



NCSA Regional Workshop Report

Nairobi, Kenya
6-9 December 2005

Global Support Programme
Capacity Development for Global Environmental Management

Introduction

The GEF Strategic Approach to Capacity Building was informed by the conclusions of the Capacity Development Initiative of 2000 and the GEF Council approved it in November 2003. The Strategic Approach outlines a set of operational principles for capacity development efforts towards effective management of global environmental issues, to be followed by the GEF and its implementing agencies supporting countries in implementing projects with GEF funds. Furthermore, the Strategic Approach outlined four possible approaches for enhanced GEF support to capacity development:

1. National Capacity Self-Assessments (NCSA);
2. Enhanced attention to capacity development in regular GEF projects;
3. Targeted capacity development with GEF focal areas; and
4. Cross-cutting capacity development programmes for LDCs and SIDS.

While the latter three pathways still require further GEF deliberations to become fully operational, NCSAs are already making considerable progress and 153 countries are currently in preparation of or undergoing their national assessment processes.

In order to further support the NCSA process, the GEF approved a Global Support Programme (GSP) for the implementation of the Strategic Approach, serving as a continuous learning and backstopping mechanism to both the countries, the implementing agencies and the GEF-Secretariat itself. The GSP will provide support through strengthening existing tools such as resource kits and guidelines, indicator development, review and feedback as well as networking, based on experiences of the countries and implementing agencies. An Interagency Capacity Development Task Force, comprising of GEF-Sec and implementing agencies members, provides further guidance on the Strategic Approach.

Workshop Programme

The East and Southern African Regional NCSA Workshop is part of a series of regional workshops, jointly organized by the GEF implementing agencies UNDP and UNEP, and the NCSA Global Support Programme (GSP). It brought together 35 participants from 17 of the 20 countries in the two sub-regions to jointly address challenges faced and experiences gained so far from the NCSA process. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Identify strengths and weaknesses in the NCSA process and possible follow-up;
- Draw lessons learned and good practices;
- Increase collaboration among GSP, implementing agencies and countries; and
- Establish a south-south network among the countries in the sub-regions.

The workshop's agenda was structured in plenary sessions, providing opportunity for contextual input from NCSA-relevant areas and activities, as well as result-oriented feedback and response from working group sessions. To facilitate above-mentioned aims, the working groups were organized in changing settings to allow for interaction among countries in an advanced stage of the NCSA process, country team sessions, and individual interface in groupings with advanced and early stage countries.

The [participants](#) included:

- NCSA managers in east and south Africa: Comoros, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe;
- GEF Implementing Agencies, UNDP and UNEP;
- Global Support Programme to the NCSA programme



Record of the Workshop

Day 1 – the GEF, NCSA Process

Session 1: Opening Session

The first day of the workshop was opened by Ms. Joyce Onyango, Senior Planning Officer of the National Environmental Management Authority (Kenya), Mr. Abdul-Majied Haddad, NCSA Task Manager of UNEP-GEF and Mr. Peter Hunnam, Manager of the UNDP-UNEP-GEF Global Support Programme.

Session 2: Introduction of the GEF Strategic Approach and the NCSAs

The Coordinator of the GSP presented a summary of the development of the NCSA as the most extensive enabling activity supported by the GEF. He outlined the international context of the NCSA, including Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the GEF and the Capacity Development Initiative. He also outlined the GEF strategic approach to capacity development comprising the NCSA program (Pathway I), capacity development components of GEF (Pathway II etc), targeted capacity development projects (strategy 3) and LDC-SIDS country programs (strategy 4).

Plenary discussion focussed on the following:

- NCSA country-level assessment may lead to regional initiatives.
- Capacity at various levels (regional, national and local) will provide better appreciation of country capacity.
- NCSA reports distinguish various levels of capacity (individual, systemic or policy, institutional). There is also the difference between content of capacity and levels/tiers of capacity.
- Countries must reflect on how capacity was captured in their NCSA process.

Session 3: Status report on each NCSA project

15 countries presented their status reports of their respective NCSA projects. Click on the links to download the country presentations for 1: [Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho](#); 2: [Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique](#); 3: [Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland](#); 4: [The Gambia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe](#)

Discussions and working groups focused on challenges, strengths and weaknesses countries experienced with the NCSA process to draw possible lessons learned, particularly for the countries at an early stage in the process.

