

***Title: Capacity development for Environmental Assessment Project (CDEAP):
Midterm Evaluation, Asia Regional Office, IUCN, January 2000***

Evaluation Team: Asia Regional Office (ARO) - internal

Year: 2000

Objectives of the Project:

The project started in January 1999 and has a mandate to enhance the capacity for environmental assessment (EA) in South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). The main objective is to establish and strengthen National Environmental Assessment Associations (NEAAs) and a regional organization, the South Asian Regional Environmental Association (SAREEA). The Regional Environmental Assessment Programme (REAP) of IUCN's Asia Regional Directorate was the implementing agency for the project.

IUCN area of specialization: Natural Resources Management

Geographical area covered: South Asia

Donors: Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS-Netherlands), Dutch EIA Commission

Type of evaluation: Mid term evaluation

Objectives of the evaluation:

- To review the progress made by the project in relation to its stated objectives, the project management, the role and functions of the key implementation partners
- To identify bottlenecks and gaps which affected the project implementation and lessons learned

Evaluation Questions:

- What are the main achievements of the CDEAP (1999-2000)?
- What are the weaknesses and drawbacks of the CDEAP project (1999-2000)?
- What are the main suggestions and improvements for the next phase of the project?

Methodology:

The evaluation used document reviews, meetings, discussions and interviews to collect data. A wide range of documents was consulted, including project documents, correspondence and workshop reports. Questionnaires were distributed to all major stakeholders (donors, Dutch EIA, SAREEA, NEAAs, and IUCN Staff) for their input.

Findings:

• **Status of expected results:**

The project has performed well and delivered most of the expected results (diverse promotional material, EA specialist database, an assessment of training needs, establishment of NEAAs, establishment of Information Network, establishment of SAREEA and its affiliation with IAIA (International Association for Impact Assessment), EA training workshops and thematic sessions, Development of SEA process model and general guidelines, SEA training and papers and a South Asian EA conference). For delayed activities, the project is on its way to deliver remaining outputs.

• **Major Achievements:**

Based on the results from the questionnaire sent to the major stakeholders, the significant achievements of the project include the formation of National Environmental Assessment Associations (NEAAs) in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and a regional association (SAREEA). The project also brought together Environmental Assessment (EA) professionals, sharing information through a website and a quarterly news bulletin. The project contributed greatly to an increase in the interest of senior policy makers in EA and invites them to integrate EA concerns in policy making at the national level. The project played an important role as catalyst in enhancing the level and technical rigor of debate on EA by introducing new areas of discussion such as: EIA in biodiversity conservation and climate change, transboundary issues, strengthening public participation, the need for strategic environmental assessment (SEA).

• **Weaknesses:**

Two years is not enough time to build credible civil society institutions, which could influence and promote Environmental Assessment (EA) policy and practice in South Asia. There is a need to build on the project's achievements, especially since the NEAAs and SAREEA are at their initial stage of development. The budget proposed to donors was reduced considerably, while the number of project components and expected results was maintained. The project faced a number of problems including a slow start, cash flow problems, a significant exchange rate loss of the Guilder versus the US Dollar, politics and differences of opinion between the key stakeholders, lack of clarity and understanding amongst partners about their mutual roles and responsibilities.

The project design did not pay enough attention, time, resources, guidance, and training as required by newly created institutions.

- **Role of IUCN Country Offices and Dutch Assistance:**

The IUCN Country offices worked closely with the Regional Assessment Programme and contributed greatly to the formation of NEAAs. Some of them hosted an NEAA secretariat. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided the overall guidance and financial support while Dutch EIA Commission granted technical support.

Recommendations:

- The present project phase should be extended to March 2001 to give time to the secretariat to complete all the pending activities. Donors should also compensate the financial losses experienced with the Guilder to Dollar exchange rate. The momentum created by these two first years of this four-year project has to be maintained and reinforced. The project should be extended to a six-year duration. The project performance and achievements should be reviewed at the end of the first phase, and changes should be made accordingly.
- The project should also continue to provide support to NEAAs and SAREEA and transform these into sustainable organisations, to avoid future dependency on IUCN. The support should include training in organisational growth and management, vision and strategic planning, programmes of development and co-ordination, resource mobilization and management. The next phase should pay close attention to determining the roles and responsibilities of the SAREEA, the NEAAs and the project secretariat.
- The project should organize more joint initiatives and activities with NEAAs and SAREEA and plan at least three activities per year per country to create any significant impact.
- The IUCN role should be extended for its constituency to benefit from its wide technical and managerial experience residing in other parts of IUCN Asia. The extended role should include capacity building of NEAAs and planning. The learning and experience of the project will be of some value and use to others parts of Asia and it is recommended to extend the project to Southeast Asian countries (Thailand, Vietnam and Laos)
- Setting up and strengthening civil society institutions capable of effectively implementing EA policy and practice require long-term vision (at least ten years) and commitment from donors. A memorandum of understanding between the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch EIA commission and IUCN Asia should be written to formalize each party's commitment to the promotion of EA in Asia.

Language of the evaluation: English

Available from: IUCN HQ, IUCN Asia Regional Office (ARO)