



**National Capacity Self-Assessment Sub-Regional Workshop  
Joint UNDP/UNEP Global Support Programme  
UN Girgiri Center, Nairobi, Kenya  
4 – 6 November 2009**

## Workshop Report

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### Introduction

Approved in November 2003, the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) programme was the first pathway of the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) *Strategic Approach to Enhance Capacity Building*, which provided a framework to develop countries' capacities for environmental management. Implemented as projects, they were/are an opportunity for countries to assess their management capacities and formulate a national capacity development strategy to achieve national and global environmental priorities, to be undertaken in a systematic manner. The NCSAs complement the other capacity development pathways identified in the *Strategic Approach* document, namely strengthening capacity building elements in GEF projects; targeted capacity building projects, and country specific programmes that address critical capacity needs in Least Developed Countries.

When completed, a total of 145 countries will have performed an assessment of their national capacities through the NCSA process with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

### Workshop Objectives

By mid-2009, a number of countries had yet to complete their NCSAs, most having experienced delays for a number of reasons. These include problematic governance structures, unclear institutional roles, and weak technical know-how and capacity to undertake comprehensive assessments. This workshop was largely organized to provide support to the remaining NCSAs in the Asia and Pacific region, but also to facilitate networking among NCSA project teams by sharing lessons learned and best practices.

### Workshop Programme

The workshop was held over three days, and conducted in English and French with simultaneous interpretations. The workshop was organized in three parts: a) an opening session of speakers from UNEP, UNDP and GEF, followed by technical presentations from the GSP Technical Advisor and the lessons learned from two completed NCSAs in Cameroon and Egypt to frame the discussions; b) individual presentations and discussions by NCSA project coordinators; and c) a session that focused on how to catalyze the implementation of the NCSAs and its priority recommendations. The workshop was originally structured to spend more time on discussing the emerging lessons from the 2006 analysis of NCSAs, such as engaging stakeholders and synthesizing cross-cutting capacity development needs. The GSP Technical Advisor modified the workshop agenda to enable participants to engage in a detailed discussion of each NCSAs implementation challenges and opportunities for their adaptive management.

## Workshop Proceedings<sup>1</sup>

### Opening Session

The workshop was opened by UNEP's head of the Division for the Global Environment Facility, Ms. Maryam Niamir-Fuller, who welcomed participants to share their experiences and lessons on how they have used the NCSA process to identify their capacity development needs for addressing environmental challenges. In her remarks, she stressed the importance of incorporating poverty alleviation strategies into the development and strengthening of institutional arrangements for implementing multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), notably the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention to combat Desertification and Drought (CCD), and Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). She also invited participants to add their voice towards a fair, balanced and effective climate change agreement in Copenhagen in December 2009.



The next speaker was Mr. Danielius Pivoriusas, Sr. Operations Officer, Capacity Building of the GEF Secretariat, who gave an overview of the GEF's programming of NCSAs and their follow-up capacity development projects, known as CB2 projects. He outlined the eligibility criteria behind these targeted cross-cutting capacity development projects, their expected outcomes, priorities for Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries, as well as indicators to track capacity development efforts and performance.

Tom Twining-Ward, Regional Technical Advisor of UNDP/GEF presented further background to the emergence of capacity development as a paradigm shift from technical assistance. Whereas international development assistance was largely input-based and supply driven, capacity development represents a newer demand-driven approach based on delivering outcomes to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). He outlined the three levels of capacity development and their entry points for UNDP, disaggregated as such to allow for a focus on complementary set of actions necessary to take a holistic approach to manage the assessment and priority implementation of capacity development needs to achieve sustainability of measures to protect the global environment. Mr. Twining-Ward outlined the modalities of support to the NCSAs, both from the Global Support Programme as well as UNDP's Regional Coordination Units and Country Offices.

Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Communications and Outreach Director of UNEP/DGEF, outlined UNEP's role as a GEF Implementing Agency and the only agency whose core business is environmental policy and management. In addition to supporting a number of NCSAs, UNEP/DGEF is supporting other capacity development efforts, such as the European Commission supported programme for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries to implement MEAs. UNEP is currently supporting a few CB2 projects, and intends to continue support future CB2 projects.



