

Secretariat for Environmental Assessment in Central Africa

SEEAC-SEACA

Environmental Assessment: an essential tool for improving populations' living conditions in a context of balanced and sustainable development.

Newsletter no. 001/June-2013

[Http:www.seeaonline.org](http://www.seeaonline.org)

Editorial: [Towards pooling efforts to promote environmental assessment](#)

Environmental assessment may be described as the set of processes aimed at mainstreaming aspects of the natural and human environment into decision-making processes related to the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of interventions in order to achieve sustainable development. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) remains the most widely known form of environmental assessment in Central Africa which is applied to projects under development. Increasingly, recourse is being made to environmental audits for projects already being implemented and to so-called Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) covering policies, plans or programs.

Undoubtedly, environmental assessment is emerging as one of the key levers currently available to players in promoting governance and sustainability with the potential to positively impact countries' development efforts. In fact, it is a tool that is:

- explicitly recognized by most international conventions and multilateral agreements dealing with natural resource and environmental management;
- accepted and prescribed in the legal framework of virtually all countries and procedures of Central Africa's development partners;
- the subject of institutional arrangements and specifically makes way for involvement of stakeholders, including populations and civil society organizations (CSOs) in decision-making, thereby promoting transparency and good governance.

In spite of all its recognized potential, its effectiveness remains limited due to an array of factors including inadequate or poor quality of laws and regulations as well as poor implementation of these laws; relatively low and insufficient capacities of relevant institutions; lacuna in administrative coordination; qualitatively and quantitatively inadequate human resources, gaps in terms of sensitization, information and involvement of the public.

SEEAC which aims to bring together national associations for environmental assessment from Central African countries including Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda is one of the responses devised by practitioners in Central Africa to address these challenges.

The projects required are potential meeting points for SEEAC and other stakeholders to contribute towards sustainable development, hence our call for resource pooling around the promotion of Environmental Assessment.

Thus, you are cordially invited to the SEEAC Annual Meeting which will hold from 1st to 4th October 2013 in Douala in Cameroon and which will chart the way forward for the next five years.

Please join us.

Dieudonné Bitondo, Jr, PhD,

News

Executive Secretary

SEEAC in 2013: Large-scale projects to promote Environmental Assessment

- An extensive capacity-building programme and notably:
- training of active member national associations in resource mobilization: with technical and financial assistance from the NCEA and the firm Vision Positive (VIPOD), several active national associations responsible for seeking technical and financial partners will be trained on negotiation techniques and practices of major donors in this area.
- training of public and private media on Environmental Impact Assessments. In recognition of the fact that Environmental Assessment in general and EIA in particular are little understood by the media and considering the role this category of actors can play in optimizing public participation, SEEAC backed by NCEA, intends to bring the national associations closer to the media by organizing a series of national training courses designed for them in order to strengthen their capacities in this regard.
- holding of a regional training of trainers workshop for the national associations of Burundi, Rwanda, Central African Republic and Congo Brazzaville.
- mapping out the Environmental Impact Assessment systems of five countries: Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Central African Republic, and Rwanda. The aim was to assess progress made by these systems from 2006 (the date of the first mapping) and 2013.
- Drafting and publication of a collective work to be entitled: "Changing Environmental Assessment systems in Central Africa: the Role of National Associations of professionals" whose purpose will be on the one hand to report on the transformation of national associations for environmental assessment in relevant Central African countries over the last six years and on the other hand to capitalize all the gains and lessons learnt from PAANEEAC in order to help improve the design, preparation, implementation and monitoring of approaches to environmental assessment capacity building.
- organization of the 2013 Annual Meeting (General Assembly and 5th International Seminar) entitled "Changing environmental assessment systems in Central Africa: What is the role played by the Support Programme for National Associations for Environmental Assessment in Central Africa (PAANEEAC)". The 2013 annual meeting will hold from 1st to 4th October 2012 at the Sawa Hotel in Douala.

Financial autonomy: A major challenge for SEEAC and its member national associations

Since 2008, SEEAC and active member national associations in its network have received structural support from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Support Program for National Associations for Environmental Assessment in Central Africa. With technical and financial support from the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment, the program aimed to strengthen the bases of SEEAC and national associations as genuine centers of excellence in environmental assessment, based on a detailed action plan and a timetable for financial empowerment. PAANEEAC is now in its last year, making the need for financial empowerment even more imperative. This is why the emphasis in this year's plan of operations is on achieving this objective. A tall order and actions to follow...

