IEA

Training Manual

A training manual on integrated environmental assessment and reporting

Training Module 3

Developing an impact strategy for your IEA

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List of Acronyms

ASO	Affiliated scientific organizations
CWG	Conditions and Trends Working Group
DEAT	South Africa Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
GEA	Global Environmental Assessment Project
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
IGOs	Intergovernmental organizations
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
INC	International Negotiating Committee
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSoER	National State of the Environment Report
RWG	Responses Working Group
SGAs	Sub-global assessments
SGAWG	Sub-global assessments working group
SoE	State of the Environment
SWG	Scenarios Working Group
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

Overview

This module will focus on methods to position and deliver a national IEA so that it can have real impact on environmental policy and practice at a series of levels, ranging from local to national.

Why bother with developing an impact strategy?

In 1997, David Shenk coined the phrase "data smog," referring to the 3,000+ information messages that an average person in the United States received on a daily basis. Imagine now, ten years later, the volume of information the average person must process, and what decision-makers must sort through each day. Simply providing yet another report to your senior bureaucrats and political leaders won't be enough to ensure that they read your findings, let alone act upon them.

We want to take you through the steps that will help you determine how to engage the right people to listen to you and respond to your work. This impact process takes time; and involves a real emphasis on being clear and strategic in identifying the changes that you want to see as a result of your assessment. The process focuses on building relationships with key people, finding out what they know already and what they need to know. With that understanding, you can then seek out and create the opportunities to get your messages across, to generate dialogue, and gain the attention and support of those who may have in the past appeared non-responsive to your work.

As those who have participated in previous impact strategy workshops have said, "You need to know the goals and understand the people" (IISD workshop, EMAN, 2006).

A portion of this training will be presentational in nature. However, most of your time will be spent in pairs or small groups to discuss local political and social factors that could affect whether and how your reports are used. Small groups also will be used to practise building the components for an impact strategy for your reports.

Outputs of this training module

- The primary output should be an outline of an impact strategy for your next state of the environment (SoE) or GEO-based national integrated environmental assessment (IEA) report.
- At the end of this module, we anticipate that you will see yourself as someone capable of having a real impact on decision-making.

Notes

Course Materials

1. Introduction and learning objectives 3

This module will focus on methods to position and deliver a national IEA so that it can have real impact on environmental policy and practice at a series of levels, ranging from local to national.

At the end of this module, you should have increased your ability to ensure than an IEA has an impact.

1. You will be able to articulate reasons for doing an integrated environmental assessment that can cover but also go beyond mandated requirements.
2. You will have a greater understanding of the political context of what you are doing, such as how changes are made in policy and practice.
3. You will be able to develop effective strategies and communications tactics to achieve impact. You can explore how far you can go with achieving impact through your assessment, given your political and bureaucratic context, and given that the assessment will be only one of many tools needed to achieve change.
4. You will have a clearer recognition of who you want to reach, beyond your immediate departments, and how that will affect the way you undertake your work and what you will do with your outputs.
5. You will understand that achieving your desired impact requires more than the production of a report at the end of the assessment. Strategic positioning of your work and planned communications are essential components of your work that should be undertaken in parallel with all stages of the assessment.

2. Understanding impact

In this section you will learn:

- why it is important to have an impact strategy;
- how to understand the external environment (context) for an assessment; and
- how to recognize an issue cycle (using media, polling data, etc.)

2.1 What is an impact strategy? 7

An impact strategy consists of the steps you take to ensure that the work you do will lead to real progress on key issues or concerns. It is proactive in nature, and adaptive in a public policy environment where priorities of governments and citizens can shift and change.

2.2 When do you prepare an impact strategy and who is responsible for it?

An impact strategy should be prepared once you have initiated the process for an integrated environmental assessment. It is initiated as part of the "institutional setup" stage of a GEO-style IEA process. It is formalized in the "scoping and design" stage, implemented stages 4 through 6, and regularly monitored, assessed and improved (see Module 2). The manager, or management team, for the IEA process should be responsible for:

- developing the impact strategy, or ensuring that an impact strategy is developed;
- implementing the strategy; and
- monitoring performance on the strategy to ensure that it is achieving the results you are seeking, and modifying or adjusting it, if necessary.

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2.3 Why do you need an impact strategy?

In many jurisdictions, SoE assessment or sustainable development reports are now mandated by statute and regulation. In others, there may be a strong policy context that has led to a government undertaking or participating in an assessment as a voluntary initiative. In some, the assessment/reporting programme may be part of a larger performance monitoring and evaluation programme for the government as a whole, across all departments. While such requirements may initiate the process for an assessment, you should also take a broader view. Begin to think about the potential uses for the assessment. What impact it might have on policy and planning, and what steps should be taken to ensure that the right people are willing to pay attention to the findings of the assessment.

By their nature, most SoE/integrated environmental assessments are not detailed scientific assessments. They may, however, lead to more attention being paid to problem areas, and they may recommend a more detailed scientific assessment of root causes and downstream effects. The result of an assessment can shift the mood of the public, and lead to political pressure. It may educate a wide range of audiences on key issues, and as a result it may trigger more detailed studies that are more directly linked to specific issues and decisions.

It is often an underlying assumption of reporting that good information will lead to good decisions. But while good information is necessary, it does not follow that decision-makers will act on it. Decision-makers are often quite well informed, but their priorities and intentions may be different from yours. The challenge is to take proactive steps to ensure that your assessment doesn't sit on a bookshelf once it is done, but that it provides good input to decision making. Your assessment will lead to recommendations for actions that may require changes in policy and practice by the government. Consider from the outset how the findings from your assessment might be used, and how the priorities you identify can become the priorities of your government and your country.

An impact strategy begins with articulating the changes sought as a result of the assessment. This provides purpose beyond simply following through on the mandated requirement for the assessment. For those conducting an IEA for the first time, it may not be possible to articulate a specific policy-related change that might be necessary as there is no prior assessment which identified priority issues. For first timers, seeking better linkages between the findings of the report and formal decision-making process in government (e.g., departmental strategic plans, policy, priorities, budgets) may be the main objective. Those who are conducting an assessment for the second time or more might be able to think more specifically about issues and necessary policy changes identified from the first process.

Regardless of the number of times you've participated in an assessment, it is important to have a good understanding of several factors.

- Why has the assessment been mandated? What is the political and bureaucratic context in which it is taking place? A legislative mandate as articulated in Module 2 is powerful: 11
  having such a mandate makes it less likely other influences will prevent you from initiating and completing your report (although limited budgets may be a constraint). Government auditors and civil society should help ensure that the legislation is followed. However, once the report is done there is often no obligation to address its findings, so it is equally important to learn who supports the practice of assessments, and where there might be opposition to the process. These people may be key bureaucrats in your own department, or in other important government or non-government agencies. They may be elected or appointed representatives who sit on influential committees. Those who are already supportive are prime candidates to become champions of the findings. They should be briefed on the process from the beginning, informed and even engaged in the process, and be key recipients of presentations and policy briefs on the findings. Those who have concerns about the whole concept and practice of assessments may become detractors—either critical of the report, or focusing attention away from the report and on to other government matters. Consider how you might best build bridges with them and there might be common ground.
- If SoE reports or assessments have been prepared in the past in your country, what happened to them? What priorities for action were recommended? Were they acted upon? Why (or why not)? Barriers to use of previous assessments may continue to be barriers; but by identifying them ahead of time, ways to overcome them may be identified.
- Who is involved in the assessment? In advance of starting the IEA process, there may be participants that can add legitimacy to the assessment. In some cases, the participation of external experts and agencies, including UNEP, can be helpful to ensure that the process is respected.
- What is taking place within the current national political or bureaucratic context that might:
  - prevent more senior bureaucrats and key decision-makers from responding to the findings, or 12
  - enable them to apply the findings in support of a particular agenda.
- What is taking place within the country more generally that might provide a window of opportunity to gain public attention for the findings? For example, if there is a debate going on now about health impacts of air pollution, think about how the findings can contribute to that debate. You might personally be interested in an issue such as water pollution, but by looking for the connection to the issue on the top of today's public and political agenda, you could promote your assessment in the context of the issue "cycle" which may be the air pollution agenda.

There are many ways to get a sense of the external political and public environment in which the assessment is taking place.