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<sup>1</sup> Most of the presentations were made using MS Power Point presentations, which are available online at <http://nca.undp.org>.

## Framing Capacity Development

Mr. Kevin Hill, Technical Advisor of the Global Support Programme, presented definitions of several key concepts and a set of ten guiding principles that frame capacity development for achieving environmental sustainability. The next two presentations were made by Ms. Yasmine Fouad and Mr. Justin Nantchou Ngoko, both former NCSA project coordinators for Egypt and Cameroon respectively. They both outlined their experiences in implementing their respective NCSAs, particularly in linking the NCSA process to existing institutional structures, priorities for achieving environmental sustainability, measures to overcome challenges to implementing their NCSAs, key NCSA results and synthesis of cross-cutting capacity development priorities, and preparatory work to develop a CB2 project.



## EC/UNEP ACP MEA Programme

Mr. Marko Berglund, Associate Legal Officer of UNEP, gave an overview of the European Commission's African, Caribbean, and Pacific Multilateral Environmental Agreement Programme currently under development. This €21.5 million, four-year programme consists of two inter-related components, structured as three regional hubs to provide capacity development services to countries to implement MEA provisions. Some of the key capacity development needs this programme envisages the strengthening of client countries' negotiating capacities in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee dealing with mercury; the development of legal instruments on biosafety and persistent organic pollutants; improved compliance with and enforcement of MEAs; improved knowledge management systems and public awareness; improved policy coordination at the national and regional levels; and mainstreaming MEAs into national sustainable development strategies. More information on this programme can be found in Mr. Berglund's PowerPoint presentation and at the following website: <http://www.unep.org/AfricanCaribbeanPacific/MEAs/Doc/JulyNewsletter.pdf>.

## Conceptual framing of capacity development for environmental sustainability

One of the challenges to *capacity development for environmental sustainability* is to be able to communicate the concept appropriately to local communities. These stakeholders do not view the environment in the same way that developed countries or western societies given their different histories and relationships with nature. This even applies to some key governmental decision-makers. Multilateral environment agreements are therefore difficult to implement without the ability to effectively translate in a way that resonates with their particular culture and language. As a result, there is low political commitment to the concept and the allocation of resources to meeting MEA obligations.

Therefore, the Small Grants Programme (SGP) of the GEF perhaps offers a better opportunity to support the types of activities that bridge the nexus between the development priorities of local communities and global environmental benefits. Communicating capacity development for environmental sustainability



thus becomes a broader issue, requiring a nationally drive process to develop the context of environmental management for national and global benefits within a context that is specific to each country's culture and socio-economic priorities. For example, in Botswana, one can not talk about environmental sustainability without talking about HIV issues. Participants also explained that one of the challenges they

faced was in being able to conduct and communicate the NCSA in local dialects in order to elicit local community input.

### Political Commitment and Ownership

The low awareness and understanding of the capacity development concept and approaches in tangible terms can lead to insufficient political commitment to the NCSAs. One way to address this is to actively involve the GEF Focal Points in the finalization of the NCSA Terms of References, which detail the outputs of the consultants. Engaging the Focal Points during each step is critical so that they understand the key issues behind the NCSAs, such as understanding the three levels of capacity development. That is, the learning-by-doing approach of the NCSA should also include the Focal Points.

Another approach to strengthen ownership of the NCSA is for countries to undertake and demonstrate the management outcomes and benefits arising from the project. To be clear, this means that the NCSA, as a consultative process to assess capacity development needs, should be used to demonstrate a new and improved (holistic) consultative process to address management issues of related national environmental management needs. This requires that the NCSA be integrated with national planning structures and mechanisms.

One of the challenges in securing political commitment to environment is the prevailing attitudes and legislative instruments on the environment.

For example, in Botswana, environmental rights are not recognized in Botswana's constitution, despite over 40% of the country protected in the form of national parks.



For the NCSA to be successful there needs to be leadership and/or a champion to catalyze political commitment. Steering Committees are also important structures to provide leadership, and should be held accountable to support the NCSA. The particular design of the Steering Committee will vary depending on the country and the extant institutional framework. In some cases, the steering committees were structured as a two-tier structure, with policy decisions at the upper level supported by a technical committee/working group at a subsidiary level.

