow before, during and after completion of the SEA. Multi-stakeholder dialogue is supposed to occur throughout the process (World Bank et al. 2011):

Before

1. Outline the purpose and scale of the SEA.
2. Define agency ownership.
3. Identify "windows of opportunity".

During

1. Analyse the situation and identify stakeholders.
2. Describe the main environmental and social issues.
3. Assess the institutional, capacity and political economy.
4. Establish requirements for strengthening legal, institutional and regulatory policies.

After

1. Disseminate and communicate the information.
2. Monitor and evaluate the outcome.
3. Perform other complementary interventions.

A multitude of World Bank instruments exist for conducting SEAs, e.g. Country Environmental Analysis (CEA), Country Social Analysis (CSA) and Institutional and Governance Reviews (IGRs). These should preferably be used together for a more encompassing result (World Bank 2005).

The methodology used in PSIAs also depends on the specific context in which the assessment is conducted, taking into account resource- and time constraints, quality of data, technical capacity etc. Both quantitative and qualitative tools are frequently used. Table 6 shows some examples of tools and techniques that can be used when conducting SEAs and PSIAs. Transparency and accessibility of the methodology to stakeholders is crucial in all PSIAs. Based on the methods used, PSIAs can be broadly divided into two categories; process PSIAs and technical PSIAs. Process PSIAs have larger budgets and can take up to 18 months to complete. They consider all aspects of the PSIA framework, use different methods and information, involve a broad range of stakeholders, and try to influence policy making as much as possible. Technical PSIAs, on the other hand, are desk-based analyses of a narrow range of issues and they are usually targeted at a certain group of people as an advisory tool. Technical PSIAs have small budgets and usually take less than 6 months to complete (Coudouel et al. 2006; ODI 2009).

The PSIA framework consists of ten key elements (World Bank 2003, 2010):

1. Asking relevant questions to steer the analysis in the right direction.
2. Identifying relevant stakeholders.

3. Identifying transmission channels through which the policy change will likely affect different groups of people.
4. Evaluating institutions and capacity.
5. Compiling information and data and identifying information gaps.
6. Assessing the nature of the perceived impacts and choosing appropriate tools and techniques.
7. Establishing measures to minimise negative and enhance positive impacts.
8. Assessing and analysing risks.
9. Evaluating and monitoring the effects.
10. Promoting policy debate and influencing policy choices.

Table 6. Examples of methods and techniques recommended by the World Bank when conducting SEAs (World Bank 2005) or PSIAs (World Bank 2007).

Tools and techniques	Impact Assessment
Comparative Risk Assessment	SEA
Cost of Environmental Damage Studies	SEA
Participatory Poverty Assessments	SEA
Drivers of Change	PSIA
Stakeholder analysis matrices	PSIA
Transaction cost analysis	PSIA
Force-field analysis	PSIA
Process mapping	PSIA
Social risk management framework	PSIA

Review of IA practice

The World Bank reviewed the IA practice of the bank in the mid-1990s, concluding that a focus on sectorial and regional IA was needed. The review also highlighted the inadequacy of the IAs to address and develop alternatives (Rees 1999).

Between 2005 and 2010, the World Bank conducted a pilot programme for evaluating the effectiveness of the SEA strategy. Six SEAs in various developing countries targeting different policies were evaluated after completion. A main outcome of the evaluation was the finding that ownership of the SEA by an appropriate organisation is critical for a smooth performance of the SEA. According to the evaluation programme, development organisations should only play a catalysing role in creating awareness about and interest in SEA, whereas the ownership of the SEA should lie with a strong national organisation in order to ensure that the goal of the SEA is met and the outcome is embraced beyond the completion of the SEA report (Axelsson et al. 2012; World Bank et al. 2011).

The evaluation programme also showed that national policy issues need to be addressed with sensitivity and skill, and that informal and customary institutions need to be adequately involved in the process to ensure the longevity of the SEA. With respect to learning, the evaluation programme highlighted the importance of enduring dialogical processes between stakeholders (Axelsson et al. 2012; World Bank et al. 2011).

In the late 2000s, the World Bank completed two ex-post evaluations of the effectiveness of PSIA from altogether 66 cases. In short, the PSIAs had

generally been successful in raising awareness of the importance of PSIA, creating a framework for involving stakeholders in policy formation, and addressing a lack of expertise and resources. The reports also highlighted considerable limitations in the PSIAs conducted. The reports emphasised the need for training of World Bank staff on the PSIA approach, better incorporation of different aspects of social, political, and economic issues into the PSIA, and a wider range of rapid analytical tools for short-time PSIAs (ODI 2009; World Bank 2010).

Difficulties and challenges

Obstacles identified by the World Bank when initiating SEAs in new sectors or regions (World Bank 2005):

- Reluctance among borrowers to subject development issues to environmental assessments.
- Ignorance about the usefulness of SEAs and doubts about its effectiveness.
- Lack of resources.
- Concern that higher level decision makers are interested in concrete project interventions only, disregarding policy and institutional settings.

Obstacles identified for both new and habituated situations (Loayza 2012; World Bank et al. 2011):

- Difficulty in identifying key stakeholders and who "the public" is.
- Problems with attracting and involving grassroots stakeholders.
- Designing and conducting sufficient dialogical practices promoting accountability, social empowerment and learning.
- Lack of resources for consultation and constituency building.
- Temporary and punctuated nature of sector-reform design.

The PSIA evaluation reports identified difficulties with translating the PSIA results into more hands-on policy actions and disseminating the information in an interesting way to stakeholders and the public. It was also concluded that PSIAs often are subjected to too high expectations, which they cannot fulfil. Difficulties with incorporating the findings of the PSIA into World Bank country assistance programmes were also noted (ODI 2009; World Bank 2010).

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

The World Bank has expressed its interest for a broad alliance of donors and partners for mainstreaming environmental, social and climate change issues at institutional and policy levels. The alliance would need to specify the roles and niches of each party, and the World Bank sees itself as bringing much needed specialised experience in sector reform to the table (World Bank et al. 2011).

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Background

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) committed in its founding agreement to promoting environmentally sound, socially acceptable and sustainable development in all its lending operations. The Bank is also devoted to the European Union environmental standards as well as the European Principles for the Environment. Based on these commitments, the Bank requires an assessment of environmental and social impacts to be conducted for all proposed projects. The responsibility for conducting the assessment lies with the client, while EBRD provides assistance and resources if needed (EBRD 2008, 2010; Goldberg 1993). The EBRD does not require that EU environmental standards and principles are met for projects implemented outside the EU (CEE Bankwatch Network 2014; WWF 2013).

