

28th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Impact Assessment
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
IAIA08 Session Chair's Report

Session number and name: TF 3.1. Making SEA an Effective Tool for Strategic Decision-Making

Day: Wednesday **Date:** 7 May 2008 **Time:** 10.30-12.00

Persons attending session: about 150

Name(s) of Session Chair(s): Fernando Loayza

Contributors: Fernando Loayza, Rob Verheem, Maria Partidario

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

1. involvement of stakeholders
2. Building trust
3. Adding value to planning and policy making through SEA

(b) One or more emerging trends

1. SEA is becoming more institutions and process centred
2. Need of thinking more strategically – beyond the traditional procedures

(c) Issues relating to impact assessment effectiveness:

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

Communicating the IA process/findings to stakeholders
Action driven strategy
SEA influencing policy

(ii) challenges/barriers to IA effectiveness

Lack of political will
Competing claims
Legitimising the findings

(iii) how these barriers might be overcome

Starting the dialogue in advance
Iterative process to be followed
SEA process/output should be made interesting/attractive to people
Capacity building of all stakeholders
Building fair and transparent procedures and legal framework
Change the culture of decision making – making it more participatory

(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)

In the process of conducting SEA, elements of both science and art are used. The scientific (or say logical) elements include legal procedures, iterative process, capacity building approach etc. On the other hand, there are cultural and subjective elements like creating trust, building political will and institution building.

The SEA is also a complex blend of stakeholder interaction, policy decisions, societal analysis and scientific assessment which needs technical competence as well as an intuitive approach. It also looks at various cultural, resource and governance related aspects.

All these calls for a framework of SEA that integrates scientific knowledge, trust building and participatory measures. Only then it would add value to planning and policy making.