The Executive Secretariat

The NCEA's annual monitoring-evaluation mission to SEEAC: A note of hope

As usual, the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) conducted its annual technical mission to monitor and evaluate the activities of SEEAC. The technical visit that lasted two days, from 15 to 16 February 2013, in the presence of Ms. Gwen Van Boven, Ms. Sibout Nooteboom both technical secretaries at the NCEA, Dieudonné Bitondo (Executive Secretary of SEEAC) and Marcienne Emougou (a Permanent Support Officer) allowed for an overview of activities in 2012 and prospects for SEEAC deployment in 2013. Some of the critical issues discussed include: reviewing the various activity and financial reports of SEEAC in 2012, the drafting and publication of a collective reference work, preparing for the SEEAC 2013 annual meeting in Douala, Cameroon, the effective operationalization of the RACEEAC initiative, signs of progress observed across the SEEAC network during the year 2012 and financial autonomy.

The debates held during the deliberations came out with an upbeat report, lauding SEEAC for significant progress made even though weaknesses in terms of financial autonomy remained a serious concern. At the end of the visit, the NCEA was impressed with the strides made by the network, and greatly appreciated the prevailing atmosphere of frank collaboration, a solid foundation for partnership (NCEA-SEEAC-NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS), and commended the ability to combine monitoring with serious work on certain issues. On the SEEAC side, the discussion on the reports with future prospects in view was highly appreciated. The post NCEA-visit period will be devoted to the actual launch of the year's activities and to taking some specific issues forward based on clarifications provided by the NCEA which were highly appreciated.

The NCEA annual mission was a time for enhancing understanding of the NCEA program and role, emphasizing the need for sound financial management and efforts required to achieve financial independence and carrying out in depth assessment of work done with a view to ongoing improvement.

The Executive Secretariat

EIA systems of Central African countries under scrutiny

Between late 2005 and early 2006 the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) systems of eight Central African countries (Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome systems and Principe, Chad) were reviewed as a basis for developing a suitable capacity building program: PAANEEAC. The analysis drew on EIA mapping developed by the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA), which may be described as a tool for participatory and practical assessment of the effectiveness of a national EIA system. The instrument is structured around a questionnaire with 800 questions on virtually all aspects relevant to an EIA system (quality of legal and regulatory framework, level of compliance with this framework in practice, quality of decision making process, institutional capacity of the government to execute its regulatory mission, governance issues, etc...). The questionnaire is filled during a two-day workshop by a cross section of various actors in the EIA, including representatives of the administration in charge of EIA at national level, sectoral ministries and other government agencies, local administrations, the private sector, consultants, civil society organizations). Their collective responses are processed on a spreadsheet, producing diagrams that clearly highlight the strengths and weaknesses of a country's EIA based on set parameters. The results of the evaluation can thus be presented directly to workshop participants and to decision-makers as well. Based on these results, stakeholders can decide which parts of the EIA system should be improved upon.

With PAANEEAC nearing the end of its lifespan in 2013, it seemed worthwhile to conduct a new inventory of the environmental assessment systems of the countries concerned not only to assess their level of development, but also to highlight, where applicable, PAANEEAC's contribution to this development. The results of this review would be very useful in better defining prospective capacity building interventions in this area. They will be discussed at the SEEAC 2013 International Seminar and form the subject of the book on the PAANEEAC review which SEEAC intends to publish.

Dieudonné Bitondo, Jr, PhD. Executive Secretary

Congo Brazzaville and Central African Republic: SEEAC is honoured through its members

The year 2013 began with some members of the SEEAC network receiving promotions to high office within their countries' governments. They include Mr Paul Doko, President of the Central Association of Environmental Assessment Professionals (ACAPEE) who was appointed at the helm of the Central African Republic's Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Sustainable Development and Mr

Joël LOUMETO, Vice-President of the Congolese Association for Environmental Assessment (ACEE) who was promoted to the position of Director of the Environment within the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of the Republic of Congo. This good news bodes well for SEEAC in terms of opportunities to make impact more directly through their actions towards better promotion and integration of environmental assessment.

The Executive Secretariat

Capacity-building, experience-sharing, a brief update on national associations

The SEEAC Network: High time for resource mobilization

SEEAC member national environmental organizations have long received financial support from the Dutch project which is now folding. In order not to leave behind abandoned organizations which would be unable to find resources if only for their functioning, the moribund project, like a father who knows he is dying and gathers his children to give them last nuggets of advice, organized training in order to strengthen the organizations' capacities for resource mobilization.

The national organizations of Burundi (through 14 participants) and Rwanda (through 10 participants) received training in March while those of Cameroon (15 participants) and Congo (13 participants) were trained in April 2013. Those of the Central African Republic have not yet been trained due to the insecurity that has set in the country since March 2013.

Given that resource mobilization is the process by which an organization raises the funds it needs to carry out planned work, the aim was to learn how to obtain various resources from a myriad of resource providers (or donors) by different ways.

The training covered the following key topics:

- Developing projects to be submitted for funding;
- Identifying the requisite resources and appropriate mechanisms;
- Developing a resource mobilization action plan;
- Developing a model grant proposal;
- Presenting project proposals to resource providers (donors).

During training evaluations conducted at the end of the process, participants gave positive feedback on the training and promised to develop projects to be submitted to donors.