Purpose and use of IA

An initial IA is conducted for all proposed projects in order to clarify if they meet the EBRD standards and are worth financing. A project has to support sustainable development in some form and not be detrimental to the natural or social environment in order to be eligible for EBRD funding. A more thorough Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) is undertaken for the projects that are approved during the first screening. The purpose of this assessment is to identify risks and opportunities of the project, evaluate the capacity and commitment of the host country to address these issues, and to assess the potential of third parties to ascertain compliance with the EBRD policy. In case EBRD is providing more general corporate finance to multi-site operations, then an assessment of the overall sustainability of the host corporation's policies is required (EBRD 2008).

The level and type of IA depend on the category assigned to the project: Category A projects (e.g. construction of crude oil refineries, motorways, railways, or large dams) are likely to have significant environmental or social impacts that are not easily addressed and require the involvement of third party specialists, Category B projects might have significant environmental and/or social impacts but these are easily addressed and mitigated, and Category C projects are believed to have no or very minimal impacts and do not require further assessment. In addition, projects that are implemented by financial intermediaries, such as private funds, banks, leasing companies or pension funds, are assigned to Category FI, for which the IA is undertaken by the financial intermediary themselves (EBRD 2008).

Strategy for the application and use of IA

The EBRD has defined specific Performance Requirements (PRs) relating to certain themes, e.g. labour and working conditions, pollution prevention, biodiversity conservation, and indigenous people. The different PRs define in their objectives the expected outcomes of projects in relation to the PR's specific theme, and how to achieve these outcomes. One of the PRs is related to environmental and social impact assessment and management and sets out the criteria for how environmental and social issues should be incorporated into the project development (EBRD 2008).

The IA functions as the basis for a mandatory Environmental and Social Action Plan (ESAP) that needs to be completed by the client for projects in categories A and B (EBRD 2008). The ESAP needs to take into account the findings from the IA and stakeholder consultations and propose a plan for mitigation of negative impacts and enhancement of benefits. The ESAP should also clarify how different stakeholders and the public are involved in the project implementation and how information is being distributed in a clear manner (EBRD 2008). The EBRD does not state that the most environmentally sound alternative identified by an IA must be the one implemented (Goldberg 1993).

Phases and methodology used in the IA

The EBRD requires that the ESIA contains the following information (EBRD 2011):

- Non-technical summary containing identified information gaps and need for further studies.
- Operational framework, which outlines the legal and administrative context of the country or region and possible international agreements and treaties that need to be complied to, as well as a timeframe and process for consulting with stakeholders and the public.
- Project description including possible alternatives.
- Description of the existing environment including social, cultural and economic conditions and issues.
- Potential impacts of the proposed project and possible alternatives.
- Characterisation of impacts and issues based on probability, magnitude, reversibility, significance and duration using quantitative data. Information gaps and the need for further studies should be identified.
- Cost-effective strategy for the mitigation and management of impacts and issues including potential for institutional strengthening and training. A management plan for residual risks should be included.
- Environmental and social opportunities and benefits and a strategy for enhancement and development.
- An action plan and a system for management and monitoring.

Review of IA practice

The CEE Bankwatch Network, in collaboration with a number of other civil society organisations, has conducted reviews on some of the IAs prepared for EBRD financed projects, in an effort to clarify if the IAs generally have conformed to the IA requirements of the EBRD. Many flaws and inadequacies were found in the reviews, such as lack of transparency and insufficient involvement of stakeholders and the public, incomplete management and monitoring plans, no assessment of cumulative impacts, lack of analyses of alternatives, inadequate use of material and data, and the IA being conducted too late in the project process. The conclusion drawn from these reviews was that IAs conducted by the borrower rarely complies to EBRD standards (CEE Bankwatch Network 2007, 2009; Oyu Tolgoi Watch et al. 2012).

Difficulties and challenges

The CEE Bankwatch Network has pointed out faults with the EBRD's procedure for obtaining the information used in the initial assessment of projects and subsequent categorisation, as well as the evaluation of the IAs produced by the borrower. The information for the initial assessment is provided by the borrower and sometimes crucial information regarding factors that would place the project in Category A is deliberately left out. The CEE Bankwatch Network urges the EBRD to put more effort and time into finding these hidden risks, as well as evaluate the IAs more seriously in order to avoid unnecessary environmental or social harm (CEE Bankwatch Network 2014).

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

No information about expectations and future outlooks expressed by the EBRD was found.

African Development Bank

Background

The Environmental Policy of the African Development Bank (AfDB), developed in 1990 and updated most recently in 2004, commits the bank to work towards sustainable development and to acknowledge environmental and gender implications derived from the bank's activities in the planning process of operations. It also prescribes the AfDB to incorporate environmental and social issues into all financing activities. In 1998, an evaluation of the AfDB portfolio confirmed the value of IAs in ensuring the sustainability of the bank's operations but it also highlighted the inadequate use of IA approaches in AfDB activities. The upgrading of IA methods to proactive management tools and the use of SEAs for addressing environmental concerns at policy and programme levels was recommended. The AfDB consequently revised in the early 2000s its environmental and social assessment procedures to better reflect the recommendations (AfDB 2004).

Purpose and use of IA

The AfDB uses IA tools in order to guarantee the mainstreaming of sustainable development into all sectors of the Bank's activities. Strategic Impact Assessment (SIA) tools are utilised for addressing environmental and social issues in policy-based lending, structural adjustment lending, sectorial adjustment lending, as well as for regional assessments. SIA is seen as a broad approach that allows for consideration of more far-ranging and cumulative impacts to a greater extent than EIA. The EU Directive on SEA as well as the UNECE Protocol on SEA has been used as a source of expertise when establishing the AfDB SIA guidelines. The SIA guidelines are intended to function as a tool for member country governments applying for funding to assess the environmental and social implications of their policies, plans and programmes (AfDB 2004; Staelens et al. 2003).

The AfDB has also developed Integrated Environmental and Social Impact Assessment guidelines to help AfDB staff and borrowers to address crosscutting themes when assessing environmental and social impacts of projects (AfDB 2003). Specific assessment procedures have been developed for each of the crosscutting themes (poverty reduction, gender, population, health, and civil society and stakeholder participation) as well as for public and private sector operations (AfDB 2001).