- Review not only the relevant statutes and regulations that govern the assessment, but also review the debates in parliament and parliamentary committee minutes. Find the background white/green papers, or other relevant policy documents.
- Investigate with current/former bureaucrats their recollection of the process involved in securing the mandate to do the assessment.
- Review current debates in parliament. What are the hot button issues among the members?

- Monitor political and social coverage in the national media and what they think is worth reporting?
- Chat with colleagues in other departments about what the key issues are that they are addressing.
- Attend meetings of non-government organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations within and outside of the environment sector. Find out what their priorities are. Hold focus groups to identify user needs and interests.
- Look at polling data. If you have the resources, commission a public opinion poll, or work with the government's communications department to commission a poll to find out what is important at the present time for the citizens of your country.

Be aware that if your assessment process serves only to produce a report simply to comply with a legal or policy instruction, then the impact—the ability to have the findings used to effect change—will be severely limited.

EXERCISE

Form groups of three–four with your neighbours and discuss the following questions. Be prepared to share your answers in plenary.

1. What was the context for previous assessments with which you are familiar? Are you operating under a legal or policy mandate? Are your assessments part of a larger programme for government accountability?

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2. Why were your assessments mandated, directed or commissioned? Were your assessments a high priority for your superiors? What other things concern them?

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3. How did/will higher-level decision-makers use your findings?

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2.4 Understanding issue attention cycles

In preparing an impact strategy, it is important to be aware of levels of public, political and bureaucratic attention to current issues, and to the issues being explored in the assessment. Levels of attention will influence the choice of actors to engage (and the likelihood of getting their support),
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and how to engage them. Understanding what is on the public radar screen will also help identify where your assessment might be useful in bringing new knowledge and recommendations for action.

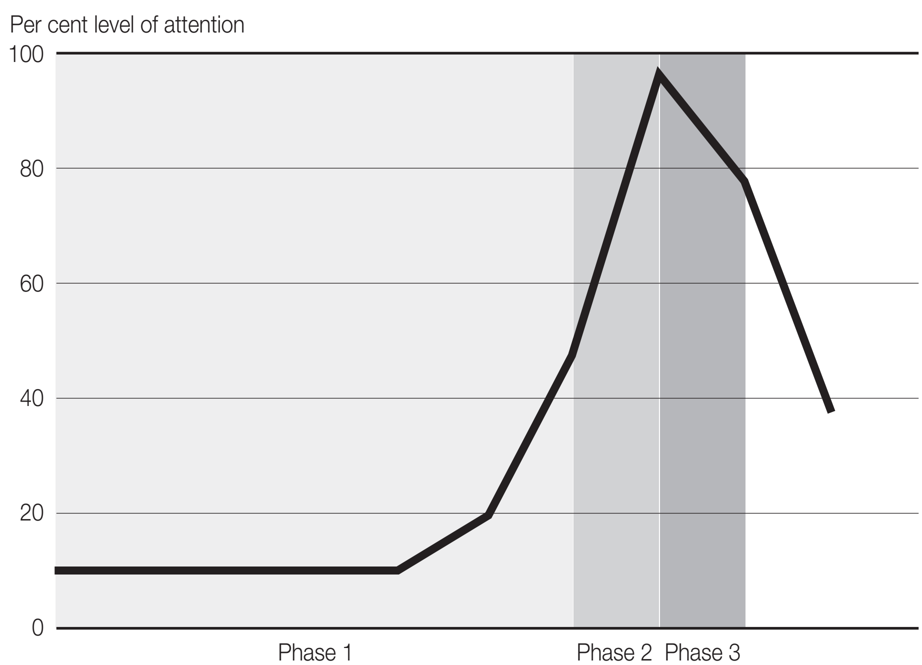
It has been found that for environmental risks there is generally a pattern that resembles a "classic" issue attention pattern initially identified by Downs (1972) and subsequently confirmed by many scholars (e.g., Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Social attention to global environmental risks has tended to lag years and even decades behind scientific and technical developments. At some point, it rises relatively rapidly, remaining high for a short period of time, and then drops off again (Social Learning Group 2001). In some cases, as with stratospheric ozone depletion in the United States, two such cycles in issue attention occur.

The research of the Social Learning Group suggests three phases of issue development (Figure 1). During the **first phase**, before the issue first achieves widespread public attention, the principal functional change is the gradual build-up of scientific and analytic capacity through research, monitoring and assessment activities. Over a long period characterized by relatively low public attention, society's capacity to address new issues gradually accumulates within a relatively fixed group of institutions, largely determined by historical circumstances and the way the issue is perceived. It is unlikely that new institutions will become involved to a major extent with the issue during this period of low attention. 18

The subsequent period of rapid rise in public attention marks a **second phase** in issue development. During periods of rapid rise in public and political attention to a new issue, there will be a renegotiation of leadership within already engaged institutions, and a need for new institutions will emerge. At this stage of issue evolution, it is important to recognize the need for coalitions of actors to push the issue forward. These coalitions provide the basis for a shared understanding of the problem and its possible solutions. Effective management of emerging issues will therefore encourage this coalition building rather than encouraging generally increased participation by individuals, or isolated groups of actors.

A **third phase** of interactions among management functions is associated with the period following the peak in public attention and continuing through the subsequent decline in attention. During this period, the linkages between the knowledge-intensive and action-intensive management functions increase in frequency and run in both directions: knowledge influences action and vice versa.

Figure 1: Phases of an issue attention cycle (adapted from Social Learning Group 2001). 21



EXERCISE 1

In preparing for this assignment, you were asked to:

- review the number of stories in your newspaper related to environment, health and development in the week prior to your training; and
- find sources of public opinion polling data in your country and review them for the current year.

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Based on your "homework:"

- what issues are of most concern to citizens in your country right now?
- how is your political leadership responding and;
- how might you align findings from your assessment with these concerns?

A case study of the climate change issue attention cycle

The case of attention to climatic change is illustrated in Figure 2. This graph charts levels of public interest in climate change as indicated by coverage of the issue in the elite newspapers of several countries. While the graph only shows the media coverage, additional research carried out by the Social Learning Group suggests that the levels of attention accorded to climate change in the elite media correlated strongly with levels of attention shown to it at the same period in time by other actors such as parliaments, industry groups and the scientific community. The media data can thus be taken as a rough reflection of overall changes in levels of attention to global environmental risks among actors.

Of particular interest in this graph is the one- or two-year period of rapidly increasing attention, then a year or two with the issue in high profile, and finally a slow decline of public attention back to lower levels. Over sufficiently long periods, recurrent cycles of public attention are possible (possibly indicating that lower attention levels have more to do with the emergence of new priorities. or media and public fatigue, rather than a resolution to the problem).

Much as in the cases of acid rain and stratospheric ozone depletion, climate change was an expert issue long before it became a public one. There was relatively little attention to climate change in the press of any arena prior to 1988, despite decades of sustained scientific work. In this case, "issue linkage" appears to have been a critical factor in getting climate change onto the agenda of the public and policy-makers. The rise of stratospheric ozone depletion to the political agenda forced a certain amount of political attention in at least some national and international arenas to the issue of global climate change.

Also important was the role of political leadership. In the late 1980s, high-ranking politicians in many of the politically powerful arenas started to speak about the need to take action regarding a global warming threat. Their attention was secured by proactive, strategic and personal efforts on the part of scientists and concerned citizens working in NGOs. This put political momentum behind scientific developments in several arenas, and the issue appears to have caught on in several of the other arenas. By 1989-1990 there was a relatively high level of attention to the issue of global climate change in the media of almost all countries.

Climate change remained on the public agenda even when media attention to stratospheric ozone depletion began to decline. In the period after the data collected for Figure 2, evidence suggests that attention dropped sharply in most arenas towards the mid-1990s before rising again in the run-up to the Kyoto Conference of 1997. This might signal that once an issue receives a high level of both public interest and political support, it will remain on the bureaucratic agenda even though public interest may shift to other concerns.

For the impact strategy, it is important to be aware of where the issue that is to be assessed lies with respect to the attention cycle. If the issue is in the first phase, in which most attention to the issue is in the scientific and technical realm, the impact strategy should consider that the audience most likely to be interested in the IEA will be in this area. It will take more concerted effort to gain the attention of the general public, private and political interests. During the second phase in which there is a rapid rise of public and political attention to the issue, there is a "window of opportunity" in which the impact strategy can consider the possibilities of reframing the issue and attracting new actors to become involved in dealing with the issue. If the issue is in the third phase, where the issue is on both the scientific and political agendas and there is considerable interaction between these communities, the impact strategy will be able to address the broader communities of concerned actors, when scientific analysis, public interest and political agendas are closely linked. It is at this stage that an impact strategy may have its most obvious and immediate results. Keep in mind though, that an impact strategy **developed** at this stage will be ineffective. The strategy must be developed early; it will just have its greatest impact at this stage.

