28th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Impact Assessment

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

IAIA08 Session Chair's Report

This information will be included in the on-line conference proceedings and will provide input to the IAIA Study of the Effectiveness of Environmental Assessment Update

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Session number and name: TF 2.3 Environmental Mainstreaming in National Development Plans

Day: Wednesday **Date:** 7 May 2008 **Time:** 8:30-10:00 **# Persons attending session:** Approx 50

Name(s) of Session Chair(s)

David Annandale

Contributors

Dr David Annandale, Professor Leonard Ortolano, Dr Barry Dalal-Clayton, Jon Hobbs

(a) Three current issues in application of assessment processes discussed in this session

- What progress have we made with mainstreaming the environment in national development planning?
- Is there evidence that mainstreaming is leading to positive environmental outcomes?
- What tools/techniques are being used around the developing world for integrating environmental issues into high-level planning?
- What are the hurdles facing better consideration of environmental issues in national development planning?
- What role does/can SEA play in encouraging environmental mainstreaming?

(b) One or more emerging trends

- Environmental mainstreaming is a more appropriate term to use than SEA, when applied to the ex-ante form of SEA. This is because some decision-makers see ex-ante (wrongly) as a project EIA- type regulatory hurdle. The term "environmental mainstreaming" does not seem to have the same connotation.

(c) Issues relating to impact assessment effectiveness:

(i) dimensions of IA effectiveness (i.e. what are the characteristics of effective IA?)

- With regard to environmental mainstreaming and national development planning… effective EA is when environmental issues are examined at the same time as economic and social issues in high-level strategic planning.

(ii) challenges/barriers to IA effectiveness

- With regard to environmental mainstreaming …the techniques need to be understood and championed by bureaucrats from finance/strategic planning ministries. There is a "terminology" problem as well. Too many terms that are misused, or not properly understood in developing countries.

(iii) how these barriers might be overcome

- Awareness raising.
- Examples of environmental mainstreaming benefiting the national development process (eg the Ghana case).
- Academic work to simplify terminology.

(d) Comments on the Art and Science of Impact Assessment (i.e. the relative importance and interplay between science and values/politics/subjectivity in impact assessment)

This forum appeared to be at the heart of the "art and science" issue. At the level of national development planning, most focus is on IA as art. This is especially the case in countries where environmental information is rudimentary. The current struggle is to have decision makers accept the importance of "environmental infrastructure" (or "capital") as a pre-condition for efficient development. There is a need to recast SEA in its ex ante form, to endure that it see as an aid to economic efficiency ... and not as an additional regulatory hurdle.