Have these promises been kept or "are the pregnancies not yet at full term"?

*Dr Roger KOLOKOSSO A BEDIANG, Management
and Development Consultant
Vision Positive du Développement (VIPOD)*

Cameroon: Two new implementing decrees on Environmental Assessment; what is the outlook?

Since February 14, 2013, two new implementing decrees related to the framework law on the environment have been issued by the Prime Minister's Office. They include decree no. 2013/0171/PM of 14 February 2014 laying down the conditions for carrying out Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) and Decree No. 2013/172/PM of 14 February 2013 laying down the conditions for conducting an Environmental and Social Audit.

What's new in the two texts: The first text comprising 32 articles on the conduct of environmental and social impact assessments breaks new ground in several ways. Firstly, it gives more explicit consideration to the issue of social impact which was sometimes open to interpretation. Moreover, it introduces the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) alongside the detailed and summary ESIA's and the impact statement. The SEA applies to policies, plans, programs and projects with multiple components and the impact statement to small scale projects not classified as summary or detailed ESIA's. It should be noted particularly that decision-making on impact statements has been decentralized to the councils.

The second text of 19 articles comes at a very timely moment to clear the confusion surrounding Article 21 of decree no. 2005/0577/PM of 23 February 2005 which temporarily established environmental audits for projects that were already underway at the time the decree was signed. With the new decree relating thereto, the audit is rightly restored to its role alongside other environmental management tools.

And limitations? A major drawback of the new legislation is that the text on the ESIA which simultaneously governs the SEA severely restricts the scope of this potent planning and environmental management tool. As a matter of fact, though they share many similarities, the SEA also differs from the ESIA in several ways. Moreover, it is important to note that the MINEPDED and the Cameroon Association for Environmental Assessment (ACAMEE) are jointly conducting a project aiming precisely to orient the ESA in such a manner as to ensure that it achieves its full potential. ACAMEE intends to continue with that focus.

The Executive Secretariat

Central African Republic: The Ministry of Environment and Ecology becomes the Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Sustainable Development

With effect from 12 June 2013, the Ministry of Environment and Ecology became the Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Sustainable Development pursuant to Decree No. 13.160 on the appointment or confirmation of members of the National Unity and Transitional Government of the Central African Republic. Headed by Mr. Paul Doko, a Minister from civil society, this brand new ministry is up against numerous challenges including the enactment of the implementing instruments of Law No. 07. 018 of 28 December 2007 laying down the CAR's Environmental Code. In fact, section 7 of the

P.O.Box 30465 Yaounde - Cameroon - Tel: (237) 22 20 39 89 - E-mail: seeac1998@yahoo.fr - Web site: www.seeaonline.org

2007 Environmental Code sets forth provisions on the EIA. Besides the fact that these provisions relate to the purpose of the EIA, persons and agencies authorized to conduct EIAs, types of assessments assigned to an EIA, the law provides that specific provisions to be determined by regulation will establish the different categories of EIAs, the methodology and procedure for conducting EIAs and conditions for publishing the EIA report.

The following draft implementing decrees of the framework law were presented during the SEEAC International Seminar in Bangui in 2012:

- the draft decree to lay down the conditions for conducting the ESIA in the Central African Republic;
- the draft decree establishing the conditions and procedure for conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment in the Central African Republic;
- the draft decree establishing the rules and procedure for conducting an Environmental Audit in the Central African Republic and;
- the draft decree establishing the conditions for organizing public hearings in the Central African Republic.

Their actual enactment by the new Ministry of Environment, Ecology and Sustainable Development is highly awaited.

The Executive Secretariat

Coming soon...

The SEEAC Annual Meeting

From 01 to 04 October 2013, SEEAC will be holding its customary Annual Meeting at the Hotel Sawa in Douala, Cameroon. It will be focusing on two main points. Its 2013 General Assembly, which will be followed by its 5th International Seminar entitled **"Changing Environmental Assessment systems in Central Africa: What is the Contribution of the Support Program for National Associations for Environmental Assessment in Central Africa (PAANEEAC)."** Organized in collaboration with the Cameroon Association for Environmental Assessment (ACAMEE), the event will be held under the distinguished patronage of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development with multifaceted assistance from the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA).

The announcement is available on the SEEAC website www.seeaconline.org

P.O.Box 30465 Yaounde - Cameroon - Tel: (237) 22 20 39 89 - E-mail: seeac1998@yahoo.fr - Web site: www.seeaconline.org

For further information on the International seminar, please e-mail to the following address: seeac1998@yahoo.fr

Contact us:

Editor: *[Dieudonné BITONDO, SEEAC Executive Secretary, PhD](#)*

YOU ARE INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS NEWSLETTER BY ANNOUNCING EVENTS, NEW PUBLICATIONS, SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE.

To subscribe to the SEEAC newsletter kindly send an e-mail to seeac1998@yahoo.fr with the subject "subscribe to the newsletter" and your e-mail address