There is a certain inevitability that issues will recede from the attention of the general public. An impact strategy may help to:

- mitigate the falling off of public attention by focusing on more direct engagement of target decision-makers; and
- shorten the issue attention cycle by moving a relevant issue back into the public eye more frequently.

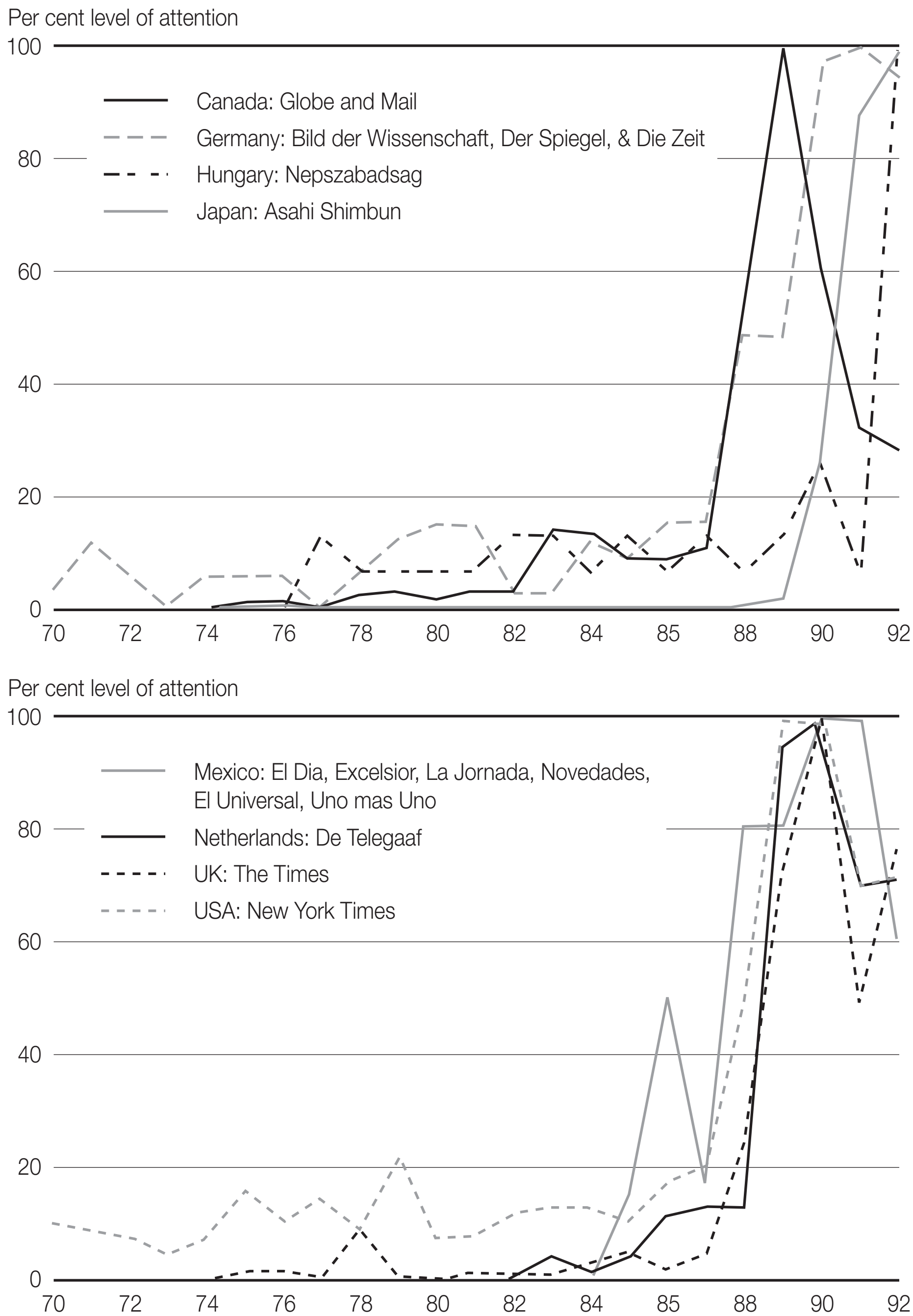
There will always be unexpected catastrophic events that can play a major role in tectonic shifts in public policy. In these circumstances, public interest and policy response may peak simultaneously, with pressure placed on knowledge seeking efforts for rapid response. One has only to consider, for example, the effect of the 2004 tsunami in Asia on policies to implement early warning systems. These events can have two outcomes for your own impact strategy.

- You can seize the opportunity to relate your assessment findings with the catastrophic event. For example, in 1997, one could have tied SoE report findings on land management to the massive land-clearing fires and resulting haze blankets across Asia that led to $US1.4 billion in short-term health costs and fire damage (IISD 2002).

  or

- You work will be moved off the political and bureaucratic radar screen for the immediate future. You will need to complete your mandated requirements for the assessment, but continue to foster the relationships built through the process, and be ready for the time to advance the findings.

Figure 2: Country comparison of newspaper attention to climate change



Source: Social Learning Group 2001

3. Model for an impact strategy

In this section you will learn:

- the difference between an impact strategy and traditional communications activities
- the basic components of an impact strategy; and
- how other organizations have developed strategies so that their assessments might impact decision making.

3.1 Attributes of impact strategies and traditional communications activities

An impact strategy incorporates communications activities combined with a good understanding of government relations as practised by advocacy groups and professional lobbyists. With communications strategies, it is necessary to identify key recipients of the assessment, prepare key messages and products that will help them grasp the essentials of the research, and identify appropriate channels to deliver those messages and products, including the media, participation in events (e.g., conferences, workshops), and electronic delivery via e-mail and web. In Module 7, you will learn more about the full range of tools and tactics available for the production and release of the reports and its supplementary products.

An impact strategy builds on communications activities in several key respects.

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	Impact strategy	Traditional communications activities
Purpose	Goal is to effect change, and to identify your potential role as a change agent.	Goal is to ensure people understand the findings and recommendations.
Audience	Small group of key actors and those who have access to those actors.	Broader audiences.
Timing	Developed at the beginning of the assessment process, monitored and adjusted throughout the process.	Part of the impact strategy; usually implemented towards the end of the strategy when findings and recommendations are known.

1. Purpose

   An impact strategy is focused explicitly and deliberately on change, and on the potential of the lead institution's role as a change agent. An impact strategy starts with an articulation of what the impact of your assessment should be. What should be done differently as a direct result of the assessment. Some of the power to effect change based on the findings may indeed rest with you, depending on your role within your bureaucracy. Usually more senior bureaucrats or politicians must be engaged to bring about policy reform, or leaders in the public and private sectors who may have roles to play in changing practice. An impact strategy identifies these key actors, and plans for ways to build their receptivity to the findings.

   In the past, communications activities have tended to focus primarily on the effective and efficient delivery of the findings and recommendations. The communications plan also often has an important corporate function: the promotion of the department and government that has been responsible for developing the report and demonstrating accountability through compliance with the mandate for the assessment.

2. Audience

   The audience for the IEA and the target group for its impact strategy may be a small group key actors who are in a position to have significant influence on environmental outcomes if they adopt the assessment's findings and recommendations. Directly reaching these influential actors, however, may be difficult. Instead, the impact strategy may target those who are able to *influence* them or try to reach them through other channels indirectly, for example through the mainstream media. Your ultimate objective should be to reach those people whom you definitely want to act on the IEA's results.

   Communications activities will always include broader audiences: those who can benefit from the information contained in the report and become actors in their own way.

3. Timing

   An impact strategy should be developed from the very beginning of the assessment process, and monitored and adjusted throughout the process. The communications activities are an important component of the impact strategy, and are usually implemented towards the end of an assessment, once the findings and recommendations become clear.

EXERCISE 2

- Share a story from your own experience about how assessments have been communicated in the past to decision-makers and to the public.
- Discuss in particular the roles of different players: who was responsible for delivering the final report, what were their tasks, who were their target audiences, who handled the release to the general public and what vehicles or channels did they use to get the information out?
- Were you satisfied with the responses to the assessment?