Strategy for the application and use of IA

Proposed projects are divided into categories, based on information provided by the borrower, to clarify the need for further assessments. Category 1 is assigned to projects that are likely to have adverse environmental or social impacts and for which a full Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA), including an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), is required, (e.g. large scale irrigation and drainage, large scale tourism development, or projects that are located in or near environmentally sensitive areas). Category 2 is reserved for projects with less adverse, local impacts that can be minimised by the application of readily available mitigation measures, and therefore require an ESMP only (e.g. renewable energy development, rural water supply and sanitation, or land and soil management). For projects assigned to Category 3, no further assessment is

required since no significant environmental or social impacts can be identified, (e.g. programmes related to family planning, health or education) (AfDB 2004). An initial screening is also conducted for policies and programmes in order to identify the need for a SIA. A SIA is considered unnecessary if no significant environmental or social impacts can be discerned or the proposal has been submitted in the case of an emergency or a matter of urgency (Staelens et al. 2003).

The IA is undertaken by the borrower, with the AfDB maintaining an assisting and guiding role. The AfDB is responsible for reviewing and approving the assessment as well as contributing with recommendations and comments. The dissemination of the results of the assessments to the public is also the duty of the AfDB. AfDB funds can also be channelled through financial intermediaries, e.g. banks and insurance companies, in which case the decisions regarding IAs is in the hands of the intermediary (AfDB 2004).

Phases and methodology used in the IAs

The AfDB SIA guidelines have deliberately been made generic in order to ensure their applicability in all contexts and situations. The SIA procedure is nonetheless recommended to follow eight steps (Staelens et al. 2003):

1. Determine the study approach, identify key issues and stakeholders, define data requirements and level of detail, and identify links to other SIAs or EIAs to avoid duplication of work.
2. Define and assess different alternatives and options to the policy, plan or programme.
3. Determine environmental standards, thresholds and indicators based on national and international quality objectives and sustainability criteria.
4. Assess the potential impacts with regard to the specified standards and indicators.
5. Propose measures by which to enhance benefits and mitigate risks, including cumulative and residual risks.
6. Develop a plan for institutional strengthening and learning.
7. Present the preferred option to both evaluators and stakeholders.
8. Monitoring and ex-post evaluation.

The SIA guidelines recommend that the methods and tools used in the SIA is consistent with the team's experience and expertise. Examples of promoted methods are listed in Table 7 (Staelens et al. 2003).

Table 7. Examples of methodological guidance provided by the AfDB for conducting SIAs (Staelens et al. 2003).

Tools and techniques	IA strategy
Scenario development (medium to long-term vision, worst case vs. best case)	SIA
Risk assessment	SIA
Environmental indicators and criteria	SIA
Policy impact matrix	SIA
Predictive and simulation models	SIA
Significance thresholds	SIA
GIS capacity/habitat analysis	SIA
Cost/benefit analysis	SIA
Lease Cost analysis	SIA
Multi-criteria analysis	SIA

Review of IA practice

The AfDB conducted a review of its Environmental Policy in 1999 to assess the performance and effectiveness of the Policy and identify areas in need of improvement and updating. The review also evaluated the effectiveness of IAs in making projects more sustainable and assessed the quality of the IA reporting system (AfDB 2000).

Difficulties and challenges

The AfDB noted in the review of its Environmental Policy that IAs were often perceived by borrowers as evaluation tools highlighting negative impacts, rather than planning tools, which effectively reduces the usefulness of IAs. This might be partly the reason why the IAs largely failed to propose alternatives, in addition to a lack of financial resources and time. The review also showed inadequacies in involving stakeholders in the planning stage of projects, as well as in the preparation of management plans (AfDB 2000).

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

The AfDB noted in the 1999 review a lack of attempts to assess the impacts in economic terms, and concluded that the economic aspect of impacts should be given more prominence in future assessments through the implementation of more economic tools and methods. The AfDB also suggested that the process of IA should be modified into a planning process, so as to ensure the results and implications of the assessment are better taken into account and incorporated into the overall project planning process (AfDB 2000).

Asian Development Bank

Background

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) started using IA in all its lending operations in 1979, initially focusing on technical assessments and mitigation measures. In the early 2000s, the ADB started developing a comprehensive environmental management plan (EMP), in order to mainstream environmental issues across all sectors of the bank. The ADB states in its Safeguard Policy from 2002 the intention of the bank to refocus its operations on five core areas: infrastructure, regional cooperation and integration, financial sector development, education, and environment and climate change. The Safeguard Policy replaces the previous separate policies relating to the environment, indigenous people, and involuntary resettlement (ADB 2009).

Purpose and use of IA

The ADB Safeguard Policy applies to all projects financed by the ADB and requires that impacts are identified as early as possible, mitigation measures are developed and implemented, and people that might be affected are involved and consulted throughout the project. The implementation of the assessment is the responsibility of the borrower, while the ADB's role is to assist, monitor and supervise. In case of highly complex or sensitive projects, independent third party experts not associated with the project should assist in the IA. The ADB states that it will not finance projects that do not comply with the requirements of the Safeguard Policy (ADB 2009).

The purpose of the ADB Environmental Safeguard Policy is to ensure that all projects are environmentally sustainable and that environmental issues are incorporated into the decision making process (ADB 2009).

Strategy for the application and use of IA

The ADB conducts an initial screening of projects based on information submitted by the regional department. The screening process categorises projects into Category A if they are likely to have significant negative impacts, Category B if they have less adverse and more easily mitigated impacts that are not irreversible, and Category C if no adverse impacts can be identified. Projects that are financed through financial intermediaries are assigned Category FI. Category A projects require a full EIA, Category B projects require an initial environmental examination, and projects in Category C require a review of environmental implications. In the case of FI-projects, the ADB conducts an assessment of environmental and social impacts of the financial intermediary's project portfolio and management policies in order to ensure that the FI complies with the standards of the ADB. SEAs are optional tools for assessing the sustainability of programme- and sector loans (ADB 2003, 2006, 2009).

In addition to the EIA, the borrower is also required to conduct a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) if the project might have significant impacts on local communities or groups of people, e.g. indigenous groups. The SIA should include an assessment of past, present and future impacts, an inventory of all displaced people and their assets, income and livelihood if relevant, as well as gender-disaggregated information. A management plan for dealing with the impacts should be completed (ADB 2009).

Phases and methodology used in the IAs

The responsibility for conducting the IA lies with the borrower, who also defines the precise process and methodology used. The EIA report submitted to the ADB should nevertheless include the following information (ADB 2003, 2009):

- Summary of facts, findings and recommendations.
- Outline of national and international regulations, laws and agreements relevant to the project.
- Project description including geographical, ecological and social components.
- Description of the baseline environment in the area including other ongoing or planned projects.
- Identification of risks and opportunities, mitigation or enhancement measures, and data gaps and uncertainties.
- Assessment and comparison of alternatives, including the reasons for choosing a particular option.
- Assessment of economic impacts, including a cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness of the proposed mitigation measures, and a discussion of impacts that have not previously been assigned monetary value.
- Outline of stakeholder participation and consultation, including details of how comments from affected and vulnerable people have been taken into account and a plan for dissemination of information.
- Timeframe and mechanisms for dealing with complaints by stakeholders and the public.
- Environmental Management Plan, which includes specific mitigation measures, plan for monitoring and reporting, as well as estimated costs and sources of funds.
- Conclusions and recommendations.

