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BACKGROUND ON THE STUDY

The International Study of the Effectiveness of EA, launched in 1993 as a joint initiative of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) and the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), is now being taken forward under the direction of an international steering committee consisting of partner countries and organizations.

It was commissioned to:

- review recent trends, key issues and emerging directions in EA
- examine the contribution of EA to problem solving and decision-making
- identify and document elements of EA systems that work well
- recommend cost-effective measures for improving the application and management of EA

Ten themes were identified for the Study (see Annex 1). These are grouped into four main categories:

1. foundations of EA, focusing on guiding principles, values and codes of practice
2. new directions in EA, focusing on strategic environmental assessment (SEA), cumulative and large scale effects and sustainability



3. process strengthening, focusing on major components of EA at the project level
4. capacity building, focusing on research, training, networking, institutional development and professional skills

A number of activities are being undertaken in collaboration with Study partners to gather information. These include international workshops, questionnaires, case studies, country status reports and EA decision analyses.

The Study has significantly expended in scope and promises to assist continuing efforts to strengthen EA as a practical tool for decision making in support of sustainable development.

This Update summarises the progress of the Study to date and identifies major activities that are underway to complete the Study by mid-1996. Preliminary results are expected to be circulated for discussion at the 1995 IAIA Annual Conference. In the interim, there are still opportunities for interested organizations and individuals to contribute to research, data-gathering and analysis.



PROGRESS TO DATE

During the first year of the Study, the Secretariat developed the overall approach and objectives. Wide consultations were undertaken with other countries, international organizations and individuals to build awareness of the Study and partnerships.

Progress to date is highlighted under the major activities of the Study.

Programme Management

The Study has been taken forward through:

- the development of **working agreements** with national EA agencies and international organizations, including Australia, France, the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, the Nordic Council, Hong Kong and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- the establishment of an *International Steering Committee* to oversee work in the Study's final phase
- linking up the Study with **related initiatives** by other organizations, through consultations with many government agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations and private sector groups, including: the Canadian International Development Agency; the World Resource Institute; the North American Treaty Organization; the UK Institute for EA; the University of Manchester's EIA Centre; the Centre for Environmental Management and Planning (CEMP); the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED); the Centre for Traditional Knowledge; and the World Council of Peoples



International Workshops and Meetings

Workshops have been a major instrument for examining study themes, gaining wide participation by national agencies and international organizations and promoting awareness of the Study. Major initiatives have included:

- workshops with national agencies responsible for managing EA systems in Australia, The People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, The Netherlands, the Nordic Countries, and the United States of America (USA)
- international meetings on EA capacity building, training and "best practices" organized by UNEP
- affiliated workshops and meetings with professional, research and training institutions, including CEMP, the UK Institute for EA, and IIED
- special sessions at IAIA '94 on the new dimensions of EA (sustainability, strategic EA and cumulative effects)

Study objectives have also been advanced through other international workshops including:

- the Arctic environmental protection strategy's workshop on environmental assessment in the Arctic, in Finland
- the European Union's EA workshop, in Greece
- the annual conference of the UK Institute of EA, in the United Kingdom
- the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) – Workshop on EA capacity building in countries in transition, in Estonia



Research Tools

Several methods are being used to collect and analyze information around major themes of the Study:

- A *questionnaire on EA practices*, distributed worldwide to EA practitioners and managers, will be a key source of information for the Study, providing insights on challenges and best practices. The questionnaire has been distributed worldwide through the IAIA and UNEP, the University of Manchester's EIA Centre, a Dutch EIA Magazine, the US Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the National Association of Environmental Professionals, and the Environment Institute of Australia
- *Country status reports and case studies* are important information sources, allowing for comparative analysis of practices and the role of EA in decision-making. Frameworks for both the country reports and case studies have been prepared and distributed through Study partners
- *EA decision* analyses will help identify where EA has "made a difference" within different institutional and political settings. A framework has been developed to provide a standard approach to information collection and analysis



The EA Summit

The first international EA Summit, held June 12-14, 1994 in Quebec City, Canada, brought together senior officials from 25 national agencies responsible for managing EA systems and from seven international organizations with responsibility for the practice of EA. The objectives of the Summit were to review progress on the EA Effectiveness Study, exchange information and views on current issues and emerging trends in EA, and consider practical approaches for strengthening EA practices.