After individual country presentations on their status and particular experiences so far, three working groups of mixed country teams of advanced and starting countries developed templates of strengths and weaknesses for each of the NCSAs five steps, based on the presentations and ensuing discussions. Since the results of the three working groups were very similar, they can be summarized below (see Table 1).

Discussions concentrated around operational issues, particularly on the flexibility of the NCSA process at national level, as well as opportunities to fast-track the process based on assessments already undertaken or currently being undertaken, such as GEF enabling activities (EAs) and follow-ups. Participants came to the conclusion that the NCSA should build as much as possible on existing assessments, EAs, and national strategies and policies in order to focus on national environmental priority issues, both thematic and cross-cutting, as well as the strategic level and policy approach the NCSA has the potential to trigger.



Table 1: Summary of working groups on strengths and weaknesses of the NCSA steps

NCSA INCEPTION	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Communication among stakeholders	Time constraints of major stakeholders
Awareness raising on MEA obligations and global-national links	Finding the "right" stakeholders and resource persons
Clarification of particular responsibilities	Lacking knowledge on MEA obligations
Build on existing structures to drive the process	Too high expectations
Coordination among focal points facilitates NCSA	Sectoral thinking/guarding sectoral "turf"
	Institutional arrangements for coordination not in place
Lessons Learned	
Early stakeholder involvement facilitates overall NCSA process	
Secure high level commitment as early as possible	
Key stage to formulate TOR to guide the subsequent process	
NCSA STOCKTAKING	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Consultants had to communicate with different NFP, among each other, and with stakeholders	Lacking knowledge on MEA obligations
Induced information exchange among focal areas	Sectoral thinking
Pooling and review of past/ongoing activities relevant to MEA obligations	No knowledge about what has been done or what information and capacity is available
Drawing baseline and clarification of MEA obligations	Sorting existing literature is tedious and a massive task
Further stakeholders identified	Danger of gathering too much information
Building on other ongoing processes	
Lessons Learned	
Sending out questionnaires without personal interview/follow-up was not helpful and costly	
Overall NCSA process and strategy has to be clear in order to filter and re-evaluate information with relevance to the NCSA	
NCSA THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS (TA)	
Strengths	Weaknesses
TA built bridges between focal areas	Poor communication among focal areas and focal points
Having TA experts is key	Balancing the 3 TA as sectoral specialists tend to be biased
TA built internal database and baseline that is of further use for programming	Reaching agreement on how to proceed
Determination national environmental priorities jointly with stakeholders	Limited understanding of and tools for prioritization
MEA awareness strengthened down to local levels	How to go from thematic to capacity assessment
NCSA CROSS CUTTING ASSESSMENT	
Strengths	Challenges/Weaknesses
3 TA provided good baseline to determine commonalities	Sectoral approaches in segregated ministries, unclear mandates and responsibilities – hampers overall process
Inter-institutional committees strengthened	Concept of cross-cutting is unclear; difficulty to have common terminology and perception
Awareness on commonalities strengthens strategies and links to development areas (e.g. poverty, HIV/AIDS/Health)	Lack of understanding of synergies and x-cutting among higher level officials – fear of losing territory
	Synthesis bears danger of losing details of TA
Lessons Learned	
Local level tends to be better integrated/synergetic than higher aggregated levels	
National system can learn from local level structures and knowledge	
NCSA REPORT AND ACTION PLAN	
Strengths	Challenges/Weaknesses
Coordination needs are voiced	Keeping the plan alive and implementing it
Articulation of awareness in strategy and potential projects	Untimely follow up leads to losing momentum and loss of "marketing" opportunities
Action plan provides starting point for MSP development	Poor national resources, insufficient longer-term funding strategies
Kick-starting longer term processes	Integrating the plan into other processes
Opportunity for market-driven and incentive-based approaches	Maintaining assessment detail and environmental priority issues in strategic action plan
Lessons Learned	
Need to involve high level officials to mainstream action plan and longer-term approach	



Day 2 – Global environmental issues, Action Plan

Session 4: Global environmental concerns and environment management

The second day of the workshop provided contextual input presentations on [environmental concerns in the sub-regions](#) (Peter Acquah of UNEP, Regional Office for Africa), as well as a [Uganda national perspective on the NCSA and beyond](#) (John Ssendawula, Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment, Uganda).

Session 5: Group Work on national environmental priorities and NCSA steps

The rest of the day was dedicated to group work, dividing the participating countries into

- A “Advanced countries”, i.e. those having finalized their assessments and/or the action plan and/or preparing follow-up proposals; and
- B “Starting countries”, comprising of those that just began their NCSA cycle as well as countries currently at the various assessment stages of the process.