The workshop discussed the expected roles of the Steering Committee, which included catalyzing action by various agencies to support the assessment process and facilitating the identification of synergies. In a number of cases, participants' experience was that their Steering Committee could have been more forceful, but this is more a reflection of a country's political stability or lack thereof. One methodological practice is for the project coordinator to make full use of the work plan and a road map to manage and hold the Steering Committee and government accountable.

### Methodological Approach

A number of countries approached their NCSAs with a focus particular to their existing priorities. Cameroon, for example, focused its NCSA around forest issues since sustainable forest management produces global environmental benefits that cut across the three conventions while at the same time responding to socio-economic priorities to reducing local community pressure on forest resources. Similarly, Haiti modeled their NCSA after Cuba's NCSA, taking an ecological approach to the assessment process. Lesotho also took an "ecological" approach to their NCSA, focusing on lowlands, foothills, and mountainous ecosystems. Taking an ecosystem approach necessarily precludes other areas, requiring that the NCSA prioritize their regional/ecosystem focus in order to reflect national priorities. Guinea Bissau also took a "regional" focus, undertaking their NCSA at the level of their three provinces

that make up the country's political units. Notwithstanding, the NCSA can not adequately involve all regional stakeholders, and in the case of Guinea Bissau, they conducted only one provincial level workshop. Cuba also disaggregated their NCSA consultative process to the three levels of local, regional and national.

The extent to which the NCSA Resource Kit was used varied among countries, with some not using it at all, while most used it as a general guide to the assessment process, with some adaptations. This was the original intent of the Resource Kit, which was to provide the basic framework for the assessment, but for each country to tailor the methodological approach to their NCSA to ensure national ownership.

One of the challenges faced by the NCSAs was the slowdown of project activities as a result of irregular submission of invoices and disbursement of project funds. Project delays also arise from mismanagement, as in the case of Sénégal, which was among the select countries to pilot the NCSA in 2000. In their case, the challenge is not the availability of expertise, but the government bureaucracy. All NCSAs are due to have been completed by June 2010. One recommendation discussed in the workshop for those countries that are in the early stages of implementing their NCSAs, such as Sénégal and Madagascar, would be to prepare a work plan to outlines the NCSA activities to be reviewed and approved by the Project Steering Committee on a regular basis. This is called for as part of the implementation arrangements. A strong Steering Committee would help strengthen political commitment and hold agencies accountable for their role to the NCSA process.



The workshop also discussed the flexibility of working with UNEP as opposed to UNDP. In the case of former, a number of participants felt that working directly with UNEP allowed the NCSA team to directly seek feedback and approval on a range of issues. Working with UNDP Country Offices allowed the NCSA teams faster and more direct support on implementation issues. The choice of implementing agency rests with the recipient government, selected on the basis of their historical relationship and comparative advantage(s). A key criterion in the choice of implementing agency is the extent to which they can support the tailoring of the NCSA to suit the complex nature of national circumstances. In Cuba's case, despite have a very good relationship with UNDP, the government decided to use UNEP to implement their NCSA.

Engaging donors should be done as early as possible in the NCSA process, and as early as the inception workshop. Donors could also be invited to the thematic workshops. Donors should be contacted directly to ascertain their areas of interest and funding priorities. However, care should be taken not to invite donors if doing so would compromise national ownership of the NCSA. The NCSA could organize a donor assistance group to coordinate donor support. Such groups already exist in most countries, chaired by UNDP. National ownership should be ensured before bringing in the donors to ensure that development priorities are driven by national priorities and not by donors.



One lesson learned from Egypt's NCSA was that a strong inception phase is critical to the success of the NCSA. Weak stock-taking reports will result in weak thematic reports, and subsequent weaker reports. However, convening a strong inception workshop may not be enough if there is political instability or weak political commitment to the NCSA. In Chad's case, the inception workshop was compromised by government bureaucracy and low political commitment.

Participants were reminded that the NCSA is only to assess capacity challenges and needs, and not to implement priority NCSA recommendations, although by undertaking the NCSA process, countries are learning capacity development methodologies by doing them. Unused NCSA project funds are to be returned to the GEF Trust Fund.