Review of IA practice

The Operations Evaluation Department of the ADB conducted an evaluation study of the Bank's environmental safeguards policy and EIA procedures in 2006. The study highlighted several shortcomings in the stages of categorisation, scoping, assessment and implementation. The shortcomings were usually found to relate to resource deficiencies, a lack of clear focus, difficulties with aligning the process with national systems, and inadequate use of relevant assessment methods and tools. However, the study also found that the EIAs have contributed positively to the environmental performance of projects compared to projects implemented without an assessment (ADB 2006).

Difficulties and challenges

The ADB has expressed its concern over the multitude of challenges facing EIA implementation in developing countries and the constraints this places on the operations of the bank. The ADB points to the fact that environmental issues are often regarded as less important than economic and social ones in developing countries, and the EIA requirements of the ADB are hence seen as a nuisance. Ignorance among the public and potential stakeholders about their rights and possibilities for involvement was also found to hinder the fruitful involvement of people in project implementation (Lohani et al. 1997).

The evaluation study of the ADB Environmental Safeguards found the categorisation of projects as Category A to be insufficient. It was noted that because categorisation of projects as A-projects would noticeably delay the project and raise the costs due to the requirement of a full EIA, many projects that should have been assigned to Category A, were instead assigned to Category B. The study also revealed that the ADB sometimes deliberately avoid financing projects that would be categorised as A-projects in order to avoid having to deal with EIAs (ADB 2006).

The study also showed that EIAs rarely contributed to the decision making process of projects due to the EIAs being too procedurally oriented and focusing on the initial evaluation rather than the actual implementation. Monitoring of environmental issues after project completion was found to be virtually lacking. According to the results of the study, the technical quality of the assessments was found to be poor because of insufficient use of quantitative analyses and methods (ADB 2006).

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

The evaluation study of the ADB Environmental Safeguards concluded that the ADB should focus more attention on aligning country programmes with the requirements for EA and put more emphasis on capacity building. It was also noted that social issues need to be included more effectively in the EIAs (ADB 2006, 2009).

The ADB recognises the need for cooperation with other development banks and multilateral financial institutions when it comes to harmonising sustainability policies and impact assessment processes, but the Bank also realises that there is still much to be done on this issue (ADB 2009).

The ADB has committed itself to assisting member countries in strengthening and advancing the countries' own safeguard policies including IA processes so as to make sure that they complement the policies of the ADB. However, there is still a long way to go in achieving this goal (ADB 2009; Rosien 2010).

The ADB has emphasised the importance of diversification and flexibility in IA methods and procedures due to the diversity of needs and capacity in different countries. The requirements of the current environmental policies, including the IA processes, are believed to be too uniform and narrow for coping with differing national circumstances (ADB 2006).

International Union for Conservation of Nature

Background

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is an international organisation dedicated to finding "pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges". IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects globally and brings governments, non-government organisations, United Nations agencies, companies and local communities together to develop and implement policy.

One of the IUCN task is to monitor and evaluate (M&E) programmes and projects. This M&E initiative has developed and adapted a range of methods and tools that are used across the Secretariat in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of IUCN projects, programmes and organisational units.

Purpose and use of IA

IUCN use several methods and tools for monitoring and evaluating IUCN projects, programmes and organisational units. These tools are the following:

- Situation Analysis Method
- Sustainability Assessment Method and Resource Kit
- An Organizational Assessment Method
- PM&E: Introduction to Key Concepts, Approaches and Terms
- Finding the Way - A Guide to Project Planning and Self- Evaluation
- Evaluation Handbook for IUCN Managers
- Guide for the Planning and Conduct of IUCN Strategic Reviews
- Links to other Websites with PM&E methods and tools

All these methods and tools are aimed at meeting the following principles of good PM&E practice:

1. Developing projects and programmes and/or establishing organisational units based on a thorough understanding of the situation in which they operate.
2. Where possible, involving stakeholders in a participatory process of planning, design, monitoring and evaluation.
3. Developing a set of clear logical results or objectives that can realistically be achieved within a particular timeframe and within an allocated budget and which will make a significant and sustained contribution to a higher level development objective.
4. Making explicit the logic model and theory of change upon which the intervention is based, including the cause and effect relationships and external factors that underpin the programme or project or organisational unit and which must hold true if planned activities are going to lead to desired results and impacts.
5. Establishing a monitoring and evaluation system, including indicators, which will show if the objectives or results have been achieved and which will provide information to support effective management and learning.

IUCN developed a Sustainability Assessment (SA) for assessing the wellbeing of people and ecosystems by using a measurable analysis method for measuring their progress. IUCN has applied this method to conservation strategies, biodiversity action plans and forest conservation and it was developed and tested in several developing countries. The SA helps to engage stakeholders in defining sustainability issues that are affecting their lives, and to help the stakeholders in assessing the wellbeing of people and ecosystems in one integrated assessment framework (Guijt et al. 2001).

This SA is intended to measure sustainable development through specific indicators and also by combining indicators into dimensions. These ten dimensions – five on human development and five on ecosystem protection – helps to organise what might be an otherwise unwieldy and contradictory set of indicators into the most appropriate and broad themes possible (Guijt et al. 2001).

IUCN had also developed a Resource Kit for SA to help the users to undertake and facilitate sustainability assessments themselves. The method has a number of key features (Guijt et al. 2001):

1. Equal treatment of people and the ecosystem: human development is not possible without a healthy environment; and likewise, environmental protection is not possible without addressing the needs of people. Considering the wellbeing of people and the ecosystem together produces a stronger and more likely vision of sustainability than if they are considered separately.
2. An analytical hierarchy, from big picture to details: the information in a sustainability assessment is organized such that each individual indicator can help contribute to our understanding of largerthemes (or dimensions such as forest lands, wealth or resource use) and ultimately human and ecosystem wellbeing.
3. Visual tools: such as maps that show where performance is best and worst; where priority actions are most needed. A complete set of maps associated with an assessment can quickly tell what issues (elements) are most important for any area.
4. Performance indicators: help demystify what indicators mean by specifying the range of good and bad performance on scales. Unlike indicators, "performance scales" can be combined to show themes (dimensions) and overall human or ecosystem wellbeing. The choices behind the performance scales are transparent, so they can be challenged by any user according to their vision of sustainability or experience in the field.
5. Cyclical nature: a typical assessment is undertaken in a participatory manner, encompassing a number of steps from defining a vision of sustainability, measuring the individual indicators and interpreting the results. A cycle recognizes that sustainability is a moving target, not an absolute goal, and that those interested in sustainable development must be prepared to learn and monitor over time.