3.2 Steps in building an impact strategy

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There are five main steps to creating an impact strategy, as illustrated in Figure 3.

1. Creating the change statement. What should the impact of the assessment be?
2. Relationship management. Identify the key actors that you are seeking to influence, and build connections to them.
3. Knowledge management. Gather and analyse the knowledge for the assessment.
4. Opportunity management. Move the knowledge into the hands of those that need to be influenced.
5. Monitoring and improvement. Determine whether the impact strategy is working, and adjust it as necessary.

Note the iterative nature of the strategy. These steps are elaborated below.

Who is involved in the process itself: are they adding legitimacy, credibility and saliency to the knowledge base?

Note that these three criteria were identified as key to the effectiveness of assessments. Legitimacy refers to ensuring that the assessment is carried out in a fair and politically acceptable way, taking the views and values of the respective audiences into account; saliency mean that the assessment addresses the information needs of its users; and, credibility means the technical and scientific reliability of the information (Jäger and Farrell, ???

Figure 3: Model for an impact strategy

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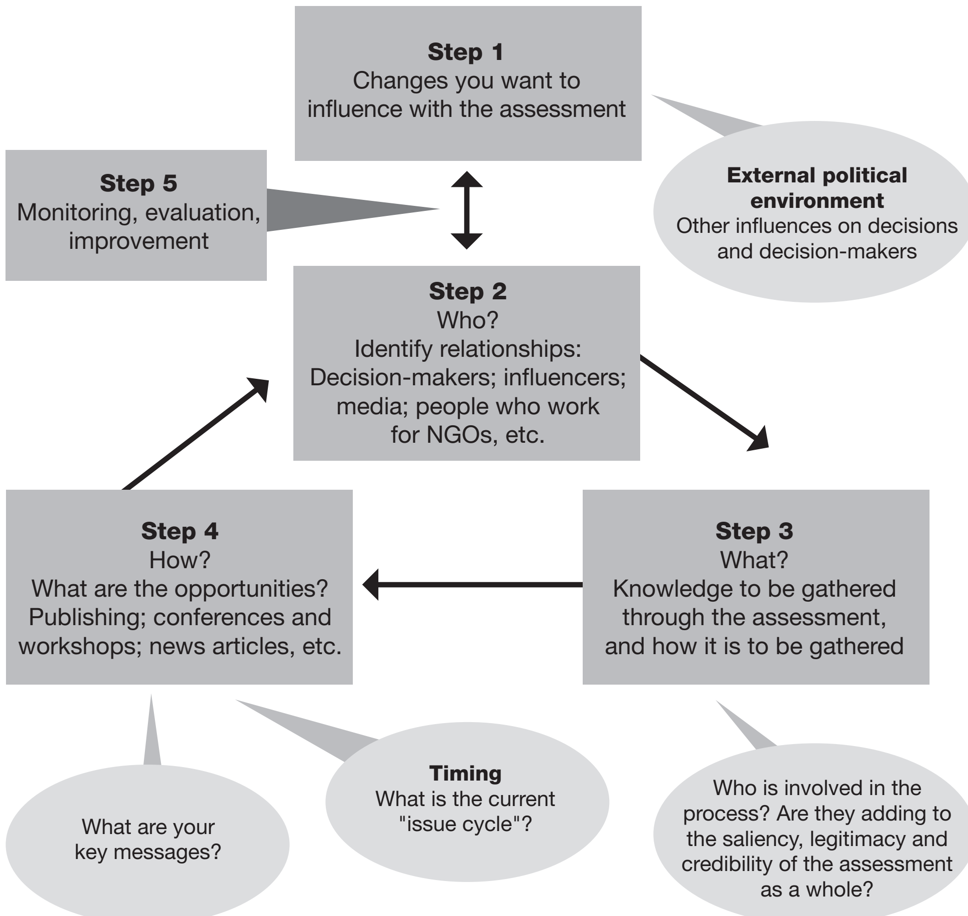

Source: IISD 2004

3.2.1 Step 1: Creating a "change" statement to anchor the impact strategy

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An impact strategy is anchored by its "change statement." This is an articulation of what the impact of your assessment should be. What should be changed or done differently as a direct result of the assessment? This first step will be the most challenging: to articulate clearly what the leaders and participants of the assessment would like to see happen as a result of your IEA. Although your government may mandate assessments, it is important to look beyond the simple requirement to undertake the assessment, and consider how the assessment might lead to changes or improvements in sustainable development policy and planning.

For those conducting an IEA for the first time, it may be difficult at this point to state what the issues are that need to be influenced. The change statement may be fairly broad, focused primarily on getting people in positions of authority to actively use your report. For example:

> *Key departmental decision-makers will use the information gathered during the assessment to develop policy priorities, departmental strategic plans and budgets.*
>
> Or:

State, as well as national, level planners will review the findings of the assessment, and prepare internal policy briefs on how they will address the recommendations of the assessment.

Remember that an important part of the IEA process is a scan of issue and policy priorities. In the context of any given priority issue to be reported, major policy mechanisms that could or should be influenced can also be identified.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper planning and implementation process is adjusted to increase attention to environmental degradation, protection and rehabilitation, based on the findings of the assessment.

An impact strategy is a dynamic process. The change statement may start off fairly broad or general, but as more data become available and analysis is carried out, the change statement can be revisited and refined. During this training session, when you learn more in Modules 4 and 5 about data and analysis, you may wish to reconsider how you have framed the change statements you will prepare in the next section of this module. Based on the findings of previous assessments, or on the new data being analysed, you may wish to focus on one key priority that you want your findings to inform and address, e.g.:

The government institutes a national watershed management plan that takes into consideration the responsibilities and capacities of villagers to protect and rehabilitate their water sources.

You can still reach out to broader audiences to inform and engage them in the report findings. Impact in this context may be an aggregate of actions that individuals may take in response to the report. But there may be little that they can do on a personal level. The impact strategy will help you work towards leveraging real policy change on a key issue.

EXERCISE 3

- How you would like to see your assessment used?
- Describe a situation (a government policy or practice) that could be improved as a result of your assessment.

3.2.2 Step 2: Relationship management

Too often, people move immediately to the information gathering stages of the assessment, without due consideration of Step 2. Careful thought should be given to who will be in a position to take the findings of the assessment and use them effectively. Information by itself doesn't leverage change, but relationships do, and this involves people communicating ideas, analysis and data to other people. This step involves identifying the individuals and groups you most want to reach. Consider how these decision-makers acquire information, who do they trust, what information source do they trust and how do they make decisions? How can you get to those people? If you cannot reach them directly, who are the people they do listen to, and can you reach them instead?

This step is designed to identify those who are in positions to make the decision or effect the changes including those who can influence the decision-makers directly. These include intermediaries, the people who lean in to whisper advice into the ears of the decision-makers), those in civil society who can bring pressure to bear on decision-makers, those who can support, reinforce and strengthen your recommendations, in particular the academic community and other research institutes, and those in the media through whom we reach the public, who can also influence decision-makers. Central to determining who to reach is the concept of **relationship management:** maintaining the connections and influence over time.

3.2.3 Step 3: Knowledge management 32

Once you have articulated who will help with achieving the decision you seek, you need to analyse both what they need to know, and what you need to know that will help them take or influence the decision. This is the **knowledge management** process of the assessment. The remainder of the Training Manual will provide you with the tools you need to gather, analyse and process your information.

You will need to consider how to build trust in your final product, including the data, the analysis and the recommendations. As outlined in Module 2, participation by your key decision-makers in the actual process of the assessment ensures saliency and relevancy to your finding (GEA 2005). In other words, it helps to ensure that the findings are relevant to their needs and will be more likely to be used. This could include not only leading scientists who ensure the assessment reflects the latest scientific results, but also others such as indigenous people whose traditional ecological knowledge can broaden the assessment's perspective or corporations that may have access to more in-depth and privileged information. Generally, the constructive collaboration of a wider set of actors may increase not only the credibility of the IEA but its legitimacy in the eyes of a broader set of 33
social stakeholders.

3.2.4 Step 4: Opportunity management

Step 4 involves moving that knowledge into the hands of those you want to influence. There are many tools available to do this: the products to be released, the conferences and workshops to hold, and the amplifiers, including electronic mailing lists and websites, which get replicated throughout much wider audiences than may have been targeted.