The nine countries in the A-teams reviewed their NCSA results to compile a regional synthesis with particular attention on priority environmental issues and proposed capacity development actions to address these issues. The table below, derived from the results of both A-teams, shows some of the common issues as well as proposed activities.

Table 2: Group A-Regional synthesis on priority environmental issues and proposed capacity development action

Thematic Area X-cutting	Priority Environmental Issue	Proposed Capacity Development Action	CD Type
CC BD LD X-cutting	Land Degradation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • de-vegetation/ loss of BD • water resource degradation • ground water depletion • unsustainable agricultural practices and land use 	(a) Support institutional collaboration at local to national levels (b) Strengthen capacity of institutions to implement policy and legal framework to manage land sustainably (c) Devolve management of land resources (d) Rehabilitation of degraded lands	B B & C C D
BD LD X-cutting	Loss of Biodiversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • growth of agriculture • de-forestation • habitat loss • Invasive Alien Species 	(a) Strengthen capacity to monitor IAS, GMOs, biodiversity, community seed banks, etc. (b) Strengthen policy review, economic valuation of biodiversity resources	A C
CC BD LD X-cutting	Natural Disasters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Droughts and floods • vulnerability • adaptation to climate change 	a) Enhance planning capacity, monitoring and inventories b) Strengthen early warning systems and response c) Awareness raising about climate change d) Zoning policy and planning framework	C & E A A C

Capacity Development types	Management Functions
A	Organising information and knowledge
B	Empowerment of stakeholders
C	Planning, policy and decision making
D	Implementation of management actions
E	Monitoring & evaluation, learning

Two closely related subjects guided the A group discussions:

- 1) A disconnect between national environmental priorities and NCSA action plans
Most reports and action plans are highly aggregated, e.g. stating “strengthening institutional coordination in order to implement MEA obligations” as an NCSA result to be addressed through capacity development activities. As discussed during the first day, countries face problems in linking their environmental priorities derived from the thematic and cross-cutting assessments with necessary capacity development activities, as well as managerial and policy-relevant actions to be formulated in the action plan or follow-up proposals. During the group work, participants re-examined their NCSA results and established the links between priorities and envisaged activities.
- 2) Unclear concept of cross-cutting, synergies, commonalities, linkages etc.
Many participants voiced their uncertainty regarding terminology as well as concepts for the cross-cutting assessment stage. Outlining thematic linkages between environmental issues



or common requirements under different MEAs is not posing a particular challenge. However, connecting these with a capacity needs assessment and activities that are cross-cutting is seen as difficult, as well as linking such activities to the different types and managerial functions of capacity development.

The workshop recommended for above issues that the implementing agencies and the GSP review and consolidate their support materials and guidance in order to strengthen the strategic relevance of the NCSA results and the NCSA action plan.

Group B countries had the task to plan in detail the NCSA steps from inception to action plan, and to develop a generic roadmap for the NCSA process. Using a simplified log frame matrix, the working groups identified objectives, outputs/results, activities and tools needed for each of the NCSA steps. The groups were not based in country teams, which ensured an interaction among the group members deriving from their personal experience rather than a pre-determined national NCSA process.

Results of the working groups were shared in sub-plenary and revealed very similar outputs as shown in the matrix below. While one group had first defined the objective of each step, starting with the action plan and working backwards, the other group had followed the sequence of the process. Both put emphasis on linking the individual steps and ensured to capture the strategic approach of the NCSA to serve as a catalyst for a national capacity development programming process.