IUCN indicates that the purpose of indicators is to communicate an important aspect of an issue in a quantifiable and clear manner. Indicators used in SA communicate performance by identifying and justifying the range of good and bad.

Setting performance standards is an important aspect of the SA method. The performance standards is to ensure that these standards are set to the highest possible level and meeting the goals of society. Performance standards are documented and justified to ensure transparency. Each performance scale must set standards for good, ok, medium, poor and bad.

Wellbeing Scores allows users to turn data into scores through performance scales, combine indicators and map the results. Mapping is a key part of sustainability for its visual ability to summarise complex situations.

Phases and methodology used in the IAs

The SA contains 6 stages of which the first four are designed to help the users to define a vision of sustainability. The last two stages assess overall human and ecological wellbeing from the individual indicators, by combining and reviewing (biodiversity report).

1. Define the system and goals. The system consists of the people and ecosystem of the area to be assessed. The goals encapsulate a vision of sustainable development and provide the basis for deciding what the assessment will measure.
2. Identify elements and objectives. Elements are key concerns or features of human society and the ecosystem that must be considered to get an adequate sense of their condition. They are grouped under dimensions. Objectives break the identified system goal(s) into specific parts that relate to each element.
3. Choose indicators and performance criteria. Indicators are measurable and representative aspects of an issue. Performance criteria are standards of achievement for each indicator.
4. Measure and map the indicators. Indicator results are recorded in their original measurements, given scores on the basis of the performance criteria, and mapped.
5. Combine the indicators and map the indices. Indicator scores are combined up the hierarchy: indicators into sub-issue indices; sub-issue indices into issue indices; issue indices into dimension indices; and dimension indices into subsystem indices (separate indices for people and the ecosystem). Indices are mapped to reveal visually overall findings and specific patterns of performance.
6. Review results and propose policies. The review links the assessment to action by analysing the patterns and the data behind them to suggest what actions are needed and where. The review also provides the diagnosis for the design of programs and projects.

Review of IA practice

No information on the review of IUCN practice was found

Difficulties and challenges

No information on difficulties and challenges of IUCN practice was found

Expectations of IA and future outlooks

No information on expectations and future outlooks of IUCN practice was found

Summary of differences and similarities in IA practices at the analysed organisations

Both similarities and differences in the IA strategies employed by the different organisations can be discerned. The reason for conducting IAs at the organisations is largely the same, emphasising the need to minimise adverse environmental impacts, promote sustainable development, and to improve the design and implementation of policies, programmes and projects. Due to different history and focal areas (project, policy and programme) in assessing sustainability, there is some variability in the approaches and terminologies being used in the organisations. This creates some challenges for a comparative analysis. The exchange of practice and experiences therefore often requires a certain amout of "translation" in order to be applicable across organisations. The organisations can be divided into the ones that focus on the use of strategic assessments on policies, plans and programmes (OECD, WTO and the World Bank), the ones that focus on impact assessments of projects (FAO, EBRD and ADB), and the ones that equally promote the implementation of both (UNEP, UNDP, WHO, AfDB and IUCN). A further division between the organisations that are mostly focusing on advertising their IA strategies and guidelines to partner countries and beneficiaries (OECD, UNEP, WHO, WTO, EBRD and ADB), and the ones that are equally using the IA processes on their own policies and programmes (UNDP, FAO, World Bank, AfDB and IUCN) can be distinguished.

The IA strategies

Of the eleven analysed organisations, ten have developed more or less their own guidelines for IA, focusing on aspects that are of importance to their specific operations (see Table 8). All of the organisations have realised the importance of keeping the guidelines adaptive and open to interpretation, allowing the IA to be tailored to the specific context in which the project, programme or policy is set. Guidance on appropriate tools and methods to use in the IA was scarce, as the guidelines tend to leave the choosing of tools to the practitioners in order to retain flexibility.

Table 8. IA guidelines developed by the organisations and their use and purpose.

Organisation	IA guidelines	Use and purpose
OECD	• Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	• Aims at integrating environmental and social issues into policy planning of country programmes and partnerships.
	• Poverty Impact Assessment (PIA)	• Tool for donors and partner countries to assess the impacts of interventions on the wellbeing of the population, focusing on poor and marginalised.
	• Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA)	• Tool for countries to assess the impacts of regulations, focusing on economic factors.
	• Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA)	• Assists member countries in assessing combined economic, social and environmental impacts of policies and plans.

UNEP	• Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	• Aims at integrating sustainable development into policy planning and analysing environmental and social issues in developing countries and economies in transition.
	• Strategic Integrated Planning for Sustainable Development	• Aids the integration of IA tools into all levels of decision making.
	• Strategic Integrated Assessment of Trade Policies	• Assesses environmental, social and economic impacts of international trade policies.
UNDP	• Environmental Overview (EO)	• Highlights how environmental issues are taken into account in operations.
	• Human Development Impact Assessment (HDIA)	• Assesses the impacts of changes in trade policies on human development in developing countries.
	• Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA)	• Identifies impacts of policy reforms on the wellbeing of different groups of society.
FAO	• Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	• Ensures the investigation of all potential impacts and the employment of the project of best practice and lessons learned.
WHO	• Health Impact Assessment (HIA)	• Tool for decision makers to assess the health impacts of their policies and to understand the linkages between environment and health.
WTO	• Environmental review	• Aims at promoting the supporting of trade and the environment. A way to support this element is to exchange information on the methodology and implementation of national environmental reviews.
World Bank	• Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	• A participatory approach for ensuring inclusion of environmental and social issues in decision making, development planning and strategic implementation.
	• Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA)	• Highlights negative social impacts of policy reforms on poor and vulnerable groups and describes options for mitigation.
EBRD	• Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA)	• Identifies risks and opportunities of projects and evaluates the capacity and commitment of the host country to address these issues.
AfDB	• Strategic Impact Assessment (SIA)	• Tool for member country governments to assess the

		environmental and social implications of their policies, plans and programmes.
	• Integrated Environmental and Social Impact Assessment	• Helps AfDB staff and borrowers to address crosscutting themes in environmental and social assessments of projects.
ADB	• Environmental Assessment (EA)	• Ensures that all projects are environmentally sustainable and environmental issues are incorporated into decision making processes.
IUCN	• M&E Initiative	• Aims at facilitating the monitoring and evaluation of projects, programmes and organisational units.
	• Sustainability Assessment	• Integrated framework for defining key sustainability issues affecting stakeholders and assessing the wellbeing of people and ecosystems.