At the heart of the tactics and strategies that are developed is the creative **management of opportunities:** both taking advantage of key windows to move the assessment findings into the hands of others, and creating opportunity directly.

An important part of this process is the development of "key messages," a series of short, simple, plain language statements that capture the essence of the work. There is a real skill in drafting statements that capture the essence of what you want to say, and expressing it in a way that is relevant to those you wish to influence and inform. This can be done with end users and tested in focus groups. The IPCC case study talks about one of the "key messages" from its work:

> The world is likely to see "a rate of increase of global mean temperature during the next century...that is greater than that seen over the past 10,000 years."

This straightforward message was by most accounts, very influential in catalyzing the decision making process, which eventually led to the signing of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992 (Agrawala 1997).

Also, keep in mind what you have learned about "issue cycles," recognizing that timing is important as you seek to position your findings in light of other competing or comparable public and political interests.

The development of scenarios based on the findings presents another type of opportunity to engage key target decision-makers. In a scenario process, you will work with them to think through the implications of the findings from your assessment. Scenarios help decision-makers deal with uncertainties, and provide options for action. The value of scenarios in helping decision-makers to buy into, and act on, your findings is discussed further in Module 6.

As opportunities often arise unexpectedly, responding to them requires creativity and a degree of improvization. However, one can prepare for cases like that by having products, properly prepared staff and protocols in place. The preparation and communication of products is discussed in more detail in Module 7.

34 3.2.5 Step 5: Monitoring, evaluation and improvement

We know that in most work involving information processes and products, causality is difficult to demonstrate. But it is possible to look at incremental changes in attitudes, actions, and behaviours that are a direct outcome of one's work (Earle and others 2001). Monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms should be in place to identify and map these incremental changes that will lead towards the decisions or changes sought, and to adjust the strategy if necessary.

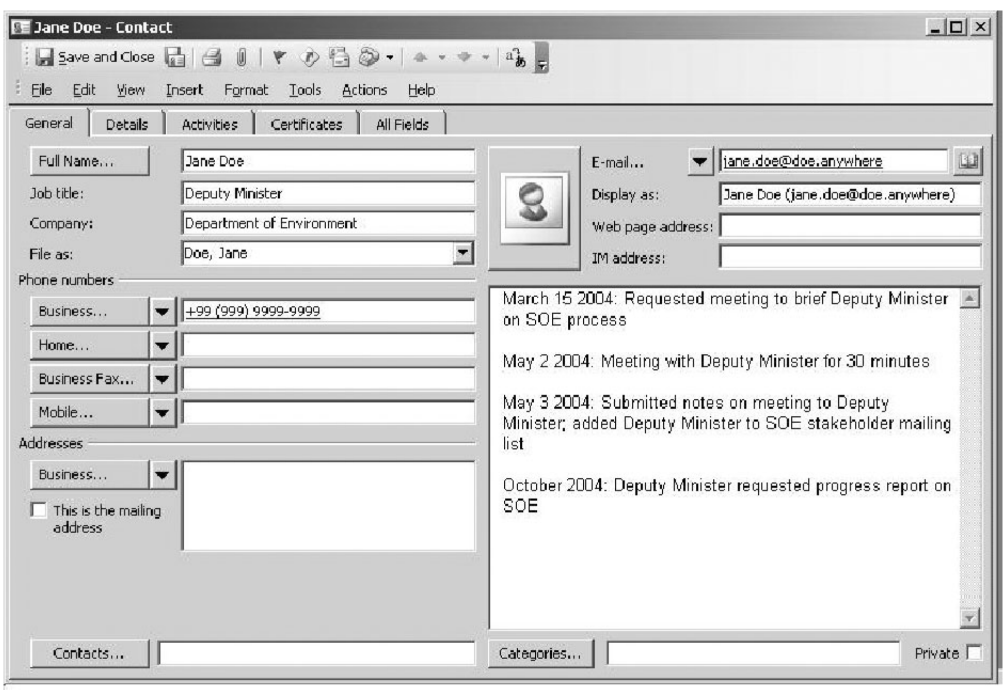
Naturally, you are going to want to know whether your strategy is working. But, sometimes the signals that you are having real influence seem small and insignificant. These quiet signals will be the incremental changes in attitudes, actions and behaviours that are a direct outcome of your work. Is a key actor returning your phone calls? Are you being invited to committee meetings that were closed to you in the past? Are key actors coming to your meetings? What is happening in the media? Are you getting more stories about your work than you did before? Is there an increased demand for assessment reports?

Monitoring and assessment mechanisms must be in place to identify and map these incremental changes that will lead towards the decisions or changes you are seeking. This can be a time intensive process, so it is a good idea to identify some key indicators, and set up simple ways to monitor your strategy against those indicators.

For example, a contacts database of key actors could be set up with a journaling function that will allow a record of interactions with them (see example screen on Figure 4). This can be as simple as just indicating the date and type of contact.

- Dates you sent information about the process, invitations to presentations.
- Dates they requested information dates they accepted invitations.

Figure 4: Sample screen from contacts database with journaling function.

35 

Keep a record of all media inquiries or request the appropriate government department whether they do media tracking (reviewing stories in the press about government initiatives; or more broadly, tracking issues of concern to the government). If they do, request notices of stories in the press about the assessment, or about issues relevant to the assessment.

For example, a media log for the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment might have looked like this.

Date	Media outlet	Type of contact, title, description of media piece
30 March 2005		Press release distributed to all media outlets
April 2005	Economist	Request for interview from Economist reporter
21 April 2005	Economist	Article: "Rescuing environmentalism and the planet": reference to MA ecosystem services analysis

Important behaviour changes of your "target actors" (those you are seeking to influence) could be reflected in a progression from passively receiving information from the assessment, all the way through to acting on recommendations and demanding more work. The following would be a good checklist:

- Receiving information
  - IEA process leaders sending information to target actors.
  - IEA process leaders using media to communicate to target actors.
  - IEA process leaders requesting, and securing, meetings with target actors.
- Seeking and processing information
  - Targets seeking information from others to "triangulate" or verify information they are receiving through the IEA process.
  - Media reporting messages from target actors that are consistent with IEA process messages.
- Acting
  - Issuing of new policy briefs, white papers, frameworks, regulations, other responses.
- Demanding
  - More work from IEA process leaders (e.g., follow-up investigations, more in depth assessments).

These and other indicators are discussed in more detail in Module 8 on monitoring and evaluation. There, you will see how monitoring the impact strategy will fit into the overall monitoring process.

EXERCISE 4

- What are some indications that the assessment findings and recommendations are influencing your key actors?
- What are some ways to keep track of your performance on the strategy?

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3.3 Case studies of assessments that had impact

In order to design and implement an impact strategy for an assessment process, it would be useful to provide examples that had a well-defined impact strategy, and to analyse the results of the strategy in terms of success and failure. Unfortunately, impact strategies in the area of global environmental
39 assessment are hard to find. In 2001, the Social Learning Group found that self-conscious process evaluation was rare in the management of global environmental risks. It seems that evaluation and impact are treated, if at all, in an *ad hoc* manner. We do not yet fully understand these barriers, although concerns about time and resource constraints are often a factor, although good strategic planning and monitoring can address some of these concerns. Regardless, for the purposes of this Module, we chose to look at particular assessment processes that have had an impact, discuss the reasons for their success and provide pointers for the development of an impact strategy. Therefore, three case studies are explored below. The first is an example of a national level SoE report, from South Africa. The second and third involve major scientific assessments: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). These assessments are considerably more detailed and academically rigorous than what is usually possible at the national level in an SoE or national IEA report. Nevertheless, both have deployed strategies to ensure that their findings impact international policy setting and decision making.

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3.3.1 South Africa National State of Environment Report, 2005

South Africa's next SoE report is being prepared by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Right from the beginning of the SoE process, a deliberate effort was made to plan and execute a strategy that would help sustain stakeholder interest throughout the assessment process. While it was called a "communications strategy," some of its components correspond to the steps of an impact strategy.

Step 1: WHY. Impact statement: what did they want to see changed as a result of their assessment?

The communications strategy begins by recognizing the context of the assessment. "Although reporting on the state of the environment is not mandatory at this point in time, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) has decided to commission a comprehensive assessment of, and report on the state of the environment in South Africa. This will be the first comprehensive report since 1999." (DEAT 2004)

Among other objectives, the National SoE Report (NSoER) was designed to:

- provide objective, accurate and scientifically credible information about the condition and prospects of the South African environment;
- report on the effectiveness of policies and programmes designed to respond to environmental change, including progress toward achieving environmental standards and targets; and
- make recommendations for strengthening policies and programmes.

