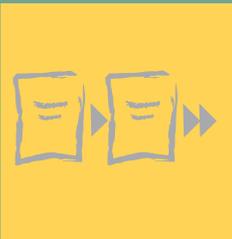
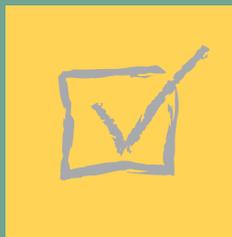
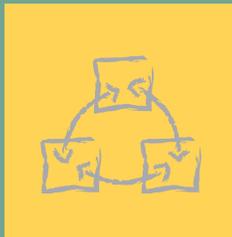


Capacity Development for Global Environmental Management



National Capacity Self-Assessment



Regional NCSA Workshop for Asian Countries

REPORT

Bangkok, Thailand, November 2006

Introduction

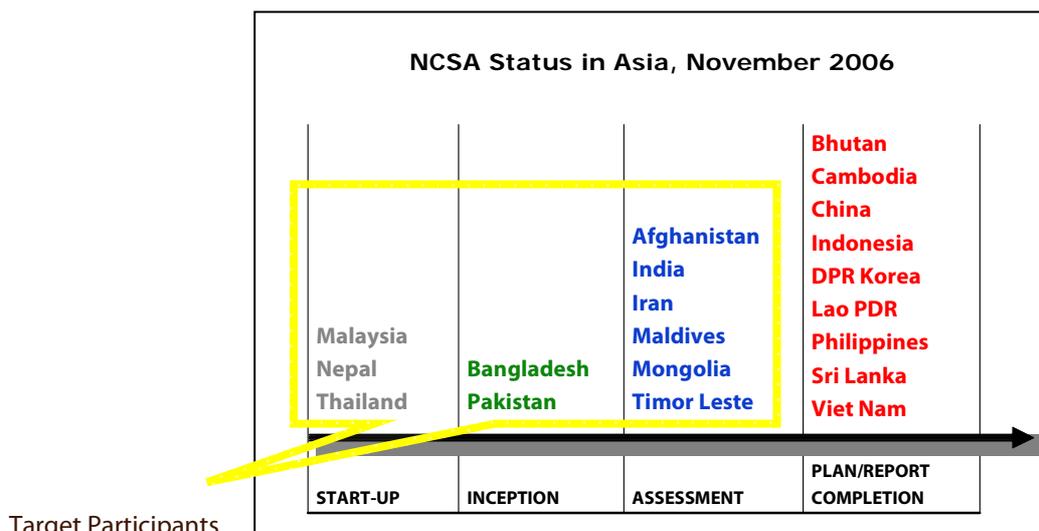
The NCSA is a GEF Enabling Activity, providing an opportunity for each participating country to review its priority environmental issues, determine underlying capacity needs to strengthen management of these issues in accordance with MEA guidance and obligations, and plan and organize a national strategy of capacity development for environmental management.

Since the inception of the NCSA programme in 2002, 152 countries have begun activities to implement their NCSA. In 2005, the Global Support Programme was jointly initiated by the GEF, UNDP and UNEP to provide additional support to implement the NCSA through networking, knowledge management and development of further tools and resource materials.

Regional workshops are among the means used to increase networking and share experiences between NCSA teams. Since mid 2005, a series of regional workshop has been organized by the GSP in conjunction with the Implementing Agencies. In early 2006, West and Central Africa and the Pacific region concluded the first round of Initiation workshops for each region.

In the Asian region, all 20 countries are engaged in the NCSA: nine of these have finished or are currently finalizing their NCSA Reports and Action Plans; six countries are at the assessment stages; two countries are at an early stage of inception; and three countries are about to initiate the process. Afghanistan, Korea and Mongolia are supported by UNEP, and the other countries by UNDP as GEF Implementing Agencies.

Having had meetings in Hanoi and Colombo in 2005, the regional workshop in Bangkok targeted those Asian countries that are still actively engaged in their NCSA process. Nine of the eleven active NCSAs participated, only Nepal and Pakistan were unable to attend.



Record of the Workshop

The Global Support Programme for the **NCSA and capacity development** and the Global Support Unit for the portfolio project **Capacity Building and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management** in Least Developed Countries (LDC) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) joined forces to organize parallel workshops on the two programmes.

A total of around 60 participants from Asian countries shared the facilities at the Asian Institute of Technology's Conference Centre – NCSA team members, SLM experts and UN Country Office environmental focal points – together with resource persons from the GEF Implementing Agencies, UNDP and UNEP, the two GEF Support Programmes, and a number of partner agencies.