All of the organisations have some features in common regarding their IA strategies (Table 9). These include an emphasis on transparency, the involvement of stakeholders and the public as well as dissemination of information. Monitoring and evaluation of project results are also included in all of the IA strategies, although the demand on how thorough the evaluation should be differs.

The development banks have fairly similar approaches to IA of projects, with the World Bank being the first to develop its own guidelines and mainstream IA methods and procedures. All of them have handed over the responsibility for conducting EIAs to the borrowers, and maintained only an advisory role with the responsibility of reviewing and scrutinising the results.

The development banks, as well as FAO, use a similar system of categorising potential projects into three or four categories depending on the project's potential impacts on the natural or social environment. The category assigned to a project determines the level and scope of the IA required before the project can be implemented. In contrast to the other banks, the EBRD also assesses the need for an environmental audit of projects. Kennedy (1999) states that this is because of the large proportion of private sector lending in the EBRD project portfolio, as well as the large amount of projects concerned with restoration of existing industrial installations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Table 9. Features that the organisations require the IA to include.

Requirements of the IA strategy	OECD	UNEP	UNDP	FAO	WHO	WTO	World Bank	EBRD	AfDB	ADB	IUCN
Be transparent and involve a broad range of stakeholders and the public	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Emphasise communication and dissemination of information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Include evaluation and monitoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Be integrative and include all possible aspects		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Emphasise capacity building, institutional strengthening and learning	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Be flexible and adaptive	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		
Conduct the IA at the earliest stage possible	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	
Justify recommended choices and alternatives	✓				✓			✓		✓	
Ensure cost-effectiveness	✓	✓						✓		✓	✓
Include principles, criteria or indicators	✓	✓			✓				✓		✓
Include explicitly stated goals and targets	✓	✓					✓				
Improve governance and social accountability	✓				✓		✓				
Enhance sustainable development		✓	✓								✓
Include a quality assurance system	✓				✓						
Focus on policies and institutions rather than impacts		✓					✓				
Identify windows of opportunity							✓				

Challenges and difficulties

The organisations are facing a range of different challenges and difficulties (see table 10), many of them relating to the poor institutional capacity of developing countries, in which most of the projects and operations of the organisations are based. Most of the organisations have expressed a lack of resources, capacity, data or time as major obstacles to the implementation of IAs. Difficulties with involving stakeholders and the public, and ensuring proper uptake of the IA results in decision making processes are also frequently expressed. UNEP, the World Bank and ADB have found that aligning their own IA requirements with the requirements of the host country can pose serious challenges. Ignorance and a lack of awareness, knowledge and expertise have been highlighted by OECD, UNDP, FAO, WTO and the World Bank.

Table 10. Challenges and difficulties (as identified by the organisations themselves or external reviewers).

Challenges and difficulties	OECD	UNEP	UNDP	FAO	WHO	WTO	World Bank	EBRD	AfDB	ADB
Lack of resources, data, capacity or time			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Difficulty with involving stakeholders and the public		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Difficulty with ensuring proper uptake of results in decision making		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Ignorance and lack of awareness of the value and effectiveness of IA	✓		✓		✓		✓			
Lack of knowledge or expertise	✓		✓	✓		✓				
Insufficient use of relevant methods and tools				✓			✓			✓
Difficulty with aligning own requirements with national ones		✓					✓			✓
The IA process fails to provide alternatives							✓	✓	✓	
Lack of institutional practice of using decision making tools	✓		✓			✓				
IA seen as an add-on tool		✓							✓	
Excessive bureaucracy				✓						✓
Difficult to design and implement sufficient dialogical practices					✓		✓			
Lack of consistency in the performance of IA		✓				✓				
Suspicion in developing countries towards Western world interventions			✓							
Insufficient quality checks of information provided by project implementers								✓		
Environmental issues not important in the host country										✓
Difficulty with identifying key stakeholders and the public							✓			
Punctuated and temporary nature of sector-reform design							✓			
Too high expectations of IAs							✓			
Ignorance of the relationship between health and the environment					✓					

Expectations and outlooks for the future

The organisations have also expressed expectations and outlooks for the future use and improvement of IA processes, mostly related to overcoming the challenges and difficulties they face. OECD, FAO, WHO, the World Bank and ADB have called for better collaboration between agencies and organisations working in developing countries, in an effort to improve institutional capacity, mainstream sustainability policies and issues into policy levels, harmonise IA practices, and share information and experiences. The need for more training and teaching on technical issues, methods and tools, and the appropriate use of IAs were highlighted by OECD, UNDP, FAO, WHO and the World Bank. UNEP emphasised the need for IA systems to be established in all countries and the importance for IA processes to be more adaptable to the needs and requirements of different countries, while the AfDB called for the development of more economic tools and methods. The WHO, on the other hand, was worried about the lack of inclusion of health issues in IA processes and strategies, and has called for better awareness raising about the relationship between health and the environment.

Discussion

IA and sustainable development

All of the organisations analysed for this study had to some degree introduced IA in their policies and operations. The reason for this broad uptake of IA practice probably lies in the commitment of the organisations to sustainable development, which is incorporated in the strategies of the organisations in one way or another. The organisations related to the United Nations (UNEP, UNDP, FAO and WHO) are guided by the efforts of the UN to work towards sustainable development at every level. UNEP, for example, is mandated by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development to further enhance its work on promoting and facilitating the use of IAs, especially in developing countries. Both OECD and WTO have committed to supporting the achievement of the MDGs as part of their general policies, and the development banks have an important role to play in ensuring that the projects which they finance contribute to sustainable development.

Only UNEP, UNDP and IUCN have explicitly stated in their guidelines that the IA should enhance sustainable development. This is in line with the overarching role of sustainable development in these organisations. Enhancing sustainable development is also mentioned by the other organisations as an underlying objective of using IAs. However, Gibson (2006) and Bond et al. (2012) emphasise that IA guidelines should include specific indicators and principles on sustainable development in order to ensure progress. How this can be done in the specific context of the work of each international organisation is an area that could be developed further in cooperation between the organisation and a community of IA experts.

Experience of IA practice

Even though the organisations have both positive and negative experiences of using IA, the organisations generally perceive IAs to be beneficial and helpful in ensuring sustainability in policy, programme and project implementation. However, reviews of the IA strategies and processes, conducted by the organisations themselves or independent third parties, show that the IAs have not always succeeded in achieving the goals and targets set for them.