Embedded in these objectives is a focus on change: the desire for stronger environmental policies and programmes, based on credible and relevant knowledge of the South African environment. However, the strategy also notes that media continue to view NSoER as another government report with few linkages to decision making or the lives of average South Africans. The implication is that communications activities must therefore clearly demonstrate how the report will impact on decisions and daily lives.

Step 2: WHO are the key actors, and how will we build relationships with them? 41

This communications strategy lacks the specificity of an impact strategy with respect to the identification and building of relationships with key actors. The strategy identifies only two target audiences, "media" and "stakeholders." One of the first activities of the strategy involved identifying stakeholders. However, the strategy itself is largely silent even on general categories of stakeholders (for example, government officials, elected representatives, NGOs, private sector interests) and the most effective channels to reach out and engage their attention.

Step 3: WHAT knowledge is to be gathered? 42

The communications strategy was designed as a parallel activity to the NSoER process, and therefore does not include the details of how information would be gathered and analysed. However, the strategy does identify the core "knowledge management" functions of the NSoER.

- to review the resource management and environmental issues reported in 1999, and to identify new issues;
- to assess the conditions and prospects of the environment, and identify potential problems; and
- to continue the development of appropriate indicators.

Step 4: HOW to reach key actors 43

The "opportunity management" component of the strategy clearly recognizes:

- the need for planning activities to inform and engage stakeholders throughout the NSoER process;
- the preparation of key messages; and 44
- the impact of issue attention cycles on uptake of the NSoER message, more particularly how issues in the current political environment and of concern to the public could either reinforce communications around NSoER, or draw attention away from NSoER communications.

Planning and messaging

Key messages included:

- you have the right to know the state of the environment in which you live; and
- the National State of the Environment report tells us what the condition of our environment is, why it is in this condition and what we are going to do about it.

What is interesting about this communications strategy is how it has been phased with the whole NSoER process. For every stage of the process, there is a plan for a parallel communications activity. More specific messaging was planned to coincide with different phases of the project.

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Project phase	Period	Messages	Key activities
Pre-national Planning Session	Last week Sept 2004	South Africa is engaging key role players in developing the 2005 NSoER.	Draft communication strategy Branding of NSoER Project Event Management and Planning Identification of stakeholders
	End Sept to Mid-November 2004		Media dialogue on the concept, background and purpose of the NSoER project. Proposed for 1st Week November
National Planning Session	Mid-November 2004	A National Planning session will identify the key issues for the 2005 NSoER	Presentation of draft communication strategy Identification of key communication issues
Post-national Planning Session	Mid-November 2004	Key issues that have emerged at the National Planning Workshop include…. The 2005 NSoER process is linked to the Provincial and City State of Environment Reports	Provincial and Local Awareness and Education Campaign Determination of the Project Milestones
Impact Assessment of Communications	Mid-November 2004	The impact of the NSoER process is being evaluated	Evaluation of the impact of communication and NSoER project
Launch of the NSoER	End November 2005	South Africa's 2005 NSoER is now available!!!	Preparation of a communication plan

Recognizing the "Issue Cycle"

The strategy also includes an analysis of the environment surrounding the communications activities that might affect uptake of messages and findings in South Africa.

Positives/Strengths

- recent times have witnessed growing balanced reporting and public debates in the media about the government's performance;
- overall positive coverage of DEAT-related matters in the mainstream media;
- the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg has raised greater awareness about the importance and linkages between responsible environmental management, social development and economic development;
- in the light of WSSD, skills training and capacity building for environmental journalists in the key issues of the sustainable development debate, as well as in ongoing professional skills, are now emerging as priority areas among journalists; and
- a growing number of journalists have expressed interest in engaging with governments around building skills and capacity to analyse the debates, issues and challenges around sustainable development.

Negatives/Challenges

- given that the momentum was not sufficiently maintained in the post-release period of the last NSoER in 1999, media interest on both the state of the environment and the indicators has not been substantial;
- the impact of the last NSoER is currently not sustained in the psyche of South Africans;

- media continue to view the NSoER as the release of another technical report. The media do not analyse the progress, challenges and constraints the report presents about the implementation of sustainable development targets since WSSD; and
- alternative voices claim that not enough is being done to monitor and report on negative impacts.

To date, newsletters and the DEAT website have been the primary vehicles for reaching key actors. Not all elements of the communications strategy were implemented. However, the NSoER is still to be released. At that point, it may be easier to judge whether the groundwork of the strategy has led to greater impact on decision making and on public awareness and support.

Step 5: Monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the strategy

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The drafters of the communications strategy recognized the importance of continuous review and adjustment. They agreed to design and adapt the communications strategy based on the results of the communications impact assessement report, in order to achieve the desired impacts.

The monitoring and evaluation component was not implemented, but the objectives listed provide an excellent basis for monitoring the impact of the next NSoER process.

3.3.2 Case Study: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The IPCC was established in 1988 to assess available information on climate change. It was created jointly by two United Nations agencies—the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)—and now has the participation of national governments worldwide. As Agrawala (1997) has pointed out, there is considerable literature citing conclusions reached by the IPCC, but detailed analyses of the institution, its assessment process and outputs are very limited.

There was no formal "impact strategy" as such, but if we deconstruct the IPCC design and process, we can see how key elements of a strategy are reflected in the work of the IPCC.

Step 1: WHY. Impact statement: what did the IPCC want to see done as a result of its work?

IPCC would be the *first* "official," systematic assessment of climate change at the international level in order to determine whether a global crisis was looming, and if so, to convince governments of the need to seriously consider a global response.

Step 2: WHO are the key actors, and how to build relationships with them

The IPCC chose to target senior government decision-makers and negotiators as the recipients of its findings. To gain their attention, careful selection was paid to who would make up the IPCC. According to Agrawala, the high profile nature of the IPCC First Assessment convinced many governments of the need to seriously negotiate a climate convention.

As the Global Environmental Assessment Project (www.ksg.harvard.edu/gea) has shown, assessment processes are more likely to be effective in linking knowledge to action when the output of the process is perceived by the science and policy communities to be credible, salient and produced according to a legitimate process (so people perceive the process to be fair and representative of their interests). In terms of the IPCC process, credibility was achieved through the selection process for the authors, and through a peer review process. Relevance was achieved, in particular after the establishment of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), through close interaction between the IPCC and INC (Agrawala 1997) and after the signing of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change through close interaction with the Subsidiary Body on Science and Technology Assessment (Miller 2005). Legitimacy was a particular concern during the earlier days of the IPCC, especially with regard to developing country participation issues, and action was taken to support the participation of experts from developing countries, especially after the first assessment round was completed.

Step 3: WHAT knowledge is to be gathered

Agrawala (1997) digs into the details of IPCC's creation and the design choices made. Many of these choices were made when public and political attention to climate change was increasing (Figure 2). One major design choice made during this period included the *scope* of the proposed assessments. Why did the IPCC choose to do a *comprehensive* assessments of the science, impacts and responses. Agrawala suggests that since the IPCC was going to be the *first* "official," systematic assessment of climate change at the international level, it made sense to investigate *all* aspects of the issue.

Step 4: HOW to reach key actors

Another important design decision was made in the early stages of the IPCC. In its first session in February 1989, the IPCC Bureau adopted a proposal by Working Group I to incorporate a 20-page "policy document" in its assessment, which would summarize the scientific results and place them into perspective. The Bureau then requested the other two Working Groups produce similar "policy documents." These became the well known policy-maker summaries of IPCC Assessments.

Key messages:

In section 3.2.4 above, we noted the key message emerging from the IPCC: that the world is likely to see "a rate of increase of global mean temperature during the next century...that is greater than that seen over the past 10,000 years."

Conclusion

Thus, although the IPCC has no "official" impact strategy, it offers several important lessons for impact strategies of assessment processes. It paid attention to the scope of the assessment, and chose a comprehensive rather than narrow approach, having weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the two. It incorporated policy-makers' summaries as part of the process and the line by line negotiation of these summaries. Although this weakened the wording, it led to significant "buy in "from the policy community. Further steps to ensure credibility, saliency and legitimacy of outputs and processes meant the outputs of the IPCC process were effective in achieving political action.