The EA Summit's *Agenda for Action* consisted of three interrelated initiatives:

- endorsing and expanding support for the International EA Effectiveness Study
- designing and establishing an international on-line network to enable EA managers to communicate with one another and exchange information
- clarifying the concept of EA capacity building, and actively supporting and coordinating capacity building initiatives through the Study



Information Products

The Study Secretariat has published several reports:

- *Information Bulletin No. 1* introduced the rationale and objectives of the Study
- A *Proposed Framework* provided more details on the Study's themes, and proposed a research design and set of arrangements for the participation and cost-sharing of agencies and organizations
- a *Final Report* on the EA Summit presented a synthesis of the discussions and the agenda for action

Background reports have been prepared in partnership with organizations:

- Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Modern Environmental Assessment (Centre for Human Settlements, the University of British Columbia)
- Balancing the Scale: Integrating Environmental and Economic Assessment (Foundation for International Training, Consulting and Audit Canada)





In addition, proceedings of the following workshops conducted in 1994 as part of the EA Effectiveness Study have been prepared by Study partners. These include:

- **EIA in the Netherlands:** Aspects of Experience and Effectiveness, Canada-Netherlands EIA Workshop, The Hague, February 1994
- **EIA in Hong Kong:** Status and Priorities, Canada-Hong Kong, March 1994
- **EIA in China:** Status and Priorities, Canada-Peoples Republic of China, March 1994
- **Trilateral Workshop on EA (Australia, Canada, New Zealand):** Emerging Directions in Environmental Assessment, Canberra, March 1994
- **EIA in the Nordic Countries:** Experience and Effectiveness, Canada-Nordic EIA Workshop, Finland, April 1994
- **EIA in the United Kingdom:** Status of Practice and Future Directions, CEMP, Scotland, April 1994
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Workshop:** The Netherlands, December 1994



A LOOK AHEAD: COMPLETING THE STUDY

The major objectives of the final phase of the Study are to:

- complete work on Study themes in collaboration with partners
- publish key reports, background papers and information bulletins
- prepare and distribute the final report of the Study by mid- 1996

Key tasks required to complete the Study are highlighted in four areas.

Programme Management

The following activities are planned:

- establish *new partnership agreements* with countries and organizations to undertake specific research and coordination tasks
- coordinate the establishment and operation of the *World EA Network* to promote the dissemination of results of the Study, to support EA capacity building initiatives, and to facilitate direct communications among EA managers and practitioners world-wide



International Workshops and Meetings

Additional international workshops are planned by the International Steering Committee, to address specific issues and themes in the Study. These include:

- global and large-scale environmental changes (Canada)
- strengthening the EA process (Australia)
- EA effectiveness in developing countries (Africa)
- guiding values and principles of EIA practice (United Kingdom)
- public participation and dispute settlement (Canada.)
- EA effectiveness (United States of America)
- EA capacity building in Francophone countries (France)

Special sessions on EA Effectiveness, Indigenous Peoples and EA, and Information Technology are proposed for IAIA '95 in Durban, South Africa.

Research Tools

Future research activities include:

- collecting and analyzing the *country status reports, case studies, and EA decision analysis* from participating countries and organizations
- distributing the *questionnaire* through additional organizations, and analyzing the results of the responses
- establishing a *database* for information collected on EA practices



Information Products

The Study's information products will be organized into three categories:

- **Study Reports** will include the interim and final reports of the Study as well as major reports on the Study themes such as compendiums of case studies, country status reports and EA decision analysis reports
- **Information Bulletins** will highlight the results of all international workshops held as part of the Study, the Study's information holdings and the World EA Network
- **Background Papers** will include reports related to the Study, published either directly by CEAA or jointly with other organizations

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ANNEX I

Study Themes

- **Guiding values and principles**
- **Application of sustainability concepts**
- **Strategic environmental assessment**
- **Cumulative and large scale effects**
- **Relationship to decision-making**
- **Integrated approaches to impact assessment**
- **Public participation and dispute settlement**
- **Follow-up and post-project analysis**
- **Total process management**
- **Capacity building**