### Expertise and Experience

The use of experts and consultants was another important issue for the NCSAs. Different NCSAs contracted consultants with a range of experience and expertise. In some cases, the contracted consultants were considered to be of high caliber, and yet their reports were of poor quality. In other cases, consultants were not necessarily contracted because of a particular expertise, but because they had multiple qualifications. In some cases, this called for a revision of consultants' Terms of References.

Having a strong dedicated and efficient project coordinator to ensure the effective management plays a big role in determining the success of the NCSA. The NCSA must also take care in the selection of the consultants, to ensure that they are competent and can deliver quality and timely products. A working group of experts were used (in Egypt's case) along with consultants and the GEF Focal Points, to review and legitimize recommendations that emerged from the NCSA consultative processes.

Another form of support was the Global Support Programme (GSP), which a number of NCSA teams took advantage of. Although the GSP is coming to an end, NCSA teams are still encouraged to use the GSP to clarify technical issues.



### Governance

A critical assumption is that the country has a functioning institutional framework for environmental management, without which the NCSA could not be effective. The absorptive capacity of a country to assess capacity development priorities and needs limits their ability to move to the next step of *developing* the needed capacities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina's case, all MEAs are overseen only at the national level by an environmental department with only a complement of six staff. In the case of Bosnia & Herzegovina, their application to join the European Union further stretched the government's resources to undertake the necessary reforms to their governance structures, which includes legislative reforms dealing with environment and strengthening their environmental institutions.

### Mainstreaming

Another issue discussed was the role of the NCSA as a process to integrate the MEAs into national planning processes. This was the case for Egypt, which found that the only way to secure political commitment to the NCSA and global environmental objectives was if they could be directly tied to national environmental priorities. The only way that the NCSA could have been implemented in Egypt was if it was fully integrated within national environmental planning processes. The NCSA therefore became a process to assess capacity development to meet national environmental priorities, but with global benefits. Institutionalizing the NCSA process within national sustainable development planning is a cost-effective way to build awareness and political commitment to the NCSA.



In the case of Cuba, the NCSA was built on the full set of their environmental laws and national sustainable development priorities. Not only did they look at the Rio Conventions, but they included an assessment of the capacities needed to implement other MEAs, such as

Ramsar and the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). In this way, synergies could be created among the set of MEAs to which Cuba is a party. However, in the case of Bostwana, the inclusion of the other MEAs served to stretch NCSA resources too thinly.

From the GEF perspective, it is preferred that the other MEAs are not included so that the NCSA focuses on the three Rio Conventions. This is a grey area, as the FCCC is a framework convention, and in fact addresses many of the same issues being addressed by other related conventions. Similarly, the CBD, although not expressly titled as a framework convention, is also such, with its articles and provisions covering many of the other MEAs addressing wildlife management. For the NCSA to expressly include obligations stated in other MEAs would require additional funds.

### Action Plan

One of the problems of the NCSA process was that it effectively ended with the preparation of an action plan, with no follow-up activities. There is an expectation among some that the priority implementation of the NCSA would be through funding from the GEF. This is not a correct interpretation. Instead, the NCSAs were to manage a consultative process wherein the donors were involved as partners in development. In the case of Egypt, the NCSA was developed in parallel with environmental planning according to national priorities, allowing for a stronger national commitment to NCSA priorities. Therefore, when national funding becomes available, the NCSA can be used to implement capacity development priorities.

Participants were reminded that the GEF is not the only financial mechanism for environment. However, it is the largest entity that finances “global” environmental management, and is not mandated to finance sustainable development. A discussion ensued that suggested that global environmental benefits can be delivered by environmental sound and sustainable development, and that the NCSAs were indeed



catalyzing this kind of development. This last issue highlighted the ambiguity between the understanding of the relationship between the GEF and sustainable development at the national level. Cuba’s Action Plan included a portfolio of project ideas was categorized at three levels of consultations and priorities: local, regional and national, and presented not only to the GEF, but to other donors.