3.3.3 Case study: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

From the outset, the MA instituted an "engagement and outreach strategy." Responsibility for this strategy was formally assigned to the MA Secretariat. From the beginning of its work, MA leaders understood the need to ensure that key actors would be engaged and informed, that broader audiences would be reached, and that this process would have to be carried on as an integral part of the whole scientific assessment.

Step 1: WHY. Impact statement: What did the MA want to see as the outcome of its work?

The MA was carried out to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being, and to establish the scientific basis for actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and their contributions to human well-being.

Step 2: WHO are the key actors, and how to build relationships with them

Before starting the scientific work, MA proponents proceeded to:

- confirm the need for the assessment by consulting the three main international conventions that directly deal with ecosystems (Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention to Combat Desertification and Ramsar Convention on Wetlands);

- position the assessment within the formal decision making processes of these conventions, and obtain formal expression from the UN on the need to conduct the assessment; and
- identify a broad range of users.

Step 3: WHAT knowledge is to be gathered

In addition to consultations with key actors, the MA conducted an assessment of the information needs of a broad range of users. This assessment became the basis for the outline of the MA reports as designed by the scientific panel, and remained a reference point throughout the process.

Step 4: HOW to reach key actors and broader audiences

The strategy defined two distinct areas of action.

- Engagement
  – provide target users with adequate access to the process of the information generated; and
  – enable broader audiences to access the products of the assessment, and benefit from networks and capacities growing out of the assessment process.
- Communication
  – raise understanding and awareness of the MA and how to use it; and
  – convey key messages from the findings to targeted audiences and the public.

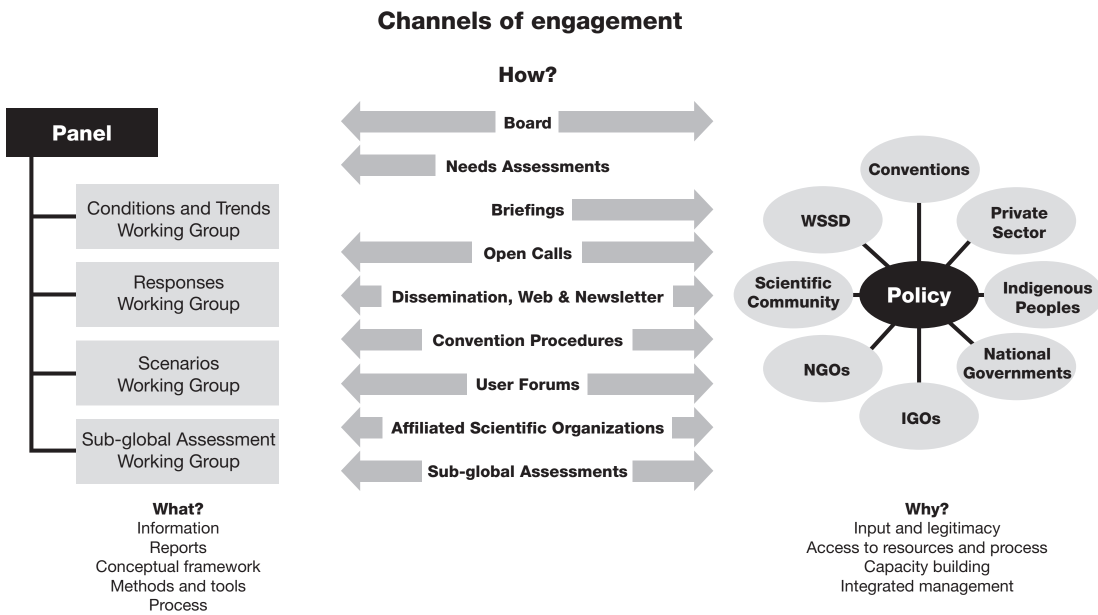
Engagement

Ultimately, the engagement strategy was an effort to ensure that adequate access to the process and products existed, so the MA could be widely shared, and would continue to yield fruits beyond its conclusion in 2005. This, in turn, would result in input from users into the process, enhancing its legitimacy, and improving the capacity of users to interpret and act on the findings of the assessment.

Several channels were used to enable engagement (Figure 4):

- MA Board meetings engaged users in the process;
- the *user needs assessment* mentioned above;
- the MA constantly produced *ad hoc briefings*, trying to seize as many opportunities as possible to address large numbers of users and present them with information about the assessment;
- *open calls* were issued to the public, governments and institutions to nominate scientists to participate in the assessment as authors or reviewers, and to submit proposals to undertake sub-global assessments affiliated with the MA;
- a *website and newsletter* were established, and a data sharing system developed;
- the internal, *formal procedures* of some target users were utilized to feed the MA and subject it to discussion.
- *multistakeholder meetings* were organized in various countries to present the MA and invite discussion on its relevance in each national context;
- a procedure to invite *academies of sciences* and scientific organizations was established, whereby these entities supported the MA in the identification of scientists and the dissemination of information; and
- the process of *sub-global assessments* was in itself another mechanism to connect the MA to local, national and regional processes.

Figure 4: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Engagement Strategy



Communication (outreach)

The MA communication effort focused on raising awareness about the MA and supporting the demand for:

- the assessment reports and associated information;
- integrated assessments at the sub-global scale; and
- training to conduct such assessments.

Making the MA visible to the media. One concern of the communications team was to achieve a certain level of press attention when the information was finally released. Three approaches were used.

1 Organizing seminars for the media while the assessment was being conducted to explain what it was, why it was being done and what to expect from it.
2. Establishing a loose working group with the media officers of partner organizations.
3. On the day of the official release, press briefings and seminars were organized in 13 cities around the world. This ensured that appropriate angles and languages were used to draw national media attention.

Keeping the visibility of the MA before the users. The assessment was a four-year endeavour. Even after being approached and consulted at the inception of the assessment, targeted users needed to be kept updated and reminded of upcoming work. These activities were also meant to build momentum and expectations, and consisted of multiple briefings and smaller meetings in international and national arenas.

Facilitating access to MA products. A constant concern of the MA was to ensure that as many people as possible could access the information. Again, there were three approaches.

1. Targeted publications. In addition to the full technical assessment reports, the MA produced six synthesis reports aimed at different users. The information contained in the main assessment volumes was summarized and repackaged in short, carefully designed volumes dealing specifically with biodiversity, desertification, wetlands, health and business and industry, plus a general synthesis directed at a more general audience.
2. Translations. Translating the information into various languages proved to be one of the main weaknesses of the MA process. While thoroughly aware of the need to do so, resources were insufficient to undertake this task adequately.
3. Electronic communications. Establishing electronic communication mechanisms was important, including a website, a system to share data and an intranet system for internal communications.

Partnering. The engagement and outreach team of the MA saw its communication activities as an instrument not just to reach out and convey an image of the MA but also as a mechanism to enhance the ownership of the MA, and improve the ability of third parties to understand and make better use of it. Hence, the MA sought to rely on as many partners as possible for outreach, and to encourage as many third parties as possible to undertake outreach for the MA on their own. This resulted in several instances where volunteers approached the MA to undertake activities, which was highly beneficial in dealing with media enquiries. Partnering required the following two elements.

1. A minimum level of coordination in terms of setting key dates and sharing basic strategies.
2. Generating materials to support outreach by third parties. These materials were shared through the intranet, but also through an "outreach kit" distributed on CD. This kit contained a collection of elements developed by the MA, including:
   - guidance on how to explain the MA to the uninitiated;
   - guidance on how to develop a communications strategy (see Addendum 2);
   - graphic elements (posters, maps, logos, photographs, videos); and
   - PowerPoint slides.

Early products. The MA did not wait until the end to start releasing some outputs. In particular, releasing the conceptual framework and early findings on sub-global assessments (SGA) allowed for better outreach during the process.

Step 5: Monitoring, evaluation and improvement

The MA engagement and outreach team was continuously haunted by the question of how to define success. How would they know they had been successful in supporting the goals of the assessment? Following are some of the items that were discussed.

- **Government buy-in.** For example, would resolutions from international bureaucracies be an indicator of the effective use of the information, or a tactic to protect the process? Government involvement, however, was very effective in attracting leading scientists.
- **An international arrangement to deal with the problem.** Was the MA inserted in a clear political context in which the information would catalyze such action?
- **A proliferation of sub-global assessments.** Would the dissemination of the practice of integrated assessments around the world be an indicator of real success?
- **Media attention**. Besides being short-term, one has to be careful what the results of this attention are. By and large, when the information was released, the media focused on the negative side of the message, as in the front page article of Le Monde, below.