The relative novelty of the IA strategies of the organisations and the links to sustainability policies may be the origin of some of the difficulties in making IA processes deliver. The processes and methodologies are being refined and more experience as well as more training is needed for making the IAs work smoothly. Properly evaluating the effectiveness of IA processes is generally perceived as difficult as benefits and harms may not be apparent until much later (Fundingsland-Tetlow and Hanusch 2012). Developing the evaluation of IA is another field were interaction between the organisations and a wider community of IA researchers and practitioners may provide significant added value.

IAs at different levels

As expected, the organisations have developed different IA strategies reflecting the nature of the organisation and its objective; UNEP is targeting environmental impacts, UNDP is emphasising social and poverty issues, while WHO is concerned with the advancement of health issues. Why some of the organisations are focusing more on project level IAs, while others are promoting the use of more strategic, higher level assessment processes, is not as easily explained. The observation of Partidário (2000) that the recognition and identification of the added value of SEA was largely missing in the late 1990s shows that SEA approaches -integrating environmental and social issues into policy planning of national programmes and partnerships- are relatively recent. Although the EIA is more focused on all potential impacts and the employment of projects, SEA may still be regarded by many as just another form of EIA demanding still more time and resources. Among the development banks, the World Bank and the AfDB are using strategic IAs to a broader extent than the other two. The World Bank is the only one that has introduced specific SEA procedures in its operations, while the other banks are mainly focusing on Environemtal or Social IA procedures for individual projects. According to Kennedy (1999), this is probably due to the fact that both the banks and the borrowers tend to have a sector approach, focusing on individual projects, rather than a spatial approach to planning that examines regions.

However, all the banks have expressed intentions to incorporate strategic assessments into their policy planning processes in the future. The EBRD, for example, has already started to conduct initial assessments of the sustainability of the bank's policies and plans. Annandale et al. (2001) have pointed out that incorporation of SEA into the programme cycles of the development banks would substantially contribute to the sustainability of the banks' operations, and SEA should therefore be mainstreamed into the workings of the programme cycles, rather than being used on isolated occasions as is currently the case. Kennedy (1999) pointed out that the development banks are mere financiers rather than project developers and as such have only limited capacity to influence the project design, with the exception being programmatic loans, for which the subprojects are yet to be defined and developed, and where the banks retain their influence and decision power. For that reason, the banks would probably benefit more from focusing on strategic assessment methods targeting their own policies and plans.

Further development of context specific strategic assessments, taking into account the specific role of international organisations, and international financing institutes in particular, appears to be an area where a broad community of IA specialist could interact fruitfully with the organisations. Such interaction would raise questions that are of interest both from a practical and a theoretical point of view.

A focus on own operations vs. guiding others

All of the organisations are to some degree promoting IA strategies to member- and partner countries, beneficiaries or borrowers. Based on the information found during the study, some of the organisations (i.e. OECD, UNEP, WHO, WTO, EBRD and ADB) seem to be primarily focused on this

rather than implementing the IA strategies in their own operations. The key to this can probably be found in the nature of the organisations. They have an objective to assist member- and partner countries in achieving economic, social and environmental wellbeing, which has led to the development of IA strategies for the member countries to use.

Regarding the EIA strategies of the development banks, a focus on partner countries is not surprising considering the banks' role as external sponsors. The observed outward focus of the organisations might also be the result of availability of information on the organisations' websites, which do not necessarily provide a full account of information concerning internal affairs and operations.

An analysis of the recommendations to apply IA and the actual internal use of IA strategies goes beyond the scope of this report, but could be the topic of future research.

Challenges and obstacles on the way

The organisations seem to have encountered similar challenges when establishing and promoting IA processes. The organisations are to a great extent working in developing countries and have encountered limited institutional practice of and capacity for incorporating IA into decision making processes, thus effectively impeding the use of IA. Strengthening the institutional capacity for IA, including awareness raising about the usefulness and importance of IAs, has been found to be critical.

Impact assessments, when performed thoroughly, can be a time-consuming and costly process, which is also acknowledged by for example van den Berg (2005). The fact that reliable data and information is not always readily available in developing countries effectively pushes the price higher and strains the timetable even further. Shortages of money and time have repeatedly led to IAs being conducted in a hurry and with less detail than desired, making the usefulness of the assessment negligible. However, the continuous improvement of the processes, tools and methods used in IAs, as well as the accumulation of baseline and primary data will likely reduce the amount of time and resources needed for conducting IAs in the future.

Ideal IAs are transparent and include participatory processes, involving a wide range of stakeholders, the public, civil society and NGOs as far as possible. This is understandably a challenge for many of the organisations, because of the numerous factors impeding the effective involvement of different kinds of people, especially in developing countries and countries with poorly developed institutions for participation and transparent decision making. Marginalised or isolated groups of people might be hard to reach and communicate with, and cultural factors might hinder them from expressing their opinions. Even when all relevant stakeholders and groups of people are reached and consulted, taking everyone's opinions, needs and priorities into account and reaching an agreement that satisfies all can be an insurmountable obstacle.

For the development banks, the challenge regarding EIAs is to make sure the information provided by the borrower is accurate and that the assessment has been carried out properly and according to the requirements of the bank. If faults or gaps in the EIA are identified, the banks are required to demand additional assessments or studies to be conducted in order to

complete the EIA, but according to the CEE Bankwatch Network (2007, 2009) this is not always the case. The most probable reason for this lack of quality assurance is inadequate time and resources for fully evaluating the EIA. Sometimes it might be attributed to the EIA being conducted too late in the project cycle, when the project is already underway and a certain path has already been chosen, thus limiting the effect of the EIA. Withdrawal of funding for the project by the bank might be justified in the case of failure to deliver an appropriately conducted EIA, as demanded by the CEE Bankwatch Network, but since the project most likely will go ahead even without the bank's support, a meagre EIA could be considered better than none at all.

The material gathered for this report suggests that OECD has identified fewer challenges and obstacles than the other organisations. This may reflect a lack of publicly available internal reviews of the OECD's IA strategy or the focus of the OECDs activities which is more about providing guidance than actually implementing activities.

A systematic collection and analysis of challenges, and the development of adequate responses could be a fruitful topic for exchange between the international organisations and a wider community of IA specialists.

