

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in development cooperation:  
A practice oriented training for policy-makers, administration officials, consultants  
and NGO representatives**

This interactive course was presented by Alfred Eberhardt, a consultant at GTZ. An introduction was given by Linda Ghanime of UNDP who serves as a Co-chair of the OECD-DAC Task Force on SEA. SEA was developed by a team co-chaired by UNDP and DfID with over 25 partners. The purpose of the Task Force has been to provide guidance for integrative development planning approaches so that these efforts can be harmonized at the country level to facilitate the achievement of the MDGs.

The course was a condensed version of a participatory 4 day workshop on the application of SEA. SEA is an analytical and participatory tool to ensure an integrative approach to policy-making, planning and programming (P/P/P). Unlike the traditional environmental impact assessments, SEA stresses the inter linkages among environmental, economic and social considerations. The most common use of SEA is to evaluate an existing P/P/P, though it can also provide inputs into developing processes. The outcomes are suggestions for optimizing P/P/P. The cost of SEA has been estimated to be about 3-15% of the entire planning cost in Europe which is not significant, especially given the savings it has the potential to generate.

The training approach is the Harvard Business Case Methodology, which uses case studies in highly interactive group discussions. During the course, participants were asked to focus on two tasks in the context of a given fictitious scenario: a) Analyze the baseline trends and b) Assess proposed development objectives and elaborate their alternatives. In analyzing the baseline trends, past trends were examined to determine what the situation would be like in the future were the P/P/P not implemented. In assessing proposed development objectives and elaborate their alternatives, participants considered the positive and negative impacts of the proposed objectives, and made suggestions to optimize development objectives and priorities maintaining sustainable development objectives in check.

The concluding remarks of the course emphasized that even a small-scale SEA can have positive effects on decision making.