Planète épuisée, progrès menacé : l'alerte de l'ONU

LA DÉGRADATION des milieux naturels, sous l'effet du développement économique, menace ce développement lui-même et le progrès qu'il permet pour la condition humaine. C'est la conclusion principale de l'étude menée par plus de 1 300 scientifiques, réunis par l'ONU dans le cadre du programme du Millénaire et chargés d'évaluer l'état des écosystèmes sur toute la surface de la Terre. *« L'activité humaine exerce une telle pression sur les fonctions naturelles de la planète que la capacité des écosystèmes à répondre aux demandes des générations futures ne peut plus être considérée comme acquise »*, estime le comité directeur du projet, lancé par Kofi Annan en juin 2001. Selon cette étude, *« environ 60 % des écosystèmes permettant la vie sur Terre ont été dégradés »*. Cette dégradation pèse principalement sur les zones rurales des pays pauvres.

HUMPFF !.. CH'EST QUOI UN ÉCOCHYCHTÈME ?

- 1 300 experts ont dressé un état alarmant des milieux naturels
- 60 % des écosystèmes permettant la vie sur Terre sont dégradés
- Cette détérioration hypothèque les perspectives de développement

Lire pages 2 et 3 et notre éditorial page 16

In an effort to communicate more effectively, the MA strove to develop some powerful metaphors to explain its concepts and findings. Perhaps the most important was that of "nature as capital" and ecosystem services." While clearly effective, these metaphors were taken up to draw some controversial conclusions, as the cover of The Economist shows.

In the end, the team concluded that success for the assessment needed to be measured by demand for information and expertise from a broad range of places and interests. Further use of the information (for example to start or influence a political process) is a result of the work, and clearly shows it is having some effect.

GROUP DISCUSSION

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the impact and communications efforts of these examples?

EXERCISE 5: Building an impact strategy

In this segment of the training, you will break up into smaller groups to work together on developing an impact strategy. At the end of this section, you will have prepared a draft impact strategy using the steps described in this module. Throughout the remainder of the workshop, the draft strateg(ies) will be revisited, and you will be asked to consider whether and how to revise and strengthen your strateg(ies).

If you are participating in this training with your IEA team, then this might become a draft strategy 47
that will be useful to you in your IEA process. If you are working in mixed groups or with people that you would not work with for your real assessment, this will be an activity to practise the steps.

Please select a chairperson and a rapporteur who can capture and present your results in plenary.

Step 1: Drafting the impact statement 48

First you need to prepare an impact statement. Remember that this can be refined later on.

Examples:

> *Key departmental decision-makers will use the information gathered during the assessment to develop policy priorities, departmental strategic plans and budgets.*
>
> Or:
>
> *State, as well as national, level planners will review the findings of the assessment, and prepare internal policy briefs on how they will address the recommendations of the assessment.*

Breakout group exercise

- Discuss within the group what you specifically want to see changed as a result of your assessment.
- Prepare a statement of the impact that you want your assessment to have.
- Write the statement on your flip chart under the heading Step 1.

49 Step 2: Identification of WHO you are trying to have an impact on

Next, you need to identify the key actors who are in positions to make the changes that you would like to see.

Breakout group exercise:

- On your flip chart, under the heading Step 2, list ten people you most want to reach with your assessment findings. List them by name and position. If you don't know their names, then list their position titles. Do not list categories of people (e.g., members of parliament, private sector). You must be as specific as possible.
- Discuss within the group:
  - Why do you want to reach them?
  - How feasible is it that you can reach them?
  - Are there other people who can reach them better than you can? Who might they be? Write these on the chart, too.
- Once you have listed ten key actors, and the names of others connected to them, you can move to listing some broader categories of people (e.g., reporters at a leading newspaper, names of influential NGOs, university departments). This is the broader community of interest who you may wish to champion and work with your findings. Again, be specific. Do not simply list "business, government and civil society." Write the information on the flip chart.

50 Step 3: Discussion of WHAT knowledge you need to collect, and how that knowledge is collected

The balance of this training programme will provide you with more details on what information to gather and how to collect it. In building the influencing strategy, it is important to recognize that what you want to learn may not be what a decision-maker needs to know. Building trust with them will help to ensure that you are getting a clear picture of what they need, and will help you define issues and priorities that they want to address.

Plenary discussion

- What are the different ways you can build trust with people in this context?
- How will you find out more clearly what your ten key actors need to know, what their interests are and how the information will be of use to them?
- How is your selection of issues influenced by their stage in the issue cycle?

Breakout group exercise

- Prepare two–three statements of the information you intend to collect for your assessment. Write these on your flip chart under the heading Step 3.
- Prepare a short description of how you will interact with your key actors during the assessment period.

Step 4: Planning HOW to bring the report to the attention of key actors 51

Now you need to think about the tools and tactics you can deploy to bring the report to the attention of the 10 target people you have identified, and to others who may be able to influence the 10. Remember that in Module 7, you will learn more about the technical production and release of the mandated outputs required from the assessment. Here you can brainstorm around a much broader range of opportunities to deliver your findings. These include:

- workshops;
- formal presentations to departmental and parliamentary committees;
- lunches with representatives of NGOs to do special briefings;
- exclusive events with private sector interests to discuss how the assessment is relevant to them;
- website publications;
- electronic conferences to discuss findings; and
- news media interviews.

Plenary discussion

- What else should go on this list of opportunities to tell people what you are working on and what you are learning?

Communications channels and techniques are important. But you also need some key messages.

Breakout group exercise

- In the group, discuss two–three key messages drawn from previous assessments you have worked on. What were some of the strengths and weaknesses of these? If you have not worked on an assessment before, think about what the key messages might be from one of the case studies discussed in Section 2. What might be the key message for your new assessment? Under the heading Step 4, record **one** of the key messages.
- Discuss three approaches that you might take to promote your messages and findings to your key actors, to broader audiences and to the general public, all of whom can influence your key actors on your behalf. List these approaches under Step 4 on your flip chart.

Pulling the strategy together 52

Now you get to compare your strategy with those of the other breakout groups.

Breakout group presentation of Steps 1-4.

- Share your Steps 1-4 with the rest of the training group.
- Post the flip charts for each step together so that groups can see the variations in impact statements, key relationships and so forth.
- This is your very rough master outline, and it will give you a sense of what your impact strategy for your assessment might become. Now, you need to review and refine it.

Plenary discussion

- On the impact statement.
  - Are there any further considerations?
  - Is there a general acceptance of the impact statement by the group?
  - Record exceptions or variations in opinion, as these may re-emerge later in the training programme.

- On WHO the strategy is targeting.
  - Are there any other individuals or groups that should be added to the list?
  - Media. Have you included the names of key journalists who are influential in your country?
  - NGOs. Have you included the names of key people in NGOs who might help to promote the assessment's recommendations?
  - Now that you have zoomed in on your key actors, what are some of the broader groups you should reach out to? What about women's groups? Can they become supporters of your work? What about village councils and district authorities? What about Chambers of Commerce? What about youth organizations?
- On WHAT:
  - Discuss challenges you may face in engaging your key actors in order to more clearly understand what those actors need to know.
- On HOW:
  - Keep in mind that messages depend on the results of your assessment.
  - Do any of these messages relate to issues that are relevant to women? How can you craft a message that will reach women effectively?
  - Are there any other possible channels for communication? Have you thought about ways to reach important minority voices, such as young people and people living below the poverty line? How will you reach some of the broader groups like local authorities, village councils and district administrations?

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Step 5: Monitoring, evaluation and improvement of your impact strategy

Monitoring and evaluating mechanisms will be discussed in more detail in Module 8. But for now, let's think about some general signals that will tell you whether your strategy is having impact.

Plenary discussion

- What are some indications that you are influencing your key actors?
- What are some ways that you can keep track of your performance on the strategy?

Reality check and final plenary discussion

Preparing, implementing and monitoring an impact strategy takes time. What resources do you think might be required to implement this strategy? If your resources are limited, what would be the most critical elements that you would implement? Are there any partnerships you could form to help you? For example, how might you work with your government communications department?

What does your group as a whole think of the draft strategy? What are its possibilities? What are its limitations?

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