The agenda comprised a combined first day and final afternoon sessions, in which participants focused on the overlapping scope and complementarity of the NCSA and SLM programmes, and considered



opportunities for making connections between the two at country level, particularly with regard to joint assessment of national environmental priority issues, related capacity needs and a country programmatic approach to capacity development for environmental management. On the other two days parallel sessions were organized, with plenary discussions, break-out group work, and country team clinics.

For the NCSA workshop, the main objectives were:

- to strengthen the NCSA programme through regional progress review;
- to clarify and guide the NCSA process with tools and training exercises, particularly focusing on the assessment and action planning stages of the NCSA;
- to share lessons learned among the countries; and
- to plan the next steps including possibilities for NCSA follow-up.

Through plenary presentations both by the country teams and the resource persons, NCSA topics, possible tools and specific lessons were introduced, while the workshop's main emphasis was placed on direct interaction and joint learning experiences in working group exercises to develop a shared understanding and confidence in the suggested methods and lessons drawn from the NCSA projects (see the annexes; presentations made during the workshop are available on the GSP website <http://ncsa.undp.org>). Results of the group work were presented in plenary to allow for feedback and interaction among countries in earlier and advanced stages of the NCSA process. Country clinics provided another form of feedback and interface, where country teams could discuss particular questions or challenges with the resource persons.

Joint Session	1:	Workshop Introduction and Objectives
Joint Session	2:	Environmental Priority Issues for Land Degradation in Asia – country presentations
Joint Session	3:	Introduction to Enabling Activities
Joint Session	4:	Priority Environmental Issues and related Capacity Needs – group work
NCSA Session	5:	NCSA Status Review
NCSA Session	6:	Tools for Capacity Assessment
NCSA Session	7:	Capacity Assessment & Types of capacity development actions – group work
NCSA Session	8:	NCSA completion, developing an Action Plan
NCSA Session	9:	Action planning – group work
NCSA Session	10:	Country Clinics
Joint Session	11:	Workshop conclusion

Day 1 – Joint NCSA-SLM sessions on Environmental Priority Issues

Session 1: Workshop Introduction and Objectives

Prof. Irandoust, President of the Asian Institute of Technology, opened the workshop and welcomed the participants on behalf of the AIT. Stressing the need to underpin environmental management and development efforts with academic research, he highlighted the role academia can assume to strengthen capacity assessment and development at the national and international levels through fostering collaboration on common approaches.

After a brief introduction to the NCSA and Capacity Building for SLM and its two support programmes by Mr. Haddad and Mr. Eschweiler, Mr. Hunnam presented the common objectives that led to the combined workshops. Guided by key multilateral environmental agreements and building on past and ongoing activities at the national level, such as GEF Enabling Activities and national plans, strategies and implementation activities, both programmes are aimed at improving countries' environmental management systems through capacity assessment and developing action plans to address prevailing needs. This was followed by a brief outline by Mr. Purcell, summarizing major challenges and opportunities for land degradation and sustainable land management in the Asian region.

Session 2: Environmental Priority Issues for Land Degradation in Asia – country presentations

The NCSA analysis shows that many NCSAs spend much time on overly detailed thematic assessments, while capacity needs assessments and ensuing suggestions for capacity development activities tend to be generic and seem unrelated to environmental priority issues of national and global concern, even if these were addressed in the earlier thematic assessments. That poses a challenge to the development of a capacity development action plan later in the NCSA process, as the implementation of such actions would need clear



objectives that relate to environmental issues so that implementation can be planned and subsequent progress can be monitored, measured and evaluated.

Therefore, countries that sent participants to both workshops had been asked to discuss initial experiences from the two projects and to present a brief outline of their national priority issues in land degradation, to lead into a broader discussion on environmental issues and capacity needs. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives and Timor Leste gave an overview; although hugely diverse, the countries related their challenges to similar issues and causes. Among these were:

- Overgrazing, forest fires, land conversion and demographic pressure on land and natural resources are the main human-induced challenges to sustainable use of land resources;
- Land tenure and ownership issues, data availability, poor inter-agency collaboration and failing long-term strategies are the key managerial and capacity-related challenges to SLM.

Session 3: Introduction to Enabling Activities

To broaden the discussion on capacity assessment and development for environmental management and the need to build on earlier national exercises and strategies, the scope and mechanics of several enabling activities were sketched out, particularly the CBD related National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), the UNFCCC related National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) and the CCD related National Action Programme (NAP).