Future paths for IA practice

The analysed organisations have introduced IA methods and strategies into their operations during the 1990s (with the exception of the World Bank, which introduced IA methods in the 1980s and ADB, which introduced IA already in 1979). This means that the IA processes used by the organisations have had some decades to evolve and establish themselves in the contexts of the organisations. Yet there appears to be a shortage of evaluations and reviews of the quality of the IAs. This may partly be due to the long timeframe of many policies, programmes and projects, which makes the results and effects visible only after several years. However, the organisations generally agree that the IA strategies need to be further developed and upgraded in order to deliver better results and be more reliable. Six out of the eleven organisations called for more collaboration in developing IA processes and OECD, UNDP and the World Bank have expressed their interest for establishing a network for sharing of information and experience. Mainstreaming and harmonising the IA processes of the different organisations to better complement each other is important as the organisations often work together on development projects and programmes in developing countries.

In the future, more time and resources need to be allocated to raising awareness among governments, decision makers, policy makers and the public about the usefulness of IAs. According to Alshuwaikhat (2005), many countries, especially in the developing world, have adopted IA procedures only as a political decision pushed by international organisations who require IAs as a prerequisite for their involvement. The real value of IA is thus never realised in these contexts. More training and teaching within the organisations themselves about how to properly use IA methods, tools and processes are needed, as is the development of new tools and methods that better meet the needs and requirements of different countries. The staff dealing with IA within the organisations need to be better prepared and trained for interacting with different kinds of people, stakeholders, civil

society, policy makers etc. in order to facilitate the uptake of IA in the decision making process and make sure that the IA is conducted as efficiently and thoroughly as possible.

Outlining possible future pathways for the development of IA practice, linking it to a wider discourse on sustainable development but still linked to the specific role of the international organisations is likely to be an area for fruitful co-operation between a community of IA experts and the international organisations.

The potential role of LIAISE in interacting with international organisations

After the completion of the project in April 2014, the FP7 NoE LIAISE will continue as a Community of Practice (CoP) for IA research on SD with an increased number of partners, a broader range of disciplines (also covering health impacts and impacts on employment and labour) and participants from outside the research community (e.g. consultants and organisations for research based advice). Table 11 gives an overview of the envisaged roles and functions the future CoP potentially could fulfil. The actual implementation will depend on the level of involvement of the individual partners in the CoP and the availability of resources and funding.

Table 11. Roles and functions of the future CoP and its products and services for specific stakeholders.

Role and functions	Products/services	Users/stakeholders for 1-7
IA knowledge and information hub • Web-platform on IA for SD • News agent • Meta-data repository **Networking and discussion forum** • Think tank • Methodological reflection • Interaction with policy-makers at EC and MS **Innovation and testing** • Innovation generator, Experimental Lab • Research programming **Tool identification and quality monitoring** • Evaluating quality of IA and IA tools • Database with meta-information **Learning** • Reflection on experiments with shared learning • Training courses	1. CoP/Network with networking and information services and linkages with external research networks and stakeholders. 2. Meta-data on knowledge for IA to enable comparison, reflection and evaluation of these models and methods. 3. Procedural principles for IA for SD. An overview of procedural standards to conduct IAs. 4. Quality Guidelines for Models with special attention for policy-relevancy. 5. Guidelines/examples of methods for transdisciplinary research. 6. Shared IA Research Agenda with a focus on knowledge generation at a strategic level to enable researchers addressing policy makers' needs. 7. Staff exchange of early career researchers. 8. Training courses on specific topics.	Researchers/students (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) Policy makers and policy units (1, 3, 4, 6, 8) IA practitioners: desk officers and consultants (1, 2, 3, 4, 8) Horizontal units with the task to provide guidelines for IAs and monitor the quality of IAs (1, 2, 3, 4, 8) Research programmers and evaluators (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) Funding agencies (1, 4, 5, 6) Private sector organisations (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8)

The IA guidelines of the international organisations are very general and to the most part do not include specific instructions on which methods and tools to use in the IAs. The reason for this is to keep the guidelines adaptable to different contexts, the importance of which has been recognised by for example Runhaar and Driessen (2007). Flexibility is crucial for international organisations working in many regions of the world on various projects. On the other hand, it also makes the standardisation of IA processes difficult and the promotion of specific tools challenging.

Practitioners of IA interviewed in a survey conducted by Noble et al. (2012) pointed out the difficulty of knowing which tools to use, how to properly use them, and for which purposes. This aspect was also a key element in the activities of LIAISE. The policy makers and IA practitioners in the LIAISE Policy Board (including a representative from OECD) emphasised the importance of maintaining the existing strong links between IA methods and tools and their actual use in a specific situation.

Policy processes are inherently diverse and have complex and ever changing requirements. As a consequence LIAISE concluded that its initial goal to provide standardised IA methods and tools does not answer user needs, but should be replaced by the goal to support users in identifying the most appropriate IA methods and tools for a concrete case. Therefore the LIAISE KIT provides contextualised and harmonised descriptions of IA tools and methods to ensure relevancy for the IA process.

The LIAISE KIT is available for international organisations to support their work with regard to IA. More pro-active options for international organisations to benefit from and build on the achievements of LIAISE are outlined in Table 12.

Table 12. Options for international organisations to benefit from/contribute to LIAISE.

Role and functions of LIAISE	Options for international organisations
IA knowledge and information hub • Web-platform on IA for SD • News agent • Meta-data repository	• Promote use of the IA knowledge and information hub among the organisation's staff and partners. • Uploading by organisations of their own information to increase relevance for their own work.
Networking and discussion forum • Think tank • Methodological reflection • Interaction with policy-makers at EC and MS	• Reviews and evaluations of the IA strategies of organisations, resulting in proposals of ideas and suggestions for improvements. • Active participation of organisations in the Policy Forum (OECD is already participating).
Innovation and testing • Innovation generator, Experimental Lab • Research programming	• Assistance with developing tools and methods that are easy to apply and adaptable to different contexts, taking into account the needs and requirements of developing countries.
Tool identification and quality monitoring • Evaluating quality of IA and IA tools • Database with meta-information	• Assistance with developing indicators and setting standards of quality for IAs. • Uploading by organisations of their existing methods and tools to the LIAISE KIT in order to make it available for a broad range of users.
Learning • Reflection on experiments with shared learning • Training courses	• Promotion of IA strategies and capacity building in developing countries. • Training sessions and workshops on the use of IAs for staff of organisations.

Recommendation for LIAISE

Given the widespread use and interest in IA at international organisations, a future interaction with a community such as LIAISE could provide added value for both sides. It could contribute to the continuous improvement of IA by maintaining fora for developing the knowledge base and the practice of IA. The discussion section above provides several concrete topics and areas which could form the base for future interaction between the LIAISE Community of Practice on IA research for SD and international organisations. The recommendation for LIAISE is to contact international organisations in order to explore how such a cooperation could be developed in a mutually beneficial way

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