Table 3: Group B-NCSA Steps

INCEPTION	
Objective	To establish the institutional arrangement and operational modalities for the implementation of the NCSA process
Outputs/Results	1. Institutional arrangements and operational modalities in place and agreed by key stakeholders 2. Common vision of capacity needs at national and sub-national levels
Activities and Tools	1.1 Identify key stakeholders 1.2 Consultative workshops with all stakeholders 1.3 Define roles and TOR for e.g. a) Steering Committee, b) Task forces, c) NCSA team, d) sub-national committees, e) consultants 1.4 Develop and agree upon NCSA work plan 2.1 Communication and information exchange on the NCSA process, incl .publicity and awareness materials 2.1 Establish stakeholder network to exchange information
STOCKTAKING	
Objective	To identify existing national capacities and needs to effectively implement MEAs
Outputs/Results	1. Inventory of policies, regulations, plans, strategies, projects and activities, past and ongoing, of relevance to the thematic areas 2. Further identification of relevant stakeholders
Activities and Tools	1.1 Consultation with relevant ministries and agencies 1.2 Acquire reports and documentation on MEA related activities 1.3 Preliminary review of reports and docs collected 2.1 Identify key stakeholders Tools: Questionnaires, desk review, field visits, internet search, stakeholder communic.
THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS	
Objective	To assess the capacity needs and opportunities to address national priority issues
Outputs/Results	1. Identify and reexamine national priorities for each thematic area 2. Capacity constraints and opportunities for thematic areas are identified
Activities and Tools	1.1 Review and analysis of relevant documents 1.2 Broad consultation with relevant stakeholders 2.1 Identify root causes, constraints and opportunities for capacity development Tools: Stocktaking report, problem tree, root-cause analysis, SWOT analysis
CROSSCUTTING ASSESSMENT	
Objective	To identify capacity constraints and opportunities common to the thematic areas in order to strengthen synergies
Outputs/Results	1. Agreed synthesis of common priorities and capacity needs and opportunities
Activities and Tools	1.1 Review and analysis of thematic assessments 1.2 Broad consultation with relevant stakeholders Tools: Thematic reports, stakeholder consultations
ACTION PLAN	
Objective	To develop a national programme for capacity development to implement the NCSA findings
Outputs/Results	1. Strategic framework of actions developed



Activities and Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Formulate actions to meet national priorities for capacity development 1.2 Establish resource framework and time line to implement the activities 1.3 Agree upon action plan with stakeholders, including high level support 1.4 Specify institutions, stakeholders and possible sources of funding to implement specific activities 1.5 Establish M&E system for the implementation of the action plan
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Session 6: Cross-cutting assessments and action planning

Jerry Velasquez of UNEP's Division for Environmental Conventions presented the concept of [synergies and the cross-cutting assessments](#).

The GSP Coordinator presented a set of summary guidelines for [NCSA Action Planning](#), with the aim to strengthen the Action Plans being produced through the review and clarification of best practices and enabling each team to work in detail in the development of its own Plan.

Day 3 - Implementation of Action Plan, Follow-up Projects, PDF A/MSP Development

Session 7: Implementation of the Action Plan and Follow-up Projects

The third day of the workshop consisted of a presentation on the [UNEP Bali Strategic Plan](#) on capacity development and technology support (Levis Kabagi, UNEP Division of Environmental Policy Implementation); and a presentation [GEF operational issues](#) with a practical demonstration on how to utilise a problem mapping tool in the NCSA context (Alan Rodgers, UNDP-GEF).

Session 8: Group Discussion on PDF A/MSP Development, Work Plan and Resource Kit

Most of day three was devoted to work in country teams. The objective was to apply the experiences exchanged and lessons learned from the workshop to the national NCSA process, supported by the resource persons from the implementing agencies and the GSP. Advanced countries focused on NCSA follow-up steps such as PDF-A or MSP development, while the starting countries re-examined, refined or drafted their national NCSA work plans.

Workshop conclusion

Key lessons learned from the workshop, particularly for the implementing agencies and the Global Support Programme, can be condensed as follows:

- GSP and IAs, including decentralized support structures, have to strengthen efforts to provide consistent assistance to countries undergoing the NCSA; in particular:
 - Encouragement to build the NCSA on existing assessments and strategies at national level, such as enabling activities, PRSPs, NSDS, MDG strategies, etc.
 - Promotion of the NCSA as an opportunity to establish a programmatic strategy for national capacity development, rather than an assessment of the assessments, geared toward the development of an MSP proposal only.
- Countries face particular challenges in linking national environmental priority issues to a capacity needs assessment and the strategic/programmatic action plan level.
- The definition and usage of "cross-cutting", both in conceptual and practical terms, is another challenge to many countries. Linkages between substantive commonalities of MEAs and cross-cutting capacity development activities to address these have to be exemplified, operationalized and further promoted.

Day 4 – Country Clinics

Day four was dedicated to country clinics to further discuss national challenges, lessons learned or other NCSA related questions with the resource persons. The results of the country clinics will not only support the countries in their efforts to implement the results of their NCSAs, but will also allow the implementing agencies and the GSP to improve their assistance to the needs of the countries.