- NAPA:** Provide a process for least developed countries (LDCs) to identify priority activities that meet their urgent and immediate needs with regard to adaptation to climate change, including
- Synthesis of existing national information;
 - Participatory assessment of vulnerability to current climate variability and of areas where risks would increase due to climate change.
 - Identification of key adaptation measures as well as criteria for prioritizing activities.
 - Selection of a prioritized short list of activities.
 - Short profiles of projects and/or activities intended to address urgent and immediate adaptation needs of LDC Parties to the UNFCCC.

Currently, 47 LDCs have applied for NAPA funding, while 8 countries have already completed the process, of which 2 are in Asia and equally involved in the NCSA.

- NAP:** Review and assess the factors contributing to desertification in different environment sectors such as forestry or land management and develop a plan and activity measures necessary to remove barriers and mitigate desertification. A participatory approach must be employed in developing NAPs, which are also supported by Sub-regional (SRAP) and Regional (RAP) Action Programmes.

24 Asian countries have finished their NAP, 11 of which are also engaged in the NCSA. Central Asia and West Asia have developed sub-regional action programmes and networks.

- NBSAP:** To develop a strategy and action plan to address a country's main challenges in relation to its biodiversity priorities and the main topics under the CBD. The process is very similar to the NCSA, NAP and NAPA in that it includes:
- Stocktaking of existing activities, plans and policies;
 - Analysis of opportunities, challenges and needs to support the main priorities;
 - Development of a national biodiversity strategy;
 - Development of a national plan of action to implement the strategy.

Of the 20 Asian countries involved in the NCSA, 14 have prepared a NBSAP.

Session 4: Priority Environmental Issues and related Capacity Needs – group work

To further strengthen the focus on the necessary differentiation but close relation between substantive environmental issues and capacity issues, mixed country teams, comprising both SLM and NCSA participants, were asked to rapidly conduct a stocktaking simulation by briefly reviewing the status of Enabling Activities and similar environment and capacity related exercises for their countries. This led to a group discussion on priority environmental issues for the Rio Convention focal areas, with each to be paired with an underlying capacity issue.



The former led to a regional map for Asia of the status of Enabling Activities and similar activities (see annex 1). Key environmental issues that were mentioned several times referred to:

- BD – Natural habitat encroachment and fragmentation; Land use change
- CC – Sea level rise; Salinization (of groundwater); Increased flooding and erosion;
- LD – Soil erosion; Overgrazing

The discussions about and prioritization of environmental issues were regarded as highly informative as they demonstrated some similarities in the region, but particularly the diverse perspectives of different stakeholders; the difficulty of making a distinction between environmental and capacity issues; and the need for a thorough analysis of the logical cause-effect relation between the two during the NCSA assessment.

Day 2 – NCSA Workshop on Capacity Assessment

Session 5: NCSA Status Review

Based on the NCSA self-evaluation sheet, each country team had prepared a brief NCSA status review, including lessons learned and key challenges encountered or anticipated.

Commonly mentioned opportunities and challenges were:

- A lead national agency coordinating more than one enabling activity strongly supports an inclusive and strategic approach;
- Good communications with the key stakeholder groups are essential to have the NCSA process country-owned and -driven;
- Close linkage to existing national plans and policies increases the NCSA visibility as well as the attention to its findings.

- Reaching out and involving different ministries and other stakeholder groups is often difficult and time-consuming;
- National capacities for an in-depth capacity assessment are limited;
- Finding the right balance between technical assessment and process orientation that stimulates learning and change;
- Frequent process interruptions, both due to internal administrative and policy changes as well as tedious procedures of the GEF system and the Implementing Agencies.

The lively discussions during the country presentations session reflected a strong interest in exchanging lessons learned across the region, further clarification on terms and tools for concepts such as synergies, inter-linkages and commonalities among conventions, as well as possibilities for concrete follow-up to the NCSA.

Session 6: Tools for Capacity Assessment

Mr. Hunnam introduced the NCSA capacity assessment stages, condensed to a three pronged process:

- (1) examining and reconfirming national and global environmental priorities through earlier assessments;
- (2) analyzing the underlying capacity needs necessary for a management system to implement policy priorities; and
- (3) establishing the baseline to develop a plan of capacity development actions.

