



January 2008

Update on DTIE/ETB's ongoing work on Integrated Policymaking for Sustainable Development

Background

In 2003 UNEP through DTIE/ETB launched a process to enable nine countries to integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations into a range of public policies. This process, referred as "Integrated Assessment and Planning" (IAP), was completed in 2006 with the publication of "Sustainable Trade and Poverty Reduction: New Approaches to Integrated Policy Making at the National Level".

IAP is a step forward from Integrated Assessment (IA), on which UNEP started working since 1997 with an initial focus on trade-related policies. In IAP, assessment is not confined to trade-related policies. More important, IAP goes beyond assessment and advocates applying the concept of integration into policy planning from the outset.

For both the participating countries and UNEP, IAP was to be a learning experience. When we started the IAP process, therefore, we decided not to develop and provide the partner countries with a formal IAP framework. Instead, we opted to develop such a framework after we have gained experience from the countries participating in this process.

In September 2005 and February 2006, UNEP organised two meetings involving UNDP, the EC, OECD, governments, academic institutions, and NGOs to discuss the development of a voluntary international framework for IAP. Both meetings supported the initiative and provided advice. In the autumn of 2006, the results from the IAP process became available, providing additional insights into the preparation of a framework document. We found, for example, that the IAP process had shown clear signs of success in engaging stakeholders and identifying win-win opportunities and trade-offs. As far as internalising the integrated approach in policymaking is concerned, however, the progress was still limited. In most cases, due to deeply rooted local political and institutional factors, the IAP processes remained external to the official policymaking processes.

Reflecting on the IAP experience and building on the conclusions from the two meetings, UNEP decided to focus on three areas where we could make improvements.

1) As we get into planning or policymaking, we need to tap into the science (or art) of public policy and make use of the latest developments in this field. A major contribution of the policy science in recent years is its emphasis on the importance of integrating policy objectives, political support, and institutional capacity in the context of different policymaking systems.

2) Assessment typically identifies stakeholders after a policy has been initiated. In contrast, integrated policymaking requires careful analyses of stakeholders from the outset, their equitable, efficient, and effective participation in policymaking processes, and more important, the value conflicts among different groups and ways of coping with these conflicts.

3) We need to improve the quality of policy analysis. This affects not only the credibility of the related policy recommendations, but also the likelihood of institutionalising the integrated policymaking approach. We need to do more than assembling analytical tools from different disciplines into toolkits and start identifying and promoting integrative tools, including non-quantitative ones in recognition of the constraints in partner countries.

Based on these considerations, DTIE-ETB decided to develop an operational manual to enable public policymakers and policy analysts to integrate environmental, social, and economic objectives throughout policymaking processes. The title “An Operational Manual on Integrated Policymaking for Sustainable Development” reflects the intent to go beyond assessment. Since September 2006, we have been working with the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy to develop the manual. In Geneva on 14-15 May 2007, UNEP through DTIE/ETB held a meeting to review the manual’s first draft. About 15 experts from governments of developing and developed countries, inter-governmental organizations, think tanks, and civil society participated in the meeting and provided suggestions for revision. Within UNEP, experts representing DRC and DEPI also attended the meeting.

Future Plans

The draft manual has since gone through a rigorous revision process. On 8 February 2008, UNEP will hold an informal technical meeting to review the latest draft. With further refinement, the draft manual is expected to be circulated to a larger group of stakeholders for review and comments. In the meantime, it is planned to hold an international and regional workshops to communicate the manual in the hope that an increasing number of countries and inter-governmental bodies will uptake the integrated approach to policymaking.