Countries should not rely on GEF funds to implement priority capacity development needs, and involve other potential donors. One suggestion is to organize a two-day meeting as part of the final validation workshop, when stakeholders are presented with the NCSA Final Report. On the second day, a meeting with representatives of donors could take place as partners in development. The NCSA could also prepare a Memorandum of Understanding that is general enough to engage donor support to implement the NCSA Action Plan.

### Conclusion

The lessons learned from this workshop will contribute to an overall synthesis of lessons learned from other workshops and the NCSAs themselves, to be completed by May 2010. Those NCSAs currently under implementation, as well as the Global Support Programme, are scheduled to come to an end by June 2010.

## Annex: Workshop Agenda<sup>1</sup>

### Day One: 4 November 2009

Start	End	Duration	Activity	Presenter
9:00	10:30	1:30	Welcome and Workshop Opening (15) Introduction: The international context of NCSAs and capacity building (20) UNDP's support to NCSAs (15) UNEP's support to NCSAs (15) Adoption of Provisional Agenda (15)	UNEP/GEF: Maryam Niamir-Fuller GEF Sec: Danielius Pivoriunas  UNDP/GEF: Tom Twining-Ward UNEP/GEF: Jyoti Mathur-Filipp GSP Technical Advisor: Kevin Hill
10:30	10:45	0:15	Coffee Break <sup>3</sup>	
10:45	11:15	0:30	Developing a common understanding of capacity development	GSP Technical Advisor: Kevin Hill
11:15	12:00	0:45	Lessons Learned from Cameroon's NCSA	Justin Nantchou Ngoko Former Project Coordinator
12:00	13:30	1:30	Networking Lunch: Café Creole or Café Royale <sup>2</sup>	
13:30	13:50	0:20	Lessons Learned from Cameroon's NCSA	Justin Nantchou Ngoko Former Project Coordinator
13:50	14:10	0:20	Lessons Learned from Egypt's NCSA	Yasmine Fouad Former Project Coordinator
14:10	14:30	0:20	Questions & Answers	
14:30	15:00	0:30	Cuba's NCSA <sup>4</sup> + Q&A	Raul Garrido
16:15	17:15	1:00	Reception: Savannah Recreation Centre hosted by UNEP	
17:30			Shuttle bus returns to Jacaranda Hotel	

### Day Two

Start	End	Duration	Activity	Presenter
9:15	9:45	0:30	ACP-MEAs	Marko Berglund, UNEP
9:45	10:30	0:45	Botswana's NCSA	Tiego Jordan Mpho
10:30	10:45	0:15	Coffee Break	
9:35	9:55	0:20	Montenegro's NCSA	Djordjije Vulikic
9:55	10:15	0:20	Haiti's NCSA	Michel-Alain Louis
10:15	10:25	0:20	Lesotho's NCSA	Lemohang M. Sekhamane
10:40	11:00	0:20	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Senad Oprasic
11:00	11:20	0:20	Sénégal's NCSA	Mamadou Sangaré
12:00	13:30	1:30	Networking Lunch: Café Creole or Café Royale	

## **Day Three**

<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
9:30	10:30	1:00	Guinée Bissau's NCSA	Seco Cassama
10:30	10:45	0:15	Coffee Break	
10:45	11:45	1:00	Chad's NCSA	Julien Koundja
12:00	13:30	1:30	Networking Lunch: Café Creole or Café Royale	
13:30	15:00	1:30	Country Clinics <sup>6</sup>	
16:00			Workshop Closure	

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The provisional agenda was reviewed and agreed upon by workshop participants.
- <sup>2</sup> Workshop participants can go to one of two cafés on the UN premises for lunch.
- <sup>3</sup> Coffee/tea will be available outside the conference room at 14h30 and can not be brought into the conference room. Afternoon sessions will not break for coffee.
- <sup>4</sup> Presentations are to be a maximum of 25 minutes, leaving 10-15 minutes for Q&A.
- <sup>5</sup> Discussion of five thematic areas will be facilitated.
- <sup>6</sup> Participants are invited to discuss their particular NCSA issues with other workshop participants and resource persons. The two key issues discussed were accelerated implementation of NCSAs and resource mobilization for implementing NCSA recommendations.

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