Addressing the experience encountered on day one – the need to systematically link environmental issues and underlying capacity challenges – a **problem mapping tool** was introduced as one instrument for the NCSA assessment. The application of a problem mapping and root cause analysis to the NCSA was demonstrated with an example for the management of invasive alien species. After the identification of the core environmental issues, capacity challenges were assessed and grouped according to their functions in a management context. Beyond the assessment itself, the example also showed how such an approach could be used to support the establishment of a strategic action plan for capacity development.



Session 7: Capacity Assessment & Types of capacity development actions – group work

Groups of 3-4 country teams were assigned a priority environmental issue that had been identified in the prior exercise of day one. Applying the problem mapping tool, each group undertook a mock needs assessment, from root-cause analysis to identification of capacity needs underlying these root causes. (Refer to annex 1 for the group work results).

The discussion of the group work revealed common capacity issues that each group had identified, despite having begun with different environmental issues. These commonalities related to the five capacity functions proposed in the NCSA resource kit: a) stakeholder engagement and interaction; b) access to information and resources; c) Application of knowledge to planning and decision making; d) Implementation of decisions and e) Monitoring and learning for further planning and management.

Day 3 – Action Planning and NCSA follow-up opportunities

Session 8: NCSA completion, developing an Action Plan

The development of a national action plan for capacity development to strengthen the national environmental management system is the main purpose of the NCSA. Mr. Hunnam and Mr. Piest highlighted important elements and features of this planning process and the preparation of an action plan. The participants discussed desirable features of a good NCSA action plan, the goal of which is to address the priority environmental issues that have been targeted in the country. These include strong connectivity to the NCSA process and its results; use of a logical framework for planning and subsequent monitoring and evaluation; creation of a document that can be easily communicated, understood and implemented.

The implementation strategy for the Action Plan should clearly demonstrate connections to other national strategies and policies and how its proposed elements and activities can contribute to achieving these. A consistent logical framework approach allows for carrying results from the assessment through to the planning document, rendering apparent the links between environmental priorities, capacity disparities and a programmatic approach to strengthen the underlying system through capacity development activities. A delineation of responsibilities of different national partners, and international supporting organizations, management procedures and a resource mobilization plan for priority issues and their translation into programme log frames were also discussed.

NCSA Session 9: Action planning – group work

The working groups applied this process to their capacity assessment and developed simulation action plans and logical frameworks that linked the initial environmental issue or goal with clearly expressed objectives and action components. The group work results (see annex 1) were then explained and compared in plenary. A common perception that had developed or that was reinforced during the workshop was that capacity development can seldom be addressed in a stand-alone fashion but rather has to be regarded as an integrated approach that induces changes to existing organizational structures and institutional paradigms. It is important to be able to develop longer-term policies and implementation strategies that address priority environmental issues of relevance to a country's main stakeholders and with close relation to the international environmental agenda.

Day 4

Session 10: Country Clinics

Individual discussions among country teams and resource persons allowed issues to be addressed that had not been dealt with fully during the workshop. These related to:

- a) In-country NCSA process maintenance; how best to perpetuate the momentum created through the NCSA, e.g. by giving the steering committee a clear mandate beyond project oversight to continuously feed the NCSA results into line ministries.
- b) Formulation of terms of reference for consultants in order to produce thematic profiles that follow comparable approaches and allow for integration into a cross-cutting capacity needs assessment and action planning.
- c) Institutionalization of the action plan by e.g. delineating institutional responsibilities and arrangements already in the plan itself, or by inviting potential funding agencies to discuss the NCSA recommendations and action plan implementation.



The country clinics also provided a forum for a brief workshop evaluation. Topics and issues countries that found most useful included the interaction among the country teams to exchange information and lessons learned; the linkages that had been demonstrated between national priority issues and the global environmental agenda; and the techniques for integration of NCSA results into existing national development planning processes.

Session 11: Workshop conclusion

During the final plenary session both the NCSA and the SLM participants joined again to inform the others about their workshop results and conclusions. All speakers noted the usefulness of conducting the workshops in parallel and partly in common sessions and recommended to do so more often in the future. Apart from providing a platform for extended networking, the joint meeting also allowed for a better comparison of approaches and lessons in-country and across the region.

The organizers concluded that the twin meeting was a successful experiment they would like to continue and even expand, as it provides advantages particularly at the country level to link assessment methodologies, to build on existing information and strategies and to jointly pursue an integrated strategy of capacity development for environmental management. Only through joint planning and common approaches will existing challenges be overcome, such as connecting institutions; bringing coherence to responsibilities at national level; or integrating different planning processes and disconnected project-based procedures of the